

17 States File Suit to Stop Trump Administration's Crippling of Endangered Species Act

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Seventeen states on Wednesday sued the President Donald Trump administration over its recent move “to eviscerate” the Endangered Species Act.

“As we face the unprecedented threat of a climate emergency, now is the time to strengthen our planet’s biodiversity, not to destroy it,” [said](#) California Attorney General [Xavier Becerra](#), who’s leading the coalition. “The only thing we want to see extinct are the beastly policies of the Trump Administration putting our ecosystems in critical danger.”

The [suit](#) (pdf), brought by 17 states and the District of Columbia and the City of New York, was filed in the District Court for the Northern District of California. It comes a month after the administration [finalized](#) a series of rollbacks to the law—a move Mass Audubon president Gary Clayton [called](#) “another example of the Trump administration’s continuing war on the nature of America.”

As Jonathan Hahn [explained](#) at *Sierra* magazine last month, the new regulations, which are set to take effect Thursday,

significantly weaken the process for listing and enforcing Endangered Species Act protections and inject economic and potentially political considerations into that process where none had existed before. They will bring to an end automatic protections for threatened species, make it easier to delist species (by raising the bar for what evidence is required to show that a species is threatened or endangered), and limit the ways in which climate change can be factored into listing decisions in “the foreseeable future”—essentially removing climate change as a consideration just as the global climate crisis is accelerating.

According to the new lawsuit, the new rules

“violate the plain language and purpose of the ESA, its legislative history, numerous binding judicial precedents interpreting the ESA, and its precautionary approach to protecting imperiled species and critical habitat.”

The legal action also accuses the Trump administration of failing “to consider and disclose the significant environmental impacts of this action in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.”

Massachusetts Attorney General [Maura Healey](#), who joins with Becerra and Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh in leading the legal action, wrote on Twitter Wednesday: “The Trump Administration wants to eviscerate the Endangered Species Act. We won’t let them threaten our environment just so oil and gas companies can make a quick buck.”

The other states involved in the suit are Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Michigan Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington.

They aren’t the first group to launch a legal challenge to the administration’s weakening of the ESA, as a coalition of environmental and animal advocacy groups [filed suit](#) (pdf) last month.

“We’re coming out swinging to defend this consequential law,” Becerra said in his statement, “humankind and the species with whom we share this planet depend on it.”

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