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C. L. "BUTCH" OTTER
GOVERNOR

November 24, 2008

Director H. Dale Hall
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Hall,

I write in support of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) proposed rule delisting gray wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains (NRM). As you are well aware, the State of Idaho has worked collaboratively with the Service to maintain a viable and healthy population of wolves in Idaho for the past 13 years. Since 2002, Idaho has met and exceeded every requirement established by the federal government necessary to delist wolves.

Moreover, Idaho's five-year post-delisting management plan states that the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) will maintain a minimum population of 518 wolves in Idaho – a level five times greater than that required in the recovery plan prepared by the Service. My administration supports the IDFG efforts.

Despite the resounding success of wolf recovery in Idaho, the State's level of effort has not always been matched by that of the federal government. Until recently, the commitment underlying reintroduction made by the federal government (e.g. reintroduction as a non-essential experimental population in exchange for delisting once there were 15 breeding pairs in Idaho) has largely gone unfulfilled because of various problems with bureaucratic processes and opposition by the very same environmental groups who helped broker the commitment at the outset. I am encouraged to see the federal government finally living up to its promise and breaking from this pattern of inaction.

Please find enclosed the official comments from the State of Idaho in support of the Service's proposed delisting rule. As you will find, the State's comments address the concerns outlined in Judge Malloy's preliminary injunction order. I hope these comments will aid the Service in putting forth its best case for properly returning management of the species to the State.

In closing, I am pleased with the Service's concerted effort to push forwarded with delisting in the NRM before the end of 2008. The delisting process has left me and the citizens of Idaho immensely frustrated. Time and again the State has complied with all of the requirements necessary for delisting and demonstrated it will be a responsible steward of the species. Let's take this opportunity to close this chapter on one of the most successful ESA stories to date and reward states that actually live up to their conservation commitments.

As Always—Idaho, "Esto Perpetua"

C.L. "Butch" Otter

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Governor of Idaho

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