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Simpson Issues Statement on Wolf Delisting Proposal

Department of Interior releases a proposed settlement agreement to delist wolves in Idaho and Montana

Washington, Mar 18 -

Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson today responded to the settlement agreement reached between environmental groups and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to delist wolves in Idaho and Montana. The groups, the agency, and states have been involved in ongoing litigation over last year's decision by Judge Molloy to reinstate Endangered Species Act protection of the gray wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains. The agreement must be approved by the federal court in order to go into effect.

Simpson included language in H.R. 1, legislation continuing operations for the federal government for the remainder of the fiscal year, to overturn Judge Molloy's decision and return management of wolf populations in the region to states with approved management plans, putting pressure on environmental groups to settle.

"There is no doubt in my mind that the states, not the federal government, should be managing these animals," said Simpson, who chairs the House Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee. "The Fish and Wildlife Service made the right decision in delisting wolves and returning management authority to the states. Idaho and Montana have effective, approved plans in place for managing wolves and should regain control over management.

"I am hopeful that this proposal moves us closer to that goal, and I deeply appreciate Secretary Salazar's tenacity in finding a long-term solution to this problem. I am concerned, however, that this settlement could have a negative impact on states like Oregon, Washington, and Utah, which were not part of the original reintroduction area. Wolf populations have grown so robustly that they are spilling over into other states, and those states should continue to have the flexibility to manage these populations.

"This settlement proposal makes it clear to me that those who have forced wolves back on the endangered species list realize that their position is not defensible," said Simpson. "They also realize that if they continue to push to have wildlife management decisions made by the courts, Congress will step in. The House has already done so by including language in H.R. 1 to overturn Judge Molloy's decision, and I will continue to push to have this measure signed into law."

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