

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 15, 2018

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
2007 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

As you begin work on the fiscal year (FY) 2019 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to include language that would address the gray wolf (*Canis Lupus*) in Wyoming and the Great Lakes as well as range-wide throughout the 48 contiguous states.

In 2011 and 2012, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) officials finalized two rules after they found that recovery was sufficient to remove the gray wolf listing and revert management of the species to the states in the Great Lakes as well as in Wyoming. Further, on June 13, 2013, FWS published a proposed rule that would remove the Gray Wolf from the "List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife" range-wide throughout the 48 contiguous states. This determination was made after the FWS "evaluated the classification status of gray wolves currently listed in the contiguous United States" and found the "best available scientific and commercial information indicates that the currently listed entity is not a valid species under the Act."

The statutory purpose of ESA is to recover species to the point where they are no longer considered "endangered" or "threatened." The Gray Wolf is currently found in nearly 50 countries around the world and has been placed in the classification of "least concern" globally for risk of extinction by the Species Survival Commission Wolf Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation Nature (IUCN). This indication makes clear that this species is not endangered nor threatened with extinction.

Federal environmental and species management policies must be based on the best available science. In addition to scientific data showing significant increases to the number of wolves nationally, the 2013 proposed rule also recognized a number of significant changes in scientists' understanding of the taxonomy and historic habitat in the 37 years since the gray wolf was first listed as endangered.

The failure by the FWS to fully delist the gray wolf has also led to decreased "social tolerance" and has hurt the ability of many states to maintain this critically important facet of successful wolf recovery. This complex issue includes various considerations – from social to economic and

political – and a state’s ability to manage their gray wolf population relies on the input and buy-in of a variety of stakeholders, who can be disenfranchised by the failure to remove problem wolves – whether lethally or through other means.

We believe that state governments are fully qualified to responsibly manage gray wolf populations and are better able to meet the needs of local communities, ranchers, livestock, and wildlife populations. Delisting the gray wolf under ESA will allow state wildlife officials to more effectively manage wolf populations – as we have seen is possible in states such as Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

On March 3, 2017, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled that the FWS reasonably found the gray wolf population to have recovered sufficiently, so as to merit a delisting in the State of Wyoming.

While some progress has been made in recent years, ongoing litigation continues to prevent the FWS from fulfilling its statutory duty to delist species like the gray wolf despite the preponderance of relevant data and study indicating the species is clearly recovered in the U.S. Accordingly, Congress must take a clear stance in support of FWS’ longstanding efforts by including language in the base text that allows for the reissuance of rules to address the subject to judicial review.

Therefore, we ask that you retain the following language in the FY 2019 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill that was included as Section 116 in the FY2018 House text:

REISSUANCE OF FINAL RULES

SEC. _____. Before the end of the 60-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior shall reissue the final rule published on December 28, 2011 (76 Fed. Reg. 81666 et seq.) and the final rule published on September 10, 2012 (77 Fed. 8 Reg. 55530 et seq.), without regard to any other provision of statute or regulation that applies to issuance of such rules. Such reissuances (including this section) shall not be subject to judicial review.

We also ask that you include the following language in the FY 2019 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill as an update to Section 117 in the FY2018 House text:

GRAY WOLVES RANGE-WIDE

SEC. ____ (a) Not later than the end of fiscal year 2019, and except as provided in subsection (b), the Secretary of the Interior shall issue a rule to remove the gray wolf (Canis lupus) in each of the 48 contiguous States of the United States and the District of Columbia from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife in section 17.11 of title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, without regard to any other provision of statute or regulation that applies to issuance of such rule.

(b) Such issuance (including this section)—

(1) shall not be subject to judicial review; and


(2) shall not affect the inclusion of the subspecies classified as the Mexican gray wolf (Canis lupus baileyi) of the species gray wolf (Canis lupus) in such list.

We thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your leadership on the committee.

Sincerely,



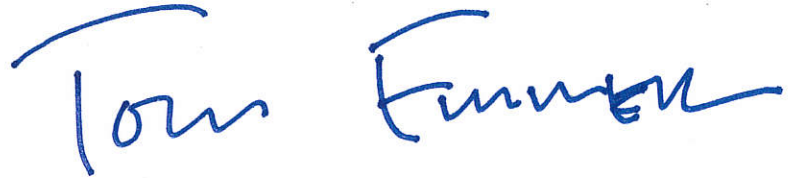
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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



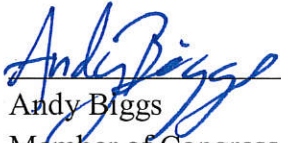
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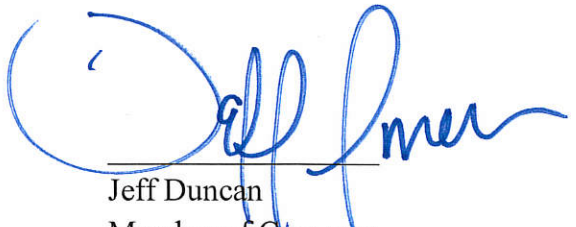


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