

NATIONAL STONE, SAND & GRAVEL ASSOCIATION



*Natural building blocks for quality of life*

May 12, 2003

The Honorable Greg Walden  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Walden:

On behalf of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (NSSGA), I am writing to thank you for your efforts to improve the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and to express our strong support for your legislation, the "Sound Science for Endangered Species Act Planning Act of 2003," H.R. 1662.

NSSGA represents the nation's aggregates industries—producers of crushed stone, sand and gravel, as well as suppliers of equipment and services to aggregate producers. Our 850 member companies turn out 90 percent of the crushed stone and 70 percent of the sand and gravel consumed annually in the United States. During 2002, a total of about 2.73 billion metric tons of crushed stone, sand and gravel, valued at \$14.6 billion, were produced and sold in the United States. The aggregate industry workforce is made up of about 120,000 men and women across America. Just to provide perspective, there are 10,000 construction aggregates operations nationwide. Virtually every Congressional District is home to a crushed stone, sand or gravel operation.

As the largest mining association in the world based on volume, the ESA regularly impacts many of our members. Our members share in the belief that the Earth's resources, upon which all life depends, are finite and that wise environmental stewardship is necessary today to preserve the quality of life for future generations. Nevertheless, many operators are confused by the apparent lack of scientific data used when making critical decisions regarding issues related to endangered species. The inclusion of "sound science" in the decision-making processes is one of NSSGA's top ESA priorities. H.R. 1662 would help us to address this priority. Your legislation would require greater weight be given to "scientific or commercial data that is empirical or has been field-tested or peer-reviewed." We agree completely with this principle and believe it is in keeping with the goal of the ESA and our conservation philosophy.

NSSGA strongly supports the peer review of all data collection by impartial experts for species listing or delisting, recovery plan development, designation of critical habitat, and development of recommendations for endangered species habitat. Given the enormous economic and social impact of each ESA decision, requiring impartial experts to review the data is reasonable and fair.

NSSGA and its members welcome your common sense proposal and will work with you to strengthen the ESA for the benefit of this and future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Joy Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jennifer Joy Wilson  
President & CEO