



Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association

8 Otis Place ~ Scituate, MA 02066
781.545.6984

December 10, 2025

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service

Proposed ESA Regulatory Changes: FWS-HQ-ES-2025-0039; NMFS-251105-0168, FWS-HQ-ES-2025-0044; NMFS-251105-0167, FWS-HQ-ES-2025-0029, FWS-HQ-ES-2025-0048

Dear Sir or Madam:

On behalf of its 1800 members, the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association (MLA) respectfully submits this letter of SUPPORT for the proposed regulatory revisions to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (FWS-HQ-ES-2025-0039; NMFS-251105-0168, FWS-HQ-ES-2025-0044; NMFS-251105-0167, FWS-HQ-ES-2025-0029, FWS-HQ-ES-2025-0048). These updates represent a thoughtful effort to modernize and clarify the implementation of the ESA in a way that maintains strong protection for wildlife while improving regulatory efficiency, transparency, and predictability for the public, industry, and government agencies alike.

Established in 1963, the MLA is a member-driven organization that accepts and supports the interdependence of species conservation and the members' collective economic interests. The MLA continues to work conscientiously through the management process with the MA Division of Marine Fisheries (MADMF), the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries and National Marine Fisheries Service to ensure the continued sustainability and profitability of all the resources in which our lobstermen are engaged in.

First, the proposal to revise the application of the blanket 4(d) rule is a constructive step toward a more tailored and species-specific approach to conservation. Allowing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to craft individualized 4(d) rules for threatened species ensures that protections are better aligned with the unique biological needs and conservation priorities of each species. This targeted strategy can improve conservation outcomes by directing resources and regulatory attention where they will have the greatest impact, while reducing unnecessary burdens where blanket restrictions are not biologically warranted.

Second, the proposed changes to critical habitat regulations offer a more balanced and pragmatic framework for evaluating habitat designations. By allowing agencies to meaningfully consider economic, community, and land-use implications, the rule promotes more transparent decision-making that integrates both conservation goals and real-world needs. This approach supports responsible land management and acknowledges that long-term species recovery is best achieved when conservation requirements are clearly defined, strategically focused, and compatible with sustainable economic activity.

Third, incorporating economic considerations into aspects of the listing and habitat-designation processes can help ensure that regulatory decisions are fully informed, balanced, and publicly defensible. While the ESA has always centered on the best available sciences, having a clearer understanding of economic impacts allows for more thoughtful implementation and helps foster public trust, interagency cooperation, and predictable regulatory pathways.

Fourth, improvements to the interagency consultation process have the potential to reduce unnecessary delays while preserving the core scientific review that protects threatened and endangered species. Streamlining consultation—without eliminating scientific input—creates a more efficient system that allows federal agencies to move forward with important projects while still meeting their responsibilities under the ESA. Enhancing clarity and reducing redundancy ultimately supports better compliance.

These reforms recognize that effective conservation depends not only on protections, but also on clear processes, practical implementation, and durable partnerships across federal agencies, states, tribes, local communities, and industry. Modernizing longstanding regulations can help strengthen the ESA's ability to function effectively in today's environmental, economic, and administrative landscape.

The ESA remains one of the nation's most significant conservation laws, and these proposed changes provide an opportunity to update regulatory tools in a measured way that continues to safeguard imperiled species while promoting transparency, efficiency, and responsible land and resource use.

For these reasons, we support the agencies' efforts to revise and improve these regulatory frameworks, and we encourage the adoption of the proposed rules.

Sincerely,
Beth Casoni
Executive Director