
U P D A T E

June 16, 2006

This periodic publication is intended solely for the use of NESARC members.

Western Governors' Association passes resolution supporting ESA improvements. The Western Governors' Association approved a resolution at its June 13th meeting that calls for reauthorization of the ESA to improve the Act's implementation. The resolution, sponsored by Governors Dave Freudenthal (D-WY) and Bill Owens (R-CO), calls for a renewed focus on the recovery of species and quantifiable measures for identifying the occurrence of those recoveries. It also calls for an increase in the role of states in the ESA process, the use of good science in ESA decisionmaking, and an increase in funding for federal activities under the ESA including incentives and technical assistance for landowners and water users. The resolution was first passed by the WGA in 1994 and has been readopted with minor modifications several times since then. A copy of the resolution may be found at:

<http://www.westgov.org/wga/policy/06/ESA.pdf>.

Secretary Kempthorne addresses the need to improve the ESA in speech to Western Governors. In a satellite appearance at the Western Governors' Association meetings noted above, recently confirmed Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne called for collaboration in improving the implementation of the ESA. He cited a WGA-supported effort aimed at conserving the greater sage grouse in the interior West, before it requires listing, as a good example of collaboration on wildlife issues. Kempthorne told governors that many species have been listed because of their threatened or endangered status, but that not enough has been done to get these species off the list. Kempthorne also called for improving the consultation process with wildlife agencies.

Secretary Kempthorne holds call with ESA stakeholders. Earlier this month, Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne held a conference call with some supporters of ESA improvements on which he reiterated that updating the ESA is high on his list of priorities. In discussing his desire to work on improvements to the ESA, the Secretary noted the bipartisan efforts on the ESA that he was involved in nearly 10 years ago when he served in the Senate and that he was encouraged to hear, throughout his recent nomination process, his former Senate colleagues from across party lines express interest in updating the Act. Secretary Kempthorne expressed his hope that the atmosphere for discussion that existed in the past will return as he assumes his new role in the department. When Secretary Kempthorne opened the call to comments, each of the participants that spoke expressed optimism that the Secretary's return to Washington will boost efforts to improve the ESA. The Secretary was happy to hear that people are ready to "roll up their shirtsleeves" to get the job done.

NOAA Organic Act marked up by House Science Committee. The House Science Committee voted unanimously earlier this week to approve H.R. 5450, the "National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Act." The bill would codify NOAA, which has been operating under executive order since its inception in 1970. The Science Committee voice vote clears the measure for consideration by the House Resources Committee, which must approve the measure before the full House can take it up. The Resources Committee has jurisdiction over the fisheries components of NOAA, including issues arising under ESA. The Resources Committee has not announced when the panel will take up the legislation.