

**Statement for the Record
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries**

Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1897, ESA Amendments Act of 2025; H.R. 845, Pet and Livestock Protection Act of 2025; H.R. 1917, Great Lakes Mass Marking Program Act of 2025; and H.R. 276, Gulf of America Act of 2025

March 25, 2025

Chair Hageman, Ranking Member Hoyle, and members of the Subcommittee, this statement provides the Department of the Interior's (Department) views on H.R. 1897, ESA Amendments Act of 2025; H.R. 845, Pet and Livestock Protection Act of 2025; H.R. 1917, Great Lakes Mass Marking Program Act of 2025; and H.R. 276, Gulf of America Act of 2025. The Department appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement for the record.

H.R. 1897, ESA Amendments Act of 2025

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is our Nation's law designed to ensure the long-term conservation of our fish, wildlife, and plant species. While the law's goals and objectives have been met for more than 50 years, the Department acknowledges challenges with the implementation of the ESA. Beginning on day one, President Trump took action to address these challenges, including ensuring prompt consultation on the ESA's regulations to support the Nation's energy supply and expediting actions to secure critical water resources. President Trump has issued a policy agenda focused on deregulation to alleviate unnecessary regulatory burdens placed on the American people, which the Department is prioritizing in fulfilling its mission, including in reviewing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) implementation of the ESA. The Department supports reforming the ESA and looks forward to working with the Subcommittee on this important legislation to thoughtfully implement the conservation goals for our Nation's species while addressing the critical challenges that the Nation faces.

H.R. 1897 would make a number of reforms to the ESA. It would clarify existing terms by providing new ESA definitions, codify the FWS' current National Listing Workplan structure, reform Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances and make changes related to Incidental Take Permits. It would also make changes to the process for developing regulations under section 4(d), require agencies to promptly initiate rulemakings after 5-year review determinations of listed species, and provide regulatory certainty that critical habitat will not be designated if a private landowner is working to implement a plan that conserves the species. H.R. 1897 would codify requirements for internet publication of best scientific and commercial data and increase collaboration with states, as well as require information related to litigation to be posted online. The bill would update the Section 7 consultation process, such as clarifying the scope of reasonable and prudent measures, and the term jeopardy. It would also make changes related to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and non-native species.

H.R. 845, Pet and Livestock Protection Act of 2025

H.R. 845 would require the Department to reissue the final rule entitled “Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Removing the Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*) From the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife” within 60 days after enactment. The bill also states that reissuance of this final rule would not be subject to judicial review. The final rule, published in 2020 by the FWS, removed the gray wolf from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife everywhere it was listed across the lower 48 states and Mexico. Gray wolves had already been delisted due to recovery in Montana, Idaho, northern Utah, and eastern Washington and Oregon since 2011, and in Wyoming since 2017. The 2020 delisting final rule, which had been promulgated in accordance with the ESA using the best available science, and following public review and consideration of public comments, was litigated, then vacated by a court in 2022. That case is currently on appeal to the Ninth Circuit.

Under the protection of the ESA, the gray wolf’s population has increased to over four times the level at the time of the initial gray wolf listings in the 1970s and its geographical footprint has expanded beyond its historical range. The Department is committed to collaborative conservation with state and other partners to ensure the gray wolf remains at a healthy and manageable level. States are leaders in wildlife management and protection and are vitally important partners with the FWS in developing management and recovery strategies backed by the best available science. The Department supports H.R. 845, and we believe, based on the best available science, that it is unreasonable to continue listing the gray wolf.

H.R. 1917, Great Lakes Mass Marking Program Act of 2025

H.R. 1917 would establish within the FWS a program for the mass marking of hatchery-produced fish in the Great Lakes, in support of the more than \$7 billion recreational and commercial fishing economy in the region. Mass marking is a conservation and monitoring technique used to distinguish hatchery-produced fish from those spawned in the wild, often through the clipping of a fin and insertion of a coded-wire tag in the fish from hatcheries. H.R. 1917 would require the FWS to collaborate on the program with partners in the Great Lakes, including federal, state, and tribal agencies, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, and joint signatories to the Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries. The legislation would codify the FWS’ existing Great Lakes Mass Marking Program, which began in 2010 and has been funded and directed through congressional appropriations.

The FWS works closely with states and other partners to support hunting and fishing opportunities in numerous ways, including through research and monitoring of wildlife populations, providing training and education, funding shooting ranges and boat ramps, and providing access and offering opportunities on national wildlife refuges. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the sponsor and Subcommittee on the legislation.

H.R. 276, Gulf of America Act of 2025

H.R. 276 would rename the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America and direct the Secretary, acting through the Chairman of the U.S. Board of Geographic Names (BGN), to oversee the renaming in federal documents and maps. The bill also directs each federal agency to update federal documents and maps in accordance with the renaming within 180 days of enactment.

The BGN is a federal body established in 1947 by Public Law 8-242 to maintain uniform geographic name usage throughout the federal government. The U.S. Geological Survey is a BGN member and provides staff support to the BGN. The BGN's primary role is to resolve name discrepancies and promulgate all official names. Approved names and changes are updated in the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS), the authoritative database with which all federal products are required to comply. Other federal data sources (i.e, maps, charts, graphics, etc.) are updated on their respective agencies' refresh schedules. Each agency monitors their own publications for consistency with official names.

H.R. 276 would codify President Trump's Executive Order 14172, "Restoring Names That Honor American Greatness," signed on January 20, 2025, that renamed the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America, and the Secretary of the Interior's Secretary's Order 3423 that provided the BGN with implementation instructions on February 7, 2025. BGN immediately updated the GNIS to reflect the name change, and the name Gulf of America was made official for federal use. The Department of the Interior supports the goals of H.R. 276 as it would codify the President's decisive action to honor American greatness.

Conclusion

Our natural resources are national assets, which are for the benefit and use of the American people. The Department looks forward to working with the sponsors and Subcommittee on the legislation to advance the administration's priorities.