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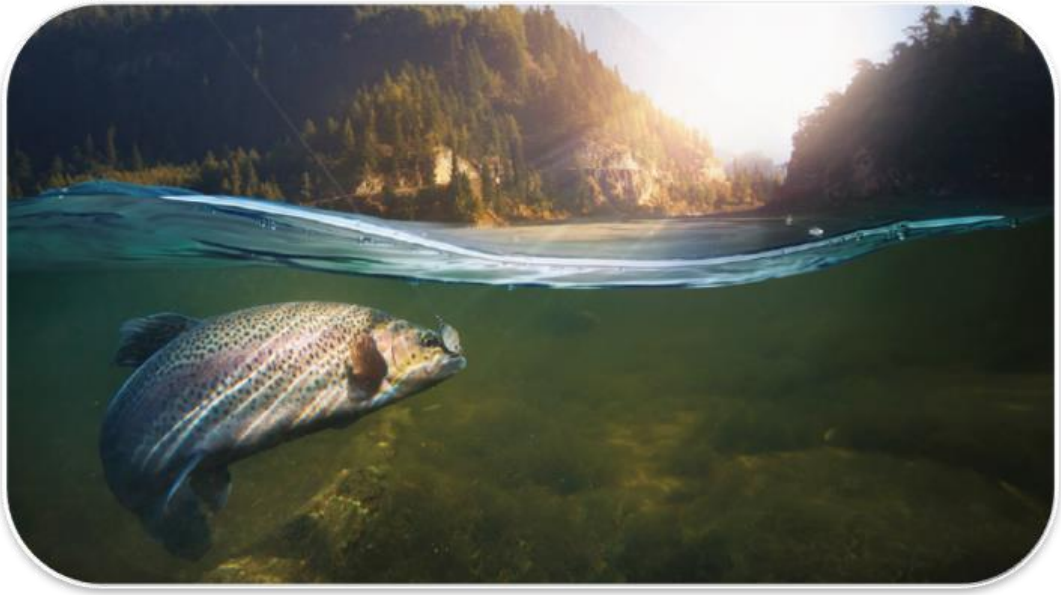

March 31, 2024

The Economic and Environmental Benefits of Proactive Conservation Versus a Regulatory Approach

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Background

More than 1,600 species of animals and plants are currently listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.[1] Another 12,000 species have been identified by state wildlife agencies as species of greatest conservation need that are declining and may require ESA listing if recovery efforts are not attempted. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) is a bipartisan initiative designed to support states, territories, and tribes to undertake proactive conservation initiatives to aid the recovery of vulnerable species or prevent wildlife and plant populations from reaching a critical status where they require protection under the ESA.

To provide actual case studies highlighting the value of this approach to the private sector, information was collected demonstrating the benefit of proactive conservation to businesses that are often impacted by regulations imposed after species decline to the point where they require ESA action. The approach combined an in-depth literature review, case studies from state fish and wildlife agencies and interviews with private companies and industry associations employing proactive strategies in the management of wildlife and plants in the course of doing business. This information will assist the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and its partners in advocating for proactive conservation efforts to prevent species listings. Additionally, these case studies illustrate how the RAWA can assist regulatory agencies to work with private businesses on proactive approaches to conservation and reduce new ESA listings and associated costs.

Approach

Information collection consisted of two primary components:1) An in-depth literature review and, 2) personal interviews and information collection from private companies, industry associations and state fish and wildlife agencies.

Literature Review - The first step consisted of reviewing available published literature using common academic research methods. This involved examining published academic and government data along with "gray" literature to gather a comprehensive overview of the economic, social, and business impacts resulting from previous ESA listings. The goal was to condense this information into a reader-friendly format that effectively communicates the costs and impacts associated with species listings under the Endangered Species Act and highlights potential alternative approaches that may help avoid future ESA listings.

Industry and States Input - The next step involved collaborating with industry, businesses, and state agencies to collect information on the cost and impacts related to past ESA listings and the initiatives and partnerships that help to avoid listings. State fish and wildlife agencies from various regions

[1] Congressional Research Service, 2021. https://crsreports.congress.gov R46677

provided case studies detailing conservation efforts aimed at mitigating listing impacts and preventing future species listings.

In addition, representatives from forestry, energy, and agriculture sectors were contacted to highlight the significance of proactive investments and conservation in aiding species recovery and preventing listings. The goal was to collect information on the costs companies incurred as a result of past ESA listing actions or costs incurred to prevent such actions. The initial request sent to targeted companies was:

1. Has your company/industry made proactive investments in wildlife conservation to restore or protect a species?
    a. Does your company/industry have internal reports or assessments that you would be willing to share outlining these costs?
2. Has your company/industry been impacted directly by proposed or actual listing of a species under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA)? If yes:
    a. Do you have estimates or actual measurements of the costs that you incurred to:
        i. Make changes to your business to address the action? Consider costs to modify facilities, change land use practices etc.
    b. Did your company/industry abandon plans for investment due to the action? Do you have estimates of costs/jobs lost due to this?

Later, a modified, more general request was sent to non-responding firms and interviews were requested:

> State wildlife agencies are seeking to enhance "collaborative conservation" approaches where wildlife agencies work with the private sector as a preferred alternative to often-costly regulatory options. We need input from the private sector to explore models of success and explain how such approaches are mutually beneficial. Can you discuss how your business's or industry's conservation investments have paid off for wildlife and your business?

Contacted organizations were those identified by the Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife Steering Committee as industry and commerce leaders who either successfully engaged in collaborative conservation in the course of their business activities or were aware of such examples. In all cases, once contacted, industry partners granted permission to share summarized insights.

The final actionable product that the coalition partners can utilize in their communications is a list of short summaries of impacts associated with previous listings or how company investments helped prevent future, more costly regulatory costs. The results are sorted by topic and footnoted to its full source. These results are supplemented with testimonials from industry partners on the value of the collaborative conservation approach to their business.

Summary Results

All results are found in Appendix A with citations in Appendix B.

Initial messaging to industry on quantifiable data on the costs of ESA listings and/or investments into collaborative conservation did not yield substantial results. While companies invest heavily into both proactive conservation and compliance with regulations when an ESA listing occurs (often including substantial changes to business practices), financial and accounting systems are generally inadequate to associate specific costs to specific conservation or compliance actions. The result is the inability to define the specific costs incurred in either proactive or reactive responses to species conservation. General responses explaining how such approaches are mutually beneficial to management agencies and industry were more readily provided and form the core of the testimonials in this project.

The following businesses and industry associations were successfully engaged in discussions of this nature:

Resource Management Service

Green Diamond Resource Company

American Petroleum Institute

National Alliance of Forest Owners

American Sportfishing Association

Conservation without Conflict

Southern Company

Ducks Unlimited

Conclusion

Quantitative data associating cooperative (or proactive) conservation to the bottom-line financial standing of companies and industries is lacking. Likewise, quantitative information on the direct impacts of ESA listings to a particular industry or business is also unavailable. However, information from the literature review and extensive communications with industry representatives clearly demonstrate the undeniable linkage between proactive approaches to managing sensitive species and the financial well-being of the contacted companies and their customers. This relationship is clearly embodied in the investments that companies have made into these programs as core components of their business model, as illustrated by the Southern Company (energy production and transmission):

> “The win-win with voluntary conservation of wildlife and habitat is, aside from helping the individual species, we hope to reduce the cost of providing energy to our customers,” said Jesalyn McCurry, Southern Company's Voluntary Conservation Manager. “Southern Company’s

20+ years of investment in a dedicated voluntary conservation program is evidence of the value of this approach to our company. Recovering America's Wildlife Act funding will assist state agencies to work more effectively with businesses such as ours in this voluntary approach to wildlife conservation."

Joe Drumm, Natural Resource Manager at Southern Company further stated: "For over 20 years, the Southern Company has worked closely as a trusted partner with state and federal stakeholders to implement voluntary conservation practices. "These cooperative approaches both benefit wildlife and strive to minimize uncertainty in the business environment. Our hope is that programs championed by the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) will increase voluntary conservation efforts, benefiting natural resources and wildlife for decades to come." (Southern Company, 2024)

These statements, along with dozens of additional testimonials and case studies compiled for use by the Alliance for America's Fish & Wildlife, provide ample evidence that can be integrated into efforts to communicate the benefits of proactive, cooperative conservation.

Acknowledgements

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Jimmy Bullock, Resource Management Service

Keith Hamm, Green Diamond Resource Company

Lance West and Robin Rorick, American Petroleum Institute

Bryan Petit and Ethan Breitling, National Alliance of Forest Owners

Mike Leonard, American Sportfishing Association

Leo Miranda, Conservation without Conflict

Jesalyn McCurry, Southern Company

Joe Drumm, Southern Company

Nick Wiley, Ducks Unlimited

Appendix A: Results

#	State/Region	Topic Focus	Collaborative Conservation: Benefits and Economic Impacts
1	U.S.	Recovery of Listed Species	Only 3% or 57 species ever listed have recovered, thus highlighting the need for new approaches in managing wildlife as offered by the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (USFWS, 2023; Downey, 2023).
2	U.S.	Cost of Listing Species	Efforts to proactively prevent species from being listed may result in significant reductions in government spending. On average, the federal government pays $19.5 million to attempt recovery once a single species is listed. Of this, $1 million is needed just for the bureaucratic and administrative costs. The private sector is estimated to pay on average three to five times more for a single species - upwards of $100 billion across all species - for direct costs, regulatory uncertainty, and foregone opportunities. (Gerber 2016; Defenders of Wildlife, 2019; Simmons and Frost, 2004)
3	U.S.	Cost of Listing Species	With 1,662 listed species at an average cost to address recovery of $19.5 million, the Federal government is on the hook for $32.5 billion, or $1.62 billion per year considering a typical 20-year recovery effort. The private sector and local governments will incur $130 billion in various costs and lost sales. Considering roughly 12,000 species have significant conservation needs, the ultimate price could be astronomical. (Defenders of Wildlife, 2019; Gerber, 2016; Simmons and Frost, 2004).
4	U.S.	Cost of Species Recovery	Considering only 25% of each species' assigned funds go towards on-the-ground recovery efforts (Gerbera, 2016) versus legal, administrative and other costs, more funds may be available per species if proactive efforts such as prescribed by the Recovering America's Wildlife Act were implemented, thus circumnavigating many of the expenses required under current regulations and processes.
5	U.S.	Cost of Species Recovery	The total funds estimated as needed to fully implement recovery plans for all listed species is just 0.0006% of the entire federal budget (Greenwald, et. al., 2016).

