



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, December 10, 2023

Endangered Species Act at 50 Years

“Not a single creature on earth has more or less right to be here.” Anthony Douglas Williams

The **Endangered Species Act**, signed into law by then President Nixon on December 28, 1973, has helped prevent the loss of hundreds of North American wildlife species, from grizzly bears and gray wolves to alligators and pelicans (*National Wildlife*, Fall 2023). **More than 1,000 fish, mammals, insects, birds, and other species have been listed under the Act, and more than 50 have rebounded** because of its protections, including our nation's emblem, the bald eagle (*Nature Conservancy*, Winter 2023). The law is not only remarkable for its strong track record in protecting wildlife on the brink, but also their habitats. By conserving lands and waters essential to a species' existence, the law can save whole ecosystems. (*Natural Resources Defense Council*, 10/14/23)

Despite the successes, our planet faces an existential crisis, with 1 million species facing extinction in the coming decades. This law must be continually defended, strengthened, and funded to ensure effective implementation (*National Wildlife*, Fall 2023). “The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service currently receives less than half the funding it needs to fully implement the Act's mandate to recover threatened and endangered species.... But sufficient funding will only fix part of the problem. Both the Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries have suffered from years of overt political pressure and industry pressure designed to weaken the Act. As a result, implementation is no longer primarily driven by the best science or conservation principles, as the law envisions....

Bold regulatory improvements must include restoring scientific integrity at the wildlife agencies, ... and guaranteeing that our government can no longer ignore the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions in their actions on climate change and change-imperiled species.” (*Center for Biodiversity*, Fall 2023)

Building upon the legacy of the Endangered Species Act, the **Recovering America's Wildlife Act would provide the additional measures we need today to save all animal and plant species in trouble.** “This bipartisan Act would provide \$1.3 billion a year to state wildlife agencies to fund on-the-ground conservation efforts. That funding would cover costs for 75 percent of activities outlined in State Wildlife Action Plans, benefiting more than 12,000 species of concern listed in the plans.

The Act would also provide \$100 million to Tribal nations to support fish and wildlife management on their lands and waters. [Sign now and help us reach 20,000 signatures on our petition urging action from congressional leaders to pass the Recovering America's Wildlife Act.](#)” (Karla Raettig, Executive Director, *National Wildlife Federation Action Fund*, 10/21/23)

God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight. (Excerpt from Laudato Si' Prayer)

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at socialjustice@holycrossphl.org.