

Our Most Threatened Species

[Office of the Secretary of Agriculture :: Weekly News From Secretary Larry Gabriel
http://www.state.sd.us/doa/secretary/news/Column_151.htm](http://www.state.sd.us/doa/secretary/news/Column_151.htm)

Congress is trying to fix the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but they don't use it to protect our most important threatened species.

One hundred years ago, its population was around 30 million scattered over about 840 million acres of habitat. Today, their numbers are about one tenth that amount covering about 952 million acres.

Obviously, generalized quantity of habitat is not the answer for this declining species. The ESA provides for such considerations in its definition of "critical habitat".

The term "critical habitat" for a threatened or endangered species means-

(i) the specific areas within the geographical area occupied by the species, at the time it is listed in accordance with the provisions of section 4 of this Act, on which are found those physical or biological features (I) essential to the conservation of the species and (II) which may require special management considerations or protection; and (ii) specific areas outside the geographical area occupied by the species at the time it is listed in accordance with the provisions of section 4 of this Act, upon a determination by the Secretary that such areas are essential for the conservation of the species.

Species protected under the act "includes any subspecies of fish or wildlife or plants", but the term "wildlife" includes "any member of the animal kingdom".

Among the 3.5 million square miles of land in the United States, there is surely some land with unique physical and biological features that will support this dying population.

With a little "special management consideration" on some of the 724 million acres owned by the federal government, this population might

flourish as it did in the past.

Private lands or "specific areas outside the geographical area occupied" can also be taken for critical habitat, when necessary for survival of an endangered or threatened species.

Maybe the nonprofit corporations of America are willing to part with some of their millions of acres of land for a good cause.

If the Sierra Club won't do it, perhaps it is time for some worthy organization like the Farm Bureau or the Farmers Union to file a petition for listing and bring this matter to a test.

This species is certainly a member of the animal kingdom. They are certainly a distinct population. They clearly are threatened by major long term decline and urban sprawl. Only about 10 percent of the original viable population remains on its traditional range.

Our most valuable "threatened species" is the American farmer.

Maybe the law is not too broad after all. If it can save the wolf, it should be able do the same for the guys who feeds us.

Exporting American agriculture At what expense?

By Kevin Rogers

April 1, 2006

Did you enjoy your last meal, and the meal before that? I hope so. The bounty, diversity, security, and safety of your every meal currently come to you at less than 10 percent of your annual disposable income. So, enjoy it while you can. Your children and grandchildren may not be afforded the same quality and security.

Because we have enjoyed such an efficient American food supply for so long, we simply take it for granted. What we often take for granted, we too often abuse.

Winston Churchill had great confidence in the American people to always do the right thing, if only as a last resort. During the heat of public debate, when ink can flow as venom, I don't always have such confidence. Perhaps, I should say my confidence is not strong enough to suggest that the last resort is going to be good enough. Today, your food security is being exported.

Nationally, we have food trade policies that grant other countries better access to our country than we do, to their dinner tables. Japanese beef comes into the U.S. easier than our beef goes there. It is true. We have great hand wringing that we are going to somehow balance the budget over cuts to farm programs, which amount to less than one percent of federal outlays. Meanwhile, some of these supports are the only thing that allows some U.S. producers to balance the budget, and remain in business.

At the same time, we see an exodus of food production. Brazil already grows more soybeans than the United States. The Brazilians are building meat production and processing infrastructures to take over those food supplies as well.

In other areas aided by public drumbeats, government seems poised to deny agriculture the mere paperwork to insure a legal and reliable labor supply. Instead, leaders call the access to workers-amnesty. At the same time, our leaders are willing to commit incredible amounts of treasury resources to border security in a spiral already proven not to work, while regularizing a legal and circular flow of immigration would be a much less expensive way to augment security.

Closer to home, there is the ever-popular chant to solve our water problems by taking it from Arizona agriculture's \$9.2 billion contribution to the state's

economy. Or, how about national animal rights activists coming to Arizona, with an agenda of ending animal livestock production in this country, and then claiming through local spokespeople that they are here to protect small family farmers? I have a suspicion they are not here to look after you and me.

Meanwhile, agriculture is pushing the frontiers. In a strange foretelling of the future, Hippocrates understood that food was medicine, and then medicine was food. Food will become more than sustenance. By understanding where these visions are headed, Arizona agriculture is beginning to raise the legitimate question that appropriate regulators ought to know something about that which they are regulating.

We only raise the question to begin the discussions, and an ASU law professor calls the suggestion "nutty." Many who claim to speak in the public interest are aghast that the mere suggestion could create some sort of Constitutional crisis. What I find "nutty" is a disconnect from reality too profound for words.

Food is survival, the sustenance to our health, and our future security. We are rapidly delegating its future to others around the world.

Enjoy your meal!

Kevin Rogers is the president of the Arizona Farm Bureau. He is a fourth generation Phoenix Valley farmer who raises cotton, alfalfa, wheat, barley, and corn.

Why I would not be a farmer

By Alan Caruba

March 15, 2006

Time was, when most Americans were farmers. Today, about two percent of the population does an astonishing job of raising, and harvesting, all the crops that turn into an astonishing variety of foods that we take for granted. Our supermarkets are stuffed to overflowing and, given the abundance, so are a lot of us.

You know something is terribly wrong, when the price of wheat at harvest time nets less than \$3.00 per bushel, a price that is well below the cost of production. Many of us are paying about as much for a gallon of gasoline, and therein, lies the problem facing farmers today. Historically, it hasn't been this bad since the Great Depression.

I was raised in the suburbs. My mom had a rose garden, but that, plus mowing the lawn and trimming the hedge, was about as close as I ever got to growing anything. In the 1980s, though, I had the opportunity to travel widely throughout the nation, visiting farmers, and getting to know what it was like to work long hours and still end up in debt, because the price of wheat, soybeans, corn, and other products were tied to international competition, and other factors beyond their control.

One of those factors today, affecting all of us and, in particular, our nation's farmers, is the price of energy. Recently, the Agriculture Energy Alliance, a coalition of 75 organizations, has been lobbying Congress to implement policy changes that will protect, expand, and improve our energy supplies. Most of us don't give much thought to the way energy is vital to the provision of a safe and abundant food supply.

I doubt that most of us think of food in terms of our national security, but stop a moment, and think what you would do if there wasn't a constant supply of food in your local supermarket, restaurant, or hamburger chain. Most of the nation's population lives within fifty miles of either the East or West coast. Few of us have a clue about raising produce or livestock.

There's another aspect of energy and food that most of us never connect. It is the role that natural gas and other chemicals play in the production of fertilizers used to increase the output of every acre of farmland. Add that to the gasoline or diesel used to run the huge tractors and combines modern farming requires, and you may understand why the "Farm Bill" is actually called the National Food Security Act.

These days, farmers are increasingly frustrated, and they have good reason to be. Agriculture is perhaps the most heavily-regulated industry in America. Moreover, it comes with no guarantees that Mother Nature will cooperate. While those of us in the suburbs and cities of America, hear reports of drought conditions in various parts of the nation, we rarely give it much thought.

Too much rain, or too little rain wreaks havoc for farmers. Too much sunshine means irrigation, and farmers must pay for the water they use. When the federal government turns off the spigot, as it did with the Klamath Valley farmers of Oregon, the hard work of generations is destroyed, in the name of saving an "endangered" suckerfish.

This is how we thank farmers, who, over the years, have tripled yields, reduced erosion by eighty percent, and wind-blown dust by six hundred percent. These are huge achievements in productivity and stewardship, since crops were first planted 11,000 years ago.

What we have in America, today, is a genuine farm crisis and, if you are dependent on the mainstream press, you are probably totally unaware of it.

How bad is it? The first Northwest wheat crop was planted in 1815 in Fort Vancouver, Washington. When the railroad lines arrived in 1883, the area boomed. Today, it is the principal white wheat producing area in the nation; a major supplier to both national and international markets. In 1992, there were 5,000 wheat farmers in Washington. Today, there are about 3,000. And, if the price of gasoline increases, along with all the other costs of farming, these and other farmers around the nation will stop farming.

When that happens, the rest of us are going to find out about it the hard way.

That's why we have to begin now to find, and extract the energy that exists in abundance here in the United States. It's offshore in areas where drilling for oil is prohibited. It's trapped in shale deposits in Utah and Colorado. It's in Alaska in the ANWR. Congress and the states are not permitting the energy industry to get at it, for the rest of us.

When it comes to sustaining our current farming population, we have a genuine crisis, and we are running the risk of losing the next generation of farmers.

Federal energy, agriculture, and foreign policies have created this crisis. A look at Congress, today, suggests it is oblivious to it.

Editor's note: Alan's book, [Warning Signs](#), is available. If you have enjoyed Alan's columns, you'll love his book. Check it out.

Alan Caruba is the author of "A Pocket Guide to Militant Islam," and a pocket guide, The United Nations Versus The United States, both are available exclusively from www.anxietycenter.com, the Internet site of The National Anxiety Center. He also writes "Warning Signs," a weekly commentary posted on the Internet site.