REVOKING PROTECTIONS FOR THE GRAY WOLF

Passed: 211-204

SUMMARY:

The House passed a bill to delist the gray wolf under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which would revoke federal protections for the species and undermine the scientific integrity of the ESA (*December 18, 2025, Roll Call No. 360).*

BACKGROUND:

The gray wolf is an iconic keystone species that plays a vital role in keeping our native ecosystems healthy. Unfortunately, gray wolf populations in the United States were decimated by decades of predator control programs, as well as loss of habitat and prey. Since receiving protection under the ESA in 1974, the gray wolf has begun a comeback but remains far from recovered.

In 2023, Rep. Boebert (R-Colo.) introduced H.R. 764, the misleadingly named Trust the Science Act, which sought to reinstate a hastily issued rule by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) at the end of the first Trump administration to delist gray wolves in 44 states (85 Fed. Reg 69778). After this bill failed in the 118th Congress, Boebert introduced H.R. 845, the "Pet and Livestock Protection Act," in this Congress. H.R. 845 is identical to H.R. 764, but with a rebranded title based on the false pretense that wolves are a danger to household pets and livestock. The bill's title perpetuates the harmful and false "big bad wolf" myth to gain support for the bill by insinuating that delisting the gray wolf and thus opening their populations to hunting will protect companion and livestock animals.

Wolves do not pose a significant threat to pets, livestock, or people. Wolf depredation accounts for less than 0.01% of livestock fatalities annually, and attacks on household pets are just as, if not more, rare. In fact, cattle are more likely to die from a lightning strike than from a wolf attack. Further, ongoing coexistence programs at Defenders and other organizations, which deploy livestock guardian dogs, range riders, fladry, and other deterrent methods, work to reduce the already-low number of livestock-wolf conflicts and enable people and wildlife to continue sharing landscapes. When rare depredations do occur, however, ranchers are fairly compensated for their losses. The notion that wolves pose a serious, unaddressed danger to cattle, cats, or dogs, is false.

Further, delisting would strip all federal protections for gray wolves and thus jeopardize the progress made to recover the species across its historic range in the lower 48. The rule was challenged by conservation organizations and vacated by a federal district court in February 2022. The court found that the delisting decision improperly relied on two core populations to delist wolves nationally; failed to provide a reasonable interpretation of what constitutes a "significant" portion of the species' range; ignored the fact that the ancestry of West Coast wolves was distinct from northern Rockies wolves; and did not consider the impact of lost historic range on gray wolves.

By forcing the reinstatement of the Trump administration's scientifically indefensible delisting rule, H.R. 845 undermines the integrity of the ESA by allowing for management decisions to be based on politics over science. The intent of the bill to shield the flawed scientific reasoning of the FWS from inquiry is made even clearer by the bill's preclusion of judicial review, undermining the rule of law that holds government officials accountable in the courts.

OUTCOME:

On December 18, 2025, the House passed H.R. 845, 211-204. "No" was the pro-conservation vote.