

National Grange

of THE ORDER of PATRONS of HUSBANDRY

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April 15, 2003

The Honorable Greg Walden
U.S. House of Representatives
1404 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Walden:

On behalf of the nearly 300,000 National Grange members, I would like to express my gratitude for your efforts to improve the Endangered Species Act, ESA and to let you know that National Grange strongly supports legislation, the "Sound Science for Endangered Species Act Planning Act of 2003," H.R. 1662.

Over the past year, farmers and ranchers in the Klamath River Basin have gone bankrupt. The entire community has suffered economic and social harm and millions of wild animals that rely on the secondary flow of irrigation water to provide habitat and food in the region have struggled from a man-made lack of water. Therefore, the National Grange has encouraged Congress to amend the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to restore proper perspective by requiring public hearings and economic impact statements on the impacts to the affected areas before a species may be listed. We have supported changes to the ESA to require that only a pure biological and numerical definition of an endangered species be used without being based on sub species, distinct populations, or hybridization. We also have demanded the compensation for private property owners for loss of usage of their property due to the Endangered Species Act.

Your legislation would require greater weight to be given to scientific or commercial data that is empirical or has been field-tested or peer-reviewed; improved public participation in the listing and recovery planning process; greater role of the states and local communities; improved processes to enable private landowners to have certainty and take actions to protect species on private lands. We agree completely with these principles and believe they are in keeping with the goal of the ESA.

Again, thank you for your efforts to improve the ESA. Please recognize our members are prepared to work with you in building additional support for H.R. 1662.

Sincerely,

Leroy Watson, Legislative Director

National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry.