

OPENING STATEMENT
Chairman Jared Huffman
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
Committee on Natural Resources
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 925, H.R. 1747, H.R. 2748, H.R.
2854, H.R. 2918, H.R. 2956, H.R. 3399, H.R. 4340, H.R. 4341,
H.R. 4348

September 24, 2019
[689 words, ~4 mins]

Good afternoon. I'm looking forward to discussing the lineup of bills we have before us today. These bills focus on solutions for wildlife conservation and ensure we protect the biodiversity that is critical for healthy ecosystems and communities.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the loss of biodiversity is an urgent crisis. This subcommittee has already heard from wildlife experts from around the world and we heard it directly from the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service – biodiversity is being destroyed by human activities at a rate unprecedented in human history. One million species are threatened with extinction. The urgency is real. We must act now to protect and conserve biodiversity before it's too late.

Conserving biodiversity isn't just for the sake of saving animals. Our lives are built around the irreplaceable benefits we get from wildlife, plants, and ecosystems, like food, clean water, recreation, medicine, cultural practices, and economic revenue. Without biodiversity, we would not be able to maintain the lives we live now.

Across the globe, there are few places where humans have not impacted wildlife. Many species face countless human-related threats, including

habitat destruction, industrial and commercial activities, pollution, disease, invasive species, and climate change.

This subcommittee has been working hard to move legislation that recognizes the value of our wildlife and presents solutions that restore wildlife around the country. Unfortunately, the Trump Administration has also been busy undermining nearly every single environmental protection we have.

In addition to opening up some of our most special places like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas extraction, the Administration is also rolling back protections for migratory birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, attempting to build a wall through critical wildlife habitat, and most recently put out new rules that severely undermine the Endangered Species Act. We are seeing over and over again that this Administration is prioritizing industry interests over the interest of the American people and our environmental laws.

The ESA is the most important law we have to protect imperiled wildlife, but the proposed changes undermine the spirit and intention of the ESA and put more species at risk.

At a time when scientists have made it clear that we need to be doing more to address the anthropogenic causes of extinction, it is inconceivable that the Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA, the very agencies charged with protecting our wildlife, could be making such devastating decisions. I look forward to asking our Administration witness more about these new ESA regulations as we discuss H.R. 4348.

We'll also use this legislative hearing to advance forward-thinking bills to address the extinction crisis. Addressing the crisis involves a mixed bag approach. There isn't going to be a one-size fits all solution to protect wildlife and their habitats, and the bills we have today represent a wide range of practical, on the ground solutions that can help.

Several of the bills provide much needed funding to some of the most endangered and threatened species groups, including my bill, the Critically Endangered Animals Conservation Act, Mr. Jeffries' bill, the Salamander Act, and Chairman Grijalva's bill, the Extinction Prevention Act.

Other bills aim to directly eliminate threats facing our wildlife. This includes Ms. Velazquez's bill to prohibit the use of a dangerous pesticide in National Wildlife Refuges and Mr. Harder's bill to expand a program to control an invasive species.

Mr. Thompson's bill on the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Mr. Wittman's bill on fish habitat conservation, and Mr. Calvert's bill to establish a new Wildlife Refuge all promote healthy wildlife populations through habitat protections and restoration projects.

Last, but certainly not least, Mr. Cartwright's bill, Safeguarding America's Future and Environment Act, offers a mechanism to start responding to the ongoing and expected effects of climate change to our wildlife and their habitats.

It is critical that we maintain the integrity of existing laws and regulations intended to protect wildlife, as well as pass new legislation that addresses emerging threats to wildlife and ensures adequate funding for our imperiled species.

With that, I invite Ranking Member McClintock to say a few words.