

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 13, 2019

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt:

We are writing to voice our deep concerns with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's proposal to end federal protections for gray wolves under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The proposal does not appear to represent the best available science and contains several serious legal flaws that undermine not only the recovery of gray wolves, but hundreds of other endangered species nationwide. This delisting proposal appears to be motivated primarily by political pressure rather than the best available science, and we urge you to withdraw the proposed rule.

Thanks to the ESA, wolves have now started to recover in the continental United States after being brought to near-extinction. However, wolf populations are still struggling to rebound in many areas of suitable habitat. Scientists estimate there were once hundreds of thousands of wolves in the lower 48 states, but today there are only a tiny fraction of that number. 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 federal protection in these areas if they are to truly recover. A blanket national delisting of the gray wolf is premature and not grounded in peer-reviewed science.

The progress made toward wolf recovery in the western Great Lakes and northern Rocky Mountains has been a boon for the ecosystems of these areas, which have benefitted from the return of this keystone predator. Studies in Yellowstone National Park found that the presence of wolves benefits a myriad of species in the food web, including pronghorn antelope, songbirds, 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. We are concerned that returning wolves to state management at this time could stall or even reverse that progress. Federal protections are still essential to help wolves return to suitable habitat where they used to roam.

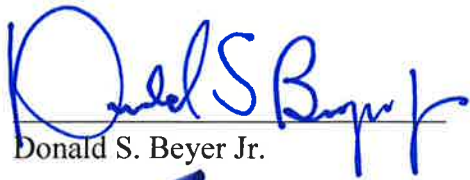
Humans pose a far greater threat to wolves than wolves pose to us. U.S. Department of Agriculture reports show that the primary causes of cattle and sheep deaths in the U.S. are health problems, weather, theft and other maladies, but not wolves or other native carnivores. In fact, a 2014 and 2015 inventory of cattle and sheep found that less than one percent (0.4 percent) died

from any type of carnivore, including coyotes, domestic dogs, and cougars. There are also a host of highly effective non-lethal solutions that livestock growers can use to protect their herds. Additionally, no human has ever been killed by a wild wolf in the lower 48 states.

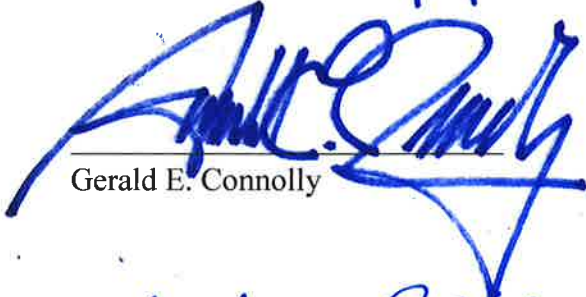
Gray wolf recovery in the lower 48 states is a wildlife success story in the making, and we encourage the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to continue to work towards recovery of this iconic American species. Specifically, we ask that the Service continue to protect wolves under the ESA.

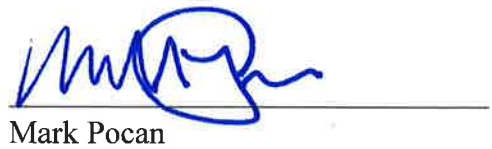
Thank you for your attention. We look forward to hearing from you.

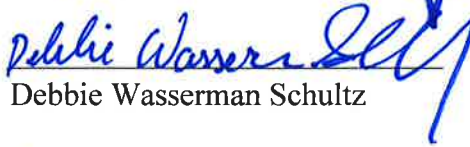
Sincerely,


Donald S. Beyer Jr.


Peter DeFazio


Gerald E. Connolly


Mark Pocan


Debbie Wasserman Schultz


Steve Cohen


Barbara Lee


Earl Blumenauer


Eleanor Holmes Norton


Darren Soto


Bonnie Watson Coleman



Thomas R. Suozzi


Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr


Diana DeGette


Adriano Espaillat


Peter Welch


Ted W. Lieu


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Paul D. Tonko


Adam B. Schiff


Ilhan Omar



Madeleine Dean


Joe Neguse


Brad Sherman


Sean Casten


Pramila Jayapal


Frederica S. Wilson


Betty McCollum


James P. McGovern



J. Luis Correa



Ro Khanna

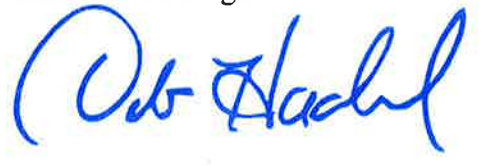

Ann McLane Kuster


Jackie Speier



Ruben Gallego

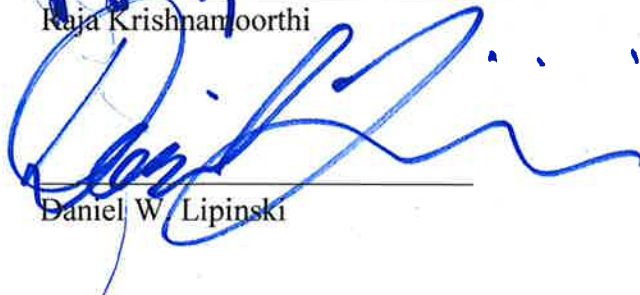

Alcee L. Hastings


Christopher H. Smith


Deb Haaland


Raja Krishnamoorthi

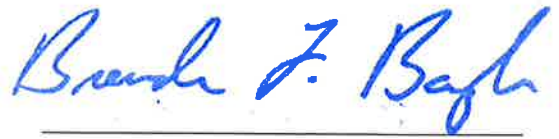

Susan A. Davis


Daniel W. Lipinski


Jim Himes



Grace Meng



Brendan F. Boyle



Richard E. Neal




Robert C. "Bobby" Scott



A. Donald McEachin



Rosa L. DeLauro



Nita M. Lowey



Albio Sires



Lucille Roybal-Allard



Jerry McNerney



Matt Cartwright



Mark DeSaulnier



Anna G. Eshoo



Jamie Raskin



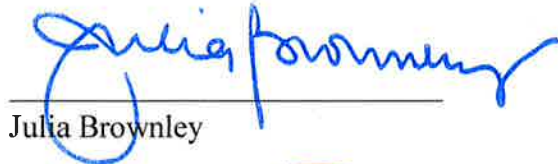
Bill Foster



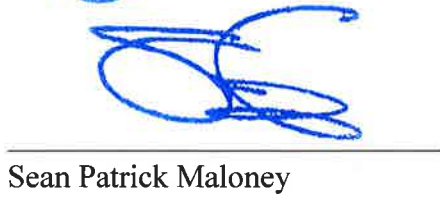
Mike Quigley


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Jason Crow


Katie Hill