

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 17, 2012

The Honorable Dan Ashe  
Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1849 C Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Ashe,

We write to express our concerns about the recent decision not to reclassify the Mexican wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) as a subspecies or distinct population segment (DPS) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).<sup>1</sup> Reclassifying this subspecies would have helped its recovery, which has been hindered by bureaucratic hurdles and substantial delay. We ask the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to reclassify the Mexican wolf as a subspecies or DPS and to develop a recovery plan as expeditiously as possible that allows them to recover fully within the United States.

When the FWS first released Mexican wolves back into the wild in eastern Arizona in 1998, it wrote a set of regulations under Section 10(j) of the ESA that severely limited where wolves could move or expand their range in Arizona and New Mexico.<sup>2</sup> The Mexican wolf population, rather than growing to more than 100 individuals by 2006 as initially predicted, has stagnated due to those restrictions. Despite repeated calls by the scientific community to modify the 10(j) regulations to speed the recovery of the Mexican wolf, these outdated rules remain in place.<sup>3</sup>

In 2003, the FWS began to develop a revised recovery plan for the Mexican wolf that could have addressed the main deficiencies of the 10(j) regulations. This effort was halted in 2005. In 2011, a new recovery team was constituted with the goal of completing a final recovery plan by the middle of 2013. Now the FWS says a revised recovery plan will not be completed until the end of 2014.

The ESA exists to help threatened and endangered species recover. The science is clear on how Mexican wolf recovery should proceed. Accordingly, we request the following:

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<sup>1</sup> *12-Month Finding on Petitions to List the Mexican Gray Wolf as an Endangered Subspecies or Distinct Population Segment with Critical Habitat*, 77 Fed. Reg. 61,375 (Oct. 9, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> *Establishment of a Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Gray Wolf in Arizona and New Mexico*, 63 Fed. Reg. 1,752 (Jan. 12, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> American Society of Mammalogists. 2009. *Letter to USFWS Concerning a Resolution on the Reintroduction and Conservation of the Gray Wolf in the Southwestern United States*; Society for Conservation Biology, North America Section. 2007. *Comments on the Scope of the EIS and Socio-Economic Assessment for the Proposed Amendment of the Rule Establishing a Nonessential Experimental Population of the Arizona and New Mexico Population of the Gray Wolf*.

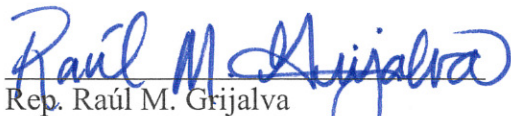
- 1) The FWS should use its emergency rulemaking authority under Section 4(b)(7) to reclassify the Mexican wolf as a subspecies or distinct population segment pending the completion of the rulemaking process.
- 2) It is our understanding that the Science and Planning team has already completed a draft Mexican wolf recovery plan. The FWS should release a timeline within 90 days for making this or another draft recovery plan available for public review and comment.
- 3) Begin the required legal processes under the ESA and National Environmental Policy Act to establish two new 10(j) populations of Mexican wolves, one on the Kaibab plateau and one in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado.

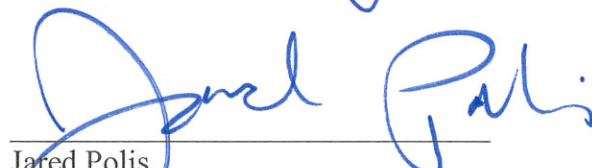
Gray wolves thrived after reintroduction to Yellowstone National Park and to Idaho in 1995 because they were allowed to expand their range beyond the original reintroduction area. Those populations reached their recovery targets in less than ten years. Similar results in Washington State show how quickly wolves can recover given proper management.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to these successes, the FWS concluded in 2010 that the Mexican wolf population "is not thriving."<sup>5</sup> The reason has nothing to do with the biology of the species. FWS management and policy decisions have hindered the species' recovery for years. We hope you will change course.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Very sincerely,

  
Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva  
Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands

  
Jared Polis  
Member of Congress

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<sup>4</sup> The first confirmed wolf pack in Washington occurred in 2008. At the end of 2011, there were five confirmed wolf packs, and by 2012 there were 12 confirmed wolf packs. Wolves will be considered recovered in Washington State when there are 15 packs for three years in a row. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2011. Wolf Conservation and Management Plan at 8-12 available at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/00001/wdfw00001.pdf>.

See also: [http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray\\_wolf/packs/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray_wolf/packs/)

<sup>5</sup> FWS 2010. *Mexican Wolf Conservation Assessment*. Available at: [http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/pdf/Mexican\\_Wolf\\_Conservation\\_Assessment.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/pdf/Mexican_Wolf_Conservation_Assessment.pdf)