



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 15, 2019

Curt Melcher, Director
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE
Salem, OR 97302

Dear Director Melcher,

I am shocked and appalled at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's (ODFW) recent abdication of its mission to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

On May 9, 2019, you sent a letter to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service describing your concurrence with the federal agency's proposed delisting of gray wolves. Your letter detailed ODFW's "commitment" to wolf conservation, and described how the species has increased in number sufficiently to carry it towards a full and robust recovery in Oregon, even with the state assuming primary management responsibilities.

These assertions are deeply concerning. Today, gray wolves are at just 1% of their former population numbers and occupy less than 10% of their former range. This iconic species is at the very beginning of a fragile recovery, one that must not be put at risk by the reckless removal of the very federal protections that have allowed it to just barely creep back from the brink of extinction.

To rescind these protections is to leave gray wolves to the mercy of a patchwork of state laws and regulations, some of which allow actual hunting and trapping of wolves - as is proposed in Oregon. And the idea that here, in Oregon, our fish and wildlife agency tasked with protecting and enhancing our wildlife has both proposed to make killing wolves easier in its own plan *and* also endorsed rolling back federal protections is the antithesis of common sense. If delisting goes through, there is no federal backdrop. If the state moves forward with its proposed plan, non-lethal requirements will be weakened, and more wolves will be killed, more frequently, in more parts of the state like Mt. Hood and the Rogue watershed. Take all of this together, and it's a true death sentence for gray wolves in Oregon and across the country.

As co-chair of the Congressional Animal Protection Caucus and a proud representative of Oregon in the U.S. Congress, I am ashamed by your willingness to throw an incredibly important predator species under the bus in favor of a few private interests that clearly have a different mission than your agency.

Will the wolves recover in Oregon? If they do, it'll be despite your best efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Earl Blumenauer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

CC: Oregon Governor Kate Brown
Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission