

July 31, 2014

Sally Jewell, Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20240  
exsec@ios.doi.gov

Dan Ashe, Director  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
1849 C Street, NW, Room 3256  
MailStop 3238 MIB  
Washington, DC 20240-0001  
Dan\_ashe@fws.gov

Dear Secretary Jewell and Director Ashe,

As wildlife ecologists and conservation biologists, we are writing to express concern about the Endangered Species Act listing process for the American wolverine (*Gulo gulo*).

In February 2013, Fish and Wildlife Service scientists proposed that the wolverine be designated as a threatened species in the lower 48 states based on threats from loss of snowpack due to climate change, combined with stresses from small population size and trapping. The listing proposal was based on the best available scientific information, including numerous peer-reviewed scientific studies demonstrating the wolverine's dependence on snowpack, and studies projecting the continued and extensive loss of snowpack across the wolverine's range due to climate change.

This scientific determination was supported by five of seven peer reviewers and received strong support from a nine-person independent science panel convened in April to review the science underlying the proposal. On May 17th, the assistant regional director of the Mountain-Prairie Region issued a memo recommending finalization of the threatened listing.

Despite the strong scientific support for the listing proposal as written, it has come to our attention that the Service's regional director has ordered the scientists responsible for reviewing the status of the wolverine to withdraw the proposed listing. In a memo issued on May 30th, the regional director acknowledged that her decision was based on no new scientific information, but rather on her opinion regarding uncertainties in the modeling studies used in the listing determination.

Endangered Species Act listing decisions must be based on the best available science. This standard does not require absolute scientific certainty prior to taking action and gives the benefit of the doubt to the species. In contrast, the regional director's decision to overturn the listing determination because climate model uncertainty prevents "definitive conclusions" about "the amount and persistence of snowfall at the scale of specific wolverine den sites" stands in conflict with Act's best available science standard.

The regional director's decision to overturn a scientifically well-vetted and well-supported listing determination sets a bad precedent by allowing an administrator to overrule the expert judgment of the Service's scientists as well as independent peer reviewers. Using "uncertainty" as an excuse to dismiss the best available science sets an equally dangerous precedent given that so many rare and imperiled species are very difficult to study and assess.

We urge the Fish and Wildlife Service to uphold the integrity of the Act's science-based listing process and follow the recommendations of the Service's scientists.

Signed,

Anne C. Axel, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Marshall University

Christopher R. Ayers, Ph.D.  
Ecologist

Terrence Bell, Ph.D.  
Postdoctoral Fellow  
Montreal Biodiversity Centre

James Bess, M.S.  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Michigan Technological University

Monica Bond, M.S.  
Principal Scientist  
Wild Nature Institute

Mikael Russell Cejtin  
Master of Environmental Science Candidate  
Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

Kate Cleary, M.S.  
Ph.D. Candidate  
University of Idaho & CATIE, Costa Rica

Jeff Copeland, M.S.  
Wildlife Ecologist  
USDA Forest Service, Retired

Tara Cornelisse, Ph.D.  
American Museum of Natural History

Tierra Curry, M.S.  
Senior Scientist  
Center for Biological Diversity

Kristin Davis, B.S.  
Texas A&M University

Mark Elbroch, Ph.D.  
Panthera

Jason T. Fisher, Ph.D.  
School of Environmental Studies  
University of Victoria

Andrea Fulgione, M.S.  
Ph.D. Candidate  
University of Vienna

Priya M. Ganguli, Ph.D.  
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

Rachel E. Golden, M.S.  
Conservation Biologist

Healy Hamilton, Ph.D.  
Chief Scientist & Vice President for Conservation Science  
NatureServe

Christine Hass, Ph.D.  
Biologist

Paul J. Haverkamp, Ph.D.  
Biologist II/GIS Analyst  
Cramer Fish Sciences

Nikki Heim  
M.S. Candidate  
University of Victoria

Michael Huston, Ph.D.  
Texas State University

David W. Inouye, Ph.D.  
Professor Emeritus, Department of Biology  
University of Maryland

Dipika Kadaba, M.S.  
Duke University

Keefe Keeley, B.A.  
Executive Director  
Savanna Institute

Adrienne Kovach, Ph.D.  
Research Associate Professor of Natural Resources  
University of New Hampshire

Derek Lee, M.S.  
Principal Scientist  
Wild Nature Institute

Kiersten Lippmann, M.S.  
Staff Scientist  
Center for Biological Diversity

Robert Long, Ph.D.  
Senior Conservation Fellow, Field Conservation Program  
Woodland Park Zoo

Susannah R. McCandless, Ph.D.  
International Program Director  
Global Diversity Foundation

Katie Moriarty, M.S.  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Oregon State University

Barry R. Noon, Ph.D.  
Professor, Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology  
Colorado State University

Reed F. Noss, Ph.D.  
Provost's Distinguished Research Professor, Department of Biology  
University of Central Florida

Geoffrey W. Patton, Ph.D.  
Wildlife Ecologist

Stuart Pimm, Ph.D.  
Doris Duke Professor of Conservation  
Duke University

Nigel Pitman, Ph.D.  
Robert O. Bass Senior Visiting Scientist  
The Field Museum

Alisha Powell, B.S.  
Red Earth Environmental

Kristen Puryear, M.S.  
Community Ecologist

Alex Racelis, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Environmental Science  
University of Texas Pan-American

Richard P. Reading, Ph.D.  
Vice President for Conservation  
Denver Zoological Foundation

William J. Resetarits, Jr., Ph.D.  
Professor of Biology and Henry L. and Grace Doherty Chair in Freshwater Research  
The University of Mississippi

Christina Richardson  
University of Hawaii, Manoa

Carl Schlichting, Ph.D.  
Professor and Head, Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology  
University of Connecticut

Peter C. Schulze, Ph.D.  
Professor of Biology and Environmental Science Director, Center for Environmental Studies  
Austin College

Adam C. Stein, PhD  
Council on International Education Exchange

Christopher Still, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Oregon State University

Randy Turner, M.S.  
Klamath Basin Monitoring Program

Marian Vernon  
Master of Environmental Science Candidate  
Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

R. Steven Wagner, Ph.D.  
President, Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology  
Professor of Biological Sciences  
Central Washington University

Susan Waters, Ph.D.  
Co-director, Urban Pollination Project  
Postdoctoral Fellow  
School for Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences University of Washington-Bothell

Jeremy H. Wei  
Stanford University

Judith S. Weis, Ph.D.  
Professor of Biological Sciences  
Rutgers University

Robert Wernerehl, Ph.D.  
Ecologist  
Native Thumb Environmental Consulting

Chris Wilmers, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
University of California, Santa Cruz

Harley Winfrey  
Biological Consultant

Shaye Wolf, Ph.D.  
Climate Science Director  
Center for Biological Diversity

George Wuerthner  
Senior Scientist  
Foundation for Deep Ecology