

Urge U.S. Fish and Wildlife to Keep Existing Protections for Gray Wolves

Supported by: Defenders of Wildlife, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, National Parks Conservation Association, Humane Society of the United States, Center for Biological Diversity, Animal Welfare Institute, Endangered Species Coalition, Cascadia Wildlands, Predator Defense, Western Environmental Law Center, Wolf Conservation Center, and others

Dear Colleague,

Please join us in signing the attached letter to Director Ashe of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requesting that the agency retain Endangered Species Act protections for gray wolves in areas where they have only just barely begun to recover, including the Pacific Northwest, California, southern Rocky Mountains and Northeast. In February, 2012, the Fish and Wildlife Service released a five year review for the wolf that recommended removing protections for gray wolves across most of the lower 48 states. The agency has since indicated that it will move forward with this action as soon as this March.

Retaining protections for wolves in the lower 48 will not impact the delisting decisions in the northern Rocky Mountains or western Great Lakes, where wolf recovery has seen considerable improvement and wolves have been removed from the endangered list. Instead, it will retain protections for a small number of wolves on the West Coast and wolves that have slowly been moving back into historically occupied areas like the southern Rocky Mountains and Northeast.

Studies completed after the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park have found that wolves are highly beneficial to ecosystems, benefitting a host of species from fish to songbirds to pronghorn antelope. Wolves have also been a boon to the local economy as a major tourist draw.

Much can still be done to recover these incredible animals in portions of their former range that remain suitable. Action by the Fish and Wildlife Service to remove protections for lower 48 wolves is premature and we urge you to join us in sending the attached letter. If you would like to sign the letter or have any questions please contact Megan DeBates in Rep. Peter DeFazio's office at megan.debates@mail.house.gov (5-6416).

Sincerely,

Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress

Edward Markey
Member of Congress

Dan Ashe, Director
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Washington, DC
February XX, 2013

Dear Director Ashe:

We understand that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is conducting a status review of the gray wolf under the Endangered Species Act that may remove protections for gray wolves across large areas of the lower 48 states. The reintroduction of wolves into the northern Rocky Mountains and their resurgence in the western Great Lakes region have been important gains for a species once teetering on the brink of extinction, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should be commended for its prominent role in these achievements. In other parts of their former range, however, wolves have only barely begun to recover. In particular, wolves have only just begun to return to portions of the Pacific Northwest, California, southern Rocky Mountains and Northeast and continue to need protection in these areas if they are to truly recover. It is our hope that you will retain Endangered Species Act protections for wolves in these areas. A blanket national delisting of the gray wolf would be premature and would not be grounded in peer-reviewed science.

The rebound of gray wolves in the western Great Lakes and northern Rocky Mountains has been a boon for local economies, wildlife enthusiasts, and the ecosystems of these areas that have benefitted from the return of this keystone predator. And studies in Yellowstone National Park found that the presence of wolves benefitted a myriad of species from pronghorn antelope, to songbirds, to beavers and fish.

While there is much to be proud of, there remains considerable progress to be made towards wolf recovery in the lower 48 states. In particular, we are concerned that the same prejudice towards wolves that led to their extirpation across nearly the entire coterminous United States is still present today and, not only is threatening to undo the gains achieved in the northern Rocky Mountains and western Great Lakes, but will prevent their recovery in additional areas. We believe that federal protection continues to be necessary to ensure that wolf recovery is allowed to proceed in additional parts of the country.

Wolves are beginning to make a comeback in Oregon and Washington and a little more than a year ago, a wolf dubbed OR-7 made his way to California to become the first wolf in the state for more than 80 years. Lone wolves have also crossed into Utah, Colorado, and several states in the Northeast. These are all areas that would benefit from continued Endangered Species Act protections.

Wolf recovery in the lower 48 states is a wildlife success story in the making, and we encourage the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to continue to work towards greater

recovery of this important and popular species. Specifically, we ask that the Service continue to protect wolves in the lower 48 states under the ESA.

Thank you for the work you and your staff have done over the years to make important gains in the gray wolf recovery program.

Sincerely,