



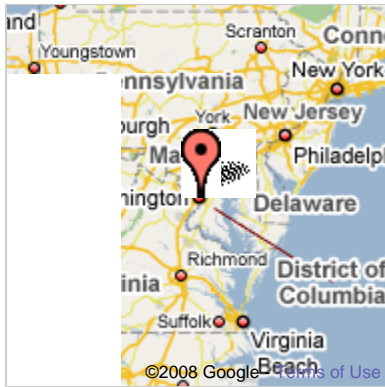
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# Obama opposes Bush endangered specie proposal

By DINA CAPPIELLO – 1 day ago

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Bush administration proposal that would eliminate the input of independent government scientists in some endangered species reviews would be out if Democrat Barack Obama wins the White House, his campaign says.

"This 11th-hour ruling from the Bush administration is highly problematic. After over a decade of successfully protecting our nation's most endangered wildlife like the bald eagle, we should be looking for ways to improve it, not weaken it," said Obama campaign spokesman Nick Shapiro. "As president, Senator Obama will fight to maintain the strong protection of the Endangered Species Act and undo this proposal from President Bush."

A spokesman for Sen. John McCain of Arizona, the Republican presidential nominee, said he had no comment on Bush's revisions.

The Associated Press reported Monday details of a proposal by the Interior and Commerce departments that would change how the 1973 law is implemented, allowing federal agencies to decide for themselves — without seeking the opinions of government wildlife experts — whether dams, highways and other projects have the potential to harm endangered species and habitats.

Current law requires federal agencies to consult with experts at the Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service if a project poses so much as a remote risk to species or habitats.

Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne defended the changes in a call with reporters Monday, calling them narrow modifications to make the law more clear and efficient.

In recent years, both federal agencies and developers have complained that the revisions, which can result in changes to projects that better protect species, have delayed work and increased costs.

The proposed regulations, which will be published Thursday in the Federal Register, included one significant change from the earlier draft: The public comment period was cut in half, from 60 to 30 days.

"In this case, it was determined that we need to move forward in a timely fashion," said Interior Department spokeswoman Tina Kreisher.

If the proposal should become final by November, a new administration could propose another rule, a process that could take months. Congress could also pass legislation that could take even longer.

An aide for the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee said that panel will hold a hearing on the rule changes when Congress returns in September.

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