



Montana
Native
Plant
Society

To observe - conserve - educate

P.O. Box 8783 Missoula, MT 59807

17 March 2006

Senators Max Baucus
511 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Baucus,

We are writing on behalf of over 600 members of the Montana Native Plant Society (MNPS). We are a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving, conserving, and studying Montana's native plants and plant communities, and educating the public about the values of our native flora and its habitats. Congress is debating whether the Endangered Species Act should be modified, and some of this legislation may attempt to weaken the Act under the guise of protecting personal property rights. We urge you to support the continuance of a strong Endangered Species Act.

We believe that all citizens have a right enjoy America's natural heritage, a clean and healthful environment as well as the biological diversity of our native landscapes. The Federal Endangered Species Act has been essential at protecting this right. The Act has prevented many species of plants and animals from going extinct. This is especially true for places experiencing high human population growth like Hawaii and California, but it is also true for Montana. Grizzly bears and gray wolves were declining in the 1960's, but now they are on the road to recovery. Proof that the Act is working is evidenced by the number of species that have been or are in the process of being delisted. Two of Montana's listed animals (wolf, grizzly bear) and one our listed plants (Ute lady's-tresses) are now in the delisting process. The Act has been instrumental in helping protect habitat for *Howellia aquatilis*, one of Montana's listed plants.

We do not want to see the property rights of any citizen needlessly sacrificed. However, the air, water, plants and animals are integral parts of the environment that we all share. No one has the right to degrade the common environment for individual gain. The Federal Endangered Species Act protects Americans against this kind of abuse and helps assure that we and our children will experience natural beauty and diversity left to us by our forefathers. Thank you for considering our concerns.

Sincerely,

Susan Winslow, President

Peter Lesica, Conservation Chair