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## Editorial: Endangered Species Act shouldn't be endangered

It seems farfetched to expect something called the Endangered Species Act to actually, you know, protect endangered species.

No, it's far more reasonable for such a law to ensure the land rights and property development of human beings, which haven't been endangered much in the millions of years we've been on the planet.

After all, only a dozen of the nearly 1,300 species protected under the 1973 act have ever rebounded enough to come off the list. The law wasn't enough to save nine species from extinction, so it obviously needs severe work.

And how better to improve it than removing the designations of "critical habitats," areas that endangered species call home but prevent real estate developers from building subdivisions and wealthy landowners from acquiring more acreage?

And if, God forbid, one of those pesky endangered species keeps those people from turning pristine land into shopping malls, then Uncle Sam should have to pay that poor fellow the millions of dollars he would have earned wiping out an irreplaceable part of the ecosystem. Definitely an improvement.

Just to make sure this is all aboveboard, decisions regarding these conflicts — decisions that would require a solid understanding of biology, ecology and the sciences related to conserving rare plants and animals — could be left to the Secretary of the Interior, a political appointee. (Don't worry about whether appointees are required to know anything about their jobs; after all, we gave Michael Brown a gig without even blinking.)

The revision's architect is Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Calif., a rancher who also has drafted a bill proposing the U.S. sell 15 national parks and monuments in trade for keeping the Arctic Wildlife National Refuge drill-free.

The House approved the ESA proposal on Sept. 29, although some silly senators seem to be much more worried about some snails and weeds than making sure multimillionaires can sustain their businesses.

After all, the act has helped save the bald eagle, our national symbol. If we can overhaul the ESA the way Pombo and his buddies want to, the eagle could eventually fall prey to our real national symbol: the dollar.

Yep ... that just sounds peachy.