

ALERT! Help Save Endangered Species All Across America!

By Barbara McKasson

Endangered species urgently need your help! There must be a loud public outcry against the latest attempt by members of the U.S. Congress and their industry supporters to punch holes in the federal Endangered Species Act. Please write or call your U.S. representative ASAP to oppose Rep. Cardoza's "Critical Habitat Reform Act of 2003" (H.R. 2933), and Rep. Walden's "Sound Science for Endangered Species Planning Act" (H.R. 1662). These two bills have been passed out of committee and could be voted on by the full House in September. If allowed to become law, these bills would be major environmental setbacks.

Rep. Cardoza's "**Critical Habitat Reform Act**" would create loopholes in the Endangered Species Act that could virtually eliminate designation of critical habitat for endangered species. This bill would abandon the goal of helping species to recover. By redefining the term "critical habitat", this bill would save minimal habitat for an endangered species, leaving the species tottering on the brink of extinction. This bill would also require preserving habitat only if the Secretary of Interior decides it is "practicable" to do so. Rep. Walden's "**Sound Science for Endangered Species Planning Act**" would restrict the use of important methods that scientists currently use to assess species' protection. Scientists, not Congress, should determine which scientific methods are best in any given situation. This bill would also cause further delays in designation of a species as "threatened" or endangered."

These two bills would add so many hoops for scientists and agency officials to jump through that over 420 scientists signed a letter to members of Congress expressing strong reservations about this legislation that would undermine habitat protection and change the way science is used in Endangered Species Act decisions.

Shown below is a sample letter to send and on page 7 is the short and simple voice message that can be phoned to your elected representatives. If you do not know the name of your Congressional representative, go to the web and enter your zip code: <http://www.house.gov/writerep>. You can also send an e-mail to your Representative from this web site.

Representative _____

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

The Endangered Species Act is the safety net for fish, plants and wildlife that are on the brink of extinction. This law has successfully prevented the extinction of our nation's majestic symbol, the American Bald Eagle and many other species. However, this law is being threatened by two bills recently passed by the House Resources Committee, Rep. Dennis Cardoza's (D-CA) "Critical Habitat Reform Act of 2003" (HR 2933) and Rep. Greg Walden's (R-OR) "Sound Science for Endangered Species Planning Act" (HR 1662).

Rep. Dennis Cardoza's "*Critical Habitat Reform Act of 2003*"— HR 2933, tries to undermine protections for the places that imperiled plants and animals need to survive and recover. The Cardoza bill creates loopholes by making numerous changes in the definition of critical habitat, thus making it increasingly more difficult for species to return from the brink of extinction. It also excludes large portions of precious habitat from even being considered for protections under the law. Critical habitat is one of the most important protections in the Endangered Species Act. Scientists tell us the main reason species are becoming endangered is loss of habitat.

Rep. Walden's (R-OR) "*Sound Science for Endangered Species Planning Act*" — HR 1662, seeks to undercut the use of the best science. By requiring government agencies to "give greater weight" to some kinds of science over others, it seeks to restrict the use of important methods that scientists currently use to assess species' protection, such as statistical tools that often provide the important insight about species. Scientists, not Congress, should determine which science best addresses any given issue.

The Endangered Species Act already requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (U.S. FWS) to use the most rigorous science available in developing balanced solutions to prevent the extinction of endangered fish, plants and wildlife. Even the General Accounting Office in its research has found that the U.S. FWS already uses the best science available in its endangered species decisions. Developers, and the politicians they give money to, are trying to weaken the Endangered Species Act. They are manipulating science to fit their political agenda and working to remove the checks and balances that help protect people and wildlife from special interests.

We owe it to our children and grandchildren to be good stewards of the environment and leave behind a legacy of protecting endangered species and the special places they call home. We have a responsibility to prevent the extinction of fish, plants and wildlife because once they are gone, we cannot bring them back. As a concerned constituent of your district, I urge to actively oppose these two bills that would weaken the safety net provided by the Endangered Species Act.

Sincerely,

Your name

Your address

The text of this letter can be copied from the Shawnee Website, Alerts Section.
(Sample Phone Message continued on Page 7: [Species Protection Calls Needed](#))