



New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts

Phone: 575-361-1413
conserve@hughes.net
www.nmacd.org

163 Trail Canyon Road
Carlsbad, New Mexico 88220

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The Honorable Paul A. Gosar, D.D. S Chairman

Congressional Western Caucus

United States House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

The New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts (NMACD) represents New Mexico's conservation districts and the over 300 locally-elected men and women who serve on their governing boards. Conservation districts are local units of government established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs at the local level. Districts work with millions of cooperating landowners and operators to help them manage and protect land and water resources on all private lands and many public lands in the United States.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) must be modernized, and voluntary conservation plays an important role in achieving this. The ESA legislative package the Congressional Western Caucus has announced this week emphasizes the needs of communities impacted by listings and focuses on scientific consensus rather than a politically-driven agenda. NMACD supports this package requiring the federal government to work with all public and private partners, including conservation districts and tribal governments, involved in managing the critical habitat for listed species.

NMACD appreciates members of the House wanting to develop programs to provide tax incentives to landowners to encourage species recovery on private lands. The importance of codifying safe harbor agreements and candidate conservation agreement with assurances will directly benefit listed species and private landowners.

We appreciate your common sense efforts to relieve the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from frivolous petitions designed to overwhelm and thereby politically control the agency's decisions.

We strongly believe that local decision-making, rather than litigation, is the best way to address environmental challenges and achieve positive results for our threatened species.

We appreciate Congressman Steve Pearce introducing part of this legislation. NMACD thanks you for your consideration and introduction of this important legislative package