

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



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## Endangered Species Act: What is the Next Step?

One of the most important issues facing the hunter-conservation community is updating and strengthening the Endangered Species Act.

Certainly, the major initiatives that the

current Administration is targeting during its second term, i.e. clear skies, a national energy initiative, Social Security reform, and simplifying the tax code, are all important.

However, when we talk about the Endangered Species Act, we are really talking about open space and private-property rights. When I am involved in conversations about private-property rights and open space, the conversation inevitably leads to a consensus, that we must update the ESA for the 21st century.

How do we do that? One thought is that the formula we used to get the Healthy

Forest Initiative passed into law may be a good model for changing ESA. I have thought about our early founding members, and why the Boone and Crockett Club came into existence in the first place. During the 1880s, land was getting gobbled up in the West. The land was not the only thing needing attention. We had railroads bringing more people westward, which led to the indiscriminate slaughter of wildlife by market hunters, and citizens who felt they only had to keep riding into the sunset to find the next undiscovered valley of clear streams, abundant wildlife and all the trappings of what was the American dream of endless resources. We soon pushed ourselves into the Pacific. There were no more valleys, and the early members had to deal with an impending crisis, which quickly became a real crisis.

The Club identified the first endangered species as our North American big game animals. In fact, we were so worried about the possibility of losing species that

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the Club was instrumental in the founding of the New York Zoological Society. Boone and Crockett Club members put together the National Collection Heads and Horns so that future generations might be able to see what these animals looked like. Also, we had an early Club member, Carl Rungius, paint all the North American big-game animals. The Club was also responsible for ensuring that Yellowstone, our first national park, preserved its biological diversity, and we were responsible for setting aside the forest reserves, thus the National Wildlife Refuge System was born. This huge contribution that the Club made to our national heritage at a critical time was unique.

When we fast forward into the 20th century, we founded agencies to manage these public resources. We created the North American model for wildlife management. We struggled with wise and shared use of our vast natural resources, as opposed to strictly preservation. We were also developing a new set of circumstances that challenged the American conscience about what we needed to do to ensure that our hunting heritage and wild lands were not compromised.

By the end of World War II, Club member Aldo Leopold was writing about a land ethic. Club member Olaus Murie was working on wildlife issues that were affected by the demographics of a quickly changing world. Our early visionaries recognized that population growth and change was moving quicker than our ability to deal with wildlife displacement and loss of habitat. Rachel Carlson's *Silent Spring* further added to our concerns about how we might be polluting our environment.

Because these serious impacts appeared suddenly and simultaneously, actions were necessary to find remedies. There were a series of legislative actions, i.e. the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and the Endangered Species Act, that were the outcome of these concerns.

Having set the stage for the change of direction that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, the ESA essentially set short-term recovery goals based upon the best science at the time. This meant changing patterns of land use that affected the private sector as well as the public sector in order to recover species, both plant and animal. Unfortunately, the administration and en-

forcement of the Act overlooked what has become apparent after some 40 years. The initial successes have been overshadowed because the law did not allow us to recognize the damage that occurs to the habitat because we have not properly addressed the long-term integrated management of the habitat required for sustaining the recovery of plant/animal species which are/were at risk.

As this debate heats up over the next six months, I encourage you to pay attention to this issue and to understand the long-term ramifications of doing nothing. The ESA, in its current formula, has not worked well for more than 10 years. If left alone, this will lead to the demise of valuable species. We must get involved in this important issue.

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most successful species conservation efforts anywhere in the world. ESA needs to adopt this model by securing a guaranteed annual source of funding, relying heavily on state wildlife management agencies, focusing on producing results (in addition to avoiding harm), and offering landowners clear contractual terms that encourage their participation.

As in the past, our Club is willing to address issues that have a variety of views within our organization. What makes us unique is our ability to take divergent views and meld it into positive results. It is a complex issue, but I can assure you that we have members who recognize the problem and understand how to fix ESA. ■

## GOT A TIP?

Share it with other B&C members.

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### My Tips

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