

December 17, 2013

Dear President Barack Obama, Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe:

As leaders in the business community, we are writing to express our concern with the national delisting of the gray wolf in the contiguous United States.

The Endangered Species Act has been successful in protecting many species crucial to the environment and history of the United States, such as the American Bald Eagle, the Pacific salmon, and the American alligator. The success of the Endangered Species Act hinges on the proper usage of the protections it places on each individual plant or animal. With the delisting of the gray wolf, not only would wolf populations decline, but also the value of the Endangered Species Act would deteriorate.

The Endangered Species Act protects plants and animals, which help sustain priceless resources such as food, medicine, drinking water, flood protection, and recreation. Outdoor recreation provides approximately \$646 billion in annual revenues and employs 6.1 million people directly in the United States,<sup>1</sup> more than the real estate and oil and gas industry combined.<sup>2</sup> Wildlife viewing, specifically, generates: \$33 billion in consumer spending on gear and trip-related costs, \$2 billion in business (serving wildlife watchers), and \$6 billion in economic ripple effects annually.<sup>3</sup> The long-term health of businesses and industries relies on a well-protected environment.

Conserving the gray wolf, specifically, has positive economic consequences. The gray wolf's reintroduction to Yellowstone National Park in 1995 boosted revenues in local communities by \$10 million annually.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, a study by University of Montana economists revealed that more than 150,000 people visited Yellowstone specifically because of wolves, people who account for an estimated \$35 million in revenue for the Greater Yellowstone area.<sup>5</sup>

Other areas have benefited from wolf-specific ecotourism. The International Wolf Center in Ely, Minnesota has brought in as much as \$3 million per year to the small town of Ely.<sup>6</sup> In Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada, the park's public wolf howls are one of the park's most popular activities, which brought in more than 126,500 people by 2005.<sup>7</sup> The benefits reaped by these areas and Yellowstone could be experienced by communities, such as those surrounding Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado or other national and state parks habitats that are suitable for wolves, but only if the wolf is protected while migrating naturally into these areas.

Prematurely delisting the wolf in the contiguous United States will not only affect wolf-related revenue, it could also set a precedent for the removal of other currently protected species. Such a

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<sup>1</sup> Outdoor Industry Association, "The Outdoor Recreation Economy," 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Outdoor Industry Association, "The Outdoor Recreation Economy," 2012.

<sup>4</sup> National Wildlife, "How much is clean water worth?," Feb/March 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Duffield, John W., Chris J. Neher, and David A. Patterson. "Wolf Recovery in Yellowstone: Park Visitor Attitudes, Expenditures, and Economic Impacts." 2008. *Yellowstone Science* 16(1): 20-25.

<sup>6</sup> International Wolf Center. *Advancing a World for Wolves: 2004 Annual Report*.

<sup>7</sup> The Friends of Algonquin Park. *Algonquin Provincial Park, Ontario, Canada: Wolf Howling*.

move would effectively erode the power of the Endangered Species Act. The strength of the Act is precisely the reason why wildlife opponents so fiercely oppose it.

Please protect the wolf and the authority of the Endangered Species Act by canceling the proposed delisting of the wolf in the contiguous United States. The wolf is an important species ecologically, culturally, and economically to North America. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to set an example of responsible stewardship for our precious wildlife by protecting the wolf in America.

Sincerely,

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