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*The Senate of
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April 4, 2014

The Honorable Doc Hastings
The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings and Ranking Member DeFazio:

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee on Natural Resources. I am pleased to support the "State, Tribal, and Local Species Transparency and Recovery Act," H.R. 4317 by Congressman Randy Neugebauer. Current law clearly directs the Secretary of the Interior to "cooperate to the maximum extent practicable with the States" when carrying out the Endangered Species Act, and for good reason (16 U.S.C. 1535(a)). State fish and wildlife agencies have the necessary jurisdiction, resources, and imperative relationships with businesses and landowners to create comprehensive wildlife action plans that can preclude the listing of a species. No one wants a species to be listed; the method for preservation of the species is at the center of the debate. The entities that are best suited to take on this role are the states themselves. Timely and meaningful coordination between state and federal agencies is imperative in order to preserve potentially endangered species.

Secondly, a definition of "best scientific and commercial data available" that includes information obtained by the states is essential. It is the essence of local control to not only allow, but also to empower and rely on the local jurisdiction to have the most current data and best understanding of the issue at hand. To forgo or minimize information from state fish and wildlife agencies, who are in the field each and every day, simply does not make sense. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service should engage state agencies early and communicate efficiently and effectively throughout the entire review of a species.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kel Seliger".

Kel Seliger

cc: The Honorable Randy Neugebauer