



# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

### Remarks by Chairman Doc Hastings

#### At the Endangered Species Act Working Group Forum "*Reviewing 40 Years of the Endangered Species Act and Seeking Improvement for People and Species*" October 10, 2013

As the Endangered Species Act approaches its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Members of the Working Group representing districts across the nation are here to hear from a variety of stakeholders about the law's effectiveness, and whether and which improvements may be needed as we move forward.

I appreciate all that have agreed to participate, especially those who have travelled thousands of miles just to have input and discuss the ESA. Others who couldn't participate are strongly encouraged to write in and submit their thoughts, concerns, ideas, and other information to our ESA Working Group website.

My own central Washington constituents continue to be impacted by the ESA in a number of significant ways, as a direct result of litigation, close-door settlements and a lack of data transparency relating to ESA listings and recovery:

- Wolves, ESA-listed on one side of a highway but not the other, are threatening ranchers and landowners' private property;
- Poorly-managed federal forests, put off limits due to the listing of the Northern Spotted Owl, have shut mills and led to increased catastrophic wildfires, and the destroying of tens of thousands of acres of the very 'habitat' sought to be protected, when the real cause of spotted decline is another, larger species of owl;
- Over 400 acres of private, irrigated Franklin County farmland is proposed to be designated as critical habitat for a sub-species of plant known as the bladderpod that a recent DNA study shows is indistinguishable from non-listed plants in other areas; and
- Despite a record run of salmon, and despite citizens already devoting 30 percent of their utility bills for salmon measures and facing continuing litigation on hydropower operations, certain groups continue seeking to tear out Northwest dams and to eliminate vital tools to protect farm crops from pests and disease.

I appreciate the willingness of my Working Group colleagues, including Co-Chairman Lummis, to devote time to be here today, not just to continue oversight of the ESA, but ultimately, to bring forward clear recommendations and ideas on how it might be improved both for species and people.