

---

November 15, 2019

The Honorable Raul Grijalva  
Chairman  
Committee on Natural Resources  
House of Representatives  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rob Bishop  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Natural Resources  
House of Representatives  
1329 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop:

Western Governors write to express support for the provisions of H.R. 3742, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act of 2019 (RAWA), that would direct annual funding to state fish and wildlife agencies and tribes for the proactive conservation of at-risk species and habitats, and the recovery of threatened or endangered fish, wildlife and plants. While we fully support provisions in the legislation that would serve as a critical funding source to tribes, our comments are specific to the bill's implications for states.

Western states are home to diverse and bountiful fish and wildlife populations that contribute to economic prosperity and quality of life. Investments in fish and wildlife conservation are imperative to maintaining resilient working landscapes that are managed according to principles of multiple use. Through their sovereign and statutory powers, states possess primary management authority over fish and wildlife within their borders. Having responsibly managed fish and wildlife species in public trust for decades, states have developed extensive science, expertise and knowledge of species and habitats within their borders.

Western Governors recognize the critical role of the Endangered Species Act (ESA or Act) in recovering imperiled species and applaud the principles and intent of the Act. They also embrace the increasingly important role of proactive and collaborative conservation of at-risk species with the goal of precluding the need to list species under the ESA. States are primary recipients of economic benefits associated with healthy species and ecosystems. Tourism and recreation in wildlife-dependent communities help sustain rural economies and promote healthy ecosystems throughout the West. At the same time, loss of functioning ecosystems, species listings and the associated land use prohibitions and consultations can affect the ability of western states to promote economic development, accommodate population growth, and maintain and expand infrastructure.

Developed by state wildlife management experts, State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) provide the blueprint for actions to comprehensively and proactively address threats to at-risk wildlife populations and habitat. State fish and wildlife management experts devote significant effort and resources to SWAP development; however, states lack the fiscal resources necessary to fully implement these plans, leaving thousands of common and at-risk species susceptible to decline and potential listing under the ESA. Annual funding through RAWA to state fish and wildlife management agencies – if provided in a fiscally responsible manner – would empower states to implement the conservation measures outlined in SWAPs, ensuring that future generations will be able to enjoy vibrant working landscapes.

The Honorable Raul Grijalva  
The Honorable Rob Bishop  
November 15, 2019  
Page 2

We commend you for recognizing the critical role state fish and wildlife managers play in proactively conserving species long before impacts to the ecosystems we rely upon are felt and before the threat of an ESA listing is imminent. We look forward to working with you to secure funding for state fish and wildlife managers to advance proactive conservation solutions for the benefit of western wildlife and communities.

Sincerely,



Doug Burgum  
Governor of North Dakota  
Chair, Western Governors' Association



Kate Brown  
Governor of Oregon  
Vice Chair, Western Governors' Association