

April 24, 2009

Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary, Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
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Honorable Gary Locke
Secretary, Department of Commerce
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To Secretary Salazar and Secretary Locke

On behalf of the millions of members and activists our organizations represent, we encourage you to quickly use the opportunity given to you by the U.S. Congress and President Obama, as well as your own existing authorities, to restore key protections under the Endangered Species Act. Please repeal the Bush Administration enacted Endangered Species Act Section 7 rule on interagency consultation and Polar Bear 4(d) rule.

We greatly appreciate President Obama's leadership in directing the agencies to maintain the consultation process, which has been used successfully for more than two decades, while you review the regulations. We encourage you to ensure this restoration of the consultation process becomes permanent and the other negative aspects of these rules are revoked.

As finalized, these last-minute rules undermine protections for endangered species and the intent of the law. They lack scientific or administrative justification. The independent, outside review that comes through consultations with Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service is a vital component to safeguarding species at risk of becoming extinct and implementing the law. In addition, global warming poses an enormous threat to polar bears and other endangered species. It is a challenge that must be addressed, and its impacts on our nation's wildlife, birds, fish and plants should not be ignored.

As you know, hundreds of thousands of Americans submitted comments in opposition to these rule changes. They were joined by scientists, lawmakers and others who questioned the scientific or legal basis of these changes. The Congressional Research Service also questioned whether the rules may actually result in an increasing number of formal consultations and further burden staff workloads. Please review this public input as you deliberate the rule changes. These resources contain ample justification for why these rule changes should be outright repealed.

If the administration is interested in considering new rules related to any of the topics addressed in the Section 7 or 4(d) rules, we encourage you to do so with an open and public process that would enable input from individuals, stakeholders and endangered species experts in a truly representative way. But we also underscore the importance of revoking the two rules in question before that process begins.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

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