



April 16, 2026

Dear Members of Congress,

As North Carolinians, we are blessed with mountain forests, diverse wetlands, and scenic coastal landscapes. We have been engaged in the work of stewarding these habitats, and understand the delicate balance of human interests and the health of animals and plants that call them home.

We write to ask you to **oppose the ESA Amendments Act (H.R. 1897)**, which weakens critical protections for threatened and endangered native wildlife species in North Carolina and across the United States.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is one of our most effective and popular conservation programs to prevent extinction and bring wildlife back to our lands, waters, and skies. All across our state, North Carolinians can see bald eagles soar overhead today thanks to protections extended by the Endangered Species Act. For over 50 years, this law has conserved species like the American Alligator and the West Indian manatee, ensuring that future generations can witness these icons of America's natural heritage.

Currently, the Endangered Species Act is protecting and enabling recovery efforts for more than sixty species in North Carolina, some of which include -

- The [red wolf](#), with fewer than 30 in the wild they are the world's most endangered wild canid, and whose re-introduction in the Eastern part of North Carolina represents the only wild population;
- The [Carolina northern flying squirrel](#), with a dwindling population due to destruction of industrial scale logging and forest fires;
- [Kemp's ridley sea turtle](#), the smallest sea turtle in the world, who relies on our beaches for nesting;

Recently, thousands of North Carolinians spoke out in favor of listing species and in support of protections by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for protections including: the [eastern hellbender](#), one of the largest salamanders in the world; the once-common [monarch butterfly](#), whose eastern populations have declined by 80% since the 1990s; and the [Southern hognose snake](#), once commonly found in the sandy fields and woods of the Coastal Plain and Sandhills region. Despite this public support, the changes brought by H.R. 1897 would remove the provisions of the Endangered Species that are needed to protect these species.

H.R. 1897 entirely overhauls the Endangered Species Act, rewriting the law in a manner that places significant new administrative burdens on already-strained state agencies, turns the

current process for listing and recovering threatened and endangered species into a far lengthier process, and reduces transparency of key decisions. The bill -

- **Prevents reasonable measures to mitigate harm to listed species.** Under the current framework, if a federal agency action must hurt a listed species in one place, they can mitigate that loss by helping the species in another place, such as by restoring or protecting habitat elsewhere. This is a balanced approach, but this bill explicitly prohibits this.
- **Shrinks and fragments critical habitat.** Federal agencies would only be able to designate critical habitat where a threatened or endangered species currently exists, preventing the conservation of suitable habitat areas where the species could be reintroduced or grow into as they recover.
- **Eliminates key opportunities for public accountability and oversight over the federal government.** The bill prevents the public from reviewing, submitting comments, and challenging federal decisions that would harm listed species and remove their protections.
- **Overburdens state agencies.** While state agencies are essential partners for wildlife conservation, they lack sufficient resources and legal frameworks to be solely responsible for the monitoring and recovery of species at risk of extinction.
- **Creates a patchwork of insufficient protections.** Many threatened and endangered species range across multiple states or migrate during the year, and a national perspective is necessary for effective species recovery programs.

Notably, H.R. 1897 adds **no new science-based recovery requirements** for at-risk animals and plants. The bill adds **no new measures to stop the causes of wildlife extinction.**

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to oppose H.R. 1897. As written, this measure would weaken the Endangered Species Act, the best tool in our national toolbox for protecting America's beloved wildlife. Given that it has done so much to protect North Carolina's native species, we must now protect the Endangered Species Act.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue and don't hesitate to reach out with any questions you have.

Sincerely,

Elected Leaders:

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Fletcher, North Carolina

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