

## **A Letter from 1,293 Scientists with Expertise in Biological Systems to the United States Senate Concerning Science and the Endangered Species Act**

March 30, 2011

Dear Senators:

As scientists with expertise in biological systems, we are writing to urge you to vote against any legislation that would undercut the use of best available science as the basis for adding or removing any particular species from the protection of the Endangered Species Act. Allowing Congress to remove or add protections for particular species would set a dangerous precedent, as the fate of every species on the endangered species list (or any candidate for that list) would then be subject to political interference.

Because of its strong scientific foundation, the Endangered Species Act is the most critical and successful law for ensuring the protection of threatened and endangered wildlife in our country. Objective scientific information and methods should be used in listing or delisting species, subspecies, and distinct population segments as endangered or threatened. While non-scientific factors may appropriately be considered at points later in the process, their use in listing decisions is inconsistent with the biologically defensible principles of the Endangered Species Act.

We are aware that there are legislative attempts to remove individual species from the Endangered Species Act. For example, congressional proposals to delist the gray wolf forgo scientific determination of whether the species, or populations of the species, have recovered and whether sufficient regulatory mechanisms are in place to ensure the species' survival. In the northern Rocky Mountains the return of wolves has restored key predator-prey dynamics in and around Yellowstone National Park that have resulted in changes throughout the entire ecosystem. To remove protections for wolves before the best available science tells us recovery is ensured would place one of our country's greatest conservation success stories at risk.

Biological diversity provides food, fiber, medicines, clean water, and myriad other ecosystem products and services on which we depend every day. To undermine the careful and thoughtful scientific process that determines whether a species is endangered or recovered would jeopardize not only the species in question and the continued success of the Endangered Species Act, but the very foundation of the ecosystems that sustain us all.

We strongly urge you to oppose any legislation that circumvents the use of best available science in Endangered Species Act decision making.

Respectfully,

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