

Tammy Cloutier  
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LD 138

Dear Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

I am writing to request your opposition to LD 138 An Act to Exempt Airports from Certain State Endangered and Threatened Species Habitat Protections unless or until additional details can be provided as to why this action is being requested.

States play a key role in endangered species protection, and endangered and threatened species are labeled as such for good reason. Many species are critical for supplying life-supporting ecosystem services that ensure their and human survival (e.g., water filtration, carbon sequestration, rodent and pest control, pollination, products for human use or consumption). Habitat destruction, pollution, and climate change are just a few of the threats faced by these species. Removing protections only adds to the challenges endangered and threatened species must overcome to simply survive, some of which may have no alternative habitat.

Our ecosystems and biodiversity are more complex than we know. However, based on what we do know, removing protections from species who need it to allow those who don't want to be "constrained by existing habitat protection rules that would otherwise prohibit activities that SIGNIFICANTLY ALTER endangered species habitats or violate PROTECTION guidelines" that were put in place for valid reasons is worrisome. What development, maintenance, or expansion projects necessitate the need to ask for protection exemptions? These general terms could encompass a number of unnecessary projects that may permanently destroy vital habitat.

If we remove protections and provide exemptions for airports, where does it stop? Where is the oversight of damaging environmental activities if we continue to allow exemptions from policies that are put into place to protect both human and nonhuman interests? This may set a dangerous precedent that allows the continued destruction of habitat and ecosystem services.

I respectfully urge you to oppose this legislation, and thank you for your time.