JAY INSLEE
Governor

STATE OF WASHINGTON
Office of the Governor

September 30, 2019

Kelly Susewind
Director
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
PO Box 43200
Olympia, Washington 98504-3200

Dear Director Susewind:

I write to ask that you make changes in the gray wolf recovery program to further increase the reliance on non-lethal methods, and to significantly reduce the need for lethal removal of this species.

I understand that conflicts between wolves and livestock do occur, especially as the state's wolf population continues to grow. The department, working with the Wolf Advisory Group, livestock producers, hunters, conservation groups and others, has made significant progress in securing both gray wolf recovery and increasing the social tolerance of wolves on the Washington state landscape. The State's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (Wolf Plan) has contributed to the recovery of this species, and is a model of citizenry engagement and statewide leadership. I acknowledge that the Wolf Plan is successful in most parts of our state.

As you know, wolves were extirpated in the state by the 1930s on behalf of livestock interests. The animals started migrating back to the state in 2008 from surrounding areas. Most of the wolves live in the northeastern corner of the state and their territories have high overlap with federal public lands. For reasons that are not entirely clear, numerous conflicts with livestock producers have occurred in a handful of federal grazing allotments. Chronic livestock depredations and annual lethal removal of wolves in the Kettle River Range in Ferry County, have resulted in public concern and outrage over lethal management actions taken by the department.

I share the public's concern and am troubled that the Wolf Plan does not appear to be working as intended in this particular area in Northeastern Washington. I believe we cannot continue using the same management approach on this particular landscape. We must look for other strategies that address the unique nature of this particular geographical area, an area which has been characterized as prime gray wolf habitat. We must find new methods to

better support co-existence between Washington's livestock industry and gray wolves in our state. The status quo of annual lethal removal is simply unacceptable.

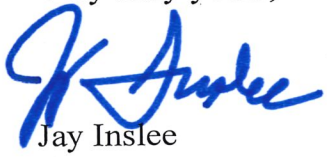
I understand that your advisory group and agency experts are currently reviewing the wolf-livestock interaction protocol, and may recommend changes to the guidelines for lethal management in particular. I ask that you accelerate the update to the lethal management guidelines, with the goal of significantly reducing the role of lethal removal in the wolf management program. In addition, please consider what opportunities exist to work with the U.S. Forest Service and other public land managers to make changes that would reduce the conflicts, including changes in allotment policies for public lands that are prime wolf habitat, the addition of more intensive range riding, and other proven or promising methods.

My requests are consistent with the requirements of ESHB 2097, signed into law this past legislative session, which calls for proactive deterrence and community collaboration to reduce conflict between wolves and livestock. These will be important for maintaining the economic viability of the livestock industry, the state's wolf populations, public acceptance of the wolves in northeastern Washington, and public acceptance of ranching on public lands. Additional funding was provided in the 2019-21 budget for wolf-livestock conflict management in Stevens and Ferry Counties.

Please provide me with an update on the above requests and statutory requirements, along with any recommendations for additional action, by December 1, 2019.

If you have any questions, please contact my Senior Policy Advisor for Natural Resources, J.T. Austin, at JT.Austin@gov.wa.gov or at (360) 902-0638. Thank you for your work.

Very truly yours,



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CC: Larry Carpenter, Chair, Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission