



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For release September 7, 1995

Megan Durham (202) 208-5650

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY BRUCE BABBITT ON THE
"ENDANGERED SPECIES CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACT OF 1995"

I hope the American people will not be misled by the title of the legislation proposed today by some House Republicans. Despite its rhetoric, this bill does not protect endangered species. Instead it sets up costly bureaucratic procedures to avoid protecting endangered wildlife. This bill would effectively repeal the Endangered Species Act.

If Noah had to follow all the rules in this bill, he wouldn't have needed an ark. He could have fit all the animals he was allowed to save in a canoe.

To touch on just a few key points of the proposed legislation and how they are likely to impact endangered species, this bill:

- o Removes most requirements for Federal agencies to help protect and conserve endangered species on Federal lands and under Federal programs. The fact is that the actions of Federal agencies are critical to the survival and recovery of endangered species.
- o Weakens protection for endangered species in foreign countries. The fact is this abrogates our international relationships and potentially weakens protection for such species as tigers, rhinos, parrots, and many others.
- o Severely weakens protection for endangered species habitat by placing the bulk of responsibility for protecting endangered species on a limited number of biological diversity reserves on national parks, wildlife refuges, and wilderness areas. It would bar biological diversity conservation activities on other Federal lands such as non-wilderness national forests and public lands of the Bureau of Land Management. The fact is that these biodiversity reserves by themselves will be inadequate to save endangered species.
- o Exempts dams, hydroplants, irrigation projects and other water-related rights from any responsibility under the Endangered Species Act. The fact is that how we manage water is a key factor in conserving many endangered species. This provision is more bad news for salmon and a wide variety of other species.

- o Leaves species virtually unprotected between the time they are listed and the time a conservation plan is completed. The fact is that during this time the species is vulnerable to destruction of its habitat and "incidental take" from a variety of activities.
- o Establishes complicated and expensive procedures for compensating private landowners that appear to have been devised simply to bring protection of endangered species on private land to a grinding halt.

This Administration has taken a number of steps to improve implementation of the Endangered Species Act and to make it work better for private landowners. We support a strong Endangered Species Act and are continuing to work with concerned lawmakers on both sides of the aisle who share our desire to refine and improve the Act.

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