Musgrave hosts hearing on endangered species

WASHINGTON D.C. — Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, R-Colo., had a hearing in Greeley July 26 to review the Endangered Species Act and its impact on the state's agriculture producers.

This event was an official congressional hearing of the Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Rural Development & Research that concentrated on the use of sound science, landowner input, and local conservation to better protect wildlife.

"Today's hearing was very informative and shined a light on the effectiveness of local and private wildlife conservation that is based on sound science and contributions from landowners," Musgrave said. "Colorado's farmers and ranchers have a history of improving land use practices, free from federal pressure, in order to protect wildlife and keep species from being listed as endangered; the case of the mountain plover is one such example. It is imperative for the federal government to encourage these programs and learn from their successes."

Testimony was presented during the hearing by a group of witnesses closely involved in species preservation and Colorado's agriculture industry: Russell George, Colorado Department of Natural Resources; Jean Stetson, Endangered Species Committee, Colorado Cattlemen; Alan Foutz, Colorado Farm Bureau; James T. Sims, Western Business Roundtable; and William Palmer, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory.

Foutz underscored one of the key messages of the hearing.

"We believe that, given the opportunity and proper support from the government, farmers and ranchers can do a better job of enhancing listed species than the government," he said. "As experienced, practical land managers who may have observed the species for a number of years, we bring a working knowledge that government scientists do not have."

The Endangered Species Act was passed by Congress and signed into law in 1973. Since then, nearly 1,300 species of animals and plants have been listed. Only 30 have been recovered.

"This hearing provided fair analysis of this critical issue to Colorado wildlife and several options in dealing with endangered species in a proactive way," Musgrave said. "It is clear in many instances the federal government has done a poor job of carrying out its intended job of protecting threatened wildlife and must initiate some common sense reforms to make the program more effective."