

September 23, 2020

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

Dear Chairman Barrasso:

On behalf of 400 members of the National Stone, Sand, and Gravel Association (NSSGA) I am writing to commend you on holding today's hearing, Modernizing the Endangered Species Act: Legislative Hearing on S. 4589, the Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2020.

NSSGA represents aggregates producers and those who manufacture equipment and services that support the construction industry. Our members are essential to the work of this country, and we represent more than 90 percent of the crushed stone and 70 percent of the sand and gravel consumed annually in the United States. Our members employ more than 100,000 hard-working men and women and are responsible for the essential raw materials found in every home, building, road, bridge and public works project.

Our members care deeply about the environment and often establish critical habitats and other enhancements on their sites that benefit local species and promote biodiversity. However, the ESA permitting process often hampers many aggregates operations as they are tied up in bureaucratic red tape -- that many times does not lead to improving outcomes for the species. As you well know, the current process of obtaining ESA permits can impact infrastructure projects negatively, causing delays, oftentimes stopping projects in their tracks, adding enormous costs to permitting new, job-creating operations.

That is why we appreciate your work in drafting S.4589, which clarifies ESA goals to ensure species are removed from the list when desired population levels are met. Further, we are pleased this bill will promote standardized and transparent scientific decisions and increase consultation with local communities and stakeholders, who should be leading efforts to protect local wildlife.

These reforms build upon recent administrative action to further increase transparency and the effectiveness of the ESA and reduce overly burdensome regulations faced by aggregates producers. NSSGA supports these efforts to cut ineffective red tape and allow aggregates producers to focus on supplying critical construction materials to infrastructure projects instead of spending years tied up in permitting that does not advance critical conservation efforts.

We greatly appreciate your attention to this important issue and work to modernize the ESA to better protect our nation's wildlife. Thank you for your consideration of our views and please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any further questions.

Sincerely,



Michael W. Johnson
President and CEO
National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association