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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

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March 27, 2017

Karen Taylor-Goodrich
Superintendent
North Cascades National Park Service
Complex 810 State Route 20
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284

Re: Grizzly Bear Restoration Plan

Dear Superintendent Taylor-Goodrich:

I write this letter to express my firm opposition to the North Cascades Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Restoration Plan. I am concerned that the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) are moving forward with plans for the restoration and reintroduction of grizzly bears to the North Cascades Ecosystem (NCE), without the use of sound science to support such a movement. I believe such decisions should be made with substantial local input and support from the local communities that will be most impacted by the proposed Grizzly Bear Restoration Plan. Based off of numerous conversations my office has had with local community members and elected officials, it has come to light that NPS and FWS are repeating past mistakes by failing to provide for adequate public input in the Public Comment process.

In March 2015, a public forum was held in Okanogan County, Washington, on the proposed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the general consensus from individuals present at these meetings was that their concerns were not being taken seriously by federal officials. As a result, I brought this issue to the attention of NPS Director Jonathan Jarvis and FWS Director Dan Ashe during two March 2015 hearings in the House Natural Resources Committee. I urged both Directors to restart the public comment process to allow residents the opportunity to voice their concerns and comment on the proposal in the proper setting and with the full support of federal officials. While Directors Jarvis and Ashe assured me that the process would be conducted in an appropriate manner moving forward, it has since come to my attention that recent public forums and meetings in Okanogan were handled in a similar manner to the 2015 forum, where many residents were not allowed to express their concerns and were treated in an unacceptable manner by the NPS and FWS employees conducting the session.

In addition to concerns over the Public Comment process, I am also concerned with the proposed plan to reintroduce grizzly bears in the North Cascades. While NPS and FWS claim the reintroduced grizzly bears will be joining an existing grizzly population, the last confirmed

sighting of a grizzly in the North Cascades was in 1996 and even the draft EIS found it is "highly unlikely that the area contains a viable grizzly bear population." These issues raise serious questions about the proposed plan and the need for the federal government to take such an action to "restore" grizzly bears in the region.

Furthermore, I encourage NPS and FWS to ensure the proposed restoration plan does not violate Washington State law, which states that grizzly bears "shall not be transplanted or introduced into the state" (RCW 77.12.035, SSB 5106 (1995)). While the EIS finds that this law does not prevent federal agencies from transplanting bears into the state, I believe it is imperative that this issue be fully examined before any reintroduction activity is to occur. The EIS offered by NPS and FWS outlines four options or "alternatives" for Grizzly Bear restoration in the NCE. Out of the four proposed "alternatives" it appears "Option A" is the only one that is consistent with Washington State Law. I support this option, which would not implement any new management action, and would thus limit options for grizzly bear restoration in the NCE.

Additionally, I would like to reiterate the importance of federal agencies consulting and working with local communities and stakeholders to get their views and support for such a proposal. This is a crucial step, as these citizens are the ones whom will be most affected by the species' reintroduction.

I believe the federal government should defer to the will of state and local communities on species reintroduction issues, and I encourage NPS and FWS to evaluate the need for reintroducing grizzly bears into the NCE, as well as the substantial impacts this action would have on local communities, businesses, and families. Additionally, there are issues of higher priority that the NPS should be addressing before we look at reintroducing grizzlies into the NCE, such as the roughly \$12 billion maintenance backlog on NPS lands.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and please do not hesitate to contact my congressional office with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dan Newhouse", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress