State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
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Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia, WA

April 27, 2015

The Honorable Dan Newhouse
United States House of Representatives
1651 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Newhouse:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) would appreciate your assistance to encourage the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to complete the delisting of the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) and remove it from federal protections under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). As you may know, gray wolves in the western two-thirds of Washington State remain federally classified as "endangered" and are under federal management.

The original delisting proposal was published on June 13, 2013, and then on March 27, 2014, the USFWS closed the second round of public comments. The Department submitted letters of support for delisting in December 2013 and March 2014. While we have been working closely with the USFWS at the state, regional and headquarter levels to ensure we are meeting our shared conservation and recovery objectives, we are concerned with the lack of progress on federal delisting.

Washington has a strong Wolf Conservation and Management Plan that has received broad support, and we are committed to maintaining a viable wolf population in Washington. The Department is well positioned to facilitate the recovery and management of wolves across the state.

- **Protection under Washington State Laws** – The Department has state-specific authority (RCW 77.12.020 and 77.15.120) to designate and protect species at risk of extinction and has classified wolves as endangered since 1980, an action akin to federal protection granted under ESA). Wolves will remain protected until their population reaches the levels established in the state recovery plan.

- **The Department is equipped for wolf conservation and management** - In 2013, the Washington State Legislature acted to provide $1.6 million per biennium for wolf management from a permanent increase in the cost of personalized license plates. Since then, the Department has hired two permanent wolf biologists and has deployed 11 conflict specialists across the state to address wildlife conflict issues.

- **Wolves are recovering in Washington State** - In 2008, the first wolf pack was documented in Washington State. Today we have 16 known packs. During this time our wolf population has increased by an average of more than 30 percent per year. At current rates, we expect to meet our recovery objects within six years. We want to have consistent management of wolves across the state of Washington. For us, successful wolf recovery means that we have a sustainable wolf population distributed throughout the state, the public accepts the presence of wolves on the landscape, and Washington citizens are confident in the Department's wolf management.

The Washington wolf management plan establishes strong expectations that livestock operators will use preventive strategies to avoid wolf-livestock conflict. But sometimes we may need to remove wolves that become habituated to livestock as a food source. Under the current federal designation and management, we cannot implement our plan in the western two-thirds of the state. Therefore, I ask you for any help you can provide to advance the federal proposal to delist wolves.

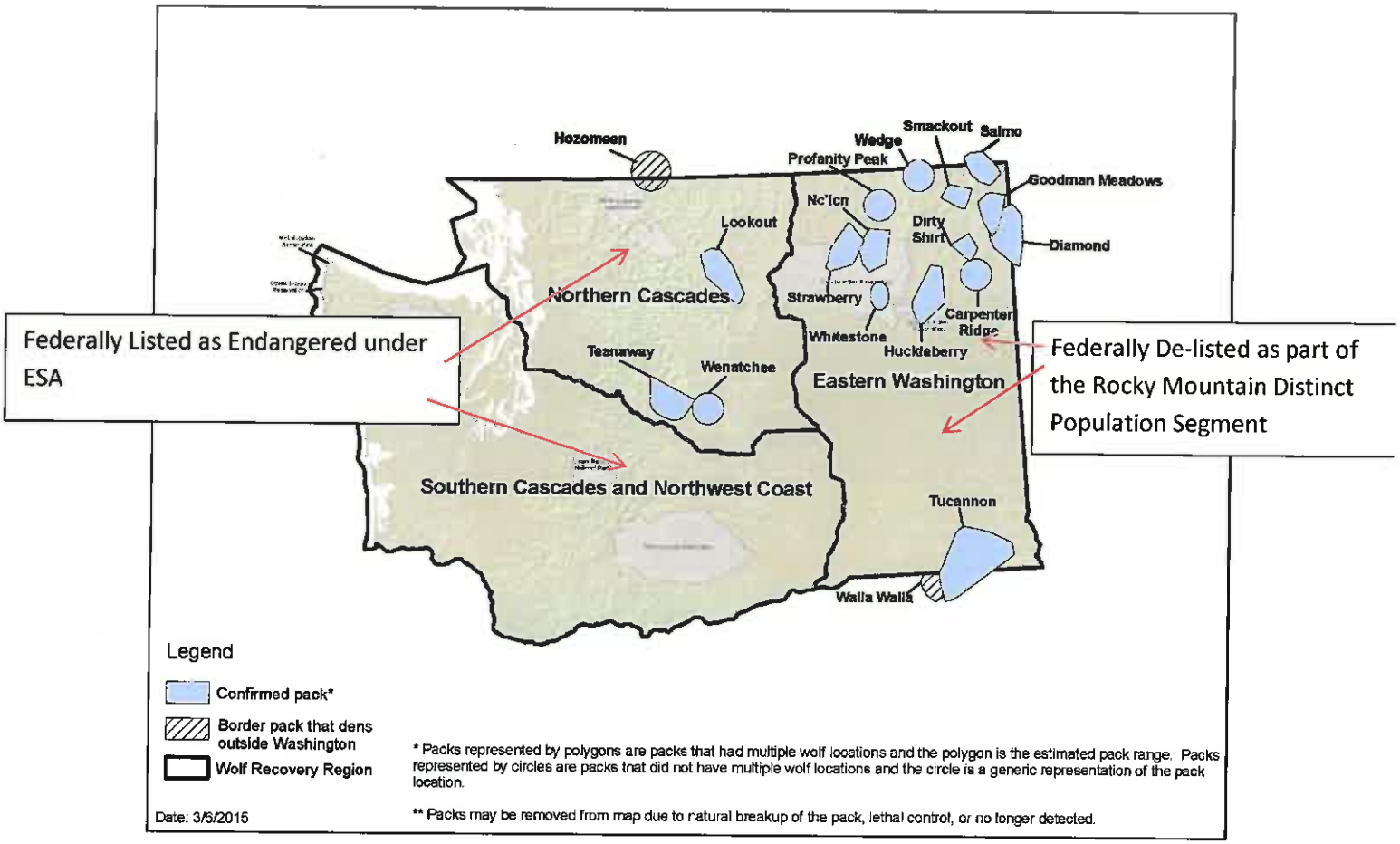
Thank you for considering this request. The Department is available to assist you with any information you may need. Please contact Jennifer Quan (360-902-2224) for more information.

Sincerely,

James Unsworth, Ph.D.
Director

Enclosure

cc: Robyn Thorson, USFWS
Eric Rickerson, USFWS
Jennifer Quan
Nate Pamplin


Federally Listed as Endangered under ESA
Federally De-listed as part of the Rocky Mountain Distinct Population Segment
Hozomeen
Wedge
Smackout
Salmo
Profanity Peak
Goodman Meadows
Nc'Icn
Lookout
Dirty Shirt
Diamond
Northern Cascades
Strawberry
Carpenter Ridge
Whitestone
Huckleberry
Teanaway
Wenatchee
Eastern Washington
Southern Cascades and Northwest Coast
Tucannon
Walla Walla
Legend
Confirmed pack*
Border pack that dens outside Washington
Wolf Recovery Region
* Packs represented by polygons are packs that had multiple wolf locations and the polygon is the estimated pack range. Packs represented by circles are packs that did not have multiple wolf locations and the circle is a generic representation of the pack location.
** Packs may be removed from map due to natural breakup of the pack, lethal control, or no longer detected.
Date: 3/6/2015