

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

December 11, 2025

The Honorable Brian Nesvik  
Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Director Nesvik:

We urge you to reverse course on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) recent cancellation of the highly anticipated National Wolf Recovery Plan, originally scheduled to be released by December 12, 2025. The Service is unnecessarily and hastily eliminating a critical step to ensuring practical, fact-based conservation of gray wolves (*Canis lupus*) rooted in public collaboration.

Initially announced in February 2024, the National Wolf Recovery Plan was intended, to "provide a vision for species recovery that is connected to site-specific actions for reducing threats and conserving listed species and their ecosystems."<sup>1</sup> Following decades of unpopular delisting attempts and subsequent litigation, the Plan sought to engage the public to develop, for the first time, a unified approach to the recovery of gray wolves in the lower 48 states under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) based on the best available science.

Now, the Service has abandoned the much-needed unified approach to recovery, claiming without evidence that "a recovery plan for the listed gray wolf entities would not promote their conservation because listing is no longer appropriate."<sup>2</sup> This decision appears to respond to political pressure rather than support science-based decision-making, so that the Service can once again attempt a nationwide delisting from the ESA without engaging in a transparent process to evaluate what is needed to achieve gray wolf recovery for the American people.

Originally listed in 1974, gray wolves have not recovered from the historic killing campaigns that led to their much-needed federal protection; they still occupy a mere fraction of their historic

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<sup>1</sup> *Service Announces Gray Wolf Finding and National Recovery Plan* | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. (2024, February 2). FWS.gov. <https://www.fws.gov/press-release/2024-02/service-announces-gray-wolf-finding-and-national-recovery-plan>

<sup>2</sup> *Recovery Planning Exception Findings for the 44-State and Minnesota Listed Entities of Gray Wolves* (*Canis lupus*). (2025). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. [https://ecos.fws.gov/docs/recovery\\_plan/20251103\\_GrayWolfRecoveryPlanExceptionFindings\\_FINAL.pdf](https://ecos.fws.gov/docs/recovery_plan/20251103_GrayWolfRecoveryPlanExceptionFindings_FINAL.pdf)

range.<sup>3</sup> The repeated attempts to delist these animals prematurely, not based on any recovery goals, has sabotaged the progress made since they were originally listed. Furthermore, the recovery goals set for the species decades ago are outdated and irrelevant.<sup>4</sup>

Today, wolves continue to face ongoing serious threats to their survival, including poaching, habitat loss, and a patchwork of inconsistent state management. In states where they are already delisted, like the Northern Rocky Mountains states (including Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming), wolves face year-round hunting in many areas, snaring, baiting, trapping, and aerial gunning and bounty-like payments in some areas. In the Midwest, when wolves temporarily lost their ESA status in November 2020, Wisconsin immediately commenced a hunt in February 2021, which resulted in the death of more than 200 wolves, including pregnant females, in less than 60 hours.<sup>5</sup> Wisconsin state law mandates a wolf hunt when the animals are not listed under the ESA.<sup>6</sup>

It is critical that any future decisions concerning the ESA status of gray wolves start with developing a comprehensive nationwide recovery plan based upon the best available science. As such, we urge the Service to fulfill its mission of “working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people” by reversing course and developing a National Wolf Recovery Plan, with public engagement.

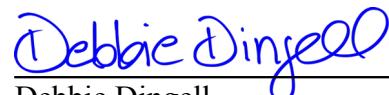
Sincerely,



Donald S. Beyer, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress  
Ranking Member, Committee  
on Natural Resources



Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

<sup>3</sup> Carroll, C., Phillips, M. K., Lopez-Gonzalez, C. A., & Schumaker, N. H. (2006). Defining recovery goals and strategies for endangered species: the wolf as a case study. *BioScience*, 56(1), 25-37; Bruskotter, J. T., Vucetich, J. A., Enzler, S., Treves, A., & Nelson, M. P. (2014). Removing protections for wolves and the future of the US Endangered Species Act (1973). *Conservation Letters*, 7(4), 401-407.

<sup>4</sup> Vucetich et al. (4 Sept. 2025). An open letter to members of Congress from scientists and scholars on federal wolf delisting and Congressional intervention on individual species in the context of the U.S. Endangered Species Act.  
[https://www.humaneworld.org/sites/default/files/docs/2025\\_09\\_24%20Open%20letter%20to%20Congress%20on%20wolves\\_0.pdf](https://www.humaneworld.org/sites/default/files/docs/2025_09_24%20Open%20letter%20to%20Congress%20on%20wolves_0.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> The Humane Society of the United States, "A Call to End Wolf Trophy Hunting in Wisconsin," <https://www.humaneworld.org/sites/default/files/docs/HSUS-WI-Wolf-Report15Jun2021.pdf> (2021).

<sup>6</sup> Wisc. Stat. Ann. § 29.185(1m) <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/29/iii/185>

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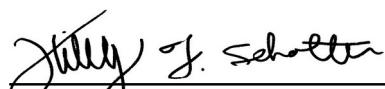
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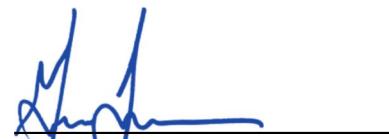
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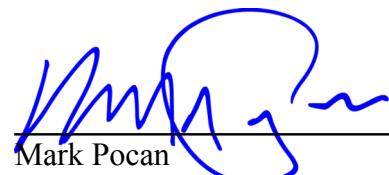
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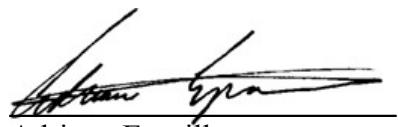
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