

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 11, 2013

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell,

On June 13, 2013, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) published a proposal to remove Endangered Species Act protection from gray wolves and maintain protections for the Mexican gray wolf (78 Fed Reg 35664). We write today to oppose this proposal because we believe there is substantial scientific evidence that gray wolves have not fully recovered in the lower 48 states and still need Endangered Species Act protection. In our view, the Interior Department's proposal is premature. We fear that it would set back gray wolf recovery in the United States for decades.

Gray wolves are one of our nation's most iconic wild animals. Once roaming free across the American landscape, centuries of trapping, hunting, and poisoning brought wolves in the lower 48 states to the brink of extinction. Except for a few pockets of survivors, wolves were essentially eliminated from the western United States in the early 20th century. Millions of dollars have been spent to restore wolves to their native habitats. The protection afforded by the Endangered Species Act allowed their numbers to expand in the West and in the Great Lakes. Scientists have identified excellent, unoccupied habitats for restoration in the Pacific Northwest, California, Colorado, Utah and the Northeast. Maintaining federal protection for wolves is essential for continued species recovery.

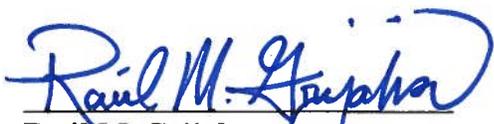
We are concerned that the same prejudice towards wolves that led to their extirpation across most of the country is still present today. This attitude threatens to undo the gains achieved in the northern Rocky Mountains and western Great Lakes and may prevent their full recovery in additional areas of significant unoccupied suitable habitat. Federal policy must address this.

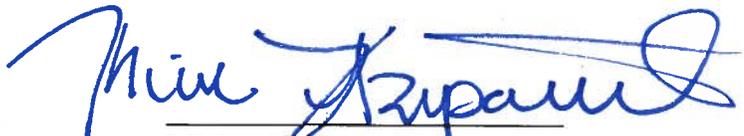
In May, you received a letter from 16 scientists with expertise in carnivore taxonomy and biology who had reviewed a draft of the delisting rule. As they concluded, "Based on a careful review of the rule, we do not believe that the rule reflects the conclusions of our work or the best available science concerning the recovery of wolves, or is in accordance with the fundamental purpose of the Endangered Species Act to conserve endangered species and the ecosystems upon which they depend." You received a separate letter from the American Society of Mammalogists expressing concern that this delisting is premature. These views should be reflected in the final decision.

We applaud the reclassification of the Mexican gray wolf in the Southwest as a distinct subspecies and its continued protection as an endangered population. However, we are concerned about a related proposal – released simultaneously – that undercuts this new listing by requiring the wolves to stay in specific boundaries, preventing needed natural dispersal. Recent peer-reviewed research indicates that Mexican wolves, with a current wild population of only 75 individuals, will need multiple populations in new areas and wide dispersal over time in order to recover.

We all appreciate the past hard work and significant progress by the federal government and others in support of gray wolf conservation. We need to build on this progress and not turn back now. We ask that you listen to the many wildlife and conservation scientists who believe this proposal is premature. We look forward to the day when we can truly celebrate the recovery of the gray wolf. We fear that the current delisting proposal, if finalized, will prevent that day from ever arriving.

Sincerely,


Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress


Michael Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

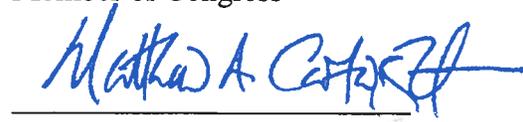

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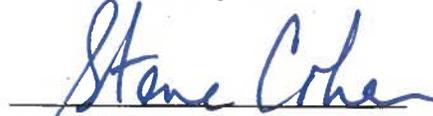
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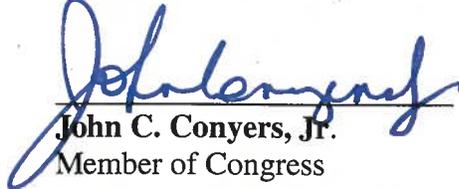
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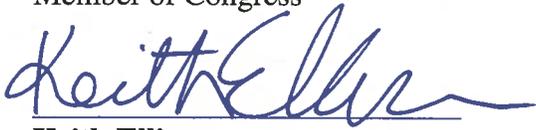
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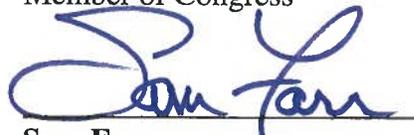
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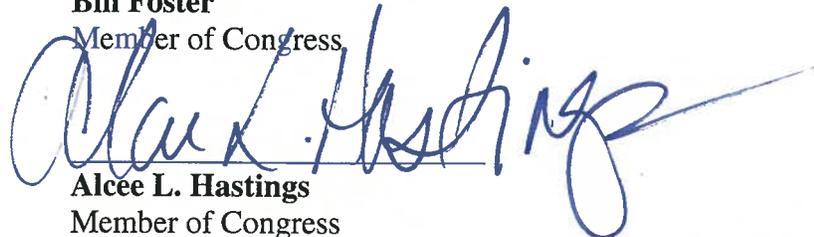
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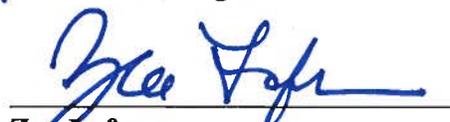

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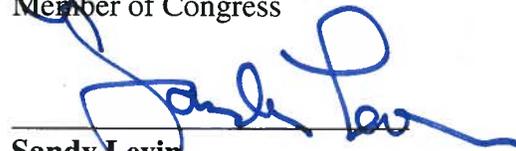

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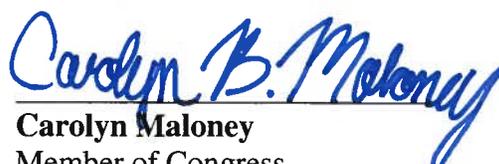

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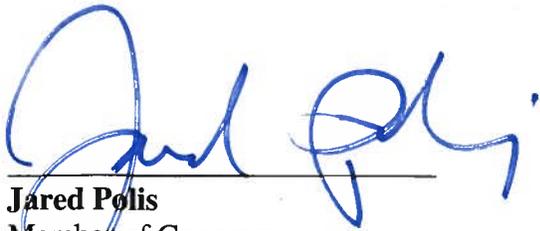
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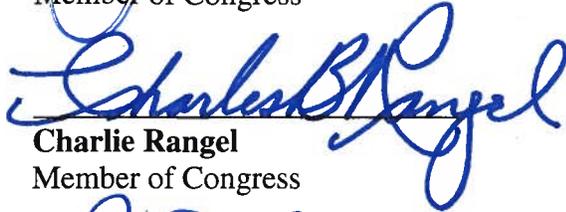
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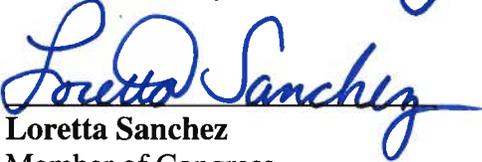
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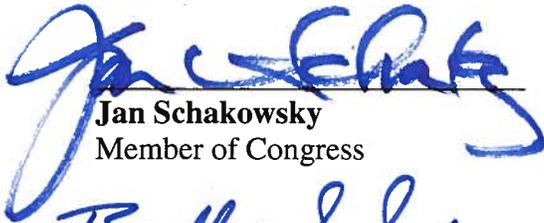
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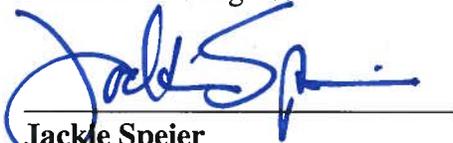
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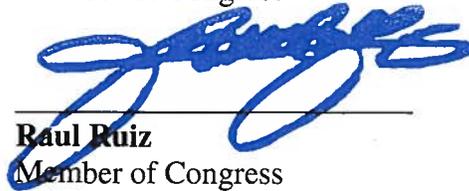
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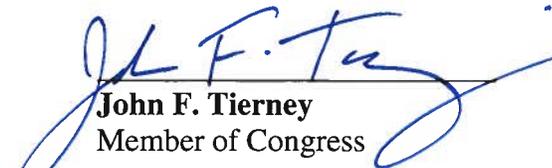
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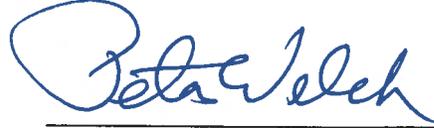
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