



# United States Department of the Interior

## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Mountain-Prairie Region



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NOV 15 2011

Paul J. Conry, President  
Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
522 Notre Dame Court  
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82009

Dear Mr. Conry:

Thank you for your September 19, 2011 letter regarding gray wolf recovery in the Northern Rockies. Specifically, you were writing in support of continued funding of wolf monitoring and mitigation in several Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) member States. We appreciate your interest in wolf recovery and delisting, and our continued partnership on this critical issue for the western United States.

As you stated in your letter, continued monitoring of gray wolves is essential. Once Endangered Species Act (Act) protections are removed, the States and Tribes lead efforts to conserve and manage the gray wolf within their jurisdictions. The States have relatively large and well-distributed professional fish and wildlife staff with the demonstrated skills and experience to successfully manage a diversity of resident species, including large carnivores. We believe these State agencies are similarly qualified to manage a recovered wolf population. State management of wolves will be in alignment with the classic State-led North American model for wildlife management, which has been extremely successful at restoring, maintaining, and expanding the distribution of numerous populations of other wildlife species, including other large predators, throughout North America.

Part of the States' management scope includes post-delisting monitoring. We are committed to funding post-delisting monitoring for the minimum five years required by the Act. To this end, we plan on providing annual funding to the States where the wolf has been delisted and will continue to pass through additional funds as allocated by Congress. Additionally, private funding and other funding sources could be available such as Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act funds and other Federal grant programs. We will continue to assist States in securing funding for wolf management after delisting.

An additional source of funding for the States will be the revenues associated with public hunting. We have long recognized and encouraged State wolf management programs to incorporate regulated public hunting into their wolf conservation programs. Hunting is a valuable, efficient, and cost-effective tool to help manage wildlife populations, in addition to

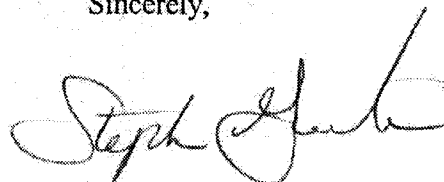
being a source of funding. Regulated hunting has not threatened wolf populations anywhere in the world. Viable, robust wolf populations in Canada, Alaska, and other parts of the world are hunted and trapped at sustainable levels.

In States where we have determined the wolf to no longer be threatened or endangered, we envision monitoring programs that are much reduced from the level of monitoring conducted while the species was listed. Importantly, monitoring efforts can be less intensive where State management maintains wolf populations well above recovery goals. More intensive monitoring will be necessary to adequately track wolf populations that are held close to recovery goals.

Your letter also encouraged continued funding for mitigating wolf-livestock conflicts. Compensation for wolf-livestock conflicts in the past was provided by Defenders of Wildlife. Defenders of Wildlife has concluded this program; however, Federal legislation has been passed that can provide funding to initiate State-run compensation programs. We will continue to administer any funds that are allocated by Congress to this program. In addition, Federal funding to mitigate wolf-livestock conflicts has been provided in the past through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services. Wildlife Services will continue to be available to assist the States in controlling problem wolves after delisting.

Thank you for the opportunity to be of service. If you have any questions, please contact Michael Thabault, Assistant Regional Director for Ecological Services, at (303) 236-4252.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Stephen J. Thabault". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Regional Director