

BLOCKING ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT PROTECTIONS FOR HUNDREDS OF LISTED SPECIES

Passed: 213-201

SUMMARY:

The House passed an amendment that would have devastated conservation and recovery efforts for species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) by blocking federal funding for all species for which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) had not completed a formal five-year status review. (*July 18, 2018, Roll Call No. 350*).

BACKGROUND:

The ESA and its regulations require the FWS and the National Marine Fisheries Service to complete status reviews for all listed species every five years. With more than 1,600 plants and animals listed in the United States, each requiring a five-year review, the FWS often lacks the funds to complete these reviews on time. Some industry groups have seized on this failing and are now pressuring the agencies to conduct timely status reviews. These efforts are aimed at forcing the agency into premature delisting decisions or to provide the basis for litigation if the agency retains the species' listing.

Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.) introduced an amendment to the House Interior, Environment, Financial Services, and General Appropriations Act of 2019 (H.R. 6147) that would have blocked the FWS from spending funds on any listed species that has not undergone a formal five-year review. At the time that this amendment passed, approximately 700 species lacked up-to-date five-year reviews due to Congress's failure to provide adequate funds. Removal of federal funding for endangered and threatened species conservation every time the FWS fails to complete its 5-year review on time could result in the decline and eventual extinction of many currently listed species. The impacts would be severe both for species and regulated interests. This amendment would have undermined recovery for the hundreds of species that would have lost crucial funding for recovery actions. It would have also undermined the ESA itself. The ESA is our nation's most effective law for protecting wildlife in danger of extinction. Ninety-nine percent of species listed under the Act have survived, and many are on the path to recovery. Since 2011, there has been a steady increase in bills and riders that undermine or block ESA protections for particular species, along with other proposals to weaken the Act. In the 115th Congress there were more than 110 of these damaging proposals.

OUTCOME:

On July 18, 2018, the House passed the Lamborn amendment, 213-201. "No" was the pro-conservation vote. This provision did not ultimately become law as part of FY19 appropriations included in P.L. 116-9.