

## **Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs 2008 Resolutions**

### **RES. NO. 14: PROTECT THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT**

BACKGROUND: Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne has proposed changes to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which will seriously weaken this landmark environmental law.

The 1973 ESA is written both to protect species and also "the ecosystems upon which they depend," and is administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) (which includes the National Marine Fisheries Service NMFS). NOAA handles marine species, and the FWS has responsibility over freshwater fish and all other species.

There is ample evidence that the ESA generally works once a species makes it onto the list (increasing populations of Bald Eagle, Brown Pelican, Gray Wolf, Grizzly Bear, Gray Whale, Peregrine Falcon, Red Wolf, California Sea Otter, and others). Since enacted, 93% of listed species have populations that have increased or stabilized. Forty-four species have been delisted from the ESA, nineteen due to recovery, two from extinction, others through technical changes in status. Unfortunately many species have gone extinct while waiting to be listed.

Under section 7 of the ESA any project that requires a federal permit or receives federal funding and might impact the habitat of a listed species is required to have a scientific review by FWS and/or NMFS. The Bush administration is proposing changes that will allow government agencies, which typically do not have a core conservation goal, to side step this independent expert review based on the best science available. This will considerably weaken the ESA. Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne said August 11th 2008 that the changes were needed to ensure that the Endangered Species Act could not be used as a "back door" to regulate the gases blamed for global warming. Last May, the polar bear became the first species declared as threatened because of climate change. Warming temperatures are expected to melt the sea ice the bear depends on for survival. Recent studies conclude the ice could be gone in less than 10 years. The proposal also adds timelines to allow "action agencies" to terminate consultation if the Fish and Wildlife Service has not acted on a request within 60 days.

This is another in a series of steps by the Bush administration to put roadblocks in the way of successful legislation. Currently there are over 1300 species listed. Over 2000 species were placed under consideration during the 12 years of the GHW Bush and Clinton administration terms. Since 2001 only 59 species have been added and none in the last two years. The ESA is the only law that can hold the line for the successful recovery of these creatures.

RESOLUTION: The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs strongly opposes the

Department of Interior's proposed administrative changes to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act that allows Federal Agencies to omit the requirement for an independent scientific review by the FWS or MFS.

Submitted by and Contact: Mazamas, Joan Zuber, [zuberj@juno.com](mailto:zuberj@juno.com)