

August 14, 2012

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

CC: Secretary Ken Salazar
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 and C Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dan Ashe, Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 and C Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear President Obama,

On behalf of our millions of members nationwide, we are writing to you to ask for your support in retaining Endangered Species Act protections for gray wolves in the Pacific Northwest. We need your support because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently considering removing protections for gray wolves in the lower 48 states that have been in place since 1978 and is expected to make a decision by September 30, 2012. The gray wolf has only just begun to recover in the Pacific Northwest and needs continued protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Decades of government sponsored persecution resulted in the extirpation of wolves from all of the lower 48 states except a small area in northeastern Minnesota and Isle Royale, Michigan. With protection under the Endangered Species Act, the wolf has made tremendous progress toward recovery in the northern Rocky Mountains and western Great Lakes, but is only just beginning to recover in other portions of its former range, including the Pacific Northwest, where fewer than 60 wolves reside.

Last year, a wolf dubbed OR-7 made his way to California and became the first known wolf in the state in more than 80 years. Further north, four packs in Oregon and three packs in Washington were able to establish themselves in the eastern portion of each state because federal protections gave them the needed safety and security. But federal protections have now been lifted in that region. Most recently, in Washington, two packs have established in the western part of the state in the Cascade Mountains and it won't be long before wolves establish in Oregon's Cascades. The federal protections that currently exist in the western region of both states are needed to ensure this small struggling wolf population will continue to exist. Additionally, though a petition for state listing in California is pending, currently, wolves that disperse there are protected only by the Federal Endangered Species Act. If federal protections for wolves are lifted in the Pacific Northwest, they will have no safety net in California.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has stated that it is considering retaining protections for Pacific Northwest wolves. We strongly support retention of protection for wolves in the Pacific Northwest, including western Washington, western Oregon and California, as well as in other regions where they have not recovered, and urge you to direct the Fish and Wildlife Service to move forward with protections.

Since wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho we have learned a tremendous amount about the important role they play in shaping North American landscapes. By forcing elk to move more, wolves have allowed streamside vegetation to recover benefitting songbirds and beavers. Wolves in Yellowstone also benefited scavenging animals such as weasels, eagles, wolverines and bears, and increased numbers of foxes and pronghorns by controlling coyotes, which wolves regard as competitors. Wolves have also benefitted the economies of states in the Yellowstone Region as a significant tourism draw.

We hope we can count on your support to ensure that wolves continue to recover in the Pacific Northwest benefitting the people, wildlife and ecosystems of the region.

Sincerely,

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Center for Biological Diversity

Nancy Gloman
Vice President of Field Conservation
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