6	U.S.	Federal Spending on Endangered Species	Spending by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for endangered species protection and restoration represents only 0.04% of the FY 2023 Federal budget ($2.4 billion of the $6.37 trillion budget). (Office of Management and Budget, 2023; USFWS 2023)
7	U.S.	Public Support for RAWA	A recent survey revealed overwhelming support for the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, garnering 70% backing from all Americans, with 64% support among Republicans. Only 5% of those surveyed oppose it. (Frey, 2022)
8	U.S.	ESA Cost to Private Landowners	Considering roughly 90% of all Endangered Species Act listed species are found on private land, a significant portion of costs incurred by an Endangered Species Act designation is by private landowners. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act will provide mechanisms for states and Federal agencies to cooperatively work with volunteer landowners to help prevent future listings and their associated impacts on private landowners. (Brown and Shogren, 1998)
9	Texas	ESA Disincentive for Private Landowners	Mandating landowners to cease use of their lands to help protect a listed species often undermines conservation efforts and harms people's livelihoods. For example, ten days before the golden-cheeked warbler was rated by the Fish and Wildlife Service, one landowning firm destroyed hundreds of acres of oak and juniper warbler habitat to help escape potential upcoming land use restrictions (Mann and Plummer, 1995). Likewise, landowners were found to frequently develop land designated as critical habitat about a year sooner than similar land with no designation (List, et. al., 2006). Using financially beneficial approaches, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act will help provide incentives for landowners to conserve wildlife before any Endangered Species Act listings are needed.

10	California, Louisiana, Southeastern States	RAWA Protects Land Values	When private land is designated as critical wildlife habitat under the Endangered Species Act, property values decrease. Examples include: 1) A 2020 study found California land values decreased 48% when the red-legged frog was listed and 78% for the bay checkerspot butterfly (Aufhammer, et. al, 2020). 2) A proposed critical habitat designation in Louisiana for the dusky gopher frog would have cost property owners $34 million (Downey 2023; USFWS, 2011). 3) A single colony of red-cockaded woodpeckers could preclude the harvest of $200,000 of timber due to ESA regulation (Zhang, 2004). Proactive efforts to conserve species such as prescribed by the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, before last-gap ESA regulations take place, will help protect landowners and businesses from potential lost uses, revenues and land values.
11	Arizona and New Mexico	Private Landowner Incentives	Proactive approaches that financially incentivize public and private landowners to manage critical wildlife habitat - such as the 78,000 acres of ranchlands in Arizona & New Mexico ranchlands now under a conservation easement with volunteer landowners - has long been seen as an alternative to traditional Endangered Species Act approaches. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act would help increase the use of these landowner-friendly conservation practices and help reduce future Endangered Species Act listings by protecting habitat beneficial to many species of wildlife, not just targeted listed species. (Milpai Borderlands Group, 2023; Brown and Shogren, 1998).
12	U.S.	RAWA Prevents Ongoing Costs to Private Sector	With over 1,500 species listed by 2014, 35 of these received over 60% of the budgeted Federal recovery funds, leaving little to address the remaining species. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act will help prevent future listings and their additional and often continuing annual impacts on private business and local governments. (Greenwald, et. al., 2016).
13	U.S.	RAWA Benefits Landowners	Continued threats to wildlife populations such as development in wildlife habitat will likely increase the number of species listed as threatened or endangered. Effectively fostering stewardship among private landowners, could help reduce future listings and this could be accomplished with new efforts such as the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (Kunzig, 2023).

14	**U.S.**	**RAWA Benefits Landowners**	**Given nearly 70% of U.S. land is privately owned, landowners' support for conserving the nation's endangered and threatened species is critical (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2023). The Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) provides landowners with ways to financially benefit from conservation and achieve new levels of regulatory relief.**
15	**U.S.**	**RAWA Benefits Landowners**	**With 60% of at-risk species relying on private forest habitat, private forest owners are crucial partners in conservation. Many now work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and states through voluntary collaborative private-public partnerships to enhance wildlife, often benefiting from positive financial incentives to do so (National Alliance of Forest Owners, 2023). The Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) is designed to increase use of these cooperative conservation approaches that benefit business as well as wildlife.**
16	**Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas**	**RAWA Benefits Landowners**	**Voluntary wildlife conservation programs that incentivize private landowners work. An example are the wildlife corridors in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas developed between government agencies and volunteer private landowners. These cooperative efforts were integral in the recovery of bear populations without the need for federal regulatory actions. These types of positive conservation approaches efforts would be increased under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. (Bullock and Dohner, 2023).**
17	**U.S.**	**RAWA Benefits Family Forest Owners**	**Over 30% of U.S. forest land is privately owned, held by 10.7 million family forest owners. The wildlife conservation incentives to be offered by the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) would help ease regulatory burdens and encourage further voluntary conservation practices, benefiting both at-risk species and family forest owners' livelihoods. (Ward, et. al., 2018; Butler, et. al., 2016).**
18	**U.S.**	**Partners for Fish and Wildlife - Landowner Incentives**	**Programs like the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program would be encouraged under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. This program rewards landowners for voluntary species conservation efforts by lowering regulatory burdens they could otherwise encounter. This program showed for every federal dollar invested, roughly $8 were matched by the private sector and generated over $15 in new economic activity plus jobs (Laughland, et. al., 2014).**

19	**U.S.**	**Conservation Benefits to Economy**	**Contrary to common belief, conservation benefits the economy. For every $1 million invested in species and habitat conservation creates on average 33 quality jobs, and every dollar spent adds $2.40 to the nation's gross domestic product. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act, if passed as currently proposed, would create over 33,000 jobs and create $3.4 billion in new economic activity (BenDor, et. al., 2015; Southwick Associates and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 2013).**
20	**U.S.**	**Conservation Benefits to Economy**	**By 2015, the ecological restoration industry was already a $9.5 billion industry, supporting 126,000 jobs and billions more in ripple effects (BenDor, et. al., 2015). The Recovering America's Wildlife Act, as proposed, would help further increase the economic activity and jobs attributable to ecological restoration, activities which greatly benefit rural America.**
21	**U.S.**	**Conservation Benefits to Economy**	**The significant economic impact of the ecological restoration industry "diffuses the jobs versus the environment debate we've had for years," says George Kelly, of Resource Environmental Solutions, a company that mitigates ecological impacts. "Restoration of natural infrastructure is the win-win solution, creating jobs and long-term benefits even after the job is done," says Amanda Wrona, The Nature Conservancy (Barret, 2015)**
22	**U.S.**	**Conservation Benefits to Economy**	**Conservation investments contribute to economic vitality and growth. In 2013, the $38.8 billion spent on conservation at the local, state and national levels generated $93.2 billion in total economic activity and supported 661,000 jobs. In other words, if conservation investments in the U.S. were no longer made and these dollars were not invested elsewhere, U.S. economy would have fallen by these amounts (Southwick Associates, 2013).**
23	**U.S.**	**Outdoor Recreation Benefits to Economy**	**The economic benefits from conserving species and wild places is much greater than just those employed in restoration services. Healthier habitat and wildlife accessible to people also supports the outdoor recreation industry, which according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis exceeds $564 billion annually. Actions proposed by the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) will further strengthen the nation's vital outdoor recreation economy (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2022).**

24	**U.S.**	**Outdoor Recreation Benefits to Economy**	**According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in 2022 over 148 million people enjoyed viewing, photographing and feeding wildlife, and spent more than $250 billion to do so, generating thousands of jobs in the process. Actions proposed by the Recovering America's Wildlife Act will further strengthen the nation's vital outdoor recreation economy (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2022).**
25	**U.S.**	**Outdoor Recreation Benefits to Economy**	**According to Jessica Wahl Turner, President of the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable : "Hunting, fishing, and other wildlife-associated recreation are major drivers of America's $1.1 trillion outdoor recreation economy and rely on coordinated conservation efforts to produce healthy fish and wildlife populations. The bipartisan Recovering America's Wildlife Act is a cost-effective way to enhance public access to outdoor experiences, promising a substantial boost to local outdoor recreation economies. The businesses and people that make up our industry provide significant benefits to communities across the country, including nearly 5 million jobs. To ensure that this success is sustainable, we need smart, science-based conservation policies like RAWA so we can continue to pass down outdoor traditions like hunting and fishing to the next generation." (Turner, 2024).**
26	**U.S.**	**Collaborative Conservation**	**Experts contend that landowners need to be brought into the fold to promote species conservation. Leo Miranda-Castro, retired director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service southeast region, says the collaborative approach allowed a petition to list 404 new species to be dropped. "The volume would have been "overwhelming," Miranda-Castro says. "That's when we decided, 'Hey, we cannot do this in the traditional way." That fear of listing so many species served as a 'catalyst' to promote conservation work to make Endangered Species Act listings unnecessary, such as the measures proposed within RAWA. (Kunzig, 2023)**
27	**Southeast**	**Collaborative Conservation**	**Collaborative habitat management agreements with the owners of 20 million acres of Southeastern timberlands helped prevent listing the gopher tortoise under Endangered Species Act protections (Zhang, 2004). This proactive approach helps preserve millions of dollars of timber harvests and associated jobs, plus benefits many more species besides the tortoise and helps minimize future Endangered Species Act listings. (Kunzig, 2023)**

28	**Montana**	**Collaborative Conservation**	**Collaborative, voluntary approaches to conservation work in the prairies. For example, the private American Prairie Reserve is compensating landowners across 3.2 million acres in eastern Montana for voluntary actions benefiting many species of wildlife, using approaches that the proposed Recovering America's Wildlife Act legislation will increase. Such efforts will help minimize future Endangered Species Act listings. (Wood, 2020; AmericanPrairie.org)**
29	**U.S.**	**Collaborative Conservation - The Wildlife Conservation Initiative**	**The Wildlife Conservation Initiative, is a formal, voluntary partnership with the National Alliance of Forest Owners, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Council for Air and Stream Improvement, Inc., and various conservation organizations to conserve fish and wildlife species on private working forests. The National Alliance of Forest Owners highlights their efforts stating that "collaborative conservation through the Wildlife Conservation Initiative (WCI) delivers positive outcomes for wildlife. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has cited the benefits of active forest management, private land access for researchers, and forest certification as significant contributions to species conservation, negating the need for regulation. These successes are the result of proactive and voluntary conservation efforts, with government and private working forest owners working together to benefit species. In this way, the WCI advances collaborative conservation efforts on working lands and helps the Endangered Species Act work better for at-risk species, forest owners, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service." (National Alliance of Forest Owners, 2023)**
30	**U.S.**	**RAWA Benefits Business**	**The Recovering America's Wildlife Act would provide $1.3 billion a year to states and nearly $100 million to Native American tribes to conserve species of greatest conservation need. This Act which builds on the success of the 1937 Pittman-Robertson Act, which successfully reversed the decline in game species such as deer, ducks and turkey plus funds state wildlife agencies through a federal excise tax on guns and ammunition. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act adds a second major business-friendly element that will provide incentives to private landowners to foster species conservation where habitat loss is happening the fastest, similar to the conservation work and coordination with landowners that helped restore the red-cockaded woodpecker and the gopher tortoise. (Kunzig, 2023)**

31	**California, Oregon and Washington**	**Voluntary Conservation Prevents Listing - Green Diamond Company**	**The privately-owned Green Diamond Resource Company has over 1.5 million acres of commercial forest land managed under voluntary Habitat Conservation Plans approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This approach, championed by the proposed Recovering America's Wildlife Act, typically reduces by half the acreage that would otherwise be severely limited for commercial uses under standard Endangered Species Act procedures. (Hamm, Green Diamond Resource Company, 2023).**
32			**Green Diamond Resource Company, a private timber firm, has voluntarily conducted research and revised land usage practices benefiting species of concern. Such voluntary efforts, as championed by the proposed Recovering America's Wildlife Act, helped the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to decide new Endangered Species Act (ESA) listings were not needed, allowing Green Diamond Resource Company to continue operations in many areas that otherwise would fall under strict ESA regulations. These same efforts also serve other species of concern, providing additional benefits to Green Diamond Resource Company and other firms engaged in similar voluntary efforts (Hamm, Green Diamond Resource Company, 2023).**
33	**U.S.**	**Collaborative Conservation - Green Diamond Company**	**Cooperative conservation approaches allow landowners to continue business while also conserving wildlife habitat. According to Douglas Reed, President of this major U.S. forestry firm, "Green Diamond Resource Company regularly engages in collaborative conservation work, which today includes ten conservation agreements that benefit 61 species on more than 1.5 million acres in four states. Green Diamond is one of many stakeholders across the landscape and partnerships like this ensure we work together to live up to our collective values of responsible forestry and land management practices and environmental stewardship. Our collaboration will ensure generations to come have the same lush working forestlands, waterways teaming with fish, and the diverse wildlife populations we enjoy today." (National Alliance of Forest Owners, 2023)**

34	**Florida**	**Resource Management Service - Eliminates Regulatory Risk**	**Resource Management Service, LLC (RMS) - private firm that manages 2.4 million acres of forests globally valued at $4.9 billion - voluntarily engaged in efforts to help restore an endangered salamander species in North Florida where it was absent. This voluntary effort, a type which would be further encouraged by the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, eliminated ESA-related regulatory risks RMS might have otherwise incurred, leading to greater returns and profitability from its forestry operations (Conservation Without Conflict, 2023).**
35			**According to Jimmy Bullock, Resource Management Service: "Compared to regulatory mandates, funding to help state wildlife agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and private landowners work cooperatively to manage landscapes is by far the most cost-effective way to conserve and protect species while allowing business to continue in a sustainable way" (Resource Management Service, 2023).**
36	**Nevada**	**Voluntary Conservation Benefits Business - Newmont Corporation**	**Newmont Corporation, a Nevada mining company, entered a voluntary agreement with Federal and state wildlife agencies to conserve wildlife on 1.5 million acres of sagebrush habitat. By looking out for wildlife within its operations, Newmont also helps ensure its continued business operations which otherwise would be cut back or stopped if any wildlife populations of concern were impacted. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act will expand use of these cooperative conservation approaches that benefit both wildlife and business (Business Wire, 2016).**
37			**Nevada's Republican Governor Brian Sandoval said in 2016 about Newmont Corporation's voluntary conservation efforts on 1.5 million its sagebrush acres: "Through this historic agreement, Newmont has committed to implementing a wide-ranging, landscape-level conservation plan that includes voluntarily managing certain of its private rangelands and ranches in Nevada to achieve net conservation gains for sagebrush species. This good-faith, public-private partnership represents a significant and meaningful achievement in the cause of sagebrush habitat and species protection in the western United States (Business Wire, 2016)."**

38			**Dr. Elaine Dorward-King, Newmont's Executive Vice President for Sustainability and External Relations said about its voluntary agreement with state and Federal wildlife agencies to conserve wildlife on 1.5 million acres of its sagebrush lands: "We appreciate the good-faith demonstrated by all the parties involved to achieve this historic agreement which will advance sagebrush habitat management in Nevada while supporting continued sustainable mining practices over the long term (Business Wire, 2016)." The Recovering America's Wildlife Act will help increase use of these voluntary, pro-business conservation approaches.**
39	**Montana**	**Voluntary Conservation Benefits Business - Hecla Mining Company**	**By voluntarily restoring forests and wildlife habitat on hundreds of acres at Troy Mine site in Montana, and exceeding the State's reclamation requirements, the Hecla Mining Company reduced its required financial assurances by nearly $8 million. Such voluntary efforts will be further encouraged and supported by the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, allowing landowners to continue working their lands while helping ensure a future for species in peril (Hecla Mining Company, 2023).**
40	**U.S.**	**Collaborative Conservation - BTG Pactual Timberland Investment Group**	**Cooperative conservation approaches allow landowners to continue business while also conserving wildlife habitat. According to Gerrity Lansing, Head of this timberland investment firm, "The Timberland Investment Group is proud of our history of nature-positive stewardship of managed forests, which play an important role in wildlife conservation. Working with partners, including Federal, state, and local governments as well as academics and conservation groups, enhances our ability to protect and restore habitat for the incredible variety of species that call our forests home, including our over 300,000 acres under protection or special management across the United States. We are pleased to support the Wildlife Conservation Initiative and to partner with the USFWS and NCASI as part of our mission to sustainably manage the world's timberland." (National Alliance of Forest Owners, 2023)**

41	**Colorado**	**Collaborative Conservation - Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust**	**Since 1995, the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust has partnered with 240 families to safeguard over 450,000 acres of agricultural land, wildlife habitat, and open space across Colorado. Using grants and other alliances, land trusts like this provide ranching families with a financially positive way to continue their livelihood while also protecting wildlife and open spaces for the benefit of all. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act will help foster greater use of these win-win conservation approaches. (Land Trust Alliance, 2023).**
42	**U.S.**	**Collaborative Conservation- Ducks Unlimited**	**"Listing a species under the Endangered Species Act happens when that species' population is in dire straights," said Nick Wiley, Chief Operating Officer of Ducks Unlimited. "When a species is federally listed, strong regulatory measures are triggered to protect that listed species and its habitat. These measures may impact land uses, land values and these costs associated with maintaining working lands for agriculture, ranching, and energy production, sometimes affecting jobs, families, and communities. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act will expand cooperative conservation practices between landowners, state and federal governments that use proven financial incentives and cooperative engagement to help prevent listings. This approach can head off expensive and contentious listing measures, foster cooperation with landowners, and support important uses of working lands while applying meaningful conservation solutions." (Ducks Unlimited, 2024)**

43	**U.S.**	**Voluntary Conservation - Forest Investment Associates**	**Forest Investment Associates, with 17% of its 1.9 million acres of timberland managed for wildlife, has achieved significant conservation successes working through public-private partnerships - the type of partnerships to be increased under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. According to the President, Marc Walley: "Excellent forest stewardship and the highest standards in forest management are components of our mission statement and rooted in our culture at Forest Investment Associates. Wildlife conservation is an essential part of both of these commitments and is the foundation for our continued efforts to protect, maintain, and advance wildlife habitat on the working forests we manage. Forest Investment Associates supports the Wildlife Conservation Initiative because we recognize through collective efforts, we can promote natural capital and its value for our clients as well as generating additional benefits, such as better resource sharing and broader collaboration among those stakeholders who are in positions to most effectively advance wildlife conservation efforts on a landscape level." (Forest Investment Associates, 2023).**
44	**U.S.**	**Voluntary Conservation - Southern Company**	**In a 20-year partnership, Southern Company's $26 million investment with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation that, after matched with federal and other funds, has generated $231 million in investments, conserving nearly 4 million acres. Collaborating with communities and conservation groups, these conservation efforts have helped restore ecosystems and recover imperiled species while balancing utility operations and infrastructure development and reducing the risks for future regulatory impacts (Southern Company, 2024).**

45			**“The win-win with voluntary conservation of wildlife and habitat is, aside from helping the individual species, we hope to reduce the cost of providing energy to our customers,” said Jesalyn McCurry, Southern Company's Voluntary Conservation Manager. “Southern Company’s 20+ years of investment in a dedicated voluntary conservation program is evidence of the value of this approach to our company. Recovering America’s Wildlife Act funding will assist state agencies to work more effectively with businesses such as ours in this voluntary approach to wildlife conservation.” Joe Drumm, Natural Resource Manager at Southern Company further stated: “For over 20 years, the Southern Company has worked closely as a trusted partner with state and federal stakeholders to implement voluntary conservation practices. "These cooperative approaches both benefit wildlife and strive to minimize uncertainty in the business environment. Our hope is that programs championed by the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act (RAWA) will increase voluntary conservation efforts, benefiting natural resources and wildlife for decades to come.” (Southern Company, 2024)**
46	**U.S.**	**Voluntary Conservation - Utility Companies**	**A 2022 survey of utility companies found that engaging in voluntary conservation positively impacts utilities' bottom-line as it lowers operation and maintenance costs and reduces overall risks. Proactive measures like protecting at-risk species before they reach endangered status or transitioning a species from endangered to threatened helps avoid costly compliance requirements. (Warren, 2022).**
47	**Tennessee**	**Voluntary Conservation - Tennessee Valley Authority**	**Recovering America's Wildlife Act supports voluntary conservation through effective public-private partnerships. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), in collaboration with Duke Energy Carolinas and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, entered into a ten-year Candidate Conservation Agreement to protect the sicklefin redhorse fish, effectively pooling their resources and expertise to pursue voluntary conservation and avoid costly future regulatory burdens. “What works best is when a number of stakeholders are interested in the same species,” said Travis Henry, a certified wildlife biologist with TVA. “It allows us to use our limited resources to effect greater conservation,” and “when you develop a partnership, each partner can devote a limited amount of resources that together afford a positive outcome for a species.” (Tennessee Valley Authority and Warren, 2022)**

48	U.S.	Voluntary Partnerships Prevent Listings	A 2017 study highlighted the need to restore 125 million acres of monarch habitat in the US to avoid the species' extinction and identified 11 million acres of potential monarch habitat along utility transmission rights-a-ways. American Electric Power and other utilities along with universities and the US Fish and Wildlife Service developed a plan to preserve monarch habitat by adjusting the management of vegetation along their transmission line rights-of-ways. These are the types of partnerships envisioned by RAWA to connect industry and conservation organizations to collaborate on ways to preserve habitat to prevent unnecessary listings in the future (Wayne, et. al., 2017).
49	U.S.	Voluntary Partnerships Prevent Listings	By assigning 18% or more percent of their pipeline rights-of-way and facilities as designated monarch butterfly habitat, petroleum companies are exempted from future regulatory burdens if the species is listed. In response, firms have partnered with conservation organizations such as Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever to enhance habitat across these 12 million acres of land, using voluntary collaborative agreements that are further championed by the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (American Petroleum Institute, 2022; Loftus, 2023).
50			American Petroleum Institute's President and CEO Mike Sommers said: “We are thrilled to join forces with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever to deliver on the tremendous opportunity that thousands of miles energy rights-of-way present for wildlife habitat enhancement. Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever have a wealth of wildlife habitat management experience that American energy operators can use to advance our industry’s environmental stewardship – from cultivating native species for bobwhite quail or monarch butterflies to protecting endangered wildlife to preventing soil erosion.” (American Petroleum Institute, 2022)
51	U.S.	Voluntary Partnerships Prevent Listings	According to the Ohio Department of Transportation, changing mowing practices as part of a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances to conserve monarch butterfly saves Ohio taxpayers $2.2 million/year. This is the type of voluntary conservation efforts to be expanded by the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. (Ohio Department of Transportation, 2019).

52	**U.S.**	**Voluntary Partnerships Prevent Listings**	**According to the National Rural Electric Cooperative, an Endangered Species Act listing of the Monarch butterfly would negatively impact electric cooperatives across 49 states. Voluntary enrollment in the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances provides electric co-ops with regulatory certainty and operational flexibility which lowers the cost for co-ops to provide Monarch habitat. This type of voluntary conservation approach would be expanded under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. (Crawford, 2019)**
53	**U.S.**	**Voluntary Partnerships Prevent Listings**	**Evergy energy company entered into a volunteer Monarch butterfly Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service considering the financial risks associated with the potential federal listing of the species under the Endangered Species Act. These types of agreements, to be expanded under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, reduce the potential regulatory impacts on business if a species found on their lands is listed and helps maintain the company's operational flexibility. (Evergy, 2019).**
54	**Maine**	**Species of Greatest Conservation Need**	**In Maine, 378 species have been identified as having 'Greatest Conservation Need'. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act will help to ensure the survival of these vulnerable species by improving habitat on agricultural lands and providing economic incentives to landowners to voluntarily protect species like the Eastern meadowlark and bobolink (Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, 2022).**
55	**U.S.**	**State Wildlife Action Plans**	**One-third of listed species under the Endangered Species Act do not a have a recovery plan and of the plans in place, many remain out of date. In addition, one-half of recovery plans were not developed until five years after the species was listed (Downey, 2023). State Wildlife Action Plans developed proactively by states with public and private landowners through the Recovering America's Wildlife Act will not only prevent future listings but will help to reduce the burden associated with Endangered Species Act listings and protect the value and use of affected lands.**

The following case studies from state fish and wildlife agencies show how proactive efforts and voluntary partnerships, such as those possible under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, help avoid Endangered Species Act listings and their associated costs and impacts to commerce.			
56	**Maine**	**Collaborative Conservation Prevents Listing**	**By 2006, the New England Cottontail became a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act due to habitat loss and competition from other species. Proactive efforts by private organizations, the state and the US Fish and Wildlife Service that included research, habitat management, captive breeding and reintroduction successfully resulted in a later determination that the Cottontail no longer required an Endangered Species Act listing in the State of Maine (Fish, Maine Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, 2023).**
57	**Georgia**	**Collaborative Conservation Prevents Listing**	**A $215 million purchase of 124,000 acres by Georgia's Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative (2015) - a collaborative effort with private sector support - has helped the gopher tortoise avoid being listed under the Endangered Species Act. (Elliot, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 2023).**
58			**The 62 tracts of land purchased in Georgia with a combination of private, state and federal funds helped prevent listing the gopher tortoise under the Endangered Species Act. Such a listing would have impacted everything from landowners' use of their lands and powerline maintenance to military training and forestry. Plus, this successful voluntary partnership simultaneously benefits other species at risk such as the gopher frog, Florida pine snake, eastern diamondback and more. Recovering America's Wildlife Act will allow for more similar partnerships, reducing the commercial, municipal and infrastructure impacts that often result from new Endangered Species Act listings (Elliot, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 2023).**

59	**Washington**	**Voluntary Conservation - Candidate Conservation Agreements**	**Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances - a tool championed under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act - is more cost effective and less impactful on landowners than listing a species under the Endangered Species Act. These voluntary agreements incentivize landowners to conserve species at risk before listings are needed. For example, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife led the development of Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances with timberland owners to conserve fishers, a wildlife furbearer. As a result, the species was not listed in the State of Washington, while listings happened in California and southern Oregon, much to the benefit of the state's landowners. (Pamplin and Va Deynze, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2023).**
60	**Colorado**	**Voluntary Conservation - Safe Harbor Agreements**	**The Recovering America's Wildlife Act will also promote Safe Harbor Agreements. These help protect landowners from regulatory restrictions associated with new Endangered Species Act listings. For example, the Colorado Landowner Incentive Program supports habitat conservation for black-footed ferrets. In a nutshell, this partnership pays landowners to support restoration of black-footed ferrets and enrolls landowners in safe harbor agreements to help alleviate concerns about Endangered Species Act restrictions. This voluntary approach helps protect landowners' livelihoods and land value (Klute, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, 2023).**
61	**Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama**	**Collaborative Conservation Enhances Habitat**	**Partnership approaches to conservation, as championed by the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, work. Instead of Federal mandated regulations, state wildlife agencies in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama teamed with forest landowners, conservation organizations and federal agencies to enhance habitat for many at-risk fire dependent species. As a result, over 90,000 acres of private and industrial lands have benefited, reducing risks of new listings while also creating new jobs, supporting many more and allowing landowners continual use of their lands. (Lorenz, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 2023).**

62			**The Recovering America's Wildlife Act will empower state-based conservation which helps reduce future Endangered Species Act restrictions and costs. For example, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries invests in wildlife population surveys, helps private landowners with prescribed burns and more. Often working in partnership with federal agencies and businesses, these efforts have benefited many at-risk species such as the frecklebelly madtom, northern bobwhite, red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise and many grassland birds. Recent successes include restoring 20,000 acres of pine forests at no cost to the landowner. (Lorenz, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 2023).**
63	**Missouri**	**Collaborative Conservation Prevents Listing**	**Proactive state-based conservation efforts, which would be increased under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, helps prevent new listings. For example, low-cost species monitoring efforts by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources found populations of the Illinois chorus frog and the rattlesnake borer moth were stable, resulting in a determination that new Endangered Species Act listings were not warranted. (Briggler, Muenks and Rezac, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, 2023).**
64	**Ohio**	**Collaborative Conservation Prevents Listing**	**Proactive state-based conservation efforts, which would be increased under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, are effective and can reduce government spending. For example, the Ohio Division of Wildlife spent $250,000 to achieve recovery goals for the Lake Erie Water Snake four years earlier than expected. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service originally expected recovery would cost $960,000 and require five years. A notice to delist the species was posted in 2011 (Stanford, Ohio Division of Wildlife, 2023).**

65	**Oklahoma**	**Voluntary Conservation - Candidate Conservation Agreements**	**Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances are voluntary agreements between government and landowners that help address the needs of at-risk species before listings are required. The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation uses Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances along with financial assistance to incentivize landowners to help conserve the lesser prairie-chicken. These allow landowners to implement voluntary conservation measures with regulatory certainty about how they can use their land, something that might not be possible should the species become listed under the Endangered Species Act. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act would expand use of these voluntary conservation approaches. (Dinkines and Cooper, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, 2023).**
66		**Proactive Conservation by State Prevents Listing**	**Proactive state-based conservation efforts, which would increase under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, helps prevent new listings. For example, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation has invested in monitoring and conservation of a multitude of species, which would have otherwise resulted in new regulations and landowner and commerce impacts if the species had been listed. At-risk species that have benefited include the crawfish frog, alligator snapping turtle, bumblebees, land snails, loggerhead shrike, nightjar species, tri-colored bats, ringed salamanders, longspurs, Texas horned lizards and chicken turtles. (Richardson, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, 2023).**
67		**Collaborative Conservation Enhances Habitat**	**Public-private conservation efforts that would be encouraged by the Recovering America's Wildlife Act have already proven successful. For example, a $7.6 million donation from Oklahoma Gas and Electric to offset impacts on lesser prairie chickens from wind projects and high voltage transmission lines provided the matching funds needed by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation to purchase key wildlife habitat. (Richardson, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, 2023).**

68	Oregon	Proactive Conservation by State Prevents Listing	Proactive state-based conservation efforts, which would increase under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, helps prevent new listings. For example, research by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife developed a reliable picture of the foothill yellow frog population. The results allowed for the development of conservation agreements that ultimately resulted in the population not being listed in Oregon. In addition, investments to monitor the population of at-risk dusky Canada geese has allowed the State to continue hunting opportunities for other geese found within the Dusky's range, thus maintaining hunters' spending in local communities. The results also benefit landowners through income from hunting leases from reduced crop damages as the continued presence of hunters minimizes the time geese spend in planted fields. (Grahm-Hudson, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2023).
69			Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances - a tool championed under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act - is more cost effective and less impactful on landowners than listing a species under the Endangered Species Act. For example, to help conserve the greater sage grouse, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife along with various partners established Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances that help protect ranchers and farmers from regulatory requirements should the bird be listed and allows them to maintain operations. (Grahm-Hudson, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2023).
70	Utah	Proactive Conservation by State Prevents Listing	Conservation actions will allow state wildlife agencies to further prevent future Endangered Species Act listings which will reduce federal spending. For example, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources estimates that over the past 20 years (2002-2022), Utah and its conservation partners have successfully prevented the listing of 28 species with minimal costs. Considering the average annual cost to administer and recover a species once listed under the Endangered Species Act is estimated to average $1 million annually (Gerber, 2016), Utah's efforts have saved hundreds of millions of federal dollars to restore those species. (Thompson, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, 2023)

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