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Senator Jon Tester's Notes

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Newest bill: delist wolves, return management to Montana.

by Senator Jon Tester on Thursday, February 10, 2011 at 3:16pm

Baucus, Tester introduce legislation to put Montana back in control of wolves

Senators Urge Cooperation, Quick Solution for Montana Hunters, Ranchers, Farmers

(Washington, D.C.) – Montana’s U.S. Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester introduced legislation today to delist the Northern Rocky Mountain population of the gray wolves in Montana and Idaho from the endangered species list and return those wolves to state management. The Senators also sent a letter today to Department of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar again urging quick action to approve Montana’s application to hunt wolves in the West Fork of the Bitterroot. This application is in conjunction with the Senators’ request to hold a state-wide gray wolf hunt.

“Montanans don’t need D.C. bureaucrats telling us how to manage wolves in our state. This common-sense bill will put Montana back in control and restore our successful management plan that allows wolf hunts that protect ranchers and wolves. The debate has gone on long enough. It’s time to come together to find a solution, and give ranchers and hunters the lasting certainty they deserve once and for all,” Baucus said. “In the meantime, it’s absolutely crucial for the Department of Interior to move quickly to approve Montana’s wolf hunt this year.”

“We need a solution that delists wolves and gets them back under Montana’s management—and we need that solution now,” said Tester, Chairman of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Caucus. “Montana’s management plan was working just fine, and this legislation will return us to that plan and let Montanans start hunting wolves again.”

The Baucus–Tester bill would restore management practices as they were before the 2010 court ruling that resulted in the return of the gray wolf to Federal management under the Endangered Species Act. Before that court decision, a Fish and Wildlife Service Rule had delisted those portions of the Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolf population in Montana and Idaho and put the states in charge of managing wolves. Today’s bill codifies that rule, returning the wolf once again to state management and taking it off the endangered species list. The rule also delists gray wolves in portions of Utah, Washington and Oregon. Text of today’s bill is available here:

<http://baucus.senate.gov/02102011BaucusTesterBilltoPutWolvesBackinMontanaControl.pdf>

Baucus and Tester have been working toward a solution to put Montana back in control of wolves since the 2010 court ruling and first introduced legislation in September 2010. The Senators have since been working with their colleagues in the House and Senate, along with Governors in the affected states and the Department of Interior, to reach a solution for Montana ranchers, farmers and hunters as quickly as possible. Baucus and Tester sent letters urging Secretary Salazar to work with the Governors in December of last year and earlier this month.

While pursuing legislation, Baucus has also pressed Fish and Wildlife Service Acting Director Rowan Gould to take action to bring wolves in northern Montana under the same management rules as those in the southern half of the state and to allow all Montana landowners to protect their property from wolves. Tester, Chairman of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Caucus, wrote the bipartisan Wolf Kill Bill (http://tester.senate.gov/Newsroom/pr_040710_wolfkill.cfm), which provides a compensation fund for Montana ranchers who lose livestock to wolf predation.

Today the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced it was one step closer to approving a wolf hunt this year in portions of Idaho and Montana. The FWS issued a draft environmental assessment addressing a potential hunt in Idaho and announced its plans to issue a similar notice within six weeks for Montana. Baucus and Tester’s letter to Salazar urges the Secretary to move quickly to expedite this process for Montana. Text of Baucus and Tester’s letter follows below.

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February 10, 2011

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

This fall the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks requested that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant it additional biologist-conducted hunts of gray wolves. Since that request, unacceptable levels of predation continue to escalate as Montana's professional wildlife managers attempt to wrangle this issue with one hand tied behind their back. In the meantime, ranchers and sportsmen in Montana are suffering. The Endangered Species Act allows wildlife managers the ability to control experimental gray wolf populations. We urge you to expedite the State of Montana's request to lethally take wolves in the West Fork of the Bitterroot to control unacceptable impacts to wild ungulate populations.

Time is of the essence to assure that the State of Montana has all the necessary tools at their disposal to mitigate impacts on Montana's prized elk, moose, deer, and livestock population. In the East and West Fork Bitterroot, where the additional measures are requested, Montana biologists have documented a decline in elk from 1,900 in 2005 to fewer than 765 today. Additionally, birthrates dwindled to a current low of 10 calves per 100 cows. Biologists assert that a minimum of 25 calves per 100 must be maintained for a sustainable population.

Predation may not be sole cause of the decline, but biologists across the country agree it is compounding factor in this drastic loss and these animals must be managed.

Thank you for considering and swiftly processing Montana's application to use broader management tools for wolves. We must use all tools available to address this critically important issue.

Sincerely,

Jon Tester
Max Baucus

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[Lynette-Gary Anderson](#), [Ben Lamb](#), [Darrick Anderson](#) and [11 others](#) like this.



Bruce B Somes Sr. how about giving the land back to the people re-institute the homestead act
February 10 at 4:21pm



Sharon Aldredge stop listening to the radicals. Leave the wolves alone
February 10 at 4:33pm · [2 people](#)



Bruce B Somes Sr. radicals are the wolves we killed them off for a reason they are destroying the ranch livestock
February 10 at 5:34pm · [1 person](#)



Gary Schoep We have enough bad press for slaughtering Yellowstone bison for no scientific reason. We need good press about Montana to encourage tourism and create jobs. Wolves = Tourism. Or do we have plans to sell expensive out of state wolf hunt tag...[See More](#)
February 10 at 5:35pm · [5 people](#)



Bruce B Somes Sr. slaughter bison they taste delisios thats good a lot of homeless people are eating tonite because of that so called slaughter and controlling a herd cutting outhe culls is not slaughter is is management
February 10 at 5:50pm · [1 person](#)



Ray Wright Bruce I agree. Some people don't remember just how much money was spent to control the wolf packs . They also don't understand the fact that they put the wrong wolf back.The prarie wolf in not the timber wolf.The prarie wolf is a larger wol...[See More](#)
February 10 at 6:52pm



Cindy Rock Once again, the village idiots are trying to use lies and misinformation to justify the unjustifiable. The wolves should NEVER have been hunted in the first place. The population is not stable and they, being an upper level

predator, are the basis of a healthy ecosystem. I'm ashamed to be from Montana and ashamed of the Tester/Baucas sellout to a group of loudmouth village idiots.

February 10 at 7:26pm · 3 people



Dave Fowler Thank god its about time!
February 10 at 8:05pm



Bruce B Somes Sr. the ecosystem you speak of dont exist any more. we did away with wolves because we brought in docile domesticated animals sheep cows horses the wolves like prey that are docile and dont run. and the elk population is controlled by disease and man
February 11 at 2:45am



Cindy Rock Bruce - Sorry you have this attitude and are misinformed. If you care to, look at the studies done in Yellowstone Park. In fenced in areas, where elk were not able to eat, all fungi and plant life returned to the exact same original habita...[See More](#)
February 11 at 10:02am · 2 people



Matthew Koehler Shame on you Senator Tester for your bill to legislate wolves off the endangered species list, science and law be damned. Politicians should not decide when a species is recovered. Your legislation just opens the door for anti-environmental politicians legislating away protections for other endangered species. The safety-net of the ESA is important and you don't see to understand that.
February 11 at 10:23am · 1 person



Dave Fowler I don't believe jon tester has tunlevision, He just knows what the people Montana want.
February 11 at 10:44am



Brian Jenkins This discussion is so much better than what you find on the Missoulian.

We have an opposite set of value systems here. One side realizes ecosystems rule the world. The other feels that if it is their property they can do as they like, an...[See More](#)
February 11 at 10:47am · 1 person