



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Hannah East, Communications Director
(601) 359-1179 / cell: (662) 816-3230
HannahE@mdac.ms.gov

Ag Commissioner Gipson Joins Leaders Across the Nation in Supporting Proposed Rule for the Federal Designation of Critical Habitats

JACKSON, Miss. – Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson joined more than 100 state and local officials representing 27 states in submitting a public comment in support of reforms to the federal procedures for designating critical habitats under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The comment recommends the United States Department of the Interior and Fish and Wildlife Service finalize their proposed rule, “Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Regulations for Designating Critical Habitat,” requiring more robust economic analysis before land is designated as a critical habitat.

“This proposed rule is a common-sense approach to the designation of critical habitats by ensuring federal agencies fully consider the real-world impacts on landowners and rural communities, and analyze if those costs outweigh the benefits,” said Commissioner Gipson. “I am proud to join others in supporting this proposed rule to strengthen accountability and help ensure conservation efforts support environmental stewardship, as well as local and state economies.”

The proposed rule would amend portions of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 which provides a means to conserve the ecosystems upon which endangered and threatened species depend. Supporters say revisions would require consideration of the economic impact, the impact on national security and any other relevant impact of designating any particular area as critical habitat; and authorize the exclusion of areas from critical habitat if the benefits of excluding the area outweigh the benefits of designating it as critical habitat.

The public comment states, “We strongly support the Service’s proposed revisions to critical habitat designation procedures under the Endangered Species Act. These changes restore balance, accountability and respect for both species protection and the livelihoods of American families.”

Requiring stronger economic analysis would create a more transparent and balanced decision-making process while still protecting endangered species. In the public comment, officials state, “This deference to states encourages cooperative conservation, while protecting vulnerable species and the landowners who steward their land while making our economy strong.”

View the official comment at <https://agnet.mdac.ms.gov/agManage/uploads/3307.pdf>.

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