

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 17, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, Room: S-230
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, Room: S-221
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Reid,

As the 114th Congress draws to a conclusion in the coming weeks, I urge you to act to delist the Western Great Lakes population of the gray wolf from the Endangered Species List and pass management of the wolf back to the State of Wisconsin.

In 2011, biologists at the Fish and Wildlife Service concluded that the gray wolf population in the Great Lakes states had successfully recovered in Wisconsin. I applauded this decision and urged prompt delisting from the Endangered Species List and a return to state management, which was finalized with the full delisting of the wolf in December 2011.

The Endangered Species Act plays a critical role in saving species from the brink of extinction, and when it does, we must acknowledge we have succeeded in restoring wildlife populations by delisting them. According to both federal and state wildlife biologists, this goal has been achieved. Wisconsin wolf populations were estimated at 815-880 animals in 2012, the year following delisting. This is far above the population of 100 that the 1992 Recovery Plan for the Eastern Timber Wolf set as a minimum number of animals necessary to sustain a recovered population.

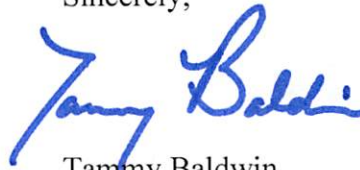
Since the wolf was relisted as endangered following a court decision in late 2015, the wolf population has grown substantially in Wisconsin, and the most recent counts estimate a population of more than 900 animals. This large population is leading to increased conflicts between humans and wolves. Families are worried about their ability to stay safe, farmers report livestock losses and losses in dairy productivity from stressed cows, and pets have been killed by wolves that are straying closer to yards, farms, and towns. In addition, sportsmen and wildlife enthusiasts report declines in the population of deer, elk, and other wildlife. The wolf has recovered, and we must manage it as such, both for the safety and economic well-being of Wisconsinites and the balance of our ecosystems.

Delisting the wolf should not mean removing it from the landscape, but restoring a greater balance between human activities and wolves. Many Wisconsinites have deeply felt beliefs about how the wolf population should be managed, and the health of the wolf population is of unique significance to Native American Tribes. I believe those debates deserve thoughtful and careful consideration by state and tribal wildlife experts, following a federal delisting.

I am proud to support the Endangered Species Act, which has protected iconic species and wildlife for the benefit of future generations. Because of the good work done by so many in bringing back the wolf population, I am also proud to support its delisting.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in responding to the urgency of this situation.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

cc: Thad Cochran, Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations;
Barbara A. Mikulski, Vice Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Appropriations;
Lisa Murkowski, Chairman, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources;
Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.