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H.R. 6784 passage earns praise from livestock industries

WASHINGTON – Today the Washington Cattlemen’s Association, the Public Lands Council, the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, and the American Sheep Industry Association praised the passage of H.R. 6784, the Manage our Wolves Act.

The Act requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to remove the gray wolf from federal protections under the Endangered Species Act. Similar action was initially proposed during the Obama Administration is 2011 and 2012.

“We appreciate the support of the Washington state Representatives who voted in favor of federal delisting of wolves,” said President of the Washington Cattlemen’s Association Sam Ledgerwood. “Now it is time for our Senators to step up and do the same: support the ranching families and small communities that are impacted by federal management of wolves. Management of wolves should be left to the state, as it is the state, and it’s local residents, who are impacted by the effect of wolves.”

In addition to requiring the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reissue the Obama-era rules, H.R. 6784 would require further rulemaking to remove Endangered Species Act protections for gray wolves across the contiguous United States. Current and emerging science continues to find that wolf populations have been fully recovered nationwide.

“If 2011, the best scientific and commercial data available has supported removing gray wolves from the List of Threatened and Endangered Species,” said National Cattlemen’s Beef Association President Kevin Kester. “It is encouraging to see the House of Representatives take this important step to make the Endangered Species Act work the way it was intended.”

In 2011 and 2012 respectively, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under President Obama issued final rules to remove gray wolves in the Western Great Lakes (76 FR 81666) and Wyoming (77 FR 55530) from federal protection under the Endangered Species Act. This decision was informed by the best scientific and commercial data available, but activist litigants used the judicial system to circumvent sound science and restore full ESA protections to these predators. While listed under the Endangered Species Act, wolves cannot be properly managed by state wildlife agencies, which best know how to balance healthy ecosystems with the needs of local communities and changing conditions on the ground.
H.R. 6784 passed the House of Representatives with a bipartisan vote.

“We are pleased this bipartisan effort to remedy a critical issue impacting livestock producers across the country was successful in the House of Representatives,” said American Sheep Industry Association President Mike Corn. “We urge the Senate to take quick action on this bill and stand ready to help ensure final passage.”

Public Lands Council President Bob Skinner noted that if the Endangered Species Act process was working as originally intended, species-specific legislation like H.R. 6784 would not be necessary.

“We are grateful to see a vote on this legislation, but the bill itself speaks to the need to modernize the Endangered Species Act,” said Skinner. “Activists should not be allowed to abuse technicalities in the judicial system to force a relisting – especially when sound science and hard data clearly illustrate that it is time for these wolves to come off the list.”