

TESTIMONY  
Presented to the  
Committee on Environment and Public Works  
U.S. Senate  
by  
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The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation

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**RE: S. 1514**

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation would like to provide comments on S. 1514, and more specifically Section 7 of the proposed legislation which deals with reissuance of the final rule regarding gray wolves in the Western Great Lakes Region; and Section 8 which deals with reissuance of the final rule regarding gray wolves in Wyoming.

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation represents over 2,600 farmers and ranchers within the state of Wyoming as well as approximately 11,000 non-agricultural members who have an interest in a strong agricultural sector. Our members produce a number of commodities in the state of Wyoming but a majority of them are engaged in livestock production, predominately cattle and sheep.

Canadian wolves were brought into Wyoming under the experimental non-essential designation allowed under section 10 (j) of the Endangered Species Act, since that time our members have experienced direct livestock losses by wolves. But the losses aren't just limited to direct losses. Studies have shown that livestock in areas with wolves don't do as well as livestock in areas without wolves. All the way from not gaining the appropriate weight to not breeding back for the next breeding cycle. This has resulted in a significant economic loss to those ranchers.

The emotional toll on livestock producers can be significant when they come upon animals injured by wolves which must be put down to end their suffering. We have a number of stories from our ranchers about having to put down cattle and calves injured by wolves. One member had over 100 injured sheep when wolves stampeded his sheep down through the timber. These sheep had broken bones; many had impaled themselves on broken branches or torn their abdominal cavities open. Most had to be euthanized by the rancher and the herder.

Wyoming Farm Bureau participated heavily in the wolf introduction program in Yellowstone National Park. Our emphasis during that time was on the impacts wolves would have on livestock and livestock producers once they left Yellowstone National Park. We were very much aware that once wolves were placed into Yellowstone National Park, they would soon leave that location.

Another aspect of our concern during that initial period was that once wolves reached the scientific number needed to be considered recovered, the courts would not allow the federal government to delist them from the Endangered Species Act. This concern proved to be valid.

In 1994 wolves from Canada were brought into pens located in Yellowstone National Park. In the interest of full disclosure, our organization represented by the American Farm Bureau filed a lawsuit to prevent this action from occurring. The US Federal Judge ruled in favor of the Farm Bureau on one count but that decision was overturned on appeal.

Once wolves were introduced into Yellowstone, it only took seven years to reach the number established by scientists for a recovered population. The recovery numbers established by these scientists was 10 breeding pairs of wolves or 100 wolves in each of the three recovery areas or 300 wolves throughout Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. After Wyoming adopted and amended state statutes to accommodate concerns raised by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Agency issued a final rule to delist wolves in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming in 2008.

Now, almost a decade after the final rule was issued by the US Fish and Wildlife, we have worked our way through the court system, gone beyond the recovery numbers by over three times and probably used a small forest on legal papers to arrive at the point recommended by the US Fish & Wildlife Service in 2008 where wolves in Wyoming are now being managed by our state's wildlife management agency.

So the question can be asked, why would S. 1514 be necessary if wolves in Wyoming are now under state management?

We believe there are a couple of important reasons to go forward with Section 8 of S. 1514. First, we believe that Congress has a responsibility to citizens whom have been impacted by this process to weigh in and make it known they feel the process that Wyoming went through is unacceptable. When the U.S. Government makes an arrangement on what is necessary to recover a species and the Executive Branch lives up to that arrangement but the Judicial Branch abrogates that agreement, the Legislative Branch should weigh in. This is exactly what occurred when Congress stepped in and legislatively mandated delisting of wolves in Montana and Idaho. It seems appropriate they also weigh in, even after the fact, to show their support for the Executive Branch's 2008 delisting action.

Secondly, anyone who may face the possibility of a species being introduced into their area would naturally look at the experience in Wyoming, Montana and Idaho. Instead of working to improve a species the citizens would work against such an effort because history has shown that even when the agreed upon outcome is achieved, there are some who can afford a protracted legal battle to draw the process out long after a delisting should occur.

One of the persistent complaints we hear from our landowners is that having an endangered species on your land is a significant liability. This committee has heard testimony on ways to improve the Endangered Species Act. We suggest that passage of S. 1514 would provide a statement from the Legislative Branch that, even under the current ESA, Congress feels that once a recovery goal is reached a species should be delisted.

Regarding Section 7, this section is an opportunity to delist wolves in the Western Great Lakes Region. Wolves in this region also long ago reached the necessary recovery goals. In conversations we've had with our counterparts in those areas, they shared the same frustration we in Wyoming had where a goal

was reached but the agreement to delist was thwarted. The farmers and ranchers in this area have experienced some of the same impacts as farmers and ranchers in Wyoming. Turning over management of wolves to those states will afford some flexibility that may not be available under the current federal management.

In a time of tight federal budgets where agencies must establish priorities on where they spend their limited funds, releasing management of wolves to the states is an easy step which would allow the Fish and Wildlife Service to focus their limited financial resources on other species. Spending funds on a recovered species makes little sense.

*Conclusion:*

The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation supports sections 7 and 8 of S. 1514. Senate action on these sections will provide an important statement to those affected landowners. , Passage of these sections will provide a statement of support that shows once recovery goals are met and the Executive Branch agrees that management should be turned over to the states this body feels it is important the federal government lives up to this agreement. We thank you for the opportunity to comment on these sections of this legislation.