



September 24, 2018

The Honorable Paul Gosar
Chairman, Congressional Western Caucus
United States House of Representatives
2057 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Gosar:

Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities (HFHC) is a grassroots coalition that advocates for active forest management on federally-owned forests. Thus, we support efforts to modernize the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and to make its implementation and processes more responsive to the needs and perspectives of Americans living in rural, forested communities. These goals are reflected in the Western Caucus' ESA modernization package before the House Committee on Natural Resources.

HFHC operates in the Pacific Northwest, Inter-Mountain West and Great Lakes States. We advocate for communities that continue to be socially and economically impacted by ESA-related decisions that have dramatically reduced timber harvests on federal lands, and have significantly restricted opportunities for active management that keep our forests healthy, resilient and accessible. Over the past several decades, the ESA has fundamentally failed to recover vulnerable wildlife species. It is part of a complex and counterproductive web of federal policies that have cost tens of thousands of American jobs, high poverty and unemployment in rural communities, and forests and wildlife habitat that's been degraded by catastrophic wildfire, insect infestations and disease.

It's time to fix this well-intentioned yet broken law, and the ESA modernization package offers steps in the right direction. HFHC is especially supportive of solutions that give communities a greater role in listing decisions, recovery planning and implementation processes. It is critical for the federal government to (1) leverage the knowledge and expertise of those who live, work and recreate on affected lands, and (2) implement the ESA in a way that doesn't destroy family-wage jobs and limit efforts to reduce the risks of catastrophic events on public lands.

As you know, a primary barrier to active forest management is the considerable cost and time it takes for federal agencies to satisfy environmental regulatory requirements. It's our hope that the ESA modernization package ultimately helps ensure more timely ESA consultations, eliminates duplicative paperwork, and expedites urgently needed forest projects.

Thank you for considering the ESA modernization package before the House Committee on Natural Resources, and for your consideration of the needs of America's forested rural communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nick Smith".

Nick Smith
Executive Director
Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities

Restore our federal forests to restore our rural communities
HealthyForests.Org