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Subject: PABIODIV: Rep. Hansen bill proposes to reform ESA
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This is probably old news to some of you:
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Hansen Files Landmark Bill to Restore Original Intent of ESA.
Exempts private property, military lands and all plant life from ESA

Retiring House Resources Chairman James V. Hansen today filed a bill that would exempt military lands, private property and all plant life from the Endangered Species Act. Hansen called the bill "a shot across the bow from a retiring chairman" and a blueprint for bold changes that reflect what Congress originally intended when it passed the law more than 30 years ago. "I'm just greasing the wheels for change here, giving my colleagues something they can act on swiftly in the next Congress," Hansen said. Growing problems with the ESA cost consumers and taxpayers more than a billion a year in litigation, lost profits, lost jobs and rising operating costs for both government and business, according to estimates from private groups. In some instances, private property owners can't walk their own property. Some military bases can't use their own land for mission-critical training at a time when America is on the verge of war. Chairman Hansen's statement: "After working with this law during my 22 years in Congress, I've concluded it's the most powerful law in the land. It can be used to thwart everything from the training of our fighter pilots to the farmer's simple desire to plant a crop in his field so he can feed his family. "Right now, in this country, the rights of an endangered fly or a species of seaweed take precedence over national security, commerce and many people's right to the enjoyment of property and the pursuit of happiness. "Our founding fathers would be appalled. This government was founded on a few key concepts, among them the need to provide a common defense and the protection of individual property rights. These days, ESA is tripping up even that. This legislation moves the federal government in the direction of working cooperatively with private land owners. Under current law, the only option to protect endangered species is legal confrontation. "Congress crafted this law nearly 40 years ago to protect large species like the grizzly, wolf and bald eagle from extinction. Frankly, the ESA hasn't done a particularly good job of protecting anything but lawyers' pocketbooks. Outlawing DDT did more for our wildlife than the ESA has done. "Meanwhile roads have been stalled, homes lost, countless jobs forfeited and thousands of acres locked up because of this ham-fisted law. Republicans and Democrats have long recognized that something needs to be done to fix the Endangered Species Act. I'm just making it easy for everybody next year by dropping a bill now with the three simple changes that could fix this law. "If we exempt private property, military lands and all plants from the ESA, we would, in short order, have a more prosperous and secure nation and still have a healthy and abundant wildlife. We would create thousands of jobs, jump-start our economy, free up our clogged court system and still protect our wildlife. I'd wager my federal pension you could make these changes and the populations of threatened and endangered species would remain the same. The numbers didn't improve when we started stripping people of their rights. I doubt they'll go down any once we restore those rights."

The Pennsylvania Biodiversity Listserve encourages open discussion about biodiversity issues in the state. It is hosted by the Allegheny Institute of Natural History, University of Pittsburgh-Bradford and is moderated by the Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership. The opinions expressed in messages are those of the authors and NOT the Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership.