



# WYOMING WOOL GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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July 17, 2017

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U.S. Senate  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6175

Dear Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper and Members of Committee:

On behalf of the Wyoming Wool Growers Association (WWGA), we offer the following comments for inclusion into the hearing record. We wish to express our appreciation to Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper and members of the Committee for the opportunity to offer the views of the Wyoming Wool Growers Association regarding S. 1514, Hunting Heritage and Environmental Legacy Preservation (HELP) for Wildlife Act. Our comments are specific Section 8. Reissuance of Final Rule Regarding Gray Wolves In Wyoming.

The Wyoming Wool Growers Association is one of the oldest livestock producers association in Wyoming and the only one solely representing the sheep industry in the state. Since 1905, the Wyoming Wool Growers Association has represented Wyoming's sheep and wool producers. We serve to protect and preserve the interests of sheep and livestock producers throughout the state and continue to advocate for the businesses, communities, and families that constitute the agricultural industry in Wyoming.

Sheep are an important part of Wyoming's agriculture sector. Wyoming is fourth in the country for sheep production behind Texas, California, and Colorado and number three in wool production, behind California and Texas. Wyoming wool is the finest in the country as reflected by the value paid for it. In 2016, Wyoming's wool producers received the highest prices paid for wool in the country.

The Wyoming Wool Growers Association supports S. 1514, HELP for Wildlife Act and we encourage the Committee to support this bill. We are especially supportive of the provisions in Section 8 that reaffirm the March 2017 D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals decision returning management of wolves in Wyoming back to the State. Ensuring that the 2011 rule be re-instated and protecting it from further judicial review will provide certainty to Wyoming's wildlife managers and to our sheep and livestock producers who must raise their livestock under threat of wolf depredation every day.

Wyoming's wildlife managers and livestock producers understand the balance that is needed to maintain a healthy wolf population in the state and a vibrant animal agriculture industry. We strongly support the bill's reaffirmation of the gray wolf delisting rule and its provision to remove the threat of continued legal action. The

constant stream of lawsuits, the length of time between when a suit is filed and a decision made, and the ever-lasting appeals process all serve to create an uncertain environment for everyone, including wildlife managers and livestock producers. Having certainty allows for good decisions to be made and plans to be adjusted as needed to ensure sustainable wolf populations. It also allows our sheep producers the opportunity to properly manage their flocks in balance with the gray wolf.

Between 2012 and 2014, Wyoming carried out a successful wolf management program that ensured a sustainable population of wolves and allowed sheep and livestock producers the ability to protect their animals. The state has a positive track record of wolf management that shows stable populations above the numbers agreed to between Wyoming and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (FWS). When the wolf was delisted, Wyoming agreed to maintain a population of 100 wolves and 10 breeding pairs. Two years later, in 2014, the state Game and Fish Department announced that Wyoming was home to 306 wolves including 23 breeding pairs, far exceeding the minimum population agreed to between FWS and the State.

Our sheep and livestock industries would also benefit from the certainty provided through this legislation. Depredation is a primary cause of sheep loss that costs our producers thousands of dollars each year and wolf depredation plays a significant role in our sheep losses. During the past two years, as the wolf population in Wyoming has continued to grow the impact on our sheep populations has also grown. This is evidenced by the number of wolves taken as a result of depredation, which doubled over the past two years (54 in 2015 and 115 in 2016). Keep in mind, that in the past two years, only federal personnel have been allowed to address wolf depredation. In order to protect sheep from wolf damage, a producer had to have his death losses confirmed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as being caused by wolves before USDA Wildlife Services could take action against the wolves responsible. During this confirmation process, the wolf or wolves would continue their killing, leaving producers helpless to protect their animals.

The Wyoming Wool Growers Association membership believes that wildlife management should reside with the state and that this bill confirms that policy with regard to the gray wolf. We believe the State is best equipped to know and truly understand the needs of its wildlife and how to best balance those needs with the communities that must live and work alongside that wildlife.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on this important legislation. We urge the Committee to pass this bill out with a favorable recommendation for passage by the Senate. If additional information is needed, please don't hesitate to contact Amy Hendrickson at the Wyoming Wool Growers office. She may be reached by email at [amy@wyowool.com](mailto:amy@wyowool.com) or by phone at 307-265-5250.

Sincerely,



Kay Neves  
President

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