

CHAPTER 7 — Endangered Species

ESA - created to protect and conserve endangered and threatened species

Extinction - no longer living

Survived - remained alive

Significant - important

Coexist - live together

Livelihood - means of support

NESARC - dedicated to improving the ESA while protecting endangered and threatened species without imposing on the quality of human life

Minimize - make smaller

Coalition - temporary alliance

In 1973, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) was passed to help prevent the extinction of many living beings. Since 1973, many species have survived with the help of humans. The cost, however, has been great, and many people across the United States have been affected by the ESA.

For example, pygmy rabbits are a recent addition to the endangered species list. Found in the Columbia Basin, fewer than 50 of these rabbits are known to be living. They weigh two-thirds of a pound on average and grow to be four to six inches long. The pygmy is thought to be the smallest rabbit in the world. Sagebrush is the main source of food and shelter for these rabbits. The decline of sagebrush is probably the main reason for the decline in the number of rabbits.

Ranchers graze their cattle on sagebrush. Ranchers who find pygmy rabbits on their private property believe that the presence of the rabbits creates a significant problem. Because rabbits and cattle both survive on sagebrush, it is difficult for them to coexist. The EPA rules and regulations protect the pygmy rabbits, and ranchers cannot graze their cattle where pygmy rabbits live. Such rules and regulations could force many cattle ranchers to give up their livelihood.

A group called the National Endangered Species Act Reform Coalition (NESARC) was formed to minimize the effect of the ESA on humans. The goal of this coalition is to find ways for humans and other species to coexist.

**Do you think the pygmy rabbits should be protected?
Can you think of ways that the cattle and rabbits live
in harmony?**