NEWS RELEASE

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County commissioner testifies on potential improvements to Endangered Species Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Association of Counties (NACo) Western Interstate Region First Vice President Gordon Cruickshank today was on Capitol Hill to offer his expertise on species conservation efforts and impacts of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) on counties. He provided insights from counties nationwide on how the Act could be improved to achieve shared goals of environmental protection and responsible land use.

Cruickshank, commissioner chair, Valley County, Idaho, testified before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works at a hearing entitled, “Fish and Wildlife Service: The President’s FY2016 budget request for the Fish and Wildlife Service and legislative hearing on Endangered Species bills.”

“Healthy, safe and vibrant communities cannot exist without healthy ecosystems and safe environmental conditions,” said Cruickshank. "ESA impacts on counties and residents are far-reaching. That’s why we must have a seat at the table as decision-makers in conservation efforts.”

Speaking on behalf of NACo, Cruickshank outlined for the committee four main points, including:

• Counties support safeguarding our nation’s wildlife, fish and plants
• ESA decisions must consider economic along with species impacts
• Federal agencies can help to alleviate local financial costs of ESA compliance, and
• Stronger intergovernmental collaboration would benefit ESA conservation efforts and litigation.

“When counties, states and the federal government work together, we can achieve a balance between species conservation and responsible land use,” said Cruickshank. “ESA decisions must consider economic impacts along with species impacts, and federal agencies should work with counties to minimize the financial costs of ESA compliance.”

To read Cruickshank’s testimony and for more information, visit www.naco.org/ESA.

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