

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

May 22, 2024

The Honorable Martha Williams
Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Williams:

The House Committee on Natural Resources (Committee) is continuing to seek information from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) regarding the Service's *National Dialogue Around Working Landscapes and Gray Wolves and Thriving Communities and Cultures*.¹

As you know, on February 1, 2024, the Committee sent you a letter requesting information, documents, and records critical to our oversight activity (Committee Letter).² The deadline for the requested information, documents, and records requested in the Committee Letter was February 21, 2024. To date, the Service has not acknowledged the Committee Letter, let alone provided a substantive reply or production responsive to our requests.

On February 2, 2024, the Service launched "a National Recovery Plan under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for gray wolves in the lower 48 states (Service's Wolf Plan)."³ Given the launch of the Service's Wolf Plan after the Committee Letter, the Committee further requests that you provide additional documents, records, communications, and information as outlined below to the Committee by February 21, 2024.

¹ *National Dialogue Initiated on Working Landscapes and Gray Wolves*, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (Dec. 13, 2023), [National Dialogue Initiated on Working Landscapes and Gray Wolves | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service \(fws.gov\)](https://www.fws.gov/national-dialogue-initiated-on-working-landscapes-and-gray-wolves).

² Letter from Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, H. Comm. on Natural Resources, et al., to Martha Williams, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Feb. 1, 2024), https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hnr_letter_to_fws_on_gray_wolf.pdf.

³ *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completes status review and finding for gray wolves in the Western United States; launches National Recovery Plan*, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (Feb. 2, 2024), <https://www.fws.gov/press-release/2024-02/service-announces-gray-wolf-finding-and-national-recovery-plan>.

1. Please explain why the Service is launching the Service's Wolf Plan for a national recovery of the Gray Wolf population when the species is recovered, should be delisted, and management should be returned to the states.

In addition, we are reiterating our request for documents, which was originally transmitted to the department on February 1, 2024. For reference, below are the specific requests from the Committee Letter. We expect to receive the following records, documents, and communications in electronic format as soon as possible, but no later June 6, 2024.

2. All documents and communications regarding the "National Dialogue Around Working Landscapes and Gray Wolves and Thriving Communities and Cultures."
3. All documents and communications between the Service and the Department of the Interior, including Secretary Haaland, regarding the "National Dialogue Around Working Landscapes and Gray Wolves and Thriving Communities and Cultures."
4. All documents and communications between Service officials, Francine Madden, and Constructive Conflict LLC regarding the "National Dialogue Around Working Landscapes and Gray Wolves and Thriving Communities and Cultures."
5. All documents and communications between the Service and third parties, including the WildEarth Guardians, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, regarding the "National Dialogue Around Working Landscapes and Gray Wolves and Thriving Communities and Cultures."
6. All documents and communications regarding the program timeline for "National Dialogue Around Working Landscapes and Gray Wolves and Thriving Communities and Cultures."
7. Describe the purpose of the "National Dialogue Around Working Landscapes and Gray Wolves and Thriving Communities and Cultures" initiative as it relates to state management of delisted gray wolf populations, such as the gray wolf population in the Northern Rockies Ecosystem.
8. All documents and communications regarding the 2022 ruling by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California in *Defenders of Wildlife, Et. Al. v. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Et Al.* to vacate the final rule, *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Removing the Gray Wolf (Canis lupus) From the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife.*
9. All documents and communications between the Service and the Department of the Interior, including Secretary Haaland, regarding the 2022 ruling by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.
10. All documents and communications between Service officials, Francine Madden, and the Constructive Conflict LLC regarding the 2022 ruling by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

11. All documents and communications between the Service and third parties, including the WildEarth Guardians, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, regarding the 2022 ruling by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

As you are aware, the Supreme Court has long recognized that Congressional oversight power is broad and far-reaching. *Barenblatt v. United States*, 360 U.S. 109 (1959). The Supreme Court has also established that Congress has a duty “to look diligently into every affair of government” and “use every means of acquainting itself with the acts and the disposition of the administrative agents of the government.” *Doe v. McMillan*, 412 U.S. 306 (1973). Hence, a “legislative inquiry may be as broad, as searching, and as exhaustive as is necessary.” *Townsend v. United States*, 95 F.2d 352, 361 (D.C. Cir. 1938). Moreover, under House Rule X, the Committee on Natural Resources has “general oversight” of any matter relating to its jurisdiction, including all matters concerning the Endangered Species Act.

Your silence and lack of a response to the Committee Letter suggests that the Service is deliberately engaging in obstruction to frustrate the oversight power of Congress. This is unacceptable. The American public deserves transparency, and the Committee will use every tool at its disposal, including the potential use of a compulsory process, to administer effective oversight and fulfill the Committee’s responsibility to the American people.

An attachment to this letter provides additional instructions for responding to the requests from the Committee on Natural Resources. Please contact the Majority staff for the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee at (202) 225-2761 or HNRR.Oversight@mail.house.gov with any questions. We look forward to your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations