



## Now a half-century old, the Endangered Species Act has been a powerful, but embattled conservation tool.

FROM YOUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



### **The ESA in New Mexico**

*We did not want to let the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) pass by without calling out*

*how much it has aided conservation, but to also to acknowledge its limitations to the future we face. As you know as a member, we primarily focus on habitat protection on public lands rather than focusing on a single species. (Our most notable exception has been our role in protecting the Mexican gray wolf here in the state.) Landscape-scale, biodiverse habitat is a critical solution to protecting endangered species...and not creating that endangerment in the first place.*

*In New Mexico, we face numerous challenges to species protection but also have several unique opportunities. The most pressing challenge is the climate crisis and its impact on water resources. According to the National Resource Conservation Service, 80% of all species rely on rivers, streams, and riparian corridors to sustain their life. That is an enormous threat in an increasingly arid state.*

*The key opportunity is that our state has substantial public lands where we can increase protection for Wilderness, wildlife, and water. Your support for our mission helps protect endangered species today and into the future by protecting the habitat they need to thrive. Thank you!*

Mark Allison  
Executive Director  
New Mexico Wild

### **The ESA: An effective conservation tool**

Many conservationists view the ESA as the most powerful conservation tool in the world. According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, which manages the ESA, the Act has saved 99% of the species that are listed. The law covers both public and private land. When a species is listed, a recovery plan is developed in most instances. For example, the Service has just completed a comment period for the endangered Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly to designate 1,636.9 acres as critical habitat in Otero County and is developing a recovery plan for the imperiled butterfly.



Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly  
Photo by Julie McIntyre/USFWS

### **The ESA: A limited conservation tool**

According to NatureServe data, about 15% of species in the U.S. are near extinction. Yet the ESA only lists about 5% of species and the wait time to successfully list a species is 12 years. The ESA is perennially underfunded. On average, an ESA-listed species receives an annual budget of \$2,686 for protection based on information collected by High Country News.

In New Mexico, one of the country's most biodiverse states, only 36 species are listed as endangered in the Service's database...less than 1% of known species in our state.

### **The ESA: An embattled law**

Critics of the ESA argue that recovery plans are often bureaucratic and expensive to implement. Some argue the that law encourages the use of "shoot, shovel, and shut-up" methods among

private landowners to clear endangered species from their land. Various industries such as logging, petroleum, and construction regularly lobby against the ESA or offer proposals to limit it. Congress occasionally introduces legislation to weaken the ESA. However, remarkably, the law has remained virtually unchanged for 50 years despite its critics. Thousands of imperiled species have benefited from it and with a changing climate, thousands more in the future will be saved because of the ESA.

### Beyond the ESA

No question that the ESA is a vital tool for conservation in New Mexico. However, there is an increasing understanding in the conservation community that broader habitat protections, including wildlife corridors, will reduce the number of species requiring ESA listing and provide wildlife and plants the ability to better adapt to a changing climate. The work of New Mexico Wild is to advocate for protections for Wilderness, wildlife, and water on our public lands where appropriate.



*The endangered Mexican gray wolf, once on the brink of extinction, was reintroduced into Southern New Mexico in 1998 with the passionate support of New Mexico Wild. Today, a population of approximately 241 wolves resist threats to their survival including habitat limitations, human predation, and genetic weaknesses. Wolves belong!*

*Photo by Sykadelx via Getty Images*

## A quick guide to ESA terms

**Endangered species:** The classification provided to an animal or plant in danger of extinction within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

**Threatened species:** Any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

**Listed species:** Species, subspecies, or a distinct vertebrate population segment that has been added to the federal lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.

**Critical habitat:** Specific geographic areas, whether occupied by listed species or not, that are determined to be essential for the conservation and management of listed species.

**Candidate species:** Animal and plant species for which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has sufficient information to propose them as endangered or threatened, but for which a proposed listing has not been processed because of higher priority listings.

**Delisting:** The process of removing an animal or plant species from the threatened or endangered species list upon a determination that threats against it have been sufficiently reduced or eliminated.

**Range:** The geographic area a species is known or anticipated to occupy.

**Taking a species:** Taking a species generally includes causing any harm to a federally protected animal or plant. Any individual that knowingly takes a listed species can result in criminal penalties of up to \$50,000 and up to one year in jail or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.



Monitoring how federal agencies, such as the Fish and Wildlife Service, protect endangered species is an important part of our work at New Mexico Wild. Please use the enclosed donation form or give online to show your support.

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