



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **California Coastal Alliance Opposes Proposed Rollbacks to the Endangered Species Act**

*Date: May 18, 2025*

Los Angeles, California — Today, California Coastal Alliance (CCA) issued a strong public statement opposing the federal government’s proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that would narrow the definition of “take” and “harm” to exclude habitat destruction.

“The ESA’s effectiveness stems from its acknowledgment that species conservation demands more than preventing direct injury—it requires maintaining the ecological systems essential to their survival,” said Ashley Oelsen, Executive Director of CCA.

Conservation scientists and legal experts have long affirmed that “harm” includes indirect actions like habitat degradation and destruction—key drivers of extinction across the globe. Redefining this term to exclude habitat loss directly undermines the purpose of the Act and invites a wave of legally permitted habitat destruction under the guise of compliance.

“If we fail to recognize habitat loss as harm, we leave species legally ‘protected’ while their homes are bulldozed or polluted beyond recovery,” said Oelsen. “That’s not conservation—it’s negligence.”

The proposed changes come at a time of escalating biodiversity loss and climate crisis, when robust environmental protections are more urgent than ever. The rollback threatens not only individual species but also the health of entire ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

California Coastal Alliance urges the Department of the Interior and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reject these dangerous revisions and uphold the integrity of the ESA by ensuring that habitat loss remains within the definition of “harm.”

## **PUBLIC COMMENT OPPOSING CHANGES TO THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT**

**Rescinding the Definition of “Harm” Under the Endangered Species Act** A Proposed Rule by the [Fish and Wildlife Service](#) and the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) on [04/17/2025](#)

Submitted via: Regulations.gov

Date: May 18, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

We strongly oppose the proposed revisions to the Endangered Species Act (ESA), particularly the attempt to narrow the definition of “take” and “harm” in ways that exclude habitat destruction.

The ESA’s effectiveness stems from its acknowledgment that species conservation demands more than preventing direct injury—it requires maintaining the ecological systems essential to their survival. Courts and scientists have long upheld the understanding that “harm” under the ESA includes indirect actions such as habitat degradation, fragmentation, or destruction. These are often the most significant drivers of species decline and extinction. Narrowing the definition of “harm” to only include direct physical injury defies ecological science and undermines decades of legal precedent and conservation progress.

If we fail to recognize habitat loss as a form of harm, we effectively deny protection to the very conditions that allow species to live. In practice, this rollback would create a massive loophole: species could be left legally “protected” while their habitats are bulldozed, polluted, or rendered uninhabitable. That is not conservation. That is negligence.

The ESA is one of our most effective environmental laws because it takes a comprehensive view of what it means to protect life. Diluting its power not only endangers species already on the brink—it also sets a dangerous precedent for ignoring the interconnectedness of life and land.

We urge the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reject these proposed changes and maintain a scientifically sound and ecologically meaningful definition of “take” and “harm” that includes habitat loss. The health of our ecosystems—and the survival of countless species—depends on it.

Sincerely,



**Ashley Oelsen**

Executive Director, California Coastal Alliance

Los Angeles, California

email: [ash@californiacoastalliance.org](mailto:ash@californiacoastalliance.org)



[www.californiacoastalliance.org](http://www.californiacoastalliance.org)

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### Rescinding the Definition of “Harm” Under the Endangered Species Act

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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