



Ecological Society of America

1990 M Street, NW
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October 29, 2013

The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings and Ranking Member DeFazio:

On behalf of the Ecological Society of America, I write to express our concern with a growing number of legislative initiatives moving in Congress that would limit environmental review requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Since its enactment in 1970, NEPA the law has played a critical role in providing an important channel of communication for the general public to inform federal agency decision-making. Through NEPA, public knowledge of environmental risks are improved as are federal agencies' ability to make policy decisions informed by the local communities who would be most affected by a suggested proposal. The Environmental Impact Statements and Environmental Assessments required by the law allow vital input from various important cross sections of the general public, including the scientific community, that inform policy. A broad cross section of society, including hunters, ranchers, farmers, conservationists and local businesses, are all among those who have benefited from its public input requirements.

Maintaining NEPA review requirements not only helps uncover threats to wildlife and ecosystems, but also potential threats to public health and safety. It also saves taxpayer dollars by preemptively identifying environmental risks that could lead to a costly environmental disaster. On numerous occasions, the law has identified previously unforeseen threats to the environmental and public health. Since its implementation, NEPA has preserved natural landscapes vital to local tourism and recreation, protected densely-populated communities from the threat of deadly pathogen outbreaks, identified threats to endangered species and preserved drinking water resources.

In March of 2012, the Council on Environmental Quality released a memorandum to federal agencies providing guidance on ways to modernize the timeliness and implementation of NEPA. Instead of pushing legislation to curtail NEPA, we request that Members of Congress work in a bipartisan manner to improve the law's functionality.

Sincerely,

Katherine McCarter

Executive Director
Ecological Society of America

Cc: House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton, Ranking Member Henry Waxman
