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PRESS RELEASE

Commissioner Bush Leads 23-State Effort to End Green 'Sue and Settle' Racket

Western states alliance stands up for property rights and military readiness

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AUSTIN — Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush has joined forces with land commissioners from Wisconsin to Hawaii to stop environmentalists from taking advantage of American taxpayers.

"The Endangered Species Act was designed to preserve biodiversity, not enrich trial lawyers and political activists," said Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush. "So we've joined with our Western allies to put an end to 'sue and settle' and force the Obama administration to be upfront with the American people. It's time to prioritize scientific assessments in conservation when dealing with property rights and our national security."

The Western States Land Commissioners Association, or WSLCA, met this summer at its annual conference in Moab, Utah. The group unanimously approved a resolution, brought to the meeting by Commissioner Bush, which calls out "sue and settle" and calls on Congress to reform the Endangered Species Act to end the questionable practice. The resolution also calls on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service to take local and state data on wildlife into account before listing a species as endangered.

Under a little reported provision of the Endangered Species Act, environmental groups sue the federal government to get a species on the endangered list. The government often settles the lawsuits, and then pays the groups' legal expenses. The result of this arrangement is that species get listed as endangered with little to no scientific data to justify it, and the green groups rake in more green in the form of taxpayer dollars. "Sue and settle" has also led to a flood of litigation, with some 120 species currently under review. The green groups' tactic, known as "sue and settle," lines environmental groups' pockets by looting the national treasury.

Additionally, when a species gets placed on the endangered list, its habitat can become severely limited or ruled out from use and development, reducing property values and in the case of Ft. Hood, Texas, harming military training. In a statement issued in July, for instance, Ft. Hood commander Lieutenant General Sean MacFarland noted that listing

the golden-cheeked warbler as endangered has hindered base operations, and de-listing the bird would benefit training. Ft. Hood, located in Central Texas, is the stateside hub of the global war against terrorism.

"If the Endangered Species Act was used as intended, we would utilize it to preserve species and we would celebrate when one gets taken off the endangered list," Commissioner Bush added. "Some in the media seem to believe that having a species removed from the list is terrible, but it's really a victory for ranchers, farmers and conservationists. It means that the animal is thriving."

WSLCA stretches from Wisconsin in the north to Louisiana in the south, and across the American west including California, Alaska and Hawaii. The full resolution may be read here: <http://www.glo.texas.gov/wslca/pdf/resolutions/WSLCA-Resolution-2015-03-ESA.pdf>.

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