



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

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Chairman Hastings: Transparency of Litigation Settlement Practices Necessary to Prevent Abuse

“Important ESA decisions should not be forced by arbitrary court deadlines, or negotiated behind closed doors”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings delivered the following statement on the House floor today in support of H.R. 2804, *the Achieving Less Excess in Regulation and Requiring Transparency Act of 2014*.



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“Mr. Speaker, I support this measure, and particularly a portion sponsored by Representative Collins that will ensure transparency of federal agencies’ litigation settlement practices.

In 2011, the Obama Administration negotiated, behind closed-doors, sweeping Endangered Species Act settlements with two litigious groups greatly increasing ESA listings and habitat designations, and impacting tens of thousands of acres and river miles across the country.

These settlements shut out affected states, local governments, private property owners and other stakeholders who deserve to know that the most current and best scientific data is being used in decisions directly impacting them and species.

In my own district, the Fish and Wildlife Service just listed a plant subspecies, despite clear data showing the plant is not a species likely to go extinct. The settlement deadlines trumped the science.

These settlements could soon result in a listing of the Lesser Prairie Chicken, impacting five mid-western states, and next year, the Greater Sage Grouse which covers nearly 250 million acres in 13 western states. The settlements also mandate decisions for 374 aquatic species in the Gulf and the “long-eared” bat impacting 39 mid-western and eastern states.

Important ESA decisions should not be forced by arbitrary court deadlines, or negotiated behind closed doors by federal lawyers supposedly on behalf of the “public interest.” This legislation aims to help correct this abuse by ensuring affected states and other parties can have a say in settlements before an unelected judge signs it. And, it ensures that no settlement moves forward without the public knowing what’s in it.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this important measure today.”

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