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Committee on Environment
and Public Works Washington, D.C.

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LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON S. 1514, THE HUNTING HERITAGE AND
ENVIRONMENTAL LEGACY PRESERVATION (HELP) FOR WILDLIFE ACT

Wednesday, July 19, 2017

United States Senate

Committee on Environment and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m. in room 406, Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Honorable John Barrasso [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Senators Barrasso, Carper, Inhofe, Boozman, Fischer, Moran, Rounds, Ernst, Cardin, Gillibrand, Booker, and Harris.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOHN BARRASSO, A UNITED STATES
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF WYOMING

Senator Barrasso. Good morning. I call this legislative hearing to order.

Today we are here to talk about S. 1514, the Hunting Heritage and Environmental Legacy Preservation for Wildlife Act, HELP for Wildlife. The bill is comprehensive. It is bipartisan, designed to enhance recreational hunting and sport fishing activities, to ensure common-sense environmental regulation, and to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat.

I introduce this bipartisan bill along with Senators Cardin and Capito and Klobuchar and Boozman and Baldwin. The bill has been additionally cosponsored by Senators Enzi, King, and Johnson. I thank them for working with me and crafting the legislation that the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership has called the strongest legislative package of sportsmen's priorities in years.

The HELP for Wildlife Act does a number of things. First, it protects wildlife and wildlife habitat across the Country by reauthorizing important environmental programs. Among others, the bill reauthorizes until 2023 the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Act, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, the Chesapeake Bay Program, and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Grants Assistance

Program.

The bill also provides for enhanced recreational shooting and sport fishing activities. The bill finalizes partnerships among public agencies and other interested parties for promoting fish conservation across the Country that will create new recreational sport fishing activities and opportunities.

The bill also ensures that lead tackle, which is widely used by anglers, is not unnecessarily regulated under the Toxic Substances Control Act, a position reaffirmed twice by the Obama Administration. The bill also promotes the building and expansion of public target ranges for recreational shooting.

Finally, this bill ensures commonsense environmental regulation that protects species, as well as farmers and ranchers. The bill prevents farmers from being held liable for bird baiting for hunting purposes if they adhere to USDA and State agriculture best practices.

The bill also prohibits judicial review of the final Obama Administration rule delisting the recovered gray wolf in Wyoming that was reinstated by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia on March 3rd of 2017 and republished on May 1st of 2017. The bill also mandates the reissuance of the final rule delisting the gray wolf in the Western Great Lakes and it prohibits judicial review.

The HELP for Wildlife Act has garnered tremendous support

from the environmental and the sportsmen's communities. Over 50 different organizations have endorsed the HELP for Wildlife Act, diverse groups such as Ducks Unlimited, which will be testifying today, the National Wildlife Federation, Trout Unlimited, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Choose Clean Water Coalition, the American Sport Fishing Association, Boone & Crockett Club, Safari Club International, the Congressional Sportsmen Foundation, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, just to name a few.

Many groups in my home State of Wyoming have also submitted written testimony in support of the bill, including the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts, the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, the Wyoming Farm Bureaus Federation, the Wyoming Wool Growers Association, and the Wyoming County Commissioners Association. Former Democrat Governor Dave Freudenthal, who I think emailed you yesterday, has also submitted written testimony in support of the HELP for Wildlife Act.

I ask that all their written testimonies be submitted for the record.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Barrasso. I will also note that my friend, Brian Nesvik, Chief Game Warden with the Wyoming Game and Fish, is testifying today in support of the bill. It is an honor. I had the honor of spending time with Brian on several occasions in 2009, including Thanksgiving dinner. At the time, he was deployed to Kuwait as the commander of the second of 300th Field Artillery unit, which had the mission to running convoy operations into Iraq in a very dangerous time. So thank you very much, Brian, for coming to be with us today to testify.

Just as with the WILD Act and the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act, which both passed this Committee earlier this year with strong bipartisan support, this bill is another example of how we can work together, both Democrat and Republican, to help protect the environment and grow the economy. So I look forward to working with my colleagues on moving this important legislation out of the Committee and pass it to the Senate Floor.

With that, I look forward to the testimony of our Ranking Member for his opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Senator Barrasso follows:]

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE THOMAS R. CARPER, A UNITED STATES
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF DELAWARE

Senator Carper. Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman.

To each of our witnesses, welcome.

Brian, what branch of the service were you in?

Mr. Nesvik. Senator, I am in the Army National Guard and
continue to serve today.

Senator Carper. Navy solutes Army. I am a retired Navy
captain. I appreciate you very much. I like to say different
uniforms; same team. So we are glad you are here.

Glad all of you are here.

We haven't seen Dale for about like 20 minutes, so it is
nice to see you again.

[Laughter.]

Senator Carper. This is double duty. Twice the citizen,
that is what you are.

Welcome, everybody.

We have considered, as you know, my colleagues know that
most of this legislation before, and I have supported different
iterations of sportsmen's bills over the years. I think most of
us have. I look forward to hearing from each of you. We look
forward to hearing from each of you about this year's bill, the
HELP for Wildlife Act.

I recognize the important role that sportsmen and other

outdoor enthusiasts play in our economies. We are blessed in our State to have two beautiful, magnificent wildlife refuges right along the Delaware Bay and one of the Nation's newest national parks. So this is something that is close to home for us in Delaware.

According to the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Delaware has about 177,000 hunters. We only have 178,000 people.

[Laughter.]

Senator Carper. Actually, we have almost a million. And anglers who spend \$158 million annually and support almost 2,000 jobs. Almost 2,000 jobs. Many of these sportsmen and sportswomen also invest their time and resources to promote habitat conservation, in part through programs that will be reauthorized through the HELP for Wildlife Act.

Hunting is only one form of wildlife-related recreation. A 2011 Census study showed that more than 340,000 people enjoyed wildlife-related recreation in Delaware and 71 percent of them participated in wildlife watching specifically. Year after year, people come to the first State to observe the federally threatened Red Knot shorebirds which stops along the Delaware Bay to refuel on horseshow crab eggs along their amazing 9,000 mile migratory journey.

As we consider the HELP for Wildlife Act, we must carefully

balance the different interests at play in wildlife preservation and recreational activities across our Country. This careful balance is especially difficult to strike when it comes to managing some of our Nation's most charismatic species, including the gray wolf.

As Ranking Member of this Committee, I have made clear my firm commitment to ensuring that wildlife management decisions are guided and driven by the best available science. The idea of intervening in the current science-based, publicly informed species management process to legislatively delist a species gives me great pause.

In the case of gray wolves, the Committee must consider the strong support across our Nation for wolf protection and the critical role that wolves play in their ecosystems. We will hear from witnesses today on both sides of this complex issue, and I am especially interested in their perspectives on how best to manage this special species.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the new provisions in this bill to reauthorize the Chesapeake Bay program, the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act. Our champion here to my left, my wingman on many issues involving Delmarva, Delmarva Peninsula, Del, Mar, and Buzz is probably out there somewhere in the audience. I would be remiss if I did not mention the new provisions in this year's bill to reauthorize the Chesapeake

Bay, and we should applaud Ben for his leadership in important sections of the HELP Act for his leadership.

As part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, Delaware takes its responsibilities to contribute to the Chesapeake Bay's recovery and sustainability very seriously. I am particularly interested to hear what our witnesses have to say about how our Bay is doing. The Committee needs a full understanding of the Chesapeake Bay program role in assisting State efforts to restore the Bay and the role that the Chesapeake Gateways and Watertrails Network plays in advancing public understanding of and support for the Chesapeake restoration.

Again, our thanks to all of you. We look forward to hearing from you and for you to share your expertise with us. Bring it on.

[The prepared statement of Senator Carper follows:]

Senator Barrasso. Well, thank you very much, Senator Carper.

We have a couple of members who have some guests today who are testifying, so I would like to first give Senator Boozman the opportunity to introduce Mr. Jeff Crow, who will be testifying today.

Senator Boozman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for calling this important hearing. I would just like to take a second to give a special thanks to Jeff, of Hot Springs County, Arkansas, for coming here today and testifying.

Director Crow began his career with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission in 1986 and has been serving as Director since 2016. In 1996, he accepted a position with the Arkansas State Police, where he had assignments in highway patrol, criminal investigations, training and SWAT. He retired from law enforcement in 2011, after 25 years of service. In 2012, he returned to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission as a colonel of the agency's Enforcement Division. In 2013, Jeff was promoted to Deputy Director, and the following year he became the agency's Chief of Staff.

Director Crow also served 25 years on active duty as a member of the Reserves in the United States Marine Corps. A combat veteran of Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom, he retired in 2007 at the rank of Sergeant Major.

I think you have done everything.

Director Crow holds an Associate's Degree in Criminal Justice from National Park College, a Bachelor's Degree in Organizational Management from John Brown University, and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Arkansas State University. With all this experience, I cannot think of anyone better to discuss why the HELP Act is great for the State of Arkansas and this Nation.

I would like to thank Director Crow for his service to the State of Arkansas and to this Country. We thank you for agreeing to testify about this important legislation and look forward to your testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Barrasso. Thank you very much, Senator Boozman.

I would like to offer now an opportunity to Senator Cardin to introduce Kim Coble, who is here to testify today.

Senator Cardin. Well, first of all, Mr. Chairman, thank you for conducting this hearing. Thank you for your leadership on this legislation.

I am pleased that Kim Coble could be with us today. Kim is the Vice President for the Environmental Protection and Restoration at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. She started her career at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation in 1992. We have been working on the Bay for a long time, Mr. Chairman, and Kim has

been one of those key players as the senior scientist in the Foundation's Virginia Office, Delmarva, the States of the Chesapeake Bay Region, which includes six States and the District of Columbia.

In 2003, she was named the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Maryland Executive Director, where she directed policy and management of a diverse team of scientists, land use specialists, lawyers, grassroots coordinators, and volunteers to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay, and then in 2011 she became the Foundation's Vice President of Environmental Protection and Restoration.

Mr. Chairman, I think this Committee has heard me mention many times how proud we are of the way that the Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts were handled. It started at the grassroots, the local levels with the State of Maryland, the State of Pennsylvania, the State of Virginia, the State of Delaware. We involved local governments and private sector, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation has been a critical part of that team.

The reauthorization of the Chesapeake Bay program is a critical factor for the Federal partnership in the program, but the Bay efforts receive help from many different programs. Several are being reauthorized by the legislation that you introduced today. So it is a pleasure to have Kim with us today to explain the importance of the Federal role for the Chesapeake

Bay.

Senator Barrasso. Well, thank you very much.

Thank you all for being here. I will alert the witnesses that today there is a roll call vote sometime during this Committee, so you may see some of us go and come back. Don't be offended; we just apologize in advance. We are going to need to vote and then come back.

So, with that, I look forward to hearing the testimony, beginning with Brian Nesvik.

STATEMENT OF BRIAN NESVIK, CHIEF GAME WARDEN, WYOMING GAME AND
FISH DEPARTMENT

Mr. Nesvik. Well, good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Carper, and members of the Committee. I am glad to be back with the Committee. It is absolutely an honor to discuss these issues that are important to the citizens of my State and across the Nation, and I will do my best here today to meet the Committee's needs on this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to open by passing along the sincere appreciation of the President of the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission, Keith Culver. I spoke with Keith here in the last couple of days and he is today, presiding over a Wyoming Game and Fish Commission meeting in a town you are very familiar with, Afton, Wyoming. They are actually discussing some of the same issues that we will discuss here today. The Commission did want to pass along, though, their appreciation for yours and the Committee's work on wildlife type legislation over the last several months.

Mr. Chairman, as you are keenly aware, Wyoming is home to a rich and diverse wildlife resource that is valued by an equally rich and diverse constituency. Much of the State's wildlife habitats remain in pristine condition and continue to provide wide open spaces and remote wild country for western iconic species like sage-grouse, grizzly bears, moose, gray wolves,

pronghorn antelope and elk. These resources directly affect and influence the quality of life for Wyoming's citizens and visitors from all over the globe.

As I analyzed the key provisions of this bill, two things struck me about the overarching themes. Firstly, there is a reliance on the underlying trust and abilities of States to make decisions regarding important issues affecting their citizenry. Secondly, the bill places priority on, and provides resources for, America's fish and wildlife resources and the places that they live.

Wyoming citizens take very seriously their trust responsibility for the management of all wildlife within its borders. State leaders have invested significant resources and inspired a conservation ethic in all of its endeavors. Wyomingites pride themselves on balancing conservation with economic development and maintaining a quality of life that reflects their most deeply held western values. One of those most important values is the reliance on State management of those wildlife occupying habitats within the boundaries of the State.

Section 8 of this Act and its provisions to preserve wolves in a delisted status in Wyoming provides a mechanism to provide the State with predictability and commitment; predictability, the State will be able to focus on managing the gray wolf, and

commitment that as Wyoming maintains a healthy and viable recovered gray wolf population, that it will be able to continue its management uninterrupted.

The gray wolf population in our State has been recovered since 2002, and the Service has now, on three occasions, published a rule that definitively states wolves are recovered and that Federal management is no longer needed. For over 15 years, Wyoming's citizens have been extremely patient while the Service and the courts have wrestled with the status of a recovered population of wildlife within Wyoming's borders. The citizens of the State are ready for predictability and commitments that ensure State management into the future, and this bill provides that.

During the two years when Wyoming managed wolves under its current Wolf Management Plan, its wolf population thrived and remained far above recovery criteria. In fact, wolf populations and the number of breeding pairs occupying suitable habitats remained over 70 percent above the minimum requirements of the ESA.

Because not all habitats are biologically and socially suitable, there is a need to manage wolves and mitigate conflicts between wolves and livestock and private property owners. The State's track record is strong in its management of these conflicts, and during the two years when Wyoming managed

the population, there were an average of 35 wolves removed by our agency consequential to livestock damage each year. Last year, under the authority of the Fish and Wildlife Service, federal managers removed at least 113 wolves in control actions in response to livestock depredation.

As currently written, this Act reserves the responsibility for the Service to relist Wyoming's gray wolf population if it becomes threatened or endangered in the future. The ESA mandates that the Service's evaluation of all potential emerging threats or changing science and requires specific actions if recovery is not maintained. Despite the facts that the courts have been the lead in relisting species, they are not required to relist species, and this bill does not inhibit the responsibility of the Service to continue to oversee, for the post-delisting monitoring period, the wolf population in Wyoming.

In Idaho and Montana, where delisting was achieved through congressional action, State management remains intact today and the five-year post-delisting monitoring requirement of the ESA has expired. Both States continue to manage a fully recovered gray wolf population and there no longer exists any Federal oversight.

Germane to the core tenets of the ESA is its intent and stated goal to recover and delist endangered species, and again,

the provisions of this bill in Section 8 that provides certainty to future management of Wyoming wolves is welcome.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I would also like to provide my concise thoughts on other very important components of this bill. As I stated earlier in my opening comments, this bill provides a priority on the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitats across America. The reauthorization of the North American Wetland Conservation Act, also known as NAWCA, is reflective of the priority Americans place on wildlife and wild places.

In one project in our State, in the Upper Green River Basin in Western Wyoming, NAWCA was used in a big way, for its intended purpose. A \$1 million NAWCA grant awarded to the Wyoming Game and Fish in 2013 protected and enhanced over 16,000 acres of critical habitat in the Pacific Flyway, benefitting wildlife and their habitats. Also important in that is that partners were able to match Federal dollars by nearly \$3 million.

Mr. Chairman, there are several other provisions of this bill where I offer additional perspective in my full written testimony, and I look forward to answering yours and the Committee's questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Nesvik follows:]

Senator Barrasso. Thank you very much for your testimony,
Brian. Appreciate your being here.

Mr. Crow.

STATEMENT OF JEFF CROW, DIRECTOR, ARKANSAS GAME AND FISH
COMMISSION

Mr. Crow. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. I am Jeff Crow, Director of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

Mr. Chairman, I ask for unanimous consent that my full statement be made part of the record.

Senator Barrasso. Without objection.

Mr. Crow. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify on behalf of the State of Arkansas supporting the Hunting Heritage and Environmental Legacy Preservation for Wildlife Act.

Arkansas' position as the Nation's top-producing rice-growing State, as well as its reputation as a premier waterfowl-hunting destination in the Country, gives us a unique perspective concerning proposed amendments to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Waterfowl conservation is one of the more successful examples of coordination between State and Federal authorities.

It is this cooperation that has benefitted wildlife in Arkansas and the people that enjoy that wildlife resource. Arkansas hunters consistently rank in the top three total duck harvest annually and lead the Nation in mallard harvest each year. In a time when many States are experiencing declines in

hunting participation, Arkansas duck hunter numbers have grown over the past decade, with approximately 100,000 individuals duck hunting in Arkansas each year, including Arkansas residents and visitors from all 50 States.

Outdoors-related recreation generates more than \$4.9 million daily in Arkansas. Waterfowl hunting in Arkansas generated \$236.7 million in retail sales, supported 4,706 jobs, and provided \$29.1 million and \$23.9 million in State/local and Federal tax revenue, respectively. These significant economic contributions cannot be overlooked and provide much needed economic stability for our State.

Arkansas is the largest rice-growing State, producing half the Nation's rice. Arkansas grows rice on more than 1.2 million acres each year from 40 counties. Arkansas rice contributes over \$4 billion annually to the State's economy and employs more than 25,000 Arkansans.

It is no secret that rice fields and ducks go hand-in-hand, but the amount of food available for migrating and wintering waterfowl in rice fields has been on the decline for several decades. Earlier harvests, more efficient harvesting and fall tillage result in little waste grain left when most ducks arrive in mid-winter. The practice of encouraging a second, or "ratoon," crop of rice after harvest offers a viable tactic to increase foraging value of rice fields to help waterfowl meet

food and energy demands required for migration, winter survival, and breeding. Although traditionally practiced in the Louisiana and Texas Gulf Coast, ratooning rice is now possible thanks to the development of those new varieties of rice which mature to harvestable conditions much faster. However, a change in interpretation of the baiting laws relative to ratoon rice crops several years ago resulted in uncertainty about the legality of flooding and waterfowl hunting over ratoon rice crops.

Currently, the Federal interpretation on whether a field is baited or not includes a variety of possibilities which leads to confusion by both landowners/producers and hunters. Some criteria which are increasingly difficult to determine from a landowner perspective and measure from a law enforcement standpoint include how the crop plants got there, what has been done to the crop, and what will happen to it in the future.

The proposed bill affords the opportunity for enhanced State-level coordination between the USDA Cooperative Extension Service State offices and State fish and wildlife agencies when defining normal agricultural practices based on crop type and conditions. It is an activity that must occur at the State level to be implemented correctly and successfully.

This bill would codify clearer definitions around issues of baiting, afford the opportunity for waterfowl hunting over ratoon rice and other crops that have not been manipulated, and

allow conservation partners to educate producers and hunters about the value of agriculture to wintering waterfowl without compromising the legal standing of those producers and hunters.

The bill language reauthorizing the North American Wetlands Conservation Act at \$50 million for the next four years is also a welcome addition. Competition for limited NAWCA funds has increased in recent years, and this proposed appropriation level would provide valuable, consistent funding for migratory bird habitat conservation in coming years. NAWCA is a long-standing program that has been extremely effective in leveraging non-Federal funds to protect, restore, enhance, and manage wetland habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife.

Mr. Chairman, once again, in closing, I would like to say I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of this legislation. I believe the changes proposed are essential to the increased participation in hunting and shooting sports, which in turn provides the mechanism for increased conservation of our Nation's wildlife resources. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about my testimony today and look forward to continuing our work together to preserve our natural resources for the next generation.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Crow follows:]

Senator Barrasso. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Crow, for traveling here from Arkansas and for your testimony today.

I would like to next turn to Mr. Dale Hall, who is the CEO of Ducks Unlimited and the former Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Mr. Hall, thanks for joining us today.

STATEMENT OF DALE HALL, CEO, DUCKS UNLIMITED AND FORMER
DIRECTOR, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Mr. Hall. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee. Thank you very much for having me here.

Mr. Chairman I request that my written comments be submitted to the record in their entirety.

Senator Barrasso. And they certainly will. Thank you.

Mr. Hall. Again, thank you for allowing me to be here to speak on behalf of Ducks Unlimited in support of the HELP Act. This bill is very important and has a lot of components in it that are important to all of us in the conservation community.

NAWCA, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, is certainly a big part of that, and it is near and dear to Ducks Unlimited's heart because we work a great deal in restoring those wetlands out there. Over our 80-year history across the continent, we have now restored over 14 million acres of wetlands, and a lot of those acres have been restored with the help of NAWCA funding in the last 30 years. It has been a real pleasure to work with this Committee in the past, and hope hopefully we are able to provide the information necessary to get this bill across the finish line.

NAWCA has accomplished success in all 50 States. The program has conserved more than 33.4 million acres in North America alone. NAWCA has conserved valuable wetlands across the

continent, but we are still in need of additional work.

Wetlands are still under threat across the continent, and while we have done a good job, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has documented that wetland loss has dramatically accelerated by 140 percent since 2004. This non-regulatory approach to working with the landowners to get the job done is, we believe, the most effective way to help conserve those wetlands and move things forward.

NAWCA catalyzes conservation efforts and resource managers and partners from many sectors to use a variety of voluntary strategies to restore enhanced degraded habitat, as well as protect some of the remaining high-quality habitat. Wildlife-related recreation generates more than \$100 billion in our economy each year, and we believe the ripple effect of that would take it up into several hundred billion dollars.

In the Chairman's State of Wyoming, 140,116 hunters created nearly 5,000 jobs, while 302,758 anglers generated more than \$476 million in retail sales. Eight NAWCA projects have been completed in Wyoming since the program's inception, and these projects have conserved 45,000 acres of critical wetland and wildlife habitat.

The Ranking Member's home State of Delaware currently has 10 NAWCA projects completed or underway, and these projects have conserved 10,800 acres of wetlands important to the State

residents. Taking \$6.6 million of Federal funding leveraged another \$412 million in private and non-Federal funding in order to do these projects.

These results are not unique and have been seen all over the Country, with more than 5,600 NAWCA partners. I want to emphasize that again. More than 5,600 NAWCA partners working together in a volunteer fashion to get this work done.

Our average at Ducks Unlimited in getting the matching fund, the law requires one-to-one match, our history is that we get an average of \$3.2 of non-Federal funding for every \$1.00 of Federal funding. That is a pretty significant payoff for the American taxpayer.

I would also like to emphasize the importance in this bill of the reauthorization of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. I have been, through my career, around to see NFWF grow and do all the wonderful things that it has been able to do, and we certainly support the reauthorization of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, while only \$6.5 million, is critical to working with the international community in getting things done.

Finally, my colleague here will speak to the Chesapeake Bay, but it is a very important area. Like the Gulf Coast, where more than a million acres have been lost and partners are

working together to try to restore those wetlands, the Chesapeake Bay is another true jewel for the American people.

Again, I look forward to working with this Committee and answering any questions that I can to help get this bill approved. It is a good bill, it is a bipartisan bill, and it is a bill that is very much needed, so thank you very much for allowing me to be here.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hall follows:]

Senator Barrasso. Thank you very much for your testimony,
Mr. Hall. We are delighted to have you.

Ms. Coble.

STATEMENT OF KIM COBLE, VICE PRESIDENT, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AND RESTORATION, THE CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Ms. Coble. Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished members of the Environment and Public Works Committee, I am Kim Coble, Vice President of Environmental Protection and Restoration for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. On behalf of our board, staff, and members, thank you for inviting me to participate in today's to discuss the HELP for Wildlife bill. And thank you to the bill cosponsors on the Committee, Senator Barrasso, Senator Cardin, Senator Capitol, Senator Boozman, for your leadership in introducing the bill.

At CBF, we have over 240,000 members and are proud to count sportsmen and anglers among them. In fact, our founders were sportsmen and anglers, and we have found them to be great conservationists.

Today we are sitting in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, which feeds the great estuary in our Nation. The Chesapeake watershed spans six States, 64,000 square miles, and encompasses over 3,600 species of plants and animals. We are surrounded by astonishing lands and waters that our extraordinary life depends on. These resources not only provide substantial ecological value, but they also provide tremendous economic value.

Data from the outdoors industry underscore how important

these lands and waters are to sportsmen, anglers, and other outdoor lovers in the region. According to the Outdoors Industry Association, annual consumer spending on outdoor recreation is \$644 billion. In Maryland, West Virginia, and Delaware alone, the 2012 outdoor recreation economy generated a total of 206,000 direct jobs, \$21.1 billion in consumer spending, and provided \$5.9 billion in wages and salaries.

Given both the ecological and economic value of the Chesapeake ecosystem, it is easy to understand why the six Bay States have been working together under a formal voluntary agreement since 1983 to restore the Chesapeake Bay watershed. At that time, our States realized isolated local restoration work was not yielding the results that are needed, and a Federal partnership was critical to achieving these results.

Today, our States operate under the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement. The first three goals of this Agreement are to protect, restore, and enhance fisheries and vital habitats, and achieve the water quality necessary to support these living resources. These three goals are at the heart of the programs put forward on the HELP for Wildlife Act.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation strongly supports the conservation programs included in this bill. They are important to the sportsmen and anglers in our region, and to restoring the Chesapeake Bay through the 2014 Bay Agreement. They work

together to support both local interests and the larger restoration of the cross-State ecosystem.

The Chesapeake Bay Program reauthorized by this bill exists to help Bay States achieve their goals in the Bay Agreement. It facilitates the Federal partnership that is critical for protecting and restoring the multi-State Chesapeake ecosystem. The Chesapeake Bay Program has allowed States to set science-based goals that address the needs of the entire ecosystem, but are also tailored to local habitats and values. The majority of program funding is invested through matching grants in local projects that directly help protect and restore wildlife and fisheries in their habitats.

This leads me to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, or NFWF. NFWF administers some of the grants that are established by the Chesapeake Bay Program through their Chesapeake Stewardship Fund. These matching grants incentivize local watershed protection and stewardship, but they must also help the States meet their science-based Bay Agreement goals.

Take wetlands, for example. States have set a goal to restore 85,000 acres of wetlands and enhance an additional 150,000 acres of wetlands by 2025. This Stewardship Fund can be invested in local stewardship projects that help reach that goal. In this way they achieve a win-win for local stakeholders and ecosystems.

Both NAWCA and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act provide critical investment and support for local stakeholder projects and habitat restorations. As a midpoint for the Atlantic flyway, the Chesapeake is a critical area for migratory birds and provides great systems for ecotourism and birders.

Moving to fish habitat, codifying the National Fish Habitat Partnership will support locally led Atlantic Fish Habitat Partnership, which CBF is proud to be a member of, and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails network and Grants Program supports local initiatives to connect outdoor lovers with natural resources by expanding the physical access to the Bay.

Programs included in this bill are very important to sportsmen and anglers in our region, and to the success of the 2014 Bay Agreement. They work together to support both local interest in restoration needs, and for this reason the Chesapeake Bay Foundation strongly supports the conservation programs included in the HELP for Wildlife Act. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Coble follows:]

Senator Inhofe. [Presiding.] Thank you, Ms. Coble.
Mr. Vucetich?

STATEMENT OF JOHN VUCETICH, PH.D., ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, SCHOOL
OF FOREST RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE, MICHIGAN
TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

Mr. Vucetich. Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify. I appreciate it greatly. I am a professor of wildlife management from Michigan Technological University and have been studying wolf ecology and management for the past 20 years.

My professional understanding of the HELP for Wildlife Act is that it is a Trojan horse and should be opposed or amended. It contains some important positive provisions, but its most important effect, I believe, would be to undermine the Endangered Species Act and to subvert wolf conservation.

Wolves are understood by science to be valuable to our ecosystems. Most Americans also recognize that wildlife, including wolves, possess value in their own right, and should be treated fairly and with respect. Sociological evidence is clear that the public support for wolves and wolf conservation is strong. Public support for the Endangered Species Act is also high among both liberal and conservative constituents.

Nevertheless, some citizens and special interests express concern that conserving wolves comes at too high a price. They raise disquiet about human safety, protecting livestock, and unfair competition with hunters for deer.

I address each of those topics in detail in my written

testimony, and here I can summarize the main findings.

First, and with respect to human safety, wolves, very simply, are not a threat to human safety. This fact is robustly supported by scientists in academia and in government. False impressions to the contrary are fostered by those who fabricate stories, made-up stories about wolves and the threats that they cause to humans.

Second, and with respect to livestock, government statistics plainly indicate that wolves are not a threat to the livestock industry. Wolves can certainly be a concern and a problem for some individual livestock owners, and we have an important obligation to attend to those challenges. Fortunately, there are effective tools available to deal with those problems. They include non-lethal control and financial compensation. And when those programs need to be improved, they should be so improved.

The economic impact on livestock is more than likely made up greatly by wolves' effect on overabundant deer populations. Over-abundant deer in the Great Lakes region is detrimental to forestry, it is detrimental to crops, it is detrimental to private property and human safety. In each of the three States in the Great Lakes region, about a dozen people are killed every year when their automobiles strike deer, and injuries number in the many hundreds.

Wolf delisting is also motivated by very few people with an intense interest to hunt wolves. Their voices have been greatly amplified by State agencies. Their expressed motivation is to promote deer hunting; however, the best scientific evidence indicates that hunter success is influenced by factors aside from wolves, and State agencies from the Great Lakes region report that deer hunting is quite successful both in terms of number of deer harvested and hunter satisfaction.

So these concerns, human safety, livestock, and deer, they tend to be grossly exaggerated. And to the limited extent that the concerns are genuine, they are readily accommodated.

The concerns about wolf hunting go further. First, plans for wolf hunting are at odds with sound science, especially in the State of Wisconsin, where hunting would be intense enough to impair the ecological value of wolves. This is one of the values that is explicitly expressed in the finding section of the ESA, a value to be protected.

Another concern about hunting pertains to America's hunting heritage and the widely acknowledged decline in hunting participation. Because few Americans participate in hunting, the success, the future success of hunting in America depends on the attitudes of non-hunters. Most non-hunters support hunting when it is motivated by obtaining meat; and most Americans, most non-hunters, oppose hunting when it is motivated by hatred for

the animal, when it is motivated by obtaining a trophy, especially by cruel methods such as traps and neck snares. These are the important motivations and methods of wolf hunting. Pressing for this kind of hunting will unquestionably harm America's hunting heritage in the whole.

A few assert that wolves demonstrate shortcomings in the Endangered Species Act. However, with a 99 percent success rate, the Endangered Species Act has been extremely effective at preventing the extinction of listed species. Moreover, there is solid sociological evidence to indicate that most people do not believe the Endangered Species Act is overly protective. Finally, the Endangered Species Act allows for ample flexibility about how it is that agencies and their collaborators go about recovering species.

What the ESA requires is better implementation, and implementation is impaired when Congress intervenes on decisions pertaining to individual species, it is impaired when Congress intervenes on judicial review of ESA decisions, and when Congress fails to provide adequate funding for the Endangered Species Act. Adequate implementation also depends on sound science playing its proper role, a condition that is not always realized.

So this is a summary of the shortcomings as I see them for the HELP for Wildlife Act as they pertain, in particular, to the

Endangered Species Act and wolf conservation.

Thank you for the opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Vucetich follows:]

Senator Inhofe. Thank you, Mr. Vucetich.

Our Chairman will be coming back, Senator Barrasso. He is voting right now, and as soon as he gets back I am going to run and vote, so I am going to kill some time while we are waiting.

Let me ask you a couple questions. First of all, confession is good for the soul, Dale. I didn't chew out, because I never do that, but I admonished my staff because they didn't let me introduce you. I always thought you were from Oklahoma. Then she looked it up and you are not; you are from Tennessee, is that right?

Well, anyway, you have come. This Partnership Act has really been great, and during the last couple administrations we have been able to successfully -- in fact, when you were director, you came out to Oklahoma; you talked to the landowners out there in Western Oklahoma on our farmlands, our ranch lands. Somehow there is this notion that the landowners and the sportsmen somehow don't care that much about the land, about preserving it, about the environmental benefits, and we find this to be completely wrong.

In fact, when you were out there, and Dan Ashe, I think it was, found the same thing, and the Government had learned from them how to preserve and take care of the conservation concerns and all that. Has that been your experience?

Mr. Hall. Yes, sir, it sure has. In my 40 years or so

working in conservation, and at least 30 of those directly with people that own the land, we need to understand something that is very basic. In this Country, 65 to 70 percent of all fish and wildlife habitat is in private ownership, and it is there because they care. It is there because they have been good land stewards and because they have wanted to have as much diversity and health on their lands as possible.

And I have never found a farmer or a rancher or a forest owner, or anyone else, that didn't truly love the land; and I think it is really unfortunate that anyone would make disparaging remarks such as these landowners don't care. That is simply not the truth. They do care and they are America's first and foremost stewards of the resource.

Senator Inhofe. Well, you know, I have heard that statement, and that is very disturbing.

Ms. Coble, do you generally agree with that, that the landowners and sportsmen are first in line in trying to preserve the conservation?

Ms. Coble. Yes, very much so. Our experience in working with farmers across the watershed have been that they are very open and willing and able to make improvements on their land and take care of it. As I mentioned in my testimony, we look at these landowners as the first conservationists, and it is a very strong ethic that we find throughout the watershed.

Senator Inhofe. And I would say also, in your particular job, you depend on landowners, on the private sector to provide a lot of the funding and a lot of the resources necessary to have that conservation.

Ms. Coble. The funding for the Bay restoration comes from many sources, and private landowners are one of those, yes.

Senator Inhofe. Sure.

Do you agree with that, Mr. Crow? How are things in Arkansas?

Mr. Crow. Yes, sir. In Arkansas, 90 percent of our land is privately owned. We feel a tremendous responsibility to those landowners to help them understand how they play a role in conservation and working with them.

One particular example that we have right now is our quail restoration effort. We are reaching out to landowners all across the State to develop some focal areas to restore our quail habitat back to its former glory. So we are getting a lot of support for that and I am really encouraged, as we visit with landowners, the level of interest that they have, whether hunters or not, in participating in conservation.

Senator Inhofe. Oklahoma and Arkansas, we are about half hog in Oklahoma, and I have to tell you that while I am very familiar -- three of my kids graduated from Arkansas, so we are very familiar with it -- with the ducks and the geese

particularly. However, we compete on almost an even basis in the north central part of Oklahoma. As you know, we have flyways there that are almost unmatched. But, generally speaking, they are the ones that really do want to have all the pristine and protection of the economy.

How about in Wyoming?

Mr. Nesvik. Well, thank you, Senator. Wyoming is very similar to what some of the other witnesses have testified to here. About 50 percent of our State is private land. Simply put, we would not enjoy the abundance nor the diversity of wildlife species that we have in our State without private lands, and many times those private lands are some of the most productive lands and are oftentimes used by wildlife.

And I guess, secondly, the second part of your question with regards to sportsmen, that is one of the values that we really value in Wyoming. Oftentimes, our best conservation efforts come as a consequence of sportsmen and landowners and others that love wildlife coming together to try to develop these projects, and nearly every single provision in this bill has some component of it that requires partnerships with private landowners and sportsmen.

Senator Inhofe. And you know, of course, Senator Barrasso being the Chairman of this Committee, he has been very interested and the prime mover of this bill, which, by the way,

we had some kind of a goof up because I was to be one of the original cosponsors, too. And he has now returned, so I am going to go vote.

Senator Barrasso, welcome back.

Senator Barrasso. [Presiding.] Well, thank you very much, Chairman Inhofe, for your continued incredible leadership of this Committee.

As I mentioned to the others, there will be people coming in and out, but I would like to start, if I could, Brian, with you with questioning.

Could you just talk about how important it is in terms of outdoor recreation for the State of Wyoming in terms of our economy, and then will this HELP for Wildlife Act improve these opportunities?

Mr. Nesvik. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. The short answer to your question is absolutely. As you and many of the esteemed members of this panel here today are well aware, habitat is the lifeblood of wildlife and also wide open spaces which provide opportunities for a variety of different outdoor activities like fishing, camping, outdoor photography, hiking, horseback riding, boating, hunting, wildlife viewing.

All of these activities, and there are many, many others, are a major part of our State's economy; they work symbiotically with the economy and are very important with regards to the

provisions dealing with shooting ranges.

In our State, as I think you are well aware, Governor Matt Mead has made providing shooting opportunities for all of its citizens a high priority. He strongly believes that outdoor activities connect people with the outdoors, and that is important and that is an important part of our values and our culture in our State. So the provisions in this bill that encourage partnership with Federal land management agencies is very much in alignment with our economy and also with our culture.

With regard to the provisions on allowing States to make decisions on the use of lead tackle, that is another very important component of our State's recreation and economy. Fishing is a big part of what a lot of our folks spend their extra time doing, so having that ability is also important.

Then, lastly, I think the regulatory certainty that comes with the provisions on the migratory bird baiting is another component that is helpful for both landowners, farmers, and also hunters, alike.

Senator Barrasso. Thank you.

Mr. Hall, the HELP for Wildlife Act extends the authorization of appropriations for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act for five years. Your written testimony talks about the projects you mentioned in Wyoming that have been

funded by the Act. You mentioned the protection of ocean lake wetlands in Wyoming, a \$75,000 grant. I think you stated it "provides important habitat to a variety of migratory birds, including several species of waterfowl, shorebirds, many other wetland-dependent species."

Could you provide more examples as to how the North American Wetland Conservation Act has been used to enhance wildlife habitat in other States?

Mr. Hall. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I welcome that question because many people believe, unfortunately, that the North American Wetlands Conservation Act is the North American Waterfowl Conservation Act. It is the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. And when we do a project and we do it at Ducks Unlimited alone, we average about 500 projects a year of one form or another. And by the Fish and Wildlife Service's estimate, those projects, each one benefits up to 900 species.

I want to say that again. Between 700 and 900 species are benefitted by these wetlands projects because, first of all, all wildlife needs water. So, if nothing else, it is a watering place for many of these. But these wetlands create the whole ecosystem, the food chain all the way from the micro invertebrates up through the top predators.

So throughout the Nation these kinds of projects are benefitting all the people. They purify water; they help to

hold back flood damage by storing water. Along the coastlines wetlands are known to, if a hurricane is traveling over emergent marsh, for every 2.7 miles that it travels over emergent marsh, the storm surge is reduced by one foot.

There are many, many benefits that come from creating these wetlands projects.

Senator Barrasso. Thank you.

Mr. Nesvik, May 1st, 2017, U.S. Fish and Wildlife issued a final ruling, again delisting the gray wolf in Wyoming under the Endangered Species Act pursuant to a mandate by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. This puts the management of the gray wolf where it should have been all along, under the control of Wyoming, not Washington.

In the words of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, "The Court's decision recognizes the recovered status of gray wolves and affirms the Service's determination that the State's regulatory mechanisms are sufficient for conserving wolves under its authority."

Talk about what kind of actions you are going to take to protect the gray wolves in Wyoming under your authority and to maintain adequate numbers needed to maintain that healthy population.

Mr. Nesvik. Certainly, Mr. Chairman. Excellent question. I will start by just saying very simply implementation of

Wyoming's wolf management plan is the short answer to your question. Our governor, our elected legislature, our Wyoming Game and Fish Commission, all of our elected leaders in the State and appointed leaders have pledged support and commitment to manage for healthy and viable populations of wolves in our State into the future.

As I have stated in my testimony, during those brief two years when we did have the opportunity to manage wolves, we did it with a tremendous track record; we did it informed by science in an adaptive manner and with the public involved, the public for whose wildlife we manage as participants. Specifically, our plan calls for management of wolves and the number of breeding pairs above the minimum requirements of the Fish and Wildlife Service; it requires an adaptive approach, meaning that as the science changes, conditions on the ground change, so does the management; it requires focused monitoring through the use of telemetry collars and classification flights. When Wyoming had this authority before, we collared over 70 wolves to make sure that we were very closely monitoring the status of the population.

Our plan requires the monitoring of genetic interchange; it requires us to provide and facilitate a zone, a flex zone where wolves can move back and forth between subpopulations; it calls for tightly regulated hunting seasons; it requires, just like we

do with every other species, to provide law enforcement and to ensure that these regulations related to wolf management are enforced; and it also requires citizen involvement.

So I think with all of those things, proven track record, commitments by elected leaders, I think demonstrates clearly that we are ready again, for the third time, to take over wolf management and do an excellent job at it.

Senator Barrasso. Thank you.

Senator Boozman?

Senator Boozman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director Crow, under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, there are substantial fines for those who bait and hunt migratory birds over presently undefined baited areas. The problem is that farming practices carried out to produce a marketable crop in Arkansas, and recommended by the applicable State agency under the Department of Agriculture, are often in conflict with the baiting prohibition.

As head of the Arkansas State wildlife agency, can you provide this Committee with your observations on the confusion that has resulted from the contradiction? Do you believe Section 3 of the HELP for Wildlife Act would resolve this situation? Also, it is not only the farmers, but it is the hunters that certainly don't want to put their reputation on the line, their freedom. So, again, could you comment on that?

Mr. Crow. Yes, sir, Senator Boozman. We actually had a situation in 2012, we had a drought that resulted in an early harvest of a lot of our rice crops, and then an early summer rain that produced kind of an unintended ratoon rice crop. Our local cooperative extension service advised our producers to either roll or plow those crops and to return those nutrients to the soil, which would clearly fall within the parameters of normal agricultural practice. However, the interpretation from the Fish and Wildlife Service maintained that those fields would be baited and that hunters would not be allowed to hunt waterfowl over them.

This created a lot of confusion and it caused a lot of difficulties for our producers and our farmers. I do believe that Section 3 will be very helpful in terms of consistency and clarification for our hunters and for our producers and landowners. I think the biggest component of that is the local input; it is the consideration, what is the normal agricultural practice being pushed out at that State level, and I think that would be very helpful not only for our producers, but for our hunters.

Senator Boozman. In your testimony, one of the things that you highlighted was the importance of enhanced State level coordination between USDA and the cooperative extension service and State agencies. Why do you feel that enhanced State level

coordination is so important when defining normal agricultural practices?

Mr. Crow. I believe that it is critically important because it is not a one-size-fits-all type of determination. I mean, what is normal practice in McCurtain County, Oklahoma may not be the same as in Lee County, Arkansas or Bossier Parish, Louisiana. There is a divergence of practices that are conducted at the local level.

Hunting and fishing is a regulated activity, and there are a lot of regulations, and I think it is incumbent upon conservation organizations to make sure that those that have regulatory responsibilities to make sure that those regulations are not confusing, they are not difficult for our hunters to understand, or for our producers or for landowners.

These are potential barriers for participation in hunting activities, and I think at a time in our Nation when we struggle to encourage people to participate in conservation through hunting, that ambiguous and difficult regulations can be a barrier to that. So I think it is extremely important.

Senator Boozman. Let's talk a little bit about NAWCA. Currently, Arkansas has 17 completed or under-way projects. Our State has been able to use \$11.7 million in NAWCA funding, along with another \$41.7 million in partner contributions, to conserve a total of 77,089 acres of wildlife habitat. Would Arkansas be

able to conserve that much wildlife without the NAWCA program?

Mr. Crow. No, sir. There would be no way that we could maintain that level of work absent the assistance that comes to us through the NAWCA program. The beauty of this program is it is private landowner-friendly, it is non-regulatory, and it is an incentive-based program.

I think it is interesting to note, and worthy to note, that the contribution, the in-kind contributions almost triple, through whether it be our agency or organizations like Ducks Unlimited that contribute to these programs is absolutely essential for what we are doing in wetland conservation to have this program.

Senator Boozman. So really great public-private partnerships.

Mr. Crow. Absolutely.

Senator Boozman. Very good.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Barrasso. Thank you.

Senator Inhofe.

Senator Inhofe. Thank you. I know I asked quite a few questions while we were waiting for our Chairman to get back from voting, but I have a couple more.

By the way, in your absence, I told Mr. Crow about our competition between Arkansas and Oklahoma in our hunting and

fishing wildlife, and what I was starting to say when Senator Barrasso came back in, after I was praising him for what he has done with this bill, I just said they also have another Senator there, and he is really big into fish and wildlife. In fact, the criticism that we get from his staff is that he goes off to commitments around the State, he keeps his fly rod in his trunk, and if he gets over a stream, he will stop there and fish for two or three hours and completely miss his meeting. So he is another one who is interested in this.

I had just a couple questions.

Mr. Vucetich, you had made a couple comments. One was that fewer Americans are hunting now. I don't know where you get that. Was Oklahoma included in that study?

Mr. Vucetich. No, this is understood to occur throughout the Nation, and in particular in the Midwest, where my comments were mostly focused on. But I don't believe there is much dispute about the notion that participation in hunting is generally on the decline.

Senator Inhofe. Come to Oklahoma; you may find that is not the case.

You did make a statement, talking about the wolf, that they are not treated fairly and with respect. I was writing down what you said.

I would like to kind of get another view on that, if you

would have one, Mr. Nesvik.

Mr. Nesvik. Thank you, Senator. I guess I would respectfully disagree with that statement. I don't believe that that is the case. Certainly, in my State and in my workings with other States in the West, I don't believe that that is the case. I think that the management plans and the attitudes and the participation by sportsmen in the past have reflected this is just another opportunity for another species.

We are very fortunate to have a diversity and abundance of species in our State. It is another species of wildlife that people have an opportunity to participate in their management, whether that be through active management or through being able to have wildlife viewing opportunities. So I don't agree with that statement.

Senator Inhofe. All right, well, those are the only two questions I had.

Senator Barrasso. Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Senator Carper.

Senator Carper. Again, we appreciate your presence, your testimony, and your willingness to respond to our questions. There are a number of other committees that are meeting right now, and I think there are probably hearings that maybe normally would be in the afternoon have been moved to the morning. So don't view the presence or the absence of members here as not

caring a great deal about these issues.

I think, Mr. Crow, I heard during the introduction or your comments, I think the Marine Corps was mentioned. Is that true?

Mr. Crow. Yes, sir, that is correct.

Senator Carper. And your name was linked to the term Marine Corps. What is the connection, sergeant major?

Mr. Crow. I am sorry?

Senator Carper. What is the connection with you and the Marine Corps?

Mr. Crow. I retired from the Marine Corps in 2007.

Senator Carper. And I just want to thank you.

Mr. Crow. Yes, sir.

Senator Carper. And say semper fi.

Mr. Crow. Thank you, as well.

Senator Carper. Okay, Navy salutes Marine Corps.
Different uniforms, same team.

Let me just start with John Vucetich. Does anyone ever mispronounce your name?

Mr. Vucetich. I am pretty easy about how it is pronounced, so, no.

Senator Carper. I expect a lot of people call you John.

Mr. Vucetich. Yes.

Senator Carper. We have heard today that some stakeholders and wildlife managers are frustrated with the lengthy process

associated with recovering and delisting the gray wolf. In your view, is the process too long? And do you think that a longer road to recovery within the bounds of the Endangered Species Act might be appropriate?

Mr. Vucetich. When we think about how long it has taken to come this far with wolves, over the last 15 years they have been kind of center stage, especially for the Fish and Wildlife Service, I think it is important to keep in mind two issues. One is that wolves are symbols of nature for many Americans; they are symbols of all of the things that many of us love about nature and they are symbols for all the things that many of us hate about nature. So what that means is that when we have conversations about wolves, we are having conversations about our relationship with nature on the whole.

Sometimes that is infused with a distracting amount of emotion. Nevertheless, they are a proxy for our attitudes overall. That, I think, demands that we be cautious and take the time necessary to go through this, because our understanding of our relationship with nature is not something that we will just settle on some day and be done discussing; it is an ongoing sort of thing.

To be a little bit more specific, many of the issues pertaining to wolves in the Endangered Species Act has to do with the legal aspect of the definition of significant portion

of range. Without going into the legal details of it, what it amounts to is that we, as an American people, still don't know what it means to be an endangered species.

How much does a species have to be impaired by us humans for us to say that is no longer good enough? That is what is at the heart of the issue about wolves with the Endangered Species Act. It is an extremely basic question that affects our understanding of the Endangered Species Act overall. It is a very difficult question.

Fish and Wildlife Service has had a very hard time trying to answer it, in part because it is a hard question. What I think they need from Congress is encouragement and leadership on answering it. And when delisting riders, like the one we are speaking about today, are accompanied with a bill that doesn't help the Fish and Wildlife Service focus on solving the problem, it kind of gets them off the hook.

Senator Carper. Good. Thank you.

A question for Kim Coble. We applaud your efforts and those of others who have worked with you to facilitate and support the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay to good health, but would we be able to restore, protect, preserve the Bay if the Chesapeake Bay program did not exist? Specifically, would the Bayside States of Maryland and Virginia be able to entice more distant States like Delaware, like Pennsylvania, like West

Virginia and New York to reduce the flow of pollutants from their States and otherwise help them to protect the Chesapeake from upstream threats?

Ms. Coble. Thank you, Senator Carper. No. The Federal partnership is critical to the Bay restoration effort, and that has been borne out over decades of work. When you have six States, you have D.C., you have many different governments, different funding programs, different perspective, different politics. To have an umbrella of the Federal partnership allows for better coordination, it allows for better dialogue, it allows for better science, and it allows for a better outcome for the whole effort.

Senator Carper. All right. I think you may have begun to answer this question, but how does this program, the Chesapeake Bay program, overcome the difficulties that downstream States have in working with their upstream counterparts?

Ms. Coble. It is an interesting question about the relationship of downstream versus upstream, because we are all part of the watershed. So New York is the furthest State upstream than Pennsylvania. Each State has a role to play in the Bay cleanup in that all their rivers and streams that feed it are part of it. So when Pennsylvania invests dollars and effort to improve their own water quality, they are also improving the health of the Bay.

Now, Maryland and Virginia, being the downstream States, obviously want to ensure that Pennsylvania does everything it can, and this is again where the Federal partnership becomes key. Virginia and Maryland can work much more closely in assuring Pennsylvania has resources it needs, has the political will it needs to get the job done because the Federal partners are at the table as well.

Senator Carper. Okay, thanks so much.

Senator Barrasso. Senator Gillibrand.

Senator Gillibrand. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that the Committee is holding this hearing to scrutinize the HELP for Wildlife Act. While this bill includes several important beneficial conservation provisions that I support, I am concerned about other parts of the bill that would have some very negative impacts on the Endangered Species Act and the regulation of toxic chemicals. I am concerned that the TSCA provision in Section 9 of this bill is a solution in search of a problem that would tie the hands of the EPA from ever regulating the components of sports fishing equipment.

This provision is unnecessary and does nothing to change the status quo for recreational fishermen. The EPA is not currently seeking to regulate sports fishing equipment under TSCA at the Federal level. However, it would be shortsighted for us to prevent future TSCA regulation permanently should the

science warrant a change in the future.

I am also concerned that this bill would legislate a delisting of gray wolves from the Endangered Species Act and prevent judicial review. Listing decisions should be based on science, and not politics.

On that topic, I would like to ask the witnesses a few questions.

Mr. Nesvik, you have raised concerns about livestock populations that have been impacted, wolf depredation. On average, how many cattle and sheep are killed by wolves each year in Wyoming?

Mr. Nesvik. Thank you, Senator. The number of cattle and sheep that are killed annually that is attributed to wolf depredation fluctuates widely. Last year was a record year, and I can get back to you with specific numbers, but I can tell you it was in the hundreds, over 200 cattle that were attributed to wolf depredations.

Senator Gillibrand. And how does that number compare to other predators like coyotes, mountain lions, and bears?

Mr. Nesvik. So in Wyoming we also investigate and compensate landowners who have damages that are a consequence of grizzly bears, mountain lions, and black bears. And, in total, of all of the different species that cause damage across our State, not only to cattle or sheep, but also to standing crops

or to agricultural operations, wolves account for about 37 percent of that total amount of damage to livestock producers and also farmers.

Senator Gillibrand. Dr. Vucetich, is wolf delisting necessary to protect livestock from wolf attacks, and are there effective methods for protecting livestock that can be used by farmers, ranchers, and government agencies today?

Mr. Vucetich. Yes, there are effective methods for protecting livestock. They include non-lethal control, there would be some instances where lethal control is appropriate, and also for financial compensation for these losses are appropriate.

Senator Gillibrand. For Ms. Coble, as you know, New York State is part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and New York State receives approximately \$2.7 million through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program for conservation projects. What types of projects are funded in New York to conserve the Chesapeake Bay, and is there more that can be done to help New York meet its conservation goals for the Chesapeake Bay?

Ms. Coble. Thank you, Senator. Generally speaking, New York is one of the six States that feed into the Chesapeake Bay watershed and therefore have goals to reduce the pollution coming down the Susquehanna from New York. The resources for New York, I can get you the specifics from it, but there are

pollution-reducing programs specifically for agricultural purposes, agricultural farms, as well as for stormwater runoff. So I don't have the dollar figures right handy.

Senator Gillibrand. Will you submit that for the record?

Ms. Coble. Yes, ma'am.

Senator Gillibrand. Thank you all for being here today and thank you for testifying.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Barrasso. Thank you so very much, Senator Gillibrand.

Senator Booker.

Senator Booker. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Some of my comments, I want to pick up where Senator Gillibrand was, but as we consider this bill, what is astonishing to me is that we just have to acknowledge that we are in the midst of a global extinction crisis on the planet Earth of stunning proportion. It is estimated that we have now lost more than half of all wildlife on the planet Earth in the last five decades, and the fact that we are not talking about this in the context of the severity of this mass extinction that we are under right now is chilling to me. This should be an issue for Congress and it should be an issue for public.

One in six species on the planet Earth are threatened with extinction in this century alone, and that is why the Endangered

Species act, which has saved 99 percent of the wildlife under its protection from extinction, is such an incredibly important law, and it is why the ESA decisions must be based on science, without interference from Congress.

So, Mr. Vucetich, I just want to focus some questions on you, if I may, in follow-up to Senator Gillibrand.

So Section 7 of the bill that we are discussing would delist gray wolves in the Western Lakes for endangered species, and you know, obviously, in 2014 the District Court here in Washington struck down the exact same efforts to delist the wolves. As you know, wolves in the United States currently inhabit only 15 percent of their historic range. So we have savagely, by 85 percent, cut their range.

You specifically have written a lot of the scholarly literature on the Endangered Species Act, so, based on your expertise, can you just explain whether the Western Great Lakes wolves have met the ESA's requirements for delisting?

Mr. Vucetich. No, they haven't, and the main reason is because, as you mentioned, wolves in the lower 48 have only been recovered to 15 percent of their former range, and the Endangered Species Act uses language that is shrouded in this phrase "significant portion of range."

What the courts have indicated in about a dozen court cases over about a 10-year period is that that phrase means that the

Endangered Species Act says that recovery requires the species be relatively widely distributed throughout its former range.

There are some difficulties and challenges in understanding exactly what "widely distributed" means, but there doesn't seem to be much dispute that 15 percent doesn't qualify. That is what the great concern is with these court cases. That is why every time the Fish and Wildlife Service proposes to delist under our meager conditions for wolves, the courts have struck them down, because it violates that particular principle of the Endangered Species Act.

Senator Booker. Thank you very much. And we do know the data about the damage to livestock. This is not an issue at question. Right now, less than one-half of 1 percent of livestock losses are attributable to wolves. Less than one-half of 1 percent. Concerns, nevertheless, have been raised about their negative economic impacts.

Is there a way to think about the economic impacts of wolves that considers the broader ecological benefits that wolves provide and the sort of cost-benefit analysis?

Mr. Vucetich. Yes, yes, absolutely. As you mentioned, there is a great deal of focus on the negative impact of wolves economically, and it is mostly focused on livestock. To cite two particular examples, in Wisconsin and Minnesota, they spend in the neighborhood of \$150,000 or \$200,000 a year compensating

for that. Those losses absolutely need to be weighed against the benefit of wolves. And I am talking about relatively hard-core economic benefits.

One of the great troubles in the Great Lakes are overabundant deer populations. Overabundant deer are damaging to forestry. In particular, when there are too many deer, hemlock can't grow, white pine can't grow, several other species. If wolves are allowed to do what they do, they would better over-abundant deer populations and it would give a very different impression of the economic cost.

There is also a human life issue, too, because, again, about a dozen people are killed a year in each of these States when their cars hit deer. So there is a sense of maybe putting human life in front of livestock, if you would expand it that way.

Senator Booker. Absolutely. So just in a sheer balance sheet analysis to taxpayers around the United States of America, the ESA makes economic sense.

But let's continue for a second. If the bill written becomes law, Great Lakes wolves would lose all of their Federal protections and management of wolves would be turned over to the States. Between 2012 and 2014, Great Lakes wolves enjoyed those protections. But during the time State wildlife managers permitted some incredibly cruel methods to kill hundreds of

wolves, and these include savage cable neck snares; steel jawed leg hold traps, which affect other wildlife, even our pets, these savage things that I have worked in a bipartisan way to try to ban from our national wildlife refuges; pack trailing of hounds.

So, in your opinion, do you think these methods are considered as "fair chase" wolf hunting methods?

Mr. Vucetich. No, they are not fair. One of the things that I think is important about wildlife management, about hunting programs in particular, is that we don't just simply hunt things; we hunt things for a reason, and the reason has to be a good reason, and then the methods have to be appropriate along with that. And there is pretty good reason to think that a lot of wolf hunting is motivated by hatred for wolves, and never in our American hunting heritage have we ever hunted something because we hated it. This is the first time in our history that we have decided to do that.

The other thing, just one more example, again, the example in Michigan, the plan for hunting wolves was all focused on reducing livestock depredations. It is important to reduce livestock depredations, but hunting is an absolutely silly way to do it; it doesn't make any sense with the science. So, once again we are hunting and killing wolves for reasons that doesn't make sense, and in that sense it is not fair or respectful to

wolves.

Senator Booker. I am just going to push one final question. Arguments in favor of wolf conservation tend to focus exclusively on the benefits that wolves provide to humans, and whether those benefits outweigh any negative impacts on us. This strikes me as sort of a limited view. So much of this analysis is done on a limited view, including that economic analysis we mentioned before.

So my final question is, is there a broader perspective that we should be considering when discussing wolf conservation and management that takes into account how residents of the Great Lakes States and other public folks perceive wolves?

Mr. Vucetich. Absolutely. There is good sociological evidence that indicates something like 80 to 90 percent of Americans say that wildlife have value beyond their economic value and beyond any value to humans. In other words, 80 to 90 percent of Americans believe that wildlife, including wolves, have value for its own sake. This is across demographic categories; men, women, wealthy people, middle class people, liberals, conservatives. It is a very, very widespread belief.

When you believe that something has value in its own right, that is the trigger for saying that it needs to be treated fairly and with respect, and I cited just a moment ago some important examples how wolves are not treated that way.

Senator Booker. Sir, thank you very much for your testimony, even though you have an overabundance of hair.

Mr. Chairman, can I, for the record --

Senator Barrasso. Be added as a cosponsor, did you say?

[Laughter.]

Senator Booker. Cosponsor of the requirement that all witnesses shave their heads, I would be very happy for that. This guy makes me feel really insecure.

Mr. Vucetich. We can find a compromise, maybe.

Senator Booker. Okay. We can meet midway.

But there is a book that I did with my Booker Book Club, sir, which I think you might be a member of, I am not sure. We did a book called *The Sixth Extinction* by Elizabeth Kolbert. It is a devastating book that talks about the mass extinction going on in the United States of America. May I enter that book into the record?

Senator Barrasso. Without objection.

Senator Booker. Thank you very much.

Senator Barrasso. Thank you.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Barrasso. Mr. Nesvik, you know what is interesting? In your written testimony you discuss the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the reauthorization that is in this HELP for Wildlife Act, and you make a point that about one-third of all endangered species are wetlands-related species. So is it safe to say that reauthorization of this program in this bill is actually going to help protect many endangered species? And can you maybe elaborate on that a little bit on that?

Mr. Nesvik. Absolutely, Mr. Chairman. I think that one of the important tenets of wildlife conservation is the fact that water is absolutely important to all living things on the planet. I think that is understood by most. But healthy wetlands are an indicator of overall ecosystem health, and Mr. Hall did an excellent job of talking about some of the details that really give rise to that analysis and that conclusion.

There are, as I stated in my testimony and as you just reiterated, a wide, wide range of endangered species that are what we call wetland obligates, species like the Kendall Warm Springs Dace. That is a species that is only found in one particular spot in the Upper Green River Basin of Wyoming, and that is where we conducted a \$1 million NAWCA project, specifically in that particular area.

The Wyoming toad is another wetland obligate endangered

species that relies heavily on wetlands, to name a couple Wyoming species.

Other species include the whooping crane, the southwestern willow flycatcher, piping plover, Least Tern, Yuma clapper rail in the southwest, the desert pupfish. I bet you have never heard of that one, Mr. Chairman. And a variety of plants as well, just to name a very few.

Senator Barrasso. Great. Thank you very much.

Senator Cardin.

Senator Cardin. Mr. Chairman, first of all, thank you for keeping the hearing open, as I was tardy getting back from the Floor. I appreciate that. I very much appreciate your leadership on this bill, as I said as I was introducing Kim Coble.

This bill is important for many reasons, and I appreciate each of the witnesses' testimony as to various parts of it. I am obviously very much interested in the impact that this legislation has on the Chesapeake Bay, and I say that because we have heard from the OMB director that it is important to have authorized programs, Mr. Chairman. I agree with that. We are the authorizing Committee. It is important for us to speak.

And we have been funding the Chesapeake Bay effort with that authorization for many, many years, and under the Chairman's leadership we now have the opportunity to have an

authorized program, which gives it a much stronger standing. It has had strong standing in Congress; it has been supported in Congress. But having authorization puts it in a much stronger position.

We have also had challenges, and this is not alone, in regards to attacks on continuation of the funding of the program. And this puts us in a much stronger position when you have an authorization.

What was particularly important, and, Kim, you have commented about this, the Chesapeake Bay program is a modest program as far as Federal funds, \$73 million. It is a relatively small amount of the total resources that goes into cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay. The largest amount of resources, by the way, come from local governments, State governments, more so than the Federal Government, just so we understand that the taxpayer support is more local than it is Federal. And we take pride in that.

But the Federal partnerships are very important, and the Chesapeake Bay program provides the glue, as Kim testified, to make sure that we are living up to everyone's obligations. It really keeps all the stakeholders focused that there is an overseer that makes sure that we do what we say we are going to do, and that provides the operations and the grants to make sure that that in fact takes place.

There are many parts to the Chesapeake Bay program. Several are included in this legislation. We have already talked about the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation; we have talked about the National Fish Habitat partnership, the National American Wetlands Conservation Act, the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network and Grant programs, all those feed in to the support of the Chesapeake Bay. And I could mention the Revolving Fund for wastewater and clean water, which very much fits into it. I could mention the Farm Bill with the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

So there are a lot of pieces that fit into the Chesapeake Bay, and I say that because it is the largest estuary in our hemisphere; it has been declared by presidents as a national treasure. Kim mentioned the number of species that are included in the Bay, the economic impact of the Bay, the quality of life, the iconic nature, that so many people live in the watershed. Why? Because they love the Chesapeake Bay, and it grows every year, presenting additional challenges.

So today's hearing on many parts of the Chesapeake Bay program is really a very, very important ingredient on the continued efforts that have been made now for close to 40 years, going back to Harry Hughes as governor of Maryland when I was in the State legislature.

So, Kim, I just want to give you one last chance to sort of

comment as to the importance of the Chesapeake Bay program itself, that \$73 million that is currently being appropriated and which here is authorized at \$90 million, how important that is to the overall effort.

Ms. Coble. Thank you, Senator Cardin and, also, thank you for your leadership for decades on the Bay. I am not sure we would be where we are today without you, so thank you.

Senator Cardin. I just would point out Senator Mathias started the efforts, the great Republican Senator from Maryland; Senator Sarbanes continued that effort, and I have his seat. Of course, my colleague, Senator Mikulski, has been a great champion; and on the other side of the aisle John Sarbanes has been one of our great leaders. But I thank you for those comments.

Ms. Coble. Probably the best point I can make regarding this is to actually talk about the health of the Bay, and what we have seen is that it is recovering. I never really thought that, really, in my career I would see the improvement in water quality, the improvement in habitat, and the improvement in the industries that are supported by it that we have seen over the last couple of years. Underwater grasses are rebounding; the famous blue crab is coming back; oysters are doing better; striped bass are coming back.

Every other year we do a State of the Bay Report where we

give numeric indicators. We gave the highest rating to the health of the Bay this last year that we have ever give, at 34, and it is very exciting to see that this Chesapeake Bay program, the Bay Agreement that is governing the cleanup and the restoration of our land, is working.

It is a true sign of success and it is a model, I think, for across the Country. It will not work without Federal leadership. It will not work without the Chesapeake Bay program and the other programs in this bill. And as you said, Senator Cardin, it is a modest amount, but it is a critical amount. That oversight and umbrella is the glue that holds the whole thing together. So it is with great support for those programs in this bill that we are here to testify in support of it.

Senator Cardin. Mr. Chairman, let me say in conclusion I also want to mention support for the Neotropical Bird, which includes, as I am sure the Chairman knows, the Baltimore Oriole, which is a neotropical bird. And we love the Baltimore Orioles, and they won last night, Mr. Carper, 12 to 1. Just want you to know.

[Laughter.]

Senator Barrasso. Let the record reflect. We would also like to introduce for the record, ask unanimous consent for a number of different submissions of articles, letters, and testimonies in support of the legislation. Without objection.

Thank you.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Barrasso. Senator Carper.

Senator Carper. As Senator Cardin prepares to leave, let me just point out I am just grateful that his moment for victory on behalf of his Orioles did not occur at the expense of my Detroit Tigers. To be continued.

Ms. Coble, one thing about your testimony that strikes me is that the far broader purpose of the Chesapeake Bay program to address issues that are also highly relevant in this bill before us, restoration, preservation of critical habitats, notably, wetlands and other fishery and wildlife habitat.

I just want to take maybe a minute, if you will, to elaborate on this broader mission of the program beyond water quality and talk about the partnerships that broader mission entails among Federal agencies, among States, nonprofits and business. Who is involved in all these issues in all these efforts?

Ms. Coble. Thank you, Senator Carper.

Senator Carper. Briefly, if you would.

Ms. Coble. We have often said what happens on the land has more impact than what is happening in the water, because the Chesapeake Bay watershed landmass is so enormous, 64,000 square miles. The habitat that is within that watershed is integral. All my colleagues at the table here have talked about the importance and interplay between the animals, the species that

live in it and the quality of that; the need for that habitat; the bird flyway on the Delmarva Peninsula is critical; the wetlands serving it. So all of those habitats are important for our wildlife, important for anglers and sportsmen, and important for water quality.

Senator Carper. All right, thanks.

I was privileged to be governor of our State from 1993 to 2001, and it was at a time when I think you said there was a score, if you will, for the restoration of the Bay gave a 34, said it is the best it has been for quite a while. From 1993 to 2001, the prospect was not so encouraging.

One of the things that we found out, what we are doing in Delaware, we raise a lot of chickens in my State, your State too, but in Sussex County, Delaware, we raise more chickens than any county in America, and they create a lot of chicken manure.

What we were doing is stacking up the chicken manure, cleaning our houses and stacking it up in farm fields, and waiting until somewhere down the line to be able to use it as a fertilizer for the nitrogen and phosphorous content. And the rains would come, wash the nutrients into ditches and creeks and streams, and eventually rivers and eventually into the Chesapeake Bay.

I remember gathering a lot of farmers in my State together in southern Delaware and some folks from environmental

communities, from the Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Control, including the fellow sitting right behind me, Christophe Tulou; he used to be our secretary. We talked about the Golden Rule, and I said to the farmers, how would you feel, how would we feel if folks over in Maryland were somehow polluting whether it is the air or the water that comes over and diminishes our ability to make a living? How would we feel about that? And we all agreed that would not be a good thing.

And we tried to figure out how to actually be guided by the Golden Rule, we know about love thy neighbor. We came up with this Nutrient Management Commission. It was farmer-led, and the final result was every farm where they had poultry litter and they spread the nutrients on farm fields, they had to have a nutrient plan and how to do that. They had to be essentially trained to do that and certified to do that.

And we have had that in place now for almost 20 years and it has worked. It has worked. Again, it involved the efforts of environmentalists and our regulatory agency in the State, but it was really the farmers, who are and can be some of our best environmentalists, who were right there at the vanguard. And I am very, very proud of what we have accomplished and, at the end of the day, to be a much better neighbor to Maryland, and we have been for a long, long time.

We applaud all of you here today, whether you served in the

Army, the Marines or not, we are grateful for your service and sharing your information with us, and I look forward to working with you going forward. Thank you so much.

Senator Barrasso. Thank you so much, Senator Carper.

Just before I bring this to a close, Brian, a quick question or two. My recollection is the introduction of wolves into Yellowstone, Bruce Babbitt, Bill Clinton was President. The number was like 30 and the idea was to get to 100 as a stable number, and we have been there for over 15 years.

My recollection in this Committee, Dan Ashe, who was President Obama's head of Fish and Wildlife, said Wyoming has done everything that we have asked them to do; they are a stable population. And I have read somewhere that the number of wolves that have expanded beyond Yellowstone, where they were "supposed to stay," is now 1,700 in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming. You are seeing them in Oregon, California. Are those roughly the accurate numbers, so the wolves have kind of expanded significantly?

Mr. Nesvik. Mr. Chairman, your numbers are approximate and they are correct. Idaho hasn't actually done a population estimate in a couple years, but Montana and Wyoming have, and you are exactly right. The wolf population in the Northern Rocky Mountains have done quite well and have expanded.

Senator Barrasso. And then take a look at this map. We

talk about the traditional area of habitat for the gray wolf, which is in gray. Wasn't it just about most of the United States at one point or another was the traditional habitat for the gray wolf, including all of New York and the northern half of New Jersey? Is this an accurate assessment of what had happened over the time?

Mr. Nesvik. Yes, Mr. Chairman, that is my understanding of kind of the historical occupied habitat of wolves back in pre-settlement.

Senator Barrasso. So, John, in your written testimony, when you say that wolves inhabit about 15 percent of the historic range, I think this is truly the case, you can see from the chart of all of the places where they were, are you advocating that this return is something that could be feasible?

Mr. Vucetich. No, I am not advocating for that, nor has anyone else who has worked on this issue of significant portion of range. I think what is disturbing to many folks who are focused on this issue is that 15 percent wouldn't seem, prima facie, to satisfy that notion of, and I am using words a little less technically, kind of widely distributed, or significant portion of range, as the law states. They are concerned that that number doesn't meet the mark.

There is also pretty plain awareness that wolves can do well in other places. Not all of those places, but definitely

other places. Places that folks have talked about are the Northeast, Pacific Northwest, the Southern Rockies, which is kind of Colorado and northern New Mexico.

And I don't know that here is the place to go into the very fine details about that, but just that there are those places that people have made the case that wolves could do well there.

Senator Barrasso. And I think we have tried to reflect that with the green, which, at the bottom, if you could maybe hold this up a little bit, where we say potential habitat.

Mr. Vucetich. Yes.

Senator Barrasso. In green. And then currently occupied habitat in the red, and then the gray all of the location.

So anything final? Any final comment, Brian, you would like to make on all of this?

Mr. Nesvik. So, Mr. Chairman, I guess the one thing I would conclude with is that our experience in Wyoming has been that gray wolves is a species that does not coexist well with human activity. They require large expanses of undisturbed habitat in order to do well. We have that in Wyoming, and that is where we have focused our wolf management plan, is in those areas where it is both biologically and socially suitable habitat for wolves.

In most of the rest of the State wolves find themselves in conflict very quickly when they expand to those other areas.

The areas you highlight on that map are places where there are some larger open expanses, but wolves travel. We have seen wolves travel 25, 30 miles in a day, and wolves eat meat. That is a scientific fact. So it is very difficult to find those large expanses of range where wolves can exist where they don't conflict with livestock operations.

But I do believe this, and I will conclude with this, Mr. Chairman, that we have demonstrated and have fully committed to do both things, mitigate livestock conflicts and also manage for a viable, healthy, and fully recovered wolf population in the State of Wyoming in the future.

Senator Barrasso. Well, I want to thank all of you today. Members may submit follow-up written questions which may happen for the record. The hearing record will be open for two weeks.

I want to thank all the witnesses for your time and testimony today.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:43 a.m. the committee was adjourned.]