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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - The Broken Endangered Species Act

OCTOBER 06TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

Jason Smith's Capitol Report - The Broken Endangered Species Act

Dear Friend,

When I talk to individuals throughout the district, many have heard about the Environmental Protection Agency's attempt to use 40-plus-year-old laws to close coal power plants, regulate puddles of water and restrict how children can help on family farms. This week, I am focusing on how another 40-year-old law, the Endangered Species Act, is increasingly used to erode private property rights, restrict how farmers use their land and water, and could destroy Missouri's timber industry.

Most everyone agrees there is value in preventing species from extinction. The problem with the Endangered Species Act is that it does not fulfill its mission of recovering species. Since the law was enacted, more than 1,500 U.S. domestic species and sub-species have been listed as endangered; however, only two percent have been recovered. In practice, an Endangered Species listing often leads to permanent, private property land-use restrictions that negatively impact local economies and result in expensive, never-ending litigation.

One example of the damage that an endangered listing can cause is the story of the Northern Spotted Owl and the timber industry in the Pacific Northwest. In 1990, the Northern Spotted Owl was listed as "endangered". Since that time, more than 80 percent of the Northwest's timber industry has shut down, more than 9 million acres of forest

have been identified as “off-limits,” and the forests have become such a fire hazard that wildfires have burned hundreds of thousands of acres of valuable timber and spotted owl habitat. Ironically, the Northern Spotted Owl population continues to decline with no signs of recovery due to a larger, predatory owl species.

Why does this matter to Missouri? Currently, the Fish and Wildlife Service is considering whether or not to list the Northern Long Eared Bat as “endangered” throughout our state, as well as 37 other states. Many agree that a disease called “White Nose Syndrome” is killing the bats; however, there is no credible research that shows harvesting timber, farming, or other development has anything to do with this disease.

The Fish and Wildlife Service should not make the same mistake twice. The Endangered Species Act is an old, unwieldy instrument that has become a litigation magnet, restricting human activities. It has not proved to help restore species in decline. In the case of the bat, it could take a bad situation and make it worse. Missouri’s timber industry is thriving, employing more than 67,000 people and contributing more than \$8 billion to our economy. Reducing the timber industry by 80 percent would mean losing 53,600 jobs and removing \$6.4 billion dollars from Missouri’s economy, with no assurance that the bat population will improve.

Albert Einstein defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. Missouri’s timber industry is too valuable to allow Federal Bureaucrats to shut it down as they did in the Northwest. I oppose the listing of the Northern Long-Eared bat as endangered in Missouri, and I would encourage others to do so as well.

Sincerely,
Jason Smith

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