March 4, 2015

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

We write today to urge an end to the cycle of policy proposals and legal defeats over gray wolves at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Service’s focus on removing wolves from the endangered species list not only ignores science but also poses a direct threat to the credibility of the agency and the long-term viability of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). It is time for a new approach for wolves that more closely aligns with those that have resulted in the successful recovery of species such as the bald eagle.

Scientific experts have shown, and courts have confirmed, that the best available science does not justify the removal of all ESA protections for gray wolves at this time. By continuing to assert otherwise, the Service is overshadowing the good work it did in the 1990s to reintroduce and begin recovering gray wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains. Once on the cusp of writing one of the great conservation success stories of our time, the Service has reversed course and has not considered alternatives that meet the requirements of the ESA while also giving states more flexibility to manage conflicts between wolves and livestock. This approach has created uncertainty for states and stakeholders, hindered species’ recovery, and led some to believe that Congressional action to delist gray wolves is the only viable solution.

We view a legislative delisting as an extreme proposal that is at odds with the intent of the ESA and the wishes of our constituents. We are deeply troubled by this prospect and any indication from the Department that it may support such legislation. Undermining the law and the Department’s credibility in this manner would set a damaging precedent and would cripple our ability to protect and recover other threatened and endangered species in the future.

As an alternative, we urge you to direct the Service to follow the science and the law and modify the June 2013 proposed delisting of gray wolves to instead downlist the species to threatened status. This approach would allow states significantly increased certainty and flexibility in managing wolves within their borders while also ensuring that the species can continue to recover in suitable areas. We understand that the Department has recently received a petition requesting it to take such action, and we ask you to give that petition your full consideration within the timeframe set forth under the ESA.

We look forward to hearing from you and to working together on this important manner.

Sincerely,

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress
Steve Israel
Member of Congress

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

Sandy Levin
Member of Congress

Frank A. LoBiondo
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

Doris O. Matsui
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

William R. Keating
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Barbara Lee
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John Lewis
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Zoe Lofgren
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Nita Lowey
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Carolyn Maloney
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Betty McCollum
Member of Congress
Jim McDermott  
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Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress

Jerry Nadler  
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
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Chellie Pingree  
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Jared Polis  
Member of Congress

Charlie Rangel  
Member of Congress

John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
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Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

Richard E. Neal  
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Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
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Mark Pocan  
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Mike Quigley  
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Raul Ruiz  
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Jan Schakowsky  
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Adam B. Schiff  
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Eric Swalwell  
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Paul D. Tonko  
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Chris Van Hollen  
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Peter Welch  
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Jackie Speier  
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