



January 7, 2021

Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commissioners

Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide important input on the Wolf Plan process that will be taking place over the next several years.

The White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts (Districts) are political subdivisions of the State of Colorado. The Districts' authorities, power, and structure are contained in the Colorado Revised Statutes, Title 35, Article 70. The Districts promote the wise use of natural resources and address rangeland health, wildlife, forest health, water, and soil erosion through information, education, and technical assistance. The Districts work and partner with local, state, and federal/national entities to implement on-the-ground conservation utilizing local expertise and knowledge.

As you know, Proposition 114 stated, *The Commission shall:*

(b) Hold statewide hearings to acquire information to be considered in developing such plan, including scientific, economic, and social considerations pertaining to such restoration."

(d) Take the steps necessary to begin reintroductions of gray wolves by December 31, 2023, only on designated lands

The Districts are genuinely concerned that our County and economy will be heavily impacted and potentially devastated with forced introduction of the gray wolf. Therefore, the Districts respectfully request our community to have fair and adequate representation in the process of developing any plan to introduce wolves on the Western Slope of Colorado. We request that this process not be rushed for any reason because it is critically important that it work for all of Colorado; specifically, the communities that will be most significantly impacted.

While the entire State's economy is suffering, northwestern Colorado counties are severely impacted by the reduction in oil, gas, and coal production on top of the Covid pandemic. The only economic drivers left for our communities are based on wildlife and agriculture. Forced introduction of wolves will severely impact both industries.

Of course, our preference is to not introduce wolves but given the ballot initiative passed, we must all work to minimize the severe negative impacts. We ask the Commission to work with families and businesses on the Western Slope to minimize these impacts and to adequately compensate the families and communities for the devastation that is bound to occur with the introduction of wolves.

The Districts respectfully request the Commission to hold in-person hearings across the Western Slope to hear from the Colorado citizens that will be impacted the most. We ask for a hearing to be held here in Rio Blanco County and provide opportunity for all interested citizens to provide input to this process.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this request of the Commission to hold hearings throughout the Western Slope of Colorado and to ensure a well thought out process that is not rushed in any way. We look forward to working with you over the next few years as the process moves forward. Our Districts offer to host and/or help coordinate a hearing held here in Rio Blanco County.

Please feel free to contact our office at 970-878-9838 with any questions.

Sincerely,



Marc Etchart, Vice President
White River Conservation District



Bill Hume, President
Douglas Creek Conservation District

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