

STATEMENT ON WOLF DELISTING

December 21, 2011

Today the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) officially announced its intent to delist the Western Great Lakes Wolves (WGLW) from the endangered species list. Once again the efforts of the USFWS illustrate the success of the Endangered Species Act in the recovery of the Great Lakes Wolf in Wisconsin.

Thanks to years of hard work from the Wisconsin Hunters Rights Coalition (HRC) and many like-minded organizations, the gray wolf recovery is once again recognized by the USFWS. Member groups of the Hunters Rights Coalition filed a formal petition seeking delisting back in May of 2010. This was followed by a letter of intent to sue the USFWS for failure to act in a timely manner. This, along with the formal comments issued by the current administration of the DNR, has led to today's action.

"Prior to the recent support of the current DNR, I firmly believe that if the HRC hadn't continued to push we never would have seen this day," said Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association (WBHA) Vice-President Carl Schoettel.

Wisconsin's wolf population is estimated by the Wisconsin DNR at around 800 wolves. This is the most wolves ever counted in Wisconsin and is likely the most Wisconsin has had since the 1800s. These numbers far exceed all population goals. 800 wolves is eight times the 100 wolves set as the recovery goal in the federal Timber Wolf Recovery Plan and more than twice the Wisconsin management goal of 350. "We believe the delisting is based on sound science and reflects the reality that wolves have recovered in Wisconsin and the rest of the upper Midwest," said Safari Club International (SCI) Central President Joe Koback.

The delisting is especially important as it gives Wisconsin the tools to deal with such a large population. 2010 was Wisconsin's worst year on record in terms of wolf attacks on livestock. 47 farms experienced attacks resulting in at least 75 livestock animals lost and 6 more injured. In April of 2007 HRC partners WBHA, SCI, United States Sportsmen's Alliance (USSA), and the NRA filed as interveners and have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars collectively in attempts to delist the WGLW. Twice the efforts of the USFWS to delist the WGLW were reversed as a result of lawsuits filed by animal rights groups such as the Human Society of the United States (HSUS).

"Although we once again anticipate that out-of-state animal rights extremists will challenge this decision, we are confident that the sound scientific basis used for the delisting will trump the uninformed emotionalism of the opponents," added Koback, noting that the sportsmen and farming communities would be united in trying to finally overcome all the artificial hurdles erected by the previous lawsuits.

Groups involved in the campaign to delist include USSA, Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association, Wisconsin Chapters of Safari Club International, Wisconsin State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, Whitetails of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Firearms Owners, Ranges, Clubs, and Educators, and the National Rifle Association.

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