



## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

District 1 – Cody Davis 970-244-1605

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Mr. Jeff Davis, Director  
Colorado Parks & Wildlife  
6060 Broadway  
Denver, CO 80216

Mr. Dallas May, Chair  
Colorado Parks & Wildlife Commission  
Colorado Parks & Wildlife  
6060 Broadway  
Denver, CO 80215

RE: Suspension of Wolf Releases Pending Improved Implementation of Management Plan

Dear Director Davis and Chair May:

The Mesa County Board of County Commissioners (“Mesa County”) heard first hand at the recent Club 20 Spring Conference from Reid Dewalt, Colorado Parks and Wildlife’s (“CPW”) Assistant Director for Aquatic, Terrestrial and Natural Resources, and Travis Black, CPW’s Northwest Region Manager, just how challenging wolf restoration in Colorado has proven to be for CPW in recent weeks.

Mr. Dewalt and Mr. Black addressed a number of prominent issues lending to the challenge. These ranged from wolf GPS collars not functioning as intended, or perhaps not at all in some instances, thereby complicating tracking and monitoring of the animals as contemplated by the Management Plan, to the very hot button issue of depredation. At the time of Mr. Dewalt’s and Mr. Black’s presentation, on April 13, Colorado had witnessed two confirmed wolf depredations this Spring. Since that time, six other depredations through four separate incidents have been confirmed, underscoring the challenge Mr. Dewalt and Mr. Black discussed.

Now the producers affected by those depredations will experience challenges in addition