

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 4th, 2006

The Honorable Lynn Scarlett
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Scarlett:

As you are aware, there are several efforts ongoing in Congress to update and modernize the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The House has passed H.R. 3824, which makes substantial changes to the recovery process for threatened and endangered species. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is currently engaged in bipartisan negotiations to craft a bill to improve the implementation of the ESA. Additionally, S. 2110 was recently introduced in the Senate to provide financial incentives to recover species.

While Congress continues to debate the future of the Act, the executive branch has an important role to play in improving the administration of the existing law. We believe the administration can augment Congress's efforts to update the Act by promulgating regulations that will:

- Update the regulations to respond to court decisions.
- Provide a greater role to states in the conservation and recovery of species within their borders. States often have extensive experience with species and are capable of responding more quickly and effectively than federal agencies to the needs of imperiled species.
- Expand the use of the partnership and cooperative conservation provision of the Act to enhance private stewardship and help conserve plants and wildlife.
- Streamline consultations under Section 7 of the Act to allow for expedited approvals for projects that have minimal impacts on listed species.

- Define or revise key terms that are vague, easily misunderstood, or are inconsistent with the letter of the law.
- Improve the scientific review process and make it more transparent so that the public can understand how the Department makes its decisions under the Act. The regulations should also ensure the availability of original data that support both scientific and policy conclusions.

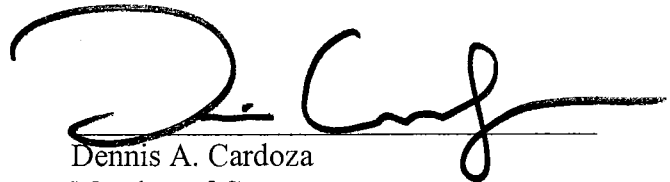
Three decades of experience have demonstrated that we need to refine the Act so that it does a better job of recovering species while minimizing a high degree of conflict, high costs, and unintended consequences. Congress is working toward this goal and has never been closer to achieving it. The administration needs to do its part in dealing with the unintended consequences of the Act.

Thank you for considering our comments.

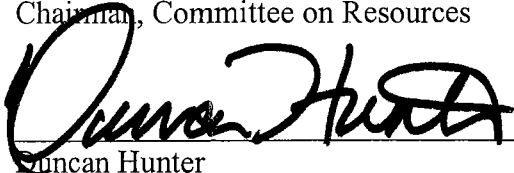
Sincerely,



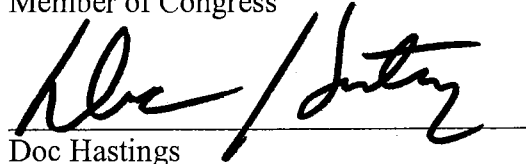
Richard Pombo
Chairman, Committee on Resources



Dennis A. Cardoza
Member of Congress



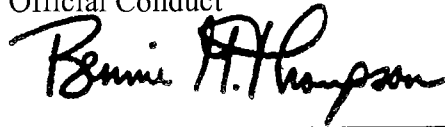
Duncan Hunter
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services



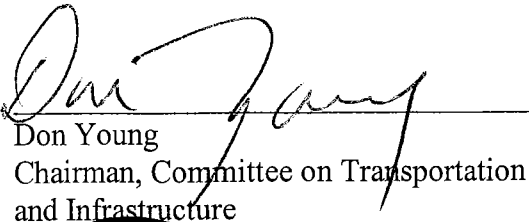
Doc Hastings
Chairman, Committee on Standards of Official Conduct



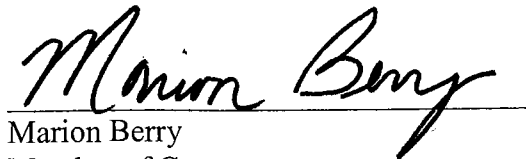
Bob Goodlatte
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security




Don Young
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure



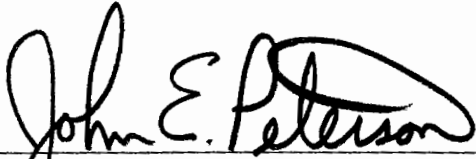
Marion Berry
Member of Congress



David Scott
Member of Congress



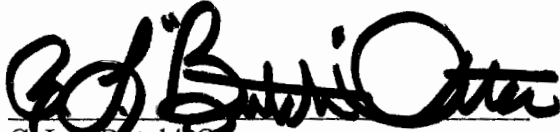
Mike Ross
Member of Congress



John E. Peterson
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Greg Walden
Member of Congress



C.L. 'Dutch' Otter
Member of Congress



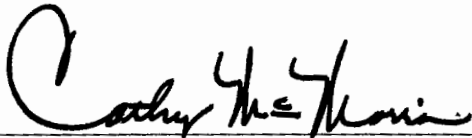
Chet Edwards
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Shelley Moore Capito
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Bob Beauprez
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris
Member of Congress



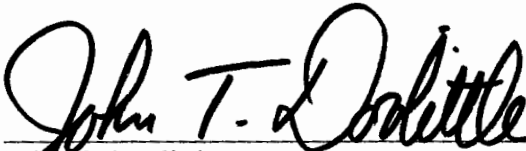
Charlie Melancon
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Ken Calvert
Member of Congress



Rob Bishop
Member of Congress



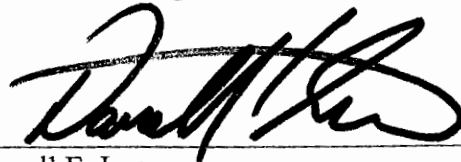
John T. Doolittle
Member of Congress



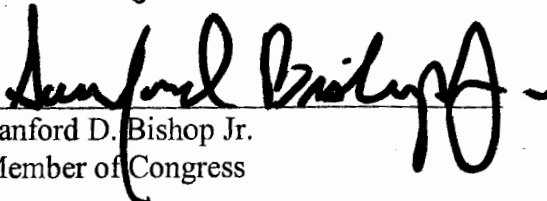
Mike Rogers
Member of Congress



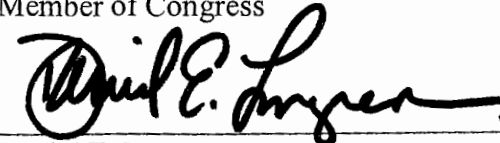
Terry Everett
Member of Congress




Darrell E. Issa
Member of Congress




Sanford D. Bishop Jr.
Member of Congress



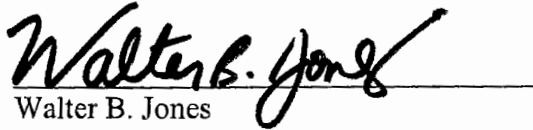
Daniel E. Lungren
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George Radanovich
Member of Congress




Jim Gibbons
Member of Congress



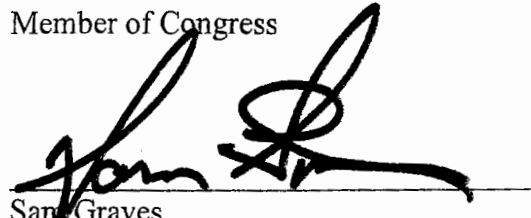
Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress



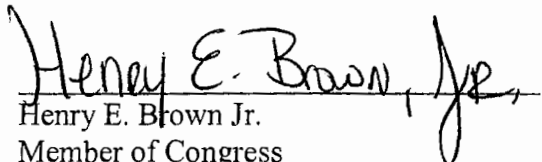
Jim Costa
Member of Congress



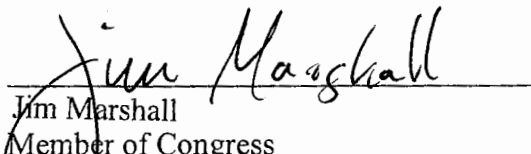
Barbara Cubin
Member of Congress



Sam Graves
Member of Congress



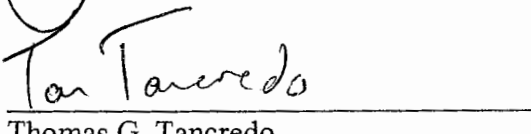
Henry E. Brown Jr.
Member of Congress



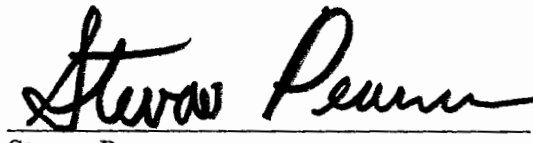
Jim Marshall
Member of Congress



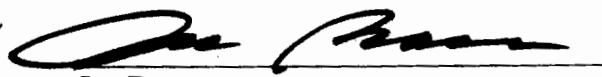
Jeff Flake
Member of Congress



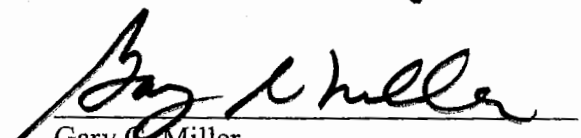
Thomas G. Tancredo
Member of Congress



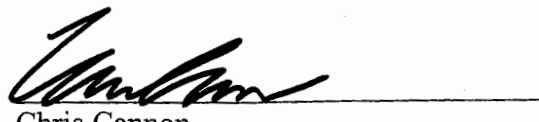
Stevan Pearce
Member of Congress



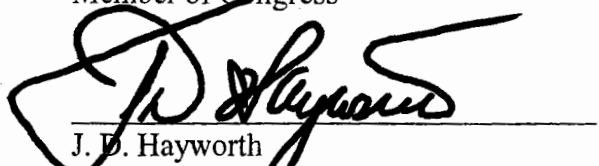
Joe Baca
Member of Congress



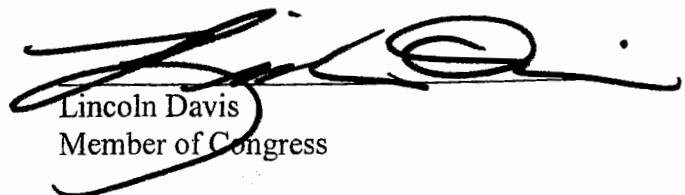
Gary C. Miller
Member of Congress



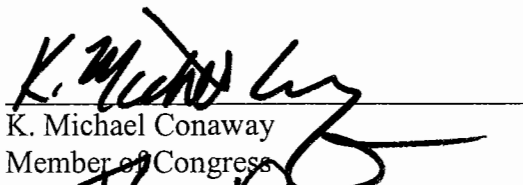
Chris Cannon
Member of Congress

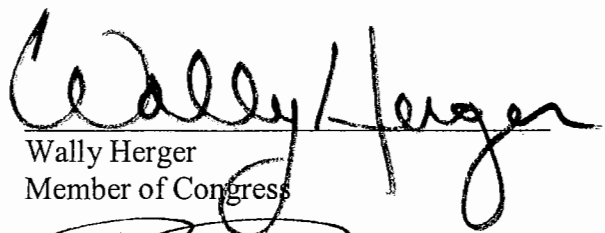


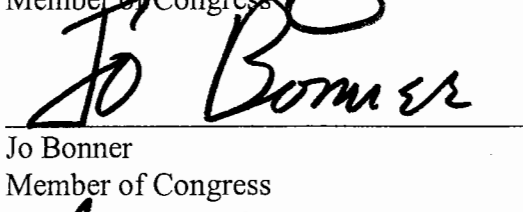
J. D. Hayworth
Member of Congress



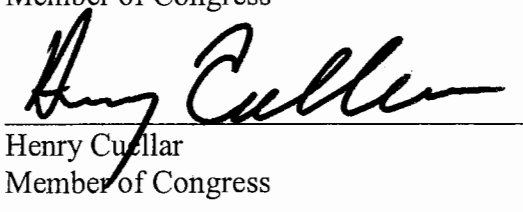
Lincoln Davis
Member of Congress

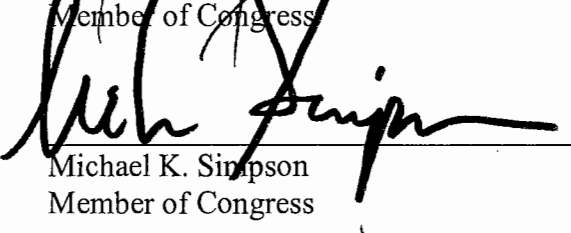

K. Michael Conaway
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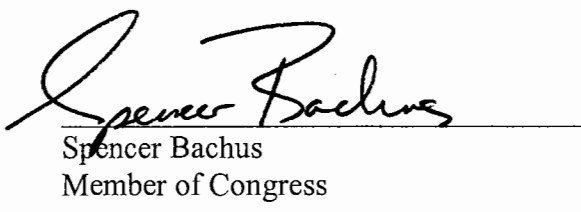

Wally Herger
Member of Congress


Jo Bonner
Member of Congress

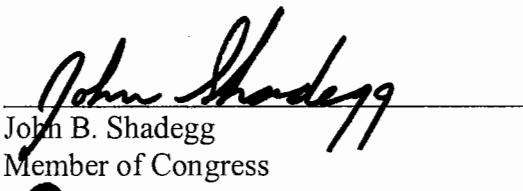

Rick Renzi
Member of Congress

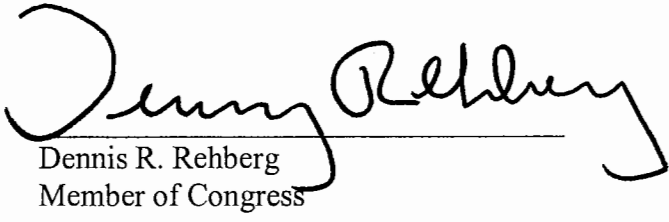

Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress

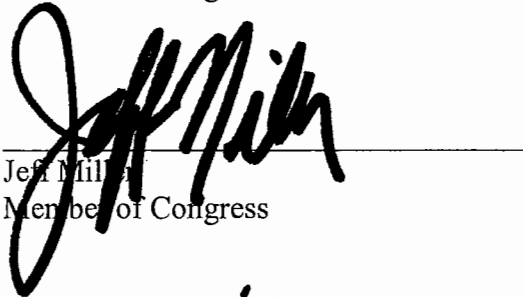

Michael K. Simpson
Member of Congress


Spencer Bachus
Member of Congress

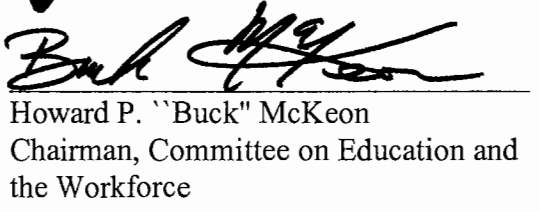

Trent Franks
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Jeff Miller
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Charles W. "Chip" Pickering
Member of Congress


Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Chairman, Committee on Education and
the Workforce