

## **Re: Please Oppose Any Legislation to Remove Wolves from the Endangered Species Act**

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned animal protection and conservation organizations, small business owners, and Native American tribal representatives, and on behalf of our millions of supporters throughout the United States, urge you to oppose any legislation to remove any or all wolves from protections under the federal Endangered Species Act (“ESA”).

Since the 1980s wolf recovery has had some great successes, as we now have wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains and western Great Lakes. The return of this iconic species has driven tourism and economic gains. For example, in the states surrounding Yellowstone National Park, the annual visitor spending has increased by \$35.5 million since the reintroduction of wolves.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the ecological benefit of this keystone species is significant. Wolves are critical to maintaining the structure and integrity of their native ecosystems.

Gray wolf populations are still recovering from centuries of persecution and habitat loss and cannot reach full recovery without federal protections. Wolves have begun to repopulate some of their historic range, demonstrating fragile successes in the recovery effort. However, there is still significant work to be done. Wolves are still missing from suitable habitat across the country and are subject to mounting persecution where they currently exist. It is too soon to remove wolves from the ESA protections, as multiple federal courts have confirmed.

Myriad polls show Americans want wolves restored to the American landscape and conserved for future generations.<sup>2</sup> Despite this sentiment, wolves in states that no longer have federal wolf protections have been subjected to increasingly hostile state management practices. Continued federal protections are essential to give wolves a chance for survival and recovery.

The ESA is one of America’s most effective and important environmental laws, serving as a safety net for plants, fish, and wildlife on the brink of extinction. The ESA represents a commitment by the American people to protect and restore those species at risk of disappearing forever. Polling shows 84 percent of Americans support the ESA, while 87 percent recognize that it has proven successful in protecting wildlife, plants, and fish from extinction.<sup>3</sup> No law has been more important in preventing species extinctions, including bald eagles, gray whales and the peregrine falcon. Unfortunately, the 2011 appropriations rider that delisted wolves in Idaho, Montana, and parts of Oregon, Washington, and Utah set a terrible precedent and rendered the

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<sup>1</sup> Duffield, John W., Chris J. Neher and David A. Patterson. "Wolf Recovery in Yellowstone: Park Visitor Attitudes, Expenditures, and Economic Impacts." *Yellowstone Science* 16, no. 1 (2008): 21-25.

<sup>2</sup> See Manfredo, M.J., A.D. Bright, J. Pate and G. Tischbein. "Colorado Residents' Attitudes and Perceptions toward Reintroduction of the Gray Wolf (*Canis Lupus*) into Colorado. Project Report No. 21." *Human Dimensions in Natural Resources Unit, Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, CO, 1994*; Meadow, R., R.P. Reading, M.K. Phillips, M. Mehringer and B.J. Miller. "The Influence of Persuasive Argument of Public Attitudes toward a Proposed Wolf Restoration in the Southern Rockies." *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 33, no. 1 (2005): 154-163; Bennett, L.E. 1994. *Colorado gray wolf recovery: A biological feasibility study. Final Report. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and University of Wyoming Fish and Wildlife Cooperative research unit, Laramie, Wyoming*; Kellert, Stephen. 1999; Kellert, S. R. *The Public and the Wolf in Minnesota*. New Haven, CT: Yale University. <http://www.wolf.org/wow/united-states/minnesota/attitudes-and-issues-8/>; Mason-Dixon Polling & Research Inc. 2013, available at [http://www.humanesociety.org/news/press\\_releases/2013/06/wisconsin-voters-support-protecting-wolves-061913.html](http://www.humanesociety.org/news/press_releases/2013/06/wisconsin-voters-support-protecting-wolves-061913.html)

<sup>3</sup> National poll by Harris Interactive, 2011, available at [http://www.defenders.org/publications/endangered\\_species\\_act\\_poll.pdf](http://www.defenders.org/publications/endangered_species_act_poll.pdf).

ESA vulnerable to other congressional attacks. Further “death by a thousand cuts” erosion of the ESA must be stopped.

Today we stand at a critical crossroads for wolf recovery. Will we halt our nation’s commitment to bringing back wolves, or will we give these iconic animals a fighting chance at survival and recovery? We urge you to oppose any legislation that removes federal protections for wolves.

Sincerely,

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