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April 18, 2016

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
123 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
1511 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva:

On behalf of the over 1.1 million members of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR), I thank you for holding oversight hearings on a recently finalized rule from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) related to designating critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). NAR is concerned this sweeping new rule will hinder economic development, reduce property values and harm property rights, without improving the protection of endangered species.

In recent years, the FWS has proposed or finalized hundreds of new critical habitat designations, impacting millions of acres. These designations create uncertainty for activities on federal, state, local government lands and privately-owned property and cause unpredictable delays that may discourage investment and prevent economic activity from taking place.

The changes finalized in the rule provide the FWS with expanded authority to designate larger and larger areas of critical habitat, impacting those who live and work near these areas. The new rule expands important definitions that previously limited the designation of critical habitat, impede the use of sound science into the designation process, and reduce the inclusion of economic impact analysis on affected communities.

NAR urges the Committee to develop legislation that would withdraw this rule and modernize the ESA with common-sense, bipartisan reforms that offer equal protection to both property owners and endangered species.

Sincerely,



Tom Salomone
2016 President, National Association of REALTORS®

cc: U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources

