



Agricultural Retailers Association

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April 15, 2003

U.S. Representative Greg Walden
1404 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Walden:

The Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA), representing hundreds of crop input dealers and farm cooperatives across the U.S., is pleased to endorse HR 1662, the Sound Science for Endangered Species Act (ESA) Planning Act of 2003. The member dealers of ARA strongly support this kind of common sense reform of the ESA and thank you for your leadership on this critical issue.

Though the goals of the ESA are laudable, the unfair administration of that law has had disastrous consequences for U.S. agriculture in recent years. Flood protection programs, river navigation, registration of crop protection products, highway and bridge projects, and other areas of important public policy have all been negatively impacted in some way by unreasonable application of the ESA. ARA believes that the opinions, concerns, and very livelihoods of U.S. farmers and their families have been largely disregarded by federal agencies administering the ESA. In light of the dramatic impact of the ESA on the lives of many Americans, it is essential that the law make use of the best possible science. ARA believes that HR 1662 helps protect the integrity of the ESA as well as affected stakeholders by bringing the best science to bear on listing, de-listing, habitat, recovery plan, and other important decisions.

ARA was particularly troubled by the April 2001 ESA decision by federal resource agencies to shut down farmers' access to irrigation waters in Oregon and California's Klamath Basin region. ARA members and their farmer customers in that part of the country were devastated by that decision, a decision that was later deemed to have "no sound scientific basis" by an independent panel convened by the National Academy of Sciences. Without your intervention and that of President Bush, that flawed decision might yet remain in place today. The Klamath Basin water crisis is clear evidence of the need for the new, more rigorous scientific standards called for in HR 1662.

Thank you again for your strong leadership and for considering the views of the member dealers of ARA.

Sincerely,

Jack Eberspacher, President & CEO