

Environment and Health Coverage Blog Waiting for a Leak to Burst: Endangered Species Act Endangered

Posted by Brian Dominick

I spent a good portion of Wednesday trying to help reporter Chris Getzan obtain a copy of a reportedly startling draft of a law Republican members of Congress intend to introduce sometime soon that would weaken the landmark Endangered Species Act over the next ten years before eliminating it outright in 2015.

While the bill was known to be in the works, the story breaking the existence of the draft bill appeared in Monday's New York Times. Someone -- probably a Republican congressperson disenchanted by the severe nature of the bill -- had leaked the bill to Times reporter Felicity Barringer.

Ms. Barringer proceeded to write a halfway decent article on the topic, though it was not until the third sentence of the sixth paragraph that she mentioned the draft legislation would eliminate the Endangered Species Act in 2015. Until that point, she only mentions weakening ESA mandates and enforcement.

We call that burying the lead -- deeply.

The Times piece also neglected to point out the true motives of Rep. Richard Pombo, the notorious ESA foe who is behind the draft bill and happens to be a representative of the so-called "fair use" movement trying to gobble up protected lands for unregulated use in ranching, timber, mining and so forth.

Meanwhile, we're dead in the water, unable to convince or cajole anyone into re-leaking the draft to us, and not knowing how to procure it from the original source. So we have to wait because we refuse to run the story without being able to confirm factual claims made by critics and proponents of the bill.

Oddly, we can interview activists at organizations that have seen the leaked draft, but we cannot see it ourselves. So if anyone wants to leak it to us, our fax machine is warm and waiting...