

June 22, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso, MD
Chairman, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso,

We appreciate your efforts as the Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works to include additional input from state and local stakeholders throughout the Endangered Species Act. There is a legitimate need for states to have more input for wildlife management while still maintaining some level of federal oversight.

Specifically, Wisconsin has a serious gray wolf situation. Under the umbrella of the Endangered Species Act, the gray wolf's federal status has undergone extensive changes during the last 15 years. This is not due to the biological or scientific evidence that population numbers for the species have met and exceeded their recovery goals, but flaws in the Act that make these decisions prone to politics and legal battles based on procedural technicalities.

While the recovery status of the gray wolf in the Western Great Lakes region continues to be fought in courtrooms and determined by Federal Judges in Washington, D.C., Wisconsin farmers have their hands tied when it comes to defending their livestock and livelihoods. It is illegal for farmers in the Western Great Lakes region to protect their livestock from depredating wolves and there is no mechanism to manage the population.

There is a dire need for states to have more control of wildlife populations. Implementation of Wisconsin's first gray wolf hunting and trapping season in 2012 demonstrated that the state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) management plan was conservative, science-based and designed to maintain the prescribed wolf population while managing it to minimize conflicts with Wisconsin farmers and others.

We agree that the ESA should include a focus on species recovery and habitat conservation objectives that respects landowners. Coordination with state wildlife agencies to leverage private, incentive-based conservation efforts can better achieve long-term conservation goals can help work toward species delisting or downlisting.

We support the 2018 Amendments to the Endangered Species Act.

Sincerely,



Jim Holte
President, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation

