



AMERICANS FOR LIMITED GOVERNMENT

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**Testimony of
Richard Manning
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Before the
Congressional Western Caucus
On the Impact of the Endangered Species Act Classification of the Northern Spotted Owl
July 12, 2018**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Western Caucus members for the opportunity to testify here today.

I am Richard Manning, President of Americans for Limited Government. But my interest in the Endangered Species Act predates my tenure with Americans for Limited Government, going back more than two decades.

More than twenty-five years ago, the Bill Clinton Administration moved to protect the northern spotted owl in Washington, Oregon and northern California by declaring it a threatened species based upon the false belief that logging harmed the habitat of the bird. This decision was made in spite of warnings of the dire impact on forestry jobs in the northwest.

Now a quarter of a century later, we know the rest of the story.

The northern spotted owl population has continued to decline in federally managed areas and during the first term of the Obama Administration, wildlife managers recommended shooting the larger cousin of the spotted owl, the aggressive, invasive barred owl which was killing the protected spotted owl.

The question is why was the northern spotted owl in worse shape than it was when the federal government declared it threatened?

Because the entire assumption for effectively ending logging on federal lands in the northwest was wrong. It turns out the threatened owl thrives in forested areas because it depends upon clearings to see the wood rats that it hunts and eats. So rather than helping the sub-species recover, the federal government actions against logging have contributed to its continued decline.

On privately managed land in California, the once threatened owl is thriving as it lives in harmony with loggers, who clear the ground so they can eat the vermin in a natural cycle of life.

Logging once was part of the life blood of the northwestern United States, now due to the political science employed by the Clinton Administration, small mill towns across the region have withered as the source of their livelihoods ceased to exist.

The dramatic and deliberate destruction of the economic way of life for many in rural Idaho, Oregon, Washington and northern California is fact.

It is also fact that this destruction was caused by bad science which harmed the northern spotted owl's recovery.

It turns out, the Endangered Species Act failed to protect the sub-species, but was used as a cudgel against the disfavored logging industry. This is a stunning abuse of the law.

The House Western Caucus is to be applauded for reigniting this effort to reform the ESA so that there is a balance between the economic and environmental needs of our nation. It is particularly important that sound science with full transparency be employed in reaching and reviewing any findings under the Act as called for by Representative McClintock's HR 3608.

It is astounding that more than twenty-five years later, the failed management plans for the northern spotted owl remain in effect, when they are actually harming the bird. Hopefully due to today's activities, the reform effort will lead to sound, transparent and replicable science with frequent and regular reviews being required before knee-jerk actions destroy other industries and communities. Ending forever the ability of fundraising driven environmental hysteria to destroy people's way of life, with the actual protection and recovery of the threatened or endangered species being a secondary concern.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for allowing me the time to remind your Members about this history. When the ESA was new, there was not a track record. Now, we have decades to look back on to determine the good, the bad and the ugly, and change the law to ensure it stays on mission while balancing the livelihoods of the people impacted by its imposition, and the well-being of communities.

Thank you again.