



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

Chairman Doc Hastings

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## **43 Members Request Extension of Public Comment Period for New Endangered Species Act Regulations**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) and 42 Members of Congress sent a letter today to U.S. Fish and Wildlife (FWS) Director Dan Ashe and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Administrator Kathryn Sullivan requesting a six month extension of the public comment period for three proposed Endangered Species Act (ESA) regulations.

The proposed rules, released on May 12, 2014, would make sweeping changes to how critical habitat designations are determined. Specifically, how the federal government will evaluate whether proposed actions “destroy or adversely modify” critical habitat under the ESA; redefining “adverse modification” as used in consultation under Section 7 of the ESA, and creating a new policy on whether and when to exclude lands or waters from critical habitat designations under Section 4(b)(2). The current 60 day public comment period expires on July 11, 2014.

*“As written, these rules could dramatically increase the amount of private and public lands designated for habitat, which in turn could result in blocking or slowing down an array of agricultural, grazing, energy transmission and production, transportation, and other activities on the more than 680 current habitat designations and hundreds more slated to be finalized in the next few years,” wrote the Members in the letter. “There is a history of concerns that we and others have had with the FWS’ and NOAA’s interpretations of critical habit designations, economic analyses methodology, and regulations stemming from hundreds of listings from closed-door settlements with litigious groups. In light of these concerns, we are surprised and disappointed that the FWS and NOAA would seek to finalize, within just 60 days, multiple rule changes of this significance without more advance notification of Congress, and with insufficient time for affected stakeholders to provide meaningful input.”*

[Click here](#) to read the full letter.

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