

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 4
INTRODUCED BY J. ELLIOTT

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING DELISTING OF THE WOLF PURSUANT TO THE FEDERAL ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT OF 1973; REQUESTING THAT CONGRESS ESTABLISH AND FUND THE NORTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAIN GRIZZLY BEAR AND GRAY WOLF NATIONAL MANAGEMENT TRUST; REQUESTING THAT WOLF POPULATION MANAGEMENT METHODS INCLUDE NONLETHAL AND LETHAL METHODS; ENCOURAGING THE FISH, WILDLIFE, AND PARKS COMMISSION TO RECLASSIFY THE GRAY WOLF WHEN REGULATION OF THE WOLF POPULATION IS NEEDED; AND REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE, AND PARKS OR THE DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK TO ADDRESS LIVESTOCK DEPREDATIONS EXPEDITIOUSLY.

WHEREAS, since 1973, the gray wolf has been protected in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming under the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973; and

WHEREAS, the gray wolf has been listed as an endangered species pursuant to Montana's Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act since 1975; and

WHEREAS, through natural recovery in Montana beginning about 1982 and through reintroduction of wolves by the federal government to Idaho and Wyoming in 1995 and 1996, the number of wolves has increased dramatically in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the delisting process would be initiated when a total of 30 breeding pairs of wolves, with an equitable distribution throughout the states of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming, has been documented for 3 successive years; and

WHEREAS, at least 30 breeding pairs were documented in 2000 and 2001, and it is anticipated that more breeding pairs will be documented for 2002; and

WHEREAS, some wolf packs are causing serious problems with depredations upon livestock and pets in certain areas; and

WHEREAS, wolves, mountain lions, bears, and coyotes have collectively had a major impact on big game populations in some areas; and

WHEREAS, many Montanans feel that it is time for the state to take over management of the gray wolf from the federal government; and

WHEREAS, the federal government will continue to manage gray wolves until gray wolves are delisted under the federal Endangered Species Act and the state has an approved management plan and an adequate regulatory framework; and

WHEREAS, the 2001 Montana Legislature passed a law establishing an adequate regulatory framework for management of the gray wolf upon delisting by the federal government; and

WHEREAS, Montana has had a citizen Wolf Management Advisory Council, appointed by the Governor, working to develop a management plan, and that Council held hearings throughout Montana in 2002; and

WHEREAS, all Americans should share in the costs of management of species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recognize that Montana has a viable management plan and is ready to assume management responsibility for the gray wolf and that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service delist the gray wolf as quickly as possible.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that federal funding be provided to Montana from a permanently established federal trust set up for future management purposes, not from annual appropriations that may be eliminated in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the U.S. Congress establish and provide funding for the Northern Rocky Mountain Grizzly Bear and Gray Wolf National Management Trust, proposed by the Governors of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that wolf population management in Montana include the full range of management tools, from nonlethal to lethal.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Commission be encouraged to reclassify the wolf as a big game animal or a furbearer, with regulated public harvest, when regulation of the wolf population is needed.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that upon delisting of the gray wolf pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks or the Montana Department of Livestock address livestock depredations caused by wolves as expeditiously as possible, using lethal wolf control when necessary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State send copies of this resolution to the Montana

Congressional Delegation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Governors of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming.

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