



# Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

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## Hastings Joins Endangered Species Act Working Group

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) today joined other Members of the House of Representatives in announcing the creation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Working Group. Throughout this year, the Working Group will hold a series of events, forums, and hearings that will invite discussion and input on ways in which the ESA (last reauthorized in 1988) may be working well, how it could be updated, and how to boost its effectiveness for both people and species.

Last Congress, the Natural Resources Committee held a series of [hearings](#) examining the impact of ESA-related litigation and settlement agreements. The Committee found that hundreds of ESA lawsuits have been filed over the past five years and that [tens of millions of dollars](#) have been awarded in taxpayer funded attorneys' fees. This takes time and resources away from real species recovery efforts. In addition, the Administration will be making listing decisions on nearly 800 species by 2016, including 160 this year, as a result of settlement agreements negotiated behind closed doors.

The Working Group will continue to examine the impacts of litigation along with a number of other specific topics and questions including: how to measure ESA progress; how to define success; if the ESA is working to achieve its goals; the role of state and local governments in recovering species; whether the ESA conserves species while ensuring property and water rights protection; the need for public engagement and input; and more.

Members of the ESA Working Group include:

- Doc Hastings (WA-04)
- Cynthia Lummis (WY – At large)
- Mark Amodei (NV-02)
- Rob Bishop (UT-01)
- Doug Collins (GA-09)
- Andy Harris (MD-01)
- Bill Huizenga (MI-02)
- James Lankford (OK-05)
- Blaine Luetkemeyer (MO-03)
- Randy Neugebauer (TX-19)
- Steve Southerland (FL-02)

- Glenn 'GT' Thompson (PA-05)
- David Valadao (CA-21)

*"The Endangered Species Act Working Group is an opportunity to build upon the Committee's work last year and have a fair, honest conversation and review of the current law. We've brought together Members from all parts of the country in order to get a broad range of input and perspectives. We want to hear from states, local community leaders, farmers, ranchers, environmental groups, property owners, and businesses – everyone who cares and has an opinion - about how the law impacts their lives and how it might be improved. I believe we all support the goal of wanting to preserve, protect, and recover key domestic species. 40 years after it was signed into law, and 25 years since it was last renewed by Congress, I hope there can also be recognition that there are ways this law can be improved and made to work better for both people and species."* – **Chairman Doc Hastings**

*"This is an opportunity for Members from across the country to collaborate on creating a more effective conservation tool for our nation's diverse wildlife. The ESA has long been a topic of great interest to the West, but as Western Caucus Co-Chair, I believe that Westerners must do a better job of reaching out to our Eastern colleagues on this topic in a way that builds trust, not division. The ESA can work, but it is far from perfect. In fact, in some ways the law hinders the kind of conservation of species that we all desire. This Working Group will leave no stone unturned for good ideas on improving the ESA for people and species. I am particularly interested in the ideas coming from our nation's policy laboratories – the states. In the end, I am hopeful the Working Group will provide a strong base of education and opens a discussion on the ESA that is free of rancor."* – **Rep. Cynthia Lummis**

*"During a time when Nevada at the local, state, and federal levels is so heavily focused on preventing the listing of the sage grouse as endangered, I am grateful House Leadership selected me to participate in the ESA Working Group along with Members from across the country. It is my hope this forum will help enable me to further convey the negative impact the looming sage grouse listing would have on Nevada and the West, as well as to identify tools to prevent it."* – **Rep. Mark Amodei**

*"I look forward to working with all those interested in improving the way we recover and ultimately de-list species from the 'endangered' status. Key to these efforts will be the states, advocacy groups, federal wildlife managers, and public land users. Much work is ahead, but the goals of improving wildlife and range health are essential to the future vitality of our open public spaces."* – **Rep. Rob Bishop**

*"There is a very real need to update the ESA so that we can actually help endangered species recover. The ESA should be a straightforward tool to engage public and private entities to work together towards protection and recovery of species. I am proud to join my colleagues on the ESA Working Group to bring common sense solutions that benefits animals as well as humans."* – **Rep. Doug Collins**

*"This Working Group will listen to diverse concerns with the goal of improving the way we govern programs that help recover vulnerable species. The current system is clogged with lawsuits, and as a physician, I understand that courtrooms rarely provide the best diagnosis."* – **Rep. Andy Harris**

*“I look forward to contributing to the Endangered Species Working Group during the 113th Congress. It is extremely important to represent the abundance of natural resources in Michigan; from the shorelines of our Great Lakes, to our many farms and forests, the Endangered Species Act impacts a variety of aspects of our state. This year marks the 40th year since the ESA was enacted. I am excited to be a part of this group of legislators examining the effectiveness of the ESA and to improve the Act for both the public, and endangered species.” – Rep. Bill Huizenga*

*“I am glad to have an opportunity to address the broken and ineffective Endangered Species Act with my colleagues on the Working Group. Oklahomans who are passionate about protecting endangered species might be interested to know that our current federal structure is ineffective and outdated. We should be good stewards of the planet God gave us and its inhabitants. But federal laws protecting dwindling animal populations should be crafted to actually address the problems they intend to solve. Current law, including the ESA, is outdated and does more to protect paperwork than animals.” – Rep. James Lankford*

*“This Working Group aims to propose thoughtful reforms to the Endangered Species Act, which over the last few decades has had many unintended consequences that have impacted our citizens and communities. I am honored to be a part of this group and eager to utilize my experience with Mississippi and Missouri River issues to represent the state and the entire Midwest in this capacity.” – Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer*

*“I’m honored to be a part of this ESA Working Group. Wildlife conservation issues can have a significant impact on West Texans, and smart conservation strategies are critical to our farmers, ranchers, and energy producers. The Working Group will be an excellent platform to coordinate the efforts of all stakeholders involved so that we can protect the livelihoods of individuals while maintaining healthy wildlife populations.” – Rep. Randy Neugebauer*

*“Protecting endangered species and promoting jobs and economic growth need not be mutually exclusive. Through collaboration, I believe we can produce a more effective Endangered Species Act. That’s why I’m pleased to be part of a working group that is welcoming the input and real life perspectives of a diverse range of stakeholders, including not just animal protection advocates and conservation groups, but also the communities, small businesses, and coastal, agricultural and forestry interests that are impacted by the ESA.” – Rep. Steve Southerland*

*“The Endangered Species Act was intended as a collaborative partnership between the states and our federal government to protect and sustain our biological resources. This review process is designed so that lawmakers can hear from all stakeholders, which will help to identify the law’s effectiveness in terms of species protection and ecosystem restoration, and to determine its failures and categorize which reforms should guide the policy making process moving forward.” – Rep. Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson*

*“California has the largest water storage and transportation system in the world, yet the Endangered Species Act is preventing people in my district from getting enough water to meet their agricultural and everyday needs. Both sides of the aisle must come together to find common-sense solutions that meet the needs of the people so deeply affected by these policies.*

*I am excited to join my colleagues as we work together to find common ground and do what's best for our constituents."* – **Rep. David Valadao**

For more information on the ESA Working Group, visit  
<http://esaworkinggroup.hastings.house.gov>

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**ESA Working Group**