



100 YEARS



# WIN-WIN

*The Endangered  
Species Act &  
Our National Parks*





▲ Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*)  
© Warren Metcalf  
▶ Glacier National Park  
© Benkrut | Dreamstime.com

## WINNING TOGETHER

Our national parks are home to awe-inspiring landscapes and iconic wildlife, including habitat for more than 600 threatened and endangered species protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This landmark legislation – signed into law by President Richard Nixon in 1973 – is our nation’s most effective statute for protecting wildlife in danger of extinction: just 1 percent of species listed under the ESA have been declared extinct, and many are on the path to recovery.

A vital part of that success has been the sanctuary provided to imperiled species by national parks. The law that established the National Park Service specifies that its mission “is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein...” Protecting the endangered species that live within national parks is central to the Park Service’s mission.

The National Park System’s well-protected landscapes are a clear benefit to ESA-listed wildlife. What is less obvious is how species protected by the ESA have benefited parks. These species are critical to the integrity of park ecosystems, sustaining and preserving intact, important natural systems.

This report demonstrates how national parks and the ESA support each other – a win-win for parks and wildlife.

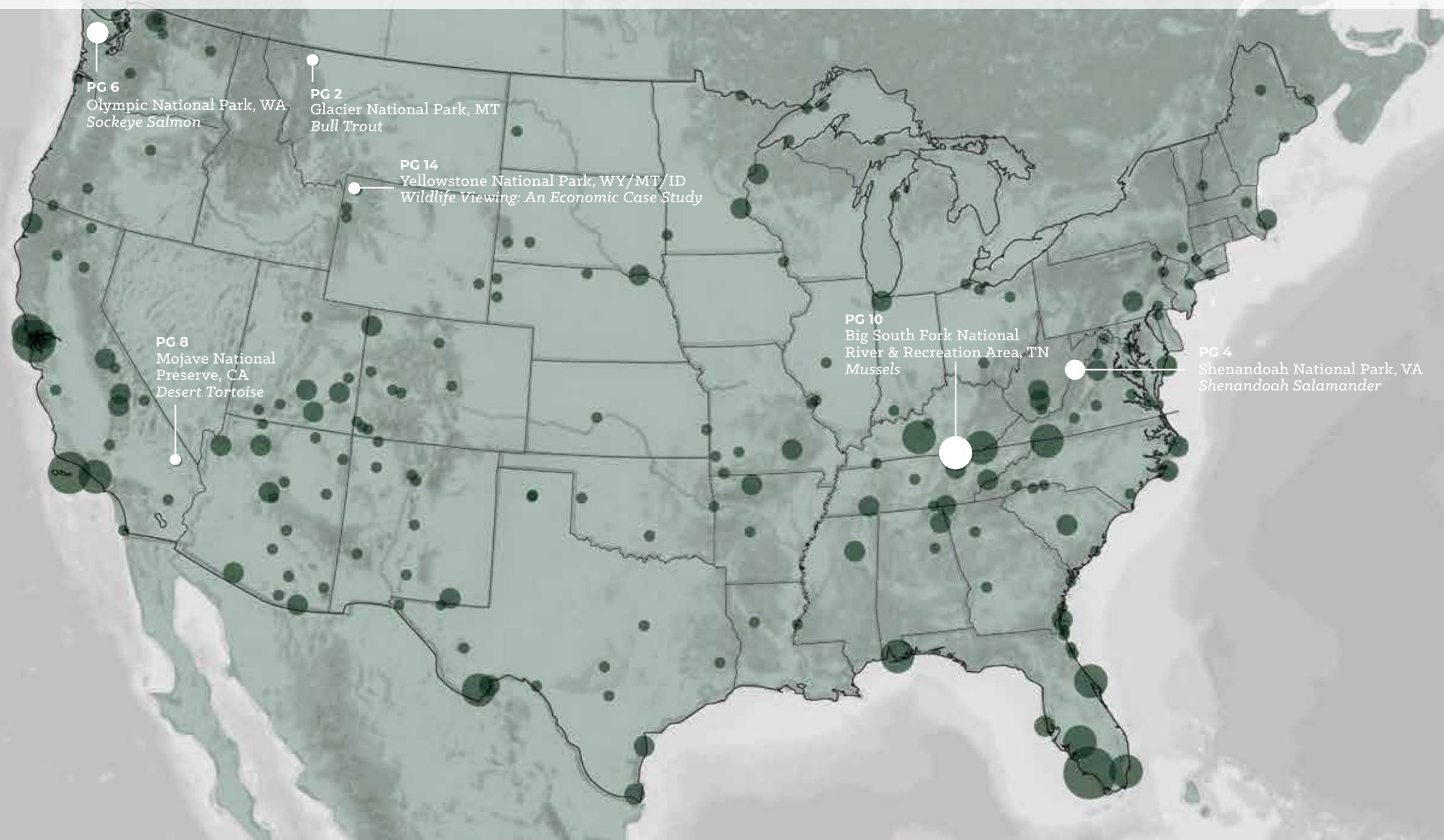
The ESA benefits national parks and surrounding communities in four key ways:

- **Healthier parks and communities** result from the legal protections, collaborative planning and partnerships fostered by the ESA.
- **More money, staff and management upgrades** flow to parks and their state and federal partners thanks to ESA-driven wildlife management.
- **Science-based policy change** driven by ESA processes help park managers protect all their natural resources, not just endangered wildlife.
- **Stronger local economies** enjoy the stream of visitors who flock to parks to view iconic species saved, recovered and protected by the ESA.

The mutually beneficial relationship between the ESA and our national parks will benefit our nation for generations to come — *if* the ESA maintains its current strong protections for the threatened and endangered plants and animals who call America’s national parks home.

Visit [esa.npca.org](https://esa.npca.org) for more information

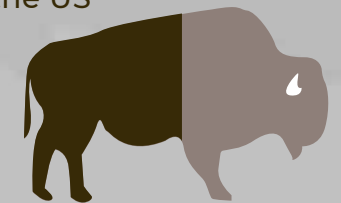
# THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES IN NATIONAL PARKS



MORE THAN **600** threatened and endangered species call national parks home

Out of all national park sites in the US

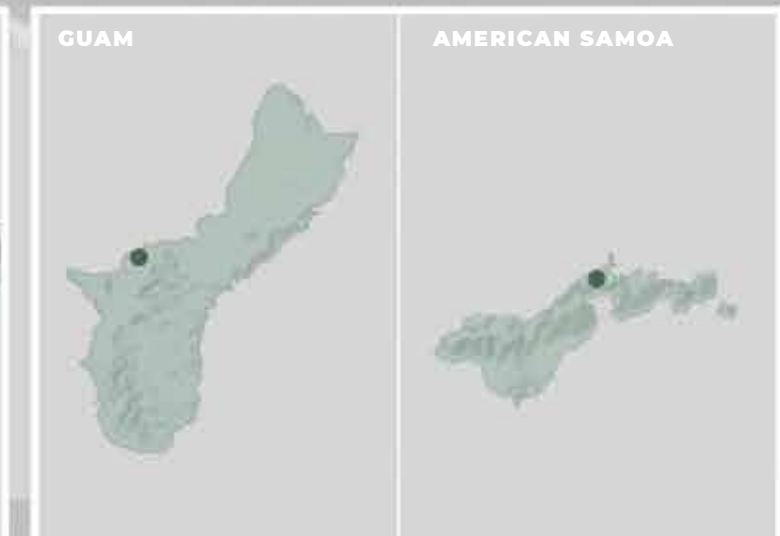
MORE THAN **1/2**



are home to threatened and endangered species



MORE THAN **1/3** of ESA-Listed species call national parks home



# HEALTHIER PARKS & COMMUNITIES

CASE STUDY



## IMPROVING THE BIG PICTURE



*Glacier National Park, MT*

### **BULL TROUT**

ESA LISTING // THREATENED

Protecting ESA-listed species has led park managers to think beyond the administrative boundaries of individual park sites. Innovative partnerships with neighboring communities and other stakeholders are creating more viable parks connected to larger, healthier ecosystems.

The Crown of the Continent ecosystem straddles the U.S.-Canadian border, 18 million acres of staggeringly beautiful wilderness. It is one of the largest intact ecosystems in the lower 48 states – home to the headwaters of our continent, Glacier National Park and the bull trout.

Bull trout are an important resource for the region, and the attention they have received as a threatened species under the ESA is helping drive broader benefits for Glacier National Park. The regional bull trout fishery has benefited from the park's policies on fishing, gill netting, piscicides, and physical stream barriers, as well as efforts to remove competing invasive species such as lake trout.

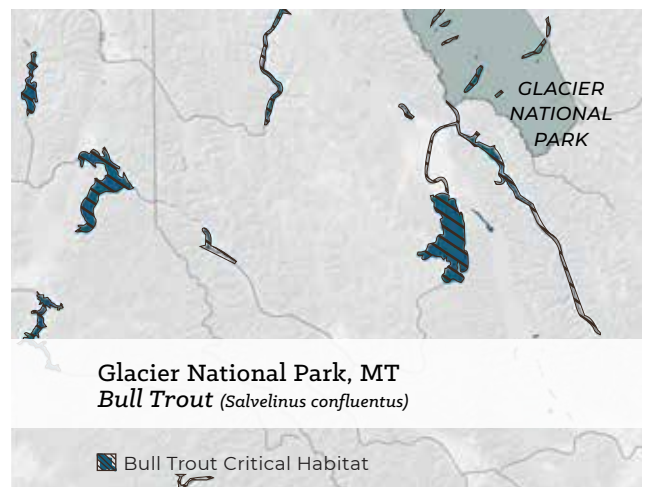


▲ Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*)  
 ©Joel Sartore  
 ▲ Glacier National Park,  
 © Kan1234 | Dreamstime.com

Helping bull trout has in turn helped the park, and the wider Crown of the Continent ecosystem. In part to enhance bull trout habitat and connectivity, Glacier’s managers now conduct landscape planning in partnership with all park neighbors. This collaboration is not only helping the bull trout recover, it’s building a more resilient ecosystem that benefits the park and surrounding communities.

Glacier National Park’s collaborative conservation partners include:

- U.S. Forest Service
- Parks Canada
- Native American tribes and first nations
- Canadian provinces, U.S. states and counties
- Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway
- Private land owners
- Nongovernmental organizations



# MORE MONEY, STAFF & MANAGEMENT UPGRADES

CASE STUDY 1

## MAKING A HANDS-ON DIFFERENCE

Limited funds and staff make it a challenge to manage a park's natural resources. ESA-listed species in parks generate additional support that helps restore habitat, develop scientific research and understanding, and improve the capacity to manage both native and invasive species.

Shenandoah National Park's 200,000 acres are located only 75 miles from Washington, DC. Each year, nearly a million and a half visitors find refuge and respite in the park's forests, meadows and waterfalls. They're not the only ones.

The Shenandoah Salamander is found on just 6,000 acres of unique habitats atop three high-elevation peaks within the park — and nowhere else. There is still much to learn about these lungless salamanders that breathe through their skin, but the safe haven of the park has bought them time.

Still, they cannot survive in any other habitat, and our warming planet puts them at risk. Their ESA status enabled park officials to leverage the expertise of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as well as additional funding to study and develop an adaptive management plan for the species. The goal: help the salamanders survive in the face of climate change. Thanks to the mandates of the ESA, the park is benefiting from a collaborative conservation strategy that also includes the U.S. Geological Survey, the state of Virginia and academic researchers.



Shenandoah National Park, VA

### SHENANDOAH SALAMANDER

ESA LISTING // ENDANGERED

Shenandoah National Park, VA  
Shenandoah Salamander (*Plethodon shenandoah*)





◀ Shenandoah salamander (*Plethodon shenandoah*) © John Cancalosi | Alamy  
▲ Shenandoah National Park,  
© Appalachianviews | Dreamstime.com



# MORE MONEY, STAFF & MANAGEMENT UPGRADES

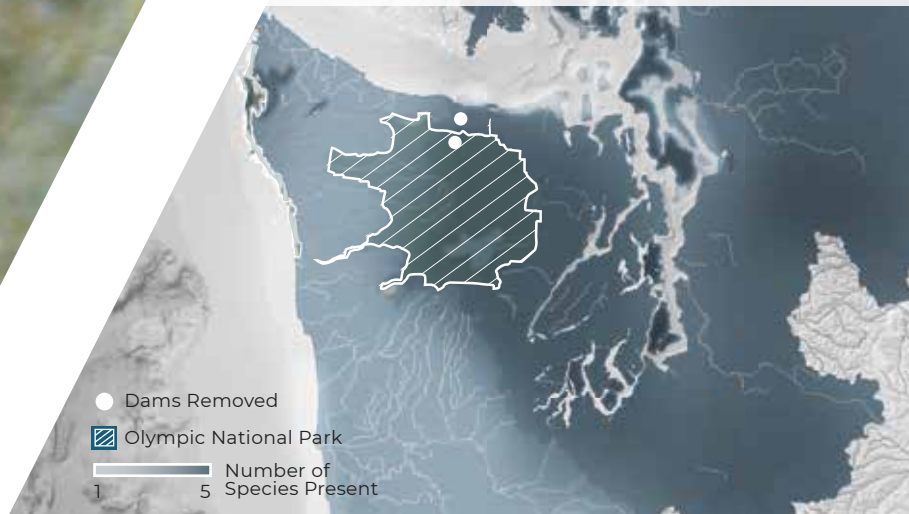
CASE STUDY 2



▲ Sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*) © Vasik Olga | Shutterstock  
◀ Olympic National Park © Binkman | Istockphoto.com



**Olympic National Park, WA**  
*ESA-Listed Salmon (Onchorhynchus spp.)*



*Olympic National Park, WA*

# SALMON

ESA LISTING // THREATENED

The million acres now encompassed by Olympic National Park once hosted millions of salmon surging up the Quinault, Ozette and Elwha River systems to spawn. In the early 20th century, two large hydroelectric dams built on the Elwha drove that river’s salmon to near extinction, damaging the economy of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. By 2007, all five salmon species in the Quinault and Ozette Rivers had declined dramatically — sockeye, for instance, numbered only 5,000.

Thanks to the ESA, a recovery plan was implemented to restore the sockeye to self-sustaining numbers. In addition, the federal government took down the Elwha Dams as part of the largest dam removal in U.S. history, which supported the park’s subsequent habitat restoration efforts. Almost immediately – much faster than expected – all five ESA-listed salmon species began to recolonize the reborn Elwha River. Eagles and otters that feed on the fish have followed.

The cascading effects from the return of the salmon are improving the park’s ecology and recreational opportunities, and benefitting tribal culture. Additional funding has also flowed to the park as a result of the salmon ESA listing — from the National Park Service and through external partners, including the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, the state of Washington, federal agencies and nonprofits.

# SCIENCE-BASED POLICY CHANGE

CASE STUDY 1



## DRIVING BETTER LEGISLATION



*Mojave National Preserve &  
3 new National Monuments, CA*

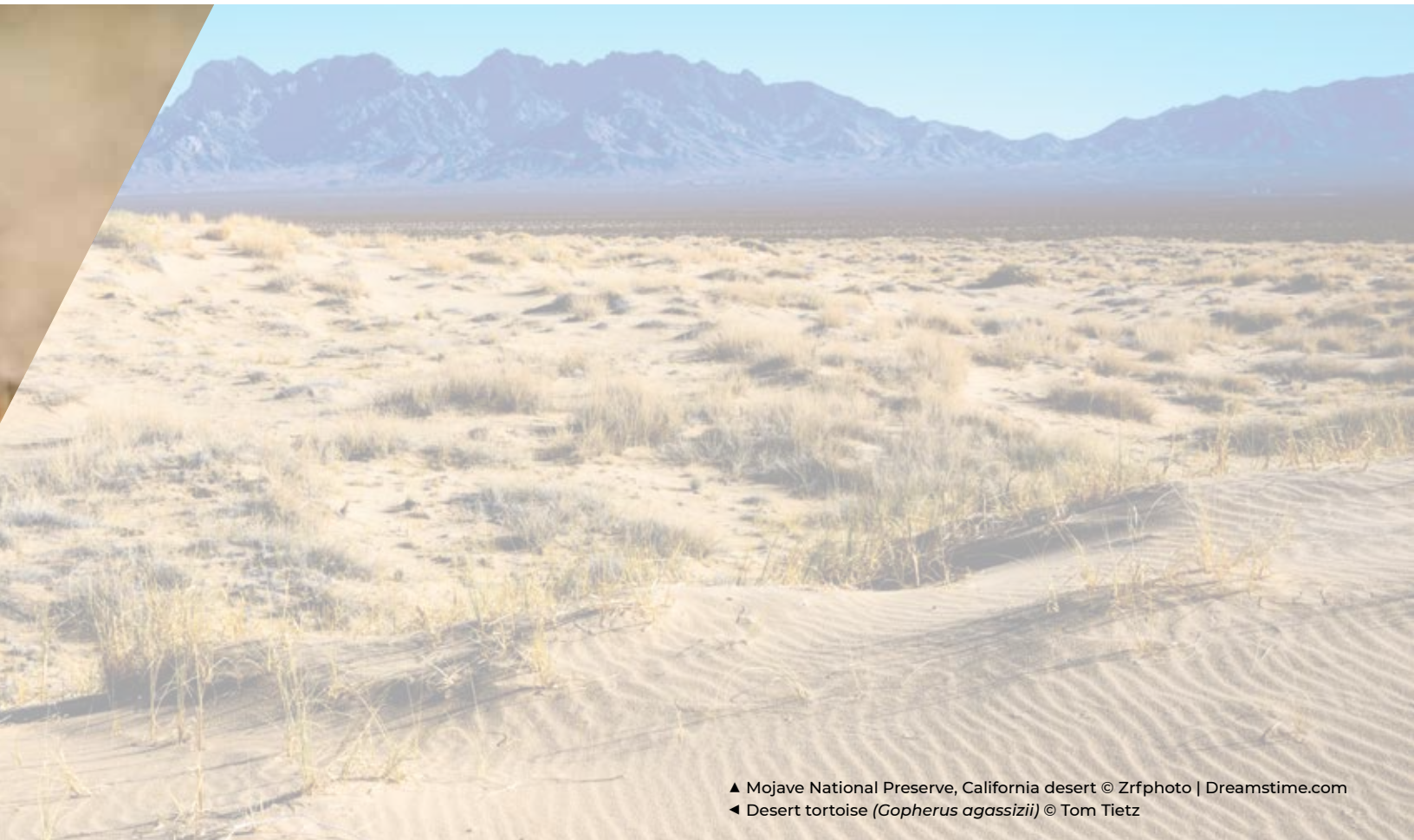
### MOJAVE (AGASSIZ'S) DESERT TORTOISE

ESA LISTING // THREATENED

The ESA and the lessons we learn from the research it drives help inform and support science-based public policy. Decisions driven by data can have a lasting positive impact on ESA-listed species as well as America's national parks.

Evolved to thrive in an exceptionally arid and challenging environment, these slow-moving gardeners and architects of the desert cannot survive the ravages of development in a fast-changing world. Not without intervention. In addition to ongoing habitat loss, more roads result in more road-kill; a growing population of ravens eats more tortoise hatchlings; and pet tortoises released into the wild introduce more disease.

When Mojave desert tortoises were ESA-listed nearly three decades ago, their plight drew national attention and urgency to protect and connect their habitat, which informed policies to conserve the

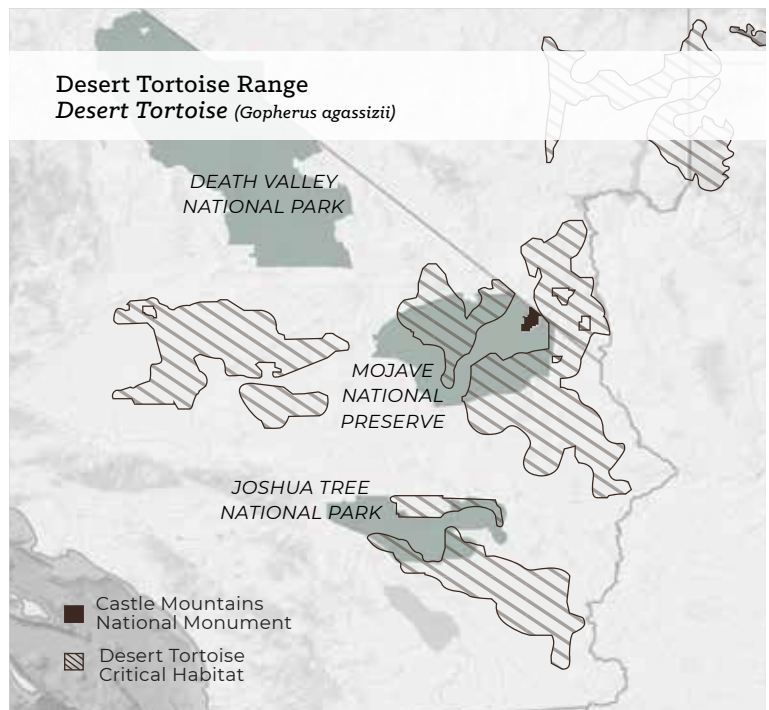


▲ Mojave National Preserve, California desert © Zrfphoto | Dreamstime.com  
 ◀ Desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) © Tom Tietz

# AND POLICY

landscapes that sustain the species. For example, the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 expanded and upgraded Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Monuments into national parks and created Mojave National Preserve. More recently, three new national monuments, Mojave Trails, Sand to Snow and Castle Mountains (NPS) now protect an additional 1.8 million acres of key habitat.

In addition to creating larger, healthier parks, these protected lands conserve habitat cores and wildlife corridors, giving the emblematic desert tortoise a leg up in its fight to avoid extinction.



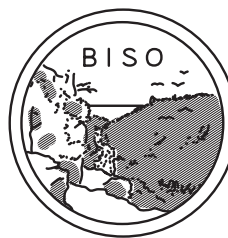
# SCIENCE-BASED POLICY CHANGE

## CASE STUDY 2

The last Ice Age transformed the region in and around the national river and recreation area into a hotspot for native mussels. Although two-thirds of the original mussel species have already been wiped out, the many threatened species that remain make this watershed in the Cumberland Mountains a global hotspot for mussels. These valuable filter feeders help clean the water. But activities such as mining in the headwaters of the Cumberland Mountains can send too much silt downstream. When that happens, the mussels can literally “clam up” and stop feeding.

Elected leaders of both political parties, along with conservationists and local communities, all worked together to protect these waters. They supported a petition under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 to declare a 600-foot corridor on either side of the ridgelines in the headwaters as unsuitable for surface coal mining operations. Throughout the process, National Parks Conservation Association and others highlighted the unique status of the protected species — and indeed, ESA-driven science and data on the area’s mussel species were crucial to NPCA’s evaluating whether a targeted mining ban would have the effect of protecting the entire watershed.

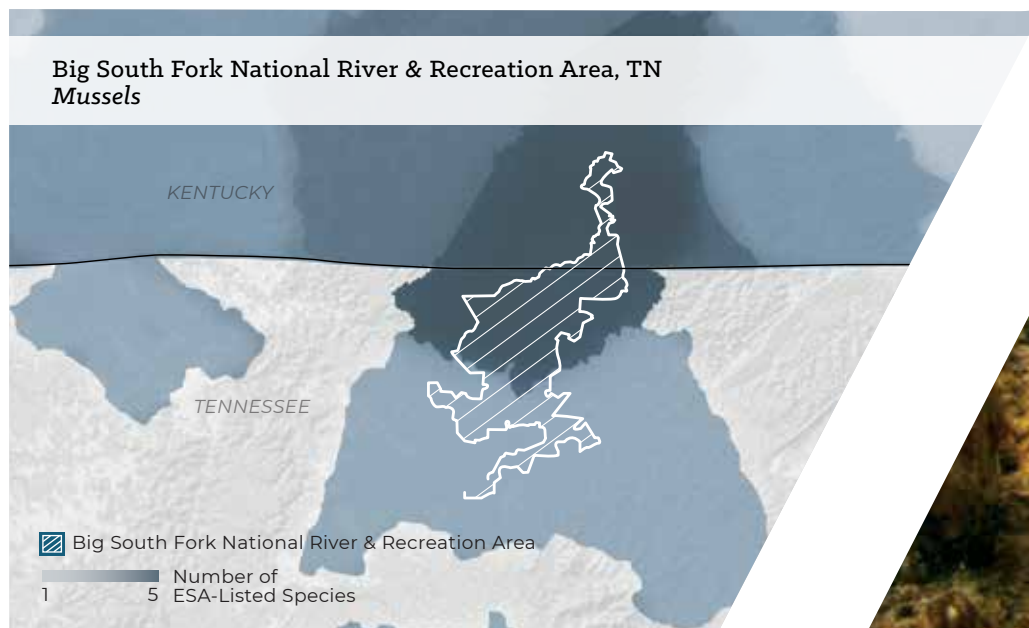
With data in hand, the petition was successful, and more than 76,000 acres are now protected from new mining. The combination of ESA-listed species and the successful petition could set a precedent for challenging future surface mining in these watersheds. It provides the Big South Fork National River with a new level of protection, improving mussel habitat as well as the water supply for tourism and area residents.



*Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area, TN*

## MUSSELS

ESA LISTING // THREATENED





◀ Mussel species in the Clinch River, Hancock Co., TN  
David Herasimtschuk © Freshwaters Illustrated  
▲ The Big South Fork of the Cumberland River  
© Anthonyheflin | Dreamstime.com

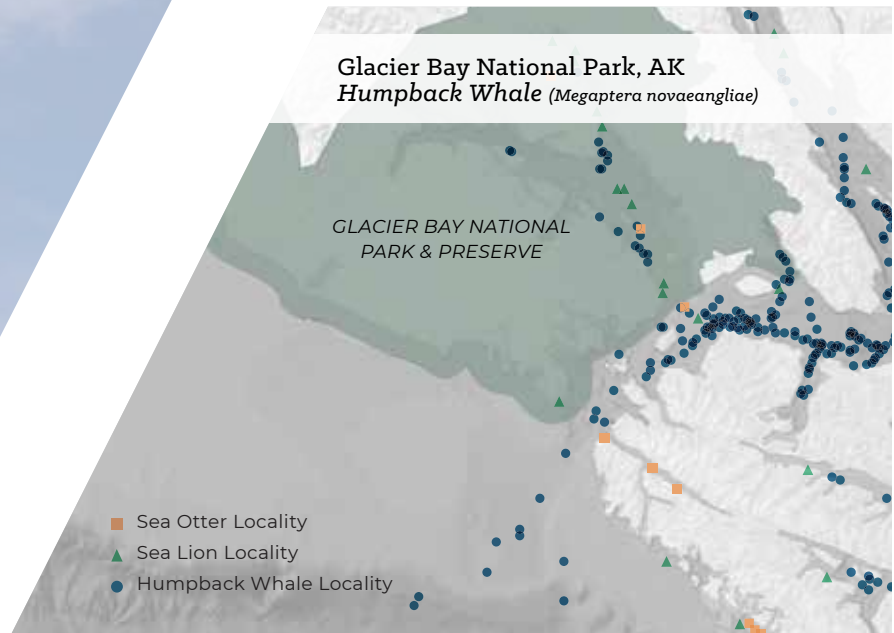
# STRONGER LOCAL ECONOMIES

CASE STUDY 1



▲ Glacier Bay National Park © Alaskagm | Dreamstime.com | Orlando Jose De Castro  
◀ Humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) © Michael Valos | Dreamstime.com

Glacier Bay National Park, AK  
*Humpback Whale (Megaptera novaeangliae)*



# PAYING OFF FOR ANIMALS AND PEOPLE



*Glacier Bay National Park  
and Preserve, AK*

## HUMPBACK WHALES

ESA LISTING // NO LONGER  
ENDANGERED

*In 2016, NOAA determined that the  
Hawaii distinct population segment  
of humpback whales, that feeds in  
Glacier Bay, is no longer at risk.*

One of the top draws for national park visitors is the chance to see wildlife, especially rare and iconic animals. The resources that come with ESA-listed species help recovery, enhance the visitor experience and benefit park-adjacent communities and economies.

With more than 3 million acres of spectacular scenery, Glacier Bay National Park is a highlight of Alaska's Inside Passage. The biggest attraction for many visitors is the unforgettable experience of watching humpback whales in their summer feeding ground. But from 1978-79, an increase in noisy vessel traffic drove these gentle giants from the bay.

After ESA-related vessel quotas were put in action, the whales came back. Fewer vessels also reduced visible haze, improving the wildlife- and scenery-viewing experience. Visitors to Glacier Bay now see Steller sea lions, whose numbers have steadily increased since the early 1980s, and northern sea otters, whose population has boomed to an estimated 8,000 individuals, among other animals.

Even with the limit on cruise ships and other boats allowed in the park, more than half a million visitors a year spend an estimated \$114 million in gateway regions around Glacier Bay. That supports more than 2,000 jobs among tour operators, lodges and other local businesses.



# STRONGER LOCAL ECONOMIES

CASE STUDY 2



Yellowstone National Park,  
WY/MT/ID

## WILDLIFE VIEWING: AN ECONOMIC CASE STUDY

The ESA is good for wildlife viewing, and that's good for regional economies, according to extensive analysis at Yellowstone. The ESA has successfully driven the conservation of wolves, grizzly bears, bald eagles and other species in the world's first national park.

After wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone, a 2006 analysis found that the opportunity to possibly view them boosted the number of non-local visitors by 3.7 percent. Regional communities benefited from an additional \$35.5 million in annual visitor spending. In fact, 67 percent of surveyed park visitors say that, among all the park's resources, wolves are either very important or extremely important.

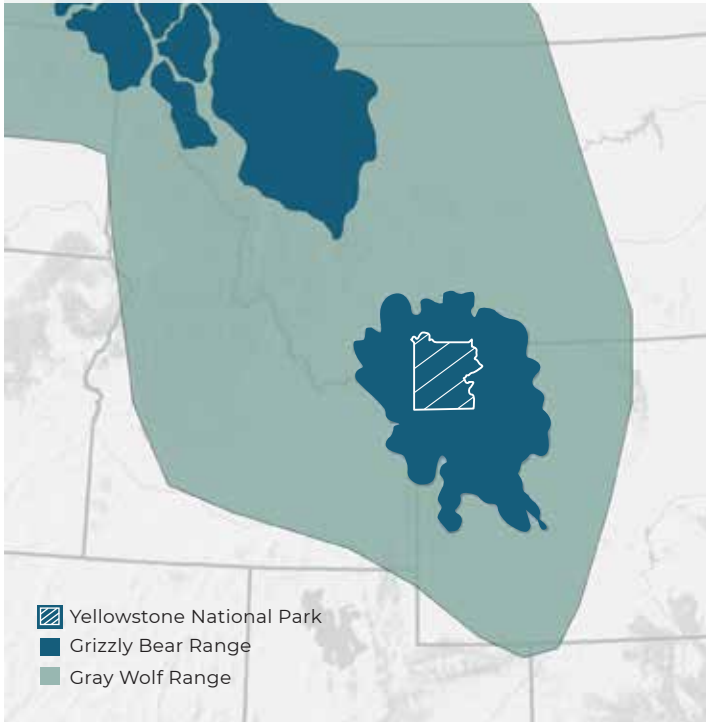
When visitors are asked the same thing about grizzly bears, that number jumps to 75 percent. The bears have become a mainstay for the regional tourism industry. A 2014 study of roadside bear viewing in Yellowstone concluded that, without the bears, park visitation would likely decline by 5 percent. For neighboring communities, that could translate to a loss of 155 jobs and \$10 million in annual economic benefits.

Yellowstone provides ample evidence that the mutually beneficial relationship between national parks and the ESA is good for both wildlife and local economies.



◀ American Bison (*Bison bison*) © Ironrodart | Dreamstime.com  
▲ Yellowstone National Park © Worldinlens | Dreamstime.com  
▶ Grey wolf (*Canis lupus*) © Joel Sartore

Yellowstone National Park, WY, MT, ID  
Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) & Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*)



“Wildlife is the number one thing people want to see.”

– CATHY SHILL, OWNER HOLE HIKING EXPERIENCE,  
JACKSON HOLE, WY

“Bears are always the biggest highlight of a trip – bigger than Old Faithful or most other wildlife.”

– ALEX KLEIN, GRAND TETON LODGE COMPANY,  
MORAN, WY



## OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD FOR PARK WILDLIFE

# ENDANGERED SPECIES STILL NEED THE ESA

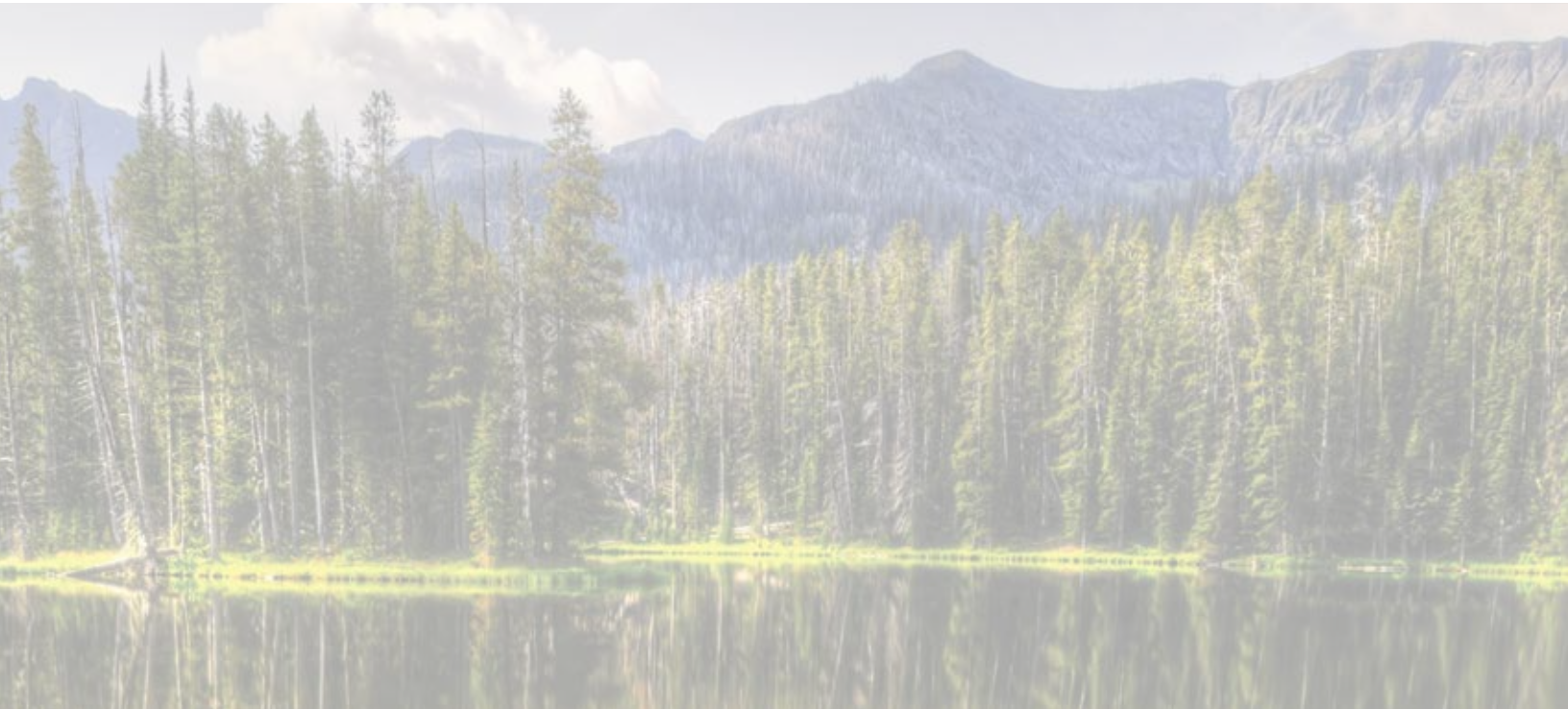


The work of protecting vulnerable wildlife under the Endangered Species Act is far from done. North Cascades grizzly bears are just one example. For 20,000 years, grizzly bears thrived in what is now North Cascades National Park and the broader ecosystem. Today, fewer than 10 grizzlies remain. The park's 10,000 square miles encompass one of America's wildest and most remote areas. Grizzly bears play an important role in keeping ecosystems like this healthy, and the ESA is critical to bringing them back.

The North Cascades ecosystem could easily support 200 bears. But getting to that number could take a century. The National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have already spent two decades planning and conducting scientific studies under the ESA, laying the foundation for grizzly bear recovery. Decades more will be needed to complete their work. But the payoff will be enormous when grizzly bears once again roam this wild landscape.

As demonstrated throughout this report, ESA requirements are likely to result in a healthier ecosystem for the park and its surrounding communities; more money, staff and improved management practices; science-based, data-driven planning for smarter policies; and stronger local economies from bear-related tourism.

We must not weaken the protections afforded by the ESA as it is currently written. Without wildlife, the wild landscapes of our national parks would be incomplete.



◀ Grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*). © Daburke | Dreamstime.com  
▲ Yellowstone National Park © Bgsmith | Dreamstime.com

The best tool for protecting parks *and* their iconic species now and into the future is the Endangered Species Act. Members of Congress and the administration should work to fully fund existing ESA programs and reject attempts to limit the act's scope.

When you support National Parks Conservation Association and Defenders of Wildlife, you are supporting the application and defense of the ESA. You are helping our work to ensure that Congress will:

- Fight congressional and administrative attacks on this bedrock law.
- Protect the integrity of the species listing process, including use of best available science; the ability of citizens to petition for species protections; and the right to judicial review of listing decisions.
- Oppose efforts to render listing decisions through congressional action.
- Support increased funding for endangered species programs at the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and other agencies.



**100 YEARS**



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2019

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