

Statement of Congressman Dan Newhouse (WA-04) on
H.R. 1274, the “*State, Tribal, and Local Species Transparency and Recovery Act*”

July 19, 2017

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee on Natural Resources in support of my legislation, H.R. 1274, the “*State, Tribal, and Local Species Transparency and Recovery Act*.” This legislation is simple, and logical—by including state and local entities in federal determinations and decision-making, we can improve policy-making and reduce the impacts on states, municipalities, tribes, and local stakeholders, all while ensuring endangered species listing decisions include the best, pertinent data involved in such matters.

Federal agencies like the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) are currently not required to share the underlying data used in listing decisions made under the *Endangered Species Act of 1973* (ESA) with the states or local entities that would be impacted by such listing decisions. These agencies too often overlook local conservation plans developed to ensure the protection of native species and habitats. These local efforts should not be disregarded, for oftentimes, the counties or local municipalities are among the best sources of such information. Local stakeholders deserve to know whether their hard work is taken into consideration long before the end result of a federal listing decision is made final and public.

The *State, Tribal, and Local Species Transparency and Recovery Act* will amend the ESA to simply require that federal agencies disclose all data used to promulgate a potential or final listing determination to the states and local jurisdictions affected by federal regulatory actions. The legislation also gives local stakeholders the opportunity to verify, dispute, or complement the information federal agencies use in an ESA listings. There have been too many examples of states' data and species recovery plans having been effectively ignored by federal agencies, even after earnest and costly efforts were made to develop comprehensive and effective plans at local levels. By providing states, tribes, and localities the data used to promulgate these proposed listings, an opportunity arises for local stakeholders to get involved, and have their voices heard.

Two cases in my own District in Central Washington come to mind regarding transparency of federal decision-making involving specific species. Earlier this year, the National Park Service and FWS released a draft plan to reintroduce grizzlies in the North Cascades Ecosystem (NCE). NPS and FWS claim the bears will be joining an existing grizzly population, however the last confirmed sighting of a grizzly bear in the NCE was in 1996. The people living in these communities deserve to know what data these federal agencies are basing their decisions on. I have expressed my deep concerns regarding the lack of sound science and data to support this plan and will continue to voice them.

The case of the Gray Wolf also comes to mind. The Department of the Interior and FWS published a proposed rule that would remove the Gray Wolf's listing **over four years ago**—and even found the “best available scientific and commercial information indicates that the currently listed entity is not a valid species under the Act.” Yet, the wolf remains listed. The Gray Wolf is found in

nearly 50 countries around the world and has grown substantially across its range. I will continue to be a firm advocate of delisting the Gray Wolf and returning its management to the states.

On a final note, Mr. Chairman, I often share with my constituents that, as a farmer, I consider myself a conservationist and steward of the gifts God has given us. Farmers are on the forefront of protecting our nation's rich, natural heritage. I believe it is important that we preserve our forests, natural resources, and wildlife for our children and grandchildren to enjoy. This legislation will only strengthen that effort. By modernizing the *Endangered Species Act*, we can ensure its effectiveness in protecting imperiled species successfully. I look forward to working with the Committee to move this legislation forward, and again thank you for the opportunity.

(640 words)