



*"Serving Western Legislatures"*

## **POLICY STATEMENT 2006-02**

### **POLICY STATEMENT ON THE REAUTHORIZATION OF THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT**

CSG-*WEST* applauds and supports the efforts by the Western Governors' Association (WGA) to seek common-sense changes to the Endangered Species Act. As a regional organization representing Western state legislators, CSG-*WEST* shares the desire to increase the effectiveness of the Act and enhance its success in recovering and protecting endangered species.

CSG-*WEST* urges the U.S. Congress to adequately fund the reauthorization of the 1973 Endangered Species Act. Moreover, it encourages the U.S. Congress to consider the concepts of recovery goals for listed species; enhancing the role of state governments in recovering species; ensuring the use of good science in ESA decisions; incentives for conservation; and a collaborative process in the Act's reauthorization as follows:

#### **RECOVERY GOALS FOR LISTED SPECIES**

CSG-*WEST* believes that recovery and ultimately, delisting of species covered by the ESA should be the highest priority of the Act. Federal funding for ESA activities should be prioritized to reflect this priority. CSG-*WEST* believes that the best way to accomplish this goal is to require the Fish and Wild Services and National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) – Fisheries to publish quantifiable recovery goals, in consultation with affected state(s), for threatened or endangered species at the time of the listing decision to provide for objective recovery criteria that both state and federal agencies may work toward in the recovery process. In cases where quantification of recovery goals is not initially feasible, the services should be required to publish a plan, including a timeline, describing the steps the federal agencies will take in identifying measurable goals.

#### **ENHANCE THE ROLE OF STATE GOVERNMENTS IN RECOVERING SPECIES**

The Endangered Species Act can effectively be implemented only through a full partnership between the states and federal government. One way to accomplish this partnership would be to authorize the delegation of authority for the development of conservation and recovery plans on a voluntary basis to states that choose to accept such delegation, and agree with the appropriate Secretary(s) to perform them in accordance

with specified standards. Authority should also be given to the appropriate Secretary to provide grants for the additional administrative costs to the state. Western states have already demonstrated leadership in the successful effort to conserve the Greater Sage Grouse. Western States stand ready to continue these efforts, and ask Congress to provide states the tools and authority to make conservation efforts meaningful.

### **ENSURE THE USE OF GOOD SCIENCE IN ESA DECISIONS**

Given the broad implications that may arise when ESA actions are taken, significant decisions must be made using objective, peer-review science. Peer review of listing, recovery and de-listing decisions by acknowledged independent experts is important to assure the public that decisions are well-reasoned and scientifically based. Peer review committees should be agreed upon by the Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA-Fisheries and the state. State agencies also have expertise and other institutional resources such as mapping capabilities, biological inventories and other important data that should be employed in developing endangered species listing and recovery decisions.

### **INCENTIVES FOR CONSERVATION**

CSG-*WEST* believes that providing economic incentives for landowners to participate in conservation efforts is likely to achieve more efficient and cost-effective results and may lead to more rapid conservation. Private landowner cooperation is critical to species conservation and protection. Conservation programs that provide economic assistance and incentives for landowners engaged in voluntary conservation activities must be maintained. Moreover, the Keystone Center's ESA Work Group, in their discussions and findings, recommended that Congress include attractive incentives to advance the goals of both the conservation interests and the regulated sector, including specific suggestions to Farm Bill measures, voluntary cooperative agreements, tax incentives, and streamlining.

### **COLLABORATIVE PROCESS**

CSG-*WEST* believes that ESA reauthorization should foster and facilitate, through incentives or alternative dispute resolution procedures, a strong collaborative process among numerous stakeholders aimed at the recovery and conservation of threatened and endangered species. Improving cooperation between private, governmental, and NGO interests in the implementation of the ESA will ensure success of the Act and reduce costly litigation that currently affect species recovery.

Adopted by The CSG-*WEST* Executive Committee on April 1, 2006  
San Francisco, California.