

# THE BUFFALO NEWS

## Opinion

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### House endangers species act

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Gutting a good law for corporate gains is a shameful reform method

The U.S. Senate needs to inject some sanity into a House of Representatives effort to gut protections for wildlife. A House bill passed Sept. 29 claims to "reform" the Endangered Species Act, but actually runs the risk of killing wildlife and maiming taxpayers.

The House measure removes critically needed habitat protections and lets corporations claim "foregone profits" compensation that the federal government would pay out of its budget for national parks and conservation.

The cynically named Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Act pushed through by House Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo, R-Calif., drastically undercuts an Endangered Species Act that, since 1973, saved from extinction such species as the national symbol, the bald eagle. Pombo's "recovery act" includes a raft of limitations that could render the act's protections useless.

Measures include not only the litigation-attracting right for corporations to estimate how much such protections cost them, and seek compensation for that, but also a provision that would politicize assessments by letting the Secretary of the Interior, not scientists, decide what "best available science" says about the health and needs of species.

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Measures include not only the litigation-attracting right for corporations to estimate how much such protections cost them, and seek compensation for that, but also a provision that would politicize assessments by letting the Secretary of the Interior, not scientists, decide what "best available science" says about the health and needs of species. Existing and future "critical habitat" designations and protections are also eliminated on federal lands, or privately owned lands where federal funding or licensing is needed for, say, large-scale energy projects.

Luckily, Pombo's counterpart in the Senate - Sen. Lincoln Chaffee, R-R.I., chairman of the Senate Resources Committee - opposes the bill.

What deserves to die here is the Pombo philosophy, not the species he so cavalierly wants to write off. The Endangered Species Act works in the interest of all Americans, and it should continue to do so without this so-called reform.