

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 11, 2014

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Dan Ashe
Director
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell and Director Ashe:

We are writing in response to notice published by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in the October 2, 2013, Federal Register (78 Fed. Reg. 61046) in which the Service proposed, in response to a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity, to list the Northern Long-Eared (NLE) bat as an endangered species due to the effects of the White Nose Syndrome (WNS). The notice also made a "not warranted" decision on listing the Eastern Small-Footed Bat.

As Arkansans, we have a proud tradition of protecting species considered endangered. However, following a review of the notice and consultations with our state officials, we have strong concerns the NLE bat does not deserve that classification due to WNS. As you know, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires all listing decisions be made based on the best-available science; to date, our conversation with state stakeholders and a review of the submitted comments indicate the available information does not support listing the NLE bat as endangered.

We are troubled by this conclusion, as such a listing would eliminate forest harvesting in Arkansas during the months of April through November, devastating what is a vital industry in our state. Further, this does not address the impact an endangered listing would have on farming, energy development, and manufacturing within the state. In order to avoid such a detrimental impact on Arkansas and other states across the country, we believe it is prudent for FWS to grant a six-month extension to further consider the scientific data and comments from affected stakeholders.

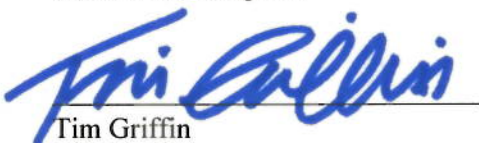
If, at the end of the additional review period, FWS still believes the proposed listing is warranted it should list the species as threatened. Such a listing would provide ample protections for the bat and allow the Service to promulgate a special §4(d) rule that addresses the threats of WNS while allowing activities that minimally affect the bat to continue.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Tom Cotton
Member of Congress



Tim Griffin
Member of Congress



Rick Crawford
Member of Congress



Steve Womack
Member of Congress