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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2306

April 1, 2019

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth HOB
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

As you begin crafting the fiscal year (FY) 2020 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, I request that you include language to encourage local management efforts and delist the gray wolf (*Canis Lupus*) range-wide throughout the 48 contiguous states.

Recently, the current administration issued a proposed rule to remove the gray wolf from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife in the lower 48 states as a result of a full recovery of the species. One finalized, management of the species will be the responsibility of individual states and tribes. While I have great confidence in the current administration, litigation and judicial activism have prevented the finalization of this warranted proposed rule previously. Accordingly, Congress should act and provide certainty.

The statutory purpose of ESA is to recover species to the point where they are no longer considered "endangered" or "threatened." The gray wolf is currently found in nearly 50 countries around the world and has been placed in the classification of "least concern" globally for risk of extinction by the Species Survival Commission Wolf Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation Nature (IUCN). This indication makes clear that this species is not endangered nor threatened with extinction. An estimated 7,000 to 11,200 gray wolves live in Alaska and another 60,000 live in Canada. There are now more than 5,000 gray wolves in the lower 48 states.

In 1978, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service first listed the gray wolf as an endangered species in the contiguous U.S. with the exception of Minnesota where the wolf was listed as threatened. Further, in 2013 and again in 2019, FWS published a proposed rule that would remove the Gray Wolf from the "List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife" range-wide throughout the 48 contiguous states. In both instances, this determination was made after the USFWS evaluated the best available scientific information and found the species was thriving.

The Obama Administration also proposed removing protections for gray wolves in Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin in 2011. The Obama Administration removed Endangered Species Act protections for gray wolves in Wyoming, a decision that was upheld in 2017.

The Obama Administration's 2013 and 2011 proposals were challenged with frivolous lawsuits from extremist organizations that don't rely on science or facts and seek to fundraise by keeping species on the Endangered Species Act in perpetuity, regardless of merits and findings that an individual species have been recovered.

I believe that state governments are fully qualified to responsibly manage gray wolf populations and are better able to meet the needs of local communities, ranchers, livestock, and wildlife populations. Delisting the gray wolf under ESA will allow state wildlife officials to more effectively manage wolf populations – as we have seen is possible in states such as Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

Provisions to return management to the states and delist the gray wolf have been included in previous base text of House Appropriation's bills. Further, as illustrated above, the species is fully recovered.

Accordingly, I also ask that you include the following language in the FY 2020 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill:

GRAY WOLF RANGE-WIDE

SEC. ____ (a) The Secretary of the Interior shall remove the gray wolf (Canis lupus) in each of the 48 contiguous States of the United States and the District of Columbia from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife in section 17.11 of title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, without regard to any other provision of statute or regulation that applies.

(b) Such removal (including this section)—

(1) shall not be subject to judicial review; and

(2) shall not affect the inclusion of the subspecies classified as the Mexican gray wolf (Canis lupus baileyi) of the species gray wolf (Canis lupus) in such list.

I thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your leadership on the committee.

Sincerely,



Tom Emmer
Member of Congress