



A Call for Protection of the Endangered Species Act by the Association of Reptile and Amphibian Veterinarians

This past week there were striking changes made to how the Endangered Species Act is implemented in the United States. There are major concerns raised that the changes will undermine the efforts to defend species at risk. Our organization strives to improve the health of reptiles and amphibians, both in captivity and in the wild. Among our membership we have private practitioners, zoo and aquarium veterinarians and wildlife veterinarians, all supportive of this objective.

The Fish and Wildlife Service currently lists 40 reptile species and 34 amphibian species in the US and territories as threatened or endangered. We, as an organization want to see these animals recover from this state and we want to avoid the loss of other species. These animals and others are threatened by habitat loss, pollution, emerging disease and climate change. The Endangered Species Act has been very effective in protecting species and critical territory to help prevent extinction due to these concerns.

The new changes will reduce protections offered to threatened species. It will make it more difficult to offer protection for critical habitat that can support threatened and endangered species as more habitat is lost. It will allow financial concerns from industry to have increased value in the decision to extend protection to species and critical habitat. Finally, it restricts the ability to consider climate change when making important decisions for the future of a species.

While this is occurring in the United States, much of the remaining world is pushing forward with recognition of the importance of protecting biological diversity and developing the energy technology of the future. The United States has vast resources and a long history of technological innovation. Seeing policy changes that appear to be favoring short-sighted gains stifle that ability and cause the United States to lose its position as a global leader in the future. We prefer to see policies in favor of hope that move us to a healthier and more diverse future.

Sources for more information:

<https://time.com/5651168/trump-endangered-species-act/>

<https://www.fws.gov/endangered/species/us-species.html>

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<https://www.apnews.com/9bf4541d89e6444783814e53302ce479>

<http://esawatch.org/weekly-newsletter-8-16-19/>

<https://www.audubon.org/news/science-loses-ground-economics-new-endangered-species-act-rules>

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/the-endangered-species-act-q-a>

<https://arstechnica.com/science/2019/08/whats-changing-about-endangered-species-act-enforcement-and-what-it-means/>

<https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/endangered-species-act>

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