

MWF Testimony on SJ 13

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee,

On behalf of the Montana Wildlife Federation, Montana's oldest and largest hunter/angler conservation organization, with over 7,500 members and 23 affiliated Rod and Gun Clubs across the state; we rise in support of SJ 15.

Nobody envisioned that delisting of wolves would drag on for almost a decade. Unfortunately, this saga has continued despite the best efforts of the state of Montana. Truly, the only way that wolves can be delisted is for the United States Congress to delist wolves, a rare and unparalleled action. Under normal circumstances, and as you have repeatedly heard MWF testify this session, MWF would not support legislative intrusions in to wildlife management issues. However, due to legal entanglements, strict wording of the Endangered Species Act, and the inability to craft a delisting rule that can withstand legal challenges, we firmly believe that the only option left is through Congress.

This resolution does two things:

- 1.) It calls on Congress to swiftly delist wolves.
- 2.) It supports Montana's wolf management plan.

Montana's wolf management plan has also been shown to work, when allowed. In 2009, Montanan's harvested 72 wolves through a regulated, structured hunt, and increased lethal take of wolves depredating on livestock. The plan was put together by a stakeholder group comprised of hunters, livestock producers and other interests. It is widely supported across the state, and will work to manage wolves both at the biological level, and at the social level.

Wolves are currently impacting big game populations in many areas. Those impacts range from severe predation in areas such as HD 250, the West Fork of the Bitterroot, and HD 310, the Upper Gallatin. Other impacts include elk changing the way that they use the landscape and increasing pressure on private landowners when elk congregate on hay fields.

Currently, several bills have been introduced to delist wolves, and Congress is moving swiftly to reinstate the 2009 delisting rule that would place management of wolves squarely with the state. We support this effort.

We ask for your support as well.

Thank you for your service,

Ben Lamb
Conservation Director for State and National Issues
Montana Wildlife Federation