

Members of the Water and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for your time and for being here in Silver City.

I don't envy you. The Mexican Wolf re-introduction program in New Mexico must be one of the most hotly and continuously contested actions of the federal and state governments. As elected officials, I understand that you must balance the need for the economic health of the state with the need to protect and enhance biodiversity of the region. Valuing both endeavors and working on behalf of both is not only necessary for today but also crucial for our future. In addition, we need elected officials who are willing to take their responsibilities seriously. These responsibilities include honoring the work of previous state administrations and being fiscally responsible with state funds.

As you know, on June 9th the New Mexico State Game and Fish Commission voted to pull out of The Mexican Wolf Adaptive Management Oversight Committee. This multi-agency cooperation is as a paradigm of collaboration working toward the protection of an endangered species, its habitat, and the property of private citizens. As I understand it, the New Mexico Department of Agriculture will still participate on the Oversight Committee. However, the New Mexico State Game and Fish Commission has had lead responsibility for implementing the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area Reintroduction Project. The decision of the New Mexico State Game and Fish Commission hinders the work of the Committee and leaves a vacancy in leadership for the re-introduction program here in New Mexico. What will your response be?

According to the El Paso Times, the state of New Mexico has invested \$507,644 since the program began 13 years ago and more than \$1million from the federal government has come into the state to aid the program. This investment should not be cut short. Nor should the state government turn back on its promise to the residents of New Mexico. Without the continued leadership by key state agencies, the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area Reintroduction Project will fail--for the wolves, landowners and taxpayers. If the absence of the Game and Fish Commission on the Committee means that the reintroduction program does not move forward, will those dollars be refunded? And if the state of New Mexico refuses to participate in the committee and take a lead role in the Blue Range project for the next four years or so, will future taxpayers be assured that we will not pay for work that has already been accomplished but was cut short by a decision on June 9, 2011?

As our elected representatives and members of the Water and Natural Resources Committee, I urge you to consider the responsibility you have---to the commitment made to work collaboratively on The Mexican Wolf Adaptive Management Oversight Committee and to the taxpayers.