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Letters to the editor

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Change now

AS OF today, the Secretary of the Interior has 23 days left to save our nation's wildlife.

In November, Americans voted for change, including a reversal of the disastrous environmental policies of the Bush administration.

Among President Barack Obama's campaign promises was his pledge to overturn last-minute regulations issued by the outgoing administration that undermine the Endangered Species Act and severely weaken our ability to protect wildlife threatened with extinction, including the polar bear.

The Bush regulations remove scientific oversight from the Endangered Species Act by allowing federal agencies, often with no biological expertise and whose missions conflict with species' protection, to decide for themselves whether their actions will harm endangered species — in short, letting the fox guard the henhouse.

These regulations also allow federal agencies to authorize projects that generate large volumes of greenhouse gases — such as new coal-fired power plants — without considering how that greenhouse gas pollution will impact endangered species like the polar bear.

Fortunately, change seemed to be at hand when the new Congress passed legislation giving Obama's Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar a 60-day window, ending on May 9, to permanently revoke these regulations.

Yet, inexplicably, Salazar has not yet acted on this crucial opportunity to restore one of our nation's most important environmental laws. Today, he will be in San Francisco for a public hearing.

This event provides Californians with a timely opportunity to tell him to uphold Obama's promise to undo the Bush administration's assault on the Endangered Species Act.

Salazar needs to deliver a change from Bush's antienvironmental policies that we can believe in.

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