

STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE RICHARD W. POMBO, CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, AT THE FULL COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT
HEARING ON PREBLE'S MEADOW JUMPING MOUSE;
GREELEY, COLORADO; SEPTEMBER 18, 2006.

Good Morning. I would like to call this hearing to order. Thank you for the opportunity to bring the House of Representatives Committee on Resources to the state of Colorado and Greeley in particular.

I look forward to listening and gaining greater insight from the witnesses today, and from my Congressional colleague on how the implementation of the Endangered Species Act with regard to the Preble's meadow jumping mouse is affecting your communities.

After more than three decades, the Endangered Species Act has given wildlife very little to cheer about. Since its inception, nearly 1,300 domestic species have been listed as threatened or endangered. Yet, less than 1% of the domestic species listed under the ESA have yet to reach the point where they have been "recovered" in more than 30 years.

As part of an effort to find out what types of species recovery efforts, particularly in the recovery planning process, may be fruitful the Government Accountability Office recently released a report. The report reviewed a select group of endangered species that could be expected to represent some of the most promising examples of our endangered species conservation efforts.

While the GAO report predicts that a number of these species will eventually be recovered and delisted in the future – in 2010, 2015, 2025 or perhaps later, it also found that about twenty percent of the species that fell into this group did so in significant part because data used in listing the species turned out to be inaccurate. In fact, data error was a significant enough factor that GAO singled it out.

This fact is very much relevant to today's hearing. It is particularly relevant given the heated debate over the status of the Preble's meadow jumping mouse. As most here are aware, there have been petitions filed to remove this mouse's threatened status based on challenges to the data that was used to justify the mouse's inclusion on the list. The challenges have asserted that the mouse is more abundant than was known at the time of listing and also challenged the validity of the mouse's taxonomic status. As required, the Department of Interior is now reviewing the matter prior to making a final decision on its proposed regulation to delist the mouse.

During this process there have been a number of studies conducted and a heated debate has ensued that focused heavily on the mouse's taxonomic status. That the distribution and numbers of this mouse are likely significantly greater than was known at the time of listing seems to have received, relatively far less attention. Today we will have witnesses that will speak to the issue of the mouse's taxonomic status and take alternate sides of the issue. No matter how strongly they make their case, it is unlikely that a general

agreement on the taxonomic dispute will be reached here that all who have been involved would agree to. None the less, it is important to hear about this aspect of implementation of the ESA.

The debate over how meaningful the variations are between this mouse and other highly similar mice are is complicated and difficult for many to comprehend. But, it is clearly not a debate without consequence and consequences that people clearly do understand. While scientists may disagree over the status of the species, the fact is that as long as it remains listed as a threatened species there are regulatory consequences felt by those who fall within this mouse's range. While we will hear about the taxonomic dispute, hopefully we will also learn today about some of the real world effects of this mouse's threatened status upon those who live with the resulting regulations.

With a strong bipartisan vote, The House Resources Committee and the House of Representatives passed H.R. 3824, the Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Act, TESRA. While TESRA has neither everything that I would like to see nor all that those who opposed it would like, that is the nature of legislating. I have no doubt however, that it would significantly improve our endangered species program for both imperiled species and people. Making law, however, requires action by both chambers of Congress and the House measure awaits a Senate response.

Hopefully what we learn here today, will contribute to Congress's understanding of the effects of the ESA, contributing to Congress's efforts to improve this law in a way that benefits both people and wildlife. That is why The House Committee on Resources is here today at the request of your Representative Mrs. Musgrave. We are before you to hear from you and receive your ideas on what we as your elected representatives in Washington, can do to improve the implementation of the Endangered Species Act.

I would at this time like to recognize a member of the House Resources Committee, Mrs. Musgrave.