

Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council

September XX, 2015

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington D.C. 20240

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Jewell and Secretary Vilsack:

The Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council supports resumption of state authority for managing the grizzly bear population of the Greater Yellowstone Area, where the population began meeting recovery criteria at least a decade ago. The recovery of the grizzly is a great achievement of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the states of Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana, and the other federal agencies of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee. Declaring the recovery effort complete and delisting the population is the best tribute to this success.

Cognizant that resuming state management requires a “delisting rule” from the Fish and Wildlife Service, and that this is a detailed task requiring close coordination among the Service, the states, and the public, we ask that you send appropriate knowledgeable staff to meet with a workgroup of the Council to discuss the effort to accomplish these ends. We assume such staff will include officials from FWS Region 6 who are and will be most involved in issuing a delisting rule. We are inviting the states of Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana to join in this discussion and would welcome a seconding of that invitation from you to those states. As the USDA Forest Service and National Park Service also play central roles in this issue, we welcome representatives of these agencies to participate in the requested discussion as well.

We are fully aware that delisting the Yellowstone grizzly has already been attempted and we believe it is well justified and overdue. We appreciate that in 2007, after several years of the bear population meeting or exceeding recovery criteria, the Fish and Wildlife Service issued a delisting rule. We understand that decision was overturned by a court, after which the Service complied with the court order for further analysis. After completing that analysis, the Service proposed a revision to the recovery criteria for the population in 2013. It appears the scientific and procedural requirements are now in place to issue a second delisting decision.

Thank you for your attention to this request. It is because we understand that this process must be carefully supported and guided that we ask for this briefing and intend to remain closely involved.

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Sincerely,

DRAFT