



PRESS RELEASE

February 10, 2014

PROTECT Applauds Action to Reopen the Public Comment Period on Proposed Gray Wolf Delisting from the Endangered Species Act

US Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it plans to solicit a new round of public comments following statement from its independent scientific panel that found no scientific basis for the delisting of the gray wolf from federal protections

For more information:

Peter Bauer, Executive Director, Office 518.685.3088, Cell 518.796.0112

Lake George, NY – Protect the Adirondacks cheers the decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to reopen the public hearing on a proposed rule to remove the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) from the Endangered Species Act. The FWS completed a public hearing in December 2013 on a proposed new rule to officially delist the gray wolf. Protect the Adirondacks opposed this proposal and recommended that the FWS rescind its proposal to delist the gray wolf from Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections.

The decision by the FWS follows receipt of an independent scientific peer review, ordered by the FWS, which stated “There was unanimity among the panel that the rule does not currently represent the ‘best available science.’” The FWS has posted this report online extended the public comment period an additional 45 days in light of this new scientific review.

“Protect the Adirondacks cheers this decision by the Fish and Wildlife Service in light of this report from its scientific panel. The gray wolf is far too important as a long-lost keystone species in many ecosystems in the northeast U.S. and Adirondacks to make decisions without sound science that could have far reaching impacts,” said Chuck Clusen, Chairman of Protect the Adirondacks.

In 2014, the gray wolf has established viable populations in the western U.S. in Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana, as well as with smaller populations in eastern Oregon and Washington. Gray wolves have also made a major comeback in the western Great Lakes states of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, with smaller populations in the eastern Dakotas.

“The stakes are high for the Adirondack Park and Northeast USA with the Fish and Wildlife Service action to delist the gray wolf,” said Peter Bauer, Executive Director of Protect the Adirondacks. “If this action is approved, it will mean that for all practical purposes the gray wolf population in the U.S. will remain as it is today and not grow, with viable populations constricted to the west, in the greater Yellowstone Park area, and the Upper Midwest. If a gray wolf population is ever to be established in the Adirondack Park, and our native ecosystem restored, federal protection under the ESA is essential.”

While the return of the gray wolf to parts of the American west and western Great Lakes states has been a major success story for the Endangered Species Act, these areas represent but a fraction of the total native habitat of the gray wolf in the continental U.S. Today, the FWS estimates that there are over 2,000 gray wolves in Minnesota, over 800 in Wisconsin, and over 600 in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Out west, estimates put the wolf populations at over 600 wolves in Idaho and Montana, over 250 in Wyoming, and a handful in eastern Washington and Oregon. The much-celebrated Yellowstone wolf restoration program has seen multiple packs develop with a total population of 100-150 wolves. The FWS estimates there are 65,000 wolves in Canada and Alaska.

PROTECT will encourage its members and the general public to submit comments to the FWS on its proposed rule.

Protect the Adirondacks

Protect the Adirondacks is a privately funded, IRS-approved not-for-profit organization dedicated to the protection of the 6-million-acre Adirondack Park in northern New York. PROTECT was formed through the merger of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks and the Residents’ Committee to Protect the Adirondacks in 2009. PROTECT pursues its mission to protect the Adirondack Park and defend the public “forever wild” Forest Preserve through citizen advocacy, grassroots organizing, education, research, and legal action. PROTECT is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. PROTECT maintains an office in Lake George. For more information see www.protectadks.org.

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