

## Federal Consultation

Critics claim the new ESA changes remove the requirement compelling federal agencies to consult with FWS or NMFS scientists before approving permits for ventures such as oil and gas drilling and logging. This, they say, will undercut the effectiveness of the ESA and put species at risk of extinction.

This is false. Interagency consultations are a cornerstone of the ESA to ensure federal actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of our most at-risk wildlife.

This final rule affirms the Services authority to use such streamlining methods that they have developed through experience since they last undertook a revision of their consultation regulations.

Streamlining the consultation process helps with timely decision-making on critical infrastructure and other projects important for job creation and economic development without compromising the conservation purposes of the section 7 consultation process.

“Streamlining consultations” is not just another term for “rubber-stamping”. Every project will continue to receive the necessary due diligence and consultation to ensure full compliance with ESA. The changes:

- Clarify what is needed to initiate in consultations and how the Services conduct consultations, which will shorten the time it takes for consultations, ensure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely and efficiently, and maintain protections for listed species.
- Do not require any more or less information than existing practice.
- Make the best use of limited resources and help ensure that the effort expended on federal consultation is commensurate with the risk to the species.
- Codify agency streamlining methods that will help with timely decision-making on critical infrastructure and other projects important for job creation and economic development without compromising the conservation purposes of the section 7 consultation process.