

DELISTING GRAY WOLVES IN THE LOWER 48 STATES

Passed: 196-180

SUMMARY:

The House passed a bill that would have delisted the gray wolf, removing Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections for it in the contiguous 48 states. (*November 16, 2018, Roll Call No. 420*).

BACKGROUND:

The gray wolf is currently listed as endangered under the ESA in most of the lower 48 states. Although once widespread, by mid-20th century, gray wolf populations had been decimated and were nearing extinction due to uncontrolled hunting and organized extermination. In 1978, gray wolves were listed under the ESA as endangered throughout the lower 48 states and as threatened in Minnesota. While the return of gray wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains and the Great Lakes has been a success story, this iconic American species still only occupies a small portion of its former range. By no means has the gray wolf recovered in significant portions of its historic range where suitable wolf habitat remains. That work is ongoing, and the ESA is essential to ensuring the continued success of wolf recovery in the lower 48 states.

Rep. Sean Duffy (R-WI) introduced the Manage Our Wolves Act, H.R. 6784, to strip the gray wolf of protections under the ESA. The bill would have removed federal protections for wolves in Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin by overriding a unanimous D.C. Circuit of Appeals decision issued on August 1, 2017 and would have unnecessarily codified a recent D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals decision that stripped federal protections for wolves in Wyoming. The bill would also have directed the Secretary to issue a rule removing the gray wolf in the 48 contiguous states from the ESA, except for a tiny population of Mexican gray wolves in the Southwest. These actions would have been precluded from judicial review. This bill would have halted and reversed the progress that the ESA has achieved for gray wolves over the past few decades and ensured that those decisions could not be challenged in court. The ESA is our nation's most effective law for protecting wildlife in danger of extinction. Ninety-nine percent of species listed under the Act have survived, and many are on the path to recovery. Since 2011, there has been a steady increase in bills and riders that undermine or block ESA protections for particular species, along with other proposals to weaken the Act. In the 115th Congress there were more than 110 of these damaging proposals.

OUTCOME:

On November 16, 2018, the House passed H.R. 6784, 196-180. "No" was the pro-conservation vote.