

PETER A. DEFAZIO
4TH DISTRICT, OREGON

TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
CHAIRMAN



Congress of the United States House of Representatives

June 28, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Ms. Martha Williams
Principal Deputy Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland and Principal Deputy Director Williams,

I write to request that you expeditiously reinstate Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections for gray wolves in the Northern Rockies, using your emergency listing powers as authorized under the ESA. The relisting is urgently needed before the region's wolf population is decimated, undoing the decades of work toward wolf recovery in the Northern Rockies and beyond that brought these iconic animals back from near extinction.

Time is of the essence. The states of Idaho and Montana recently passed laws that will have devastating consequences. Should the Biden Administration not act quickly, Idaho's law, which takes effect July 1, 2021, will allow hunters, trappers, and private contractors to kill up to 90 percent of the state's wolves--reducing their population from 1,500 to 150—using deplorable methods, such as pursuit dogs, shooting from helicopters, and trapping in snares. Idaho's law is so alarming that their own Fish and Game Commission voted to oppose the measure. The two laws recently passed in Montana will allow for the slaughter of up to 85 percent of their wolves. One law allows for chokehold snares, which slowly and cruelly kill the wolf by strangulation. The other extends trapping season into the wolves' breeding season, allowing the slaughter of numerous pregnant females.

Proponents of these laws point to livestock deaths or cite supposed competition with hunters for elk and deer. Those arguments are founded on myth, not fact. Wolves kill a miniscule amount of livestock. In 2010, the National Agricultural Statistics Service found that less than one percent (0.23 %) of livestock were killed by all predators. Dogs killed more livestock than every other species besides coyotes. Meanwhile, elk and deer populations continue to thrive. Idaho's Fish and Game Department reported that hunter harvest increased for elk, mule deer, and white tail deer in 2020. Their 2020 elk harvest was the sixth highest of all time and they called it "the second Golden Age of Idaho elk hunting."

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Killing wolves negates the key role they play in ecosystems. Wolves take out sick, old and inferior elk and deer, while hunters do not. It is also worth noting that—25 years after their return to Yellowstone National Park—the gray wolves that some feared would wipe out elk have instead proved to be more of a stabilizing force. Their presence deters elk and deer from passive grazing, which has helped stop stream erosion and degradation of fish habitat. It has also helped tree stands and vegetation recover. These are just a few of the services provided by these vital apex predators.

I urge you to quickly act to reinstate Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections for gray wolves in the Northern Rockies before it is too late. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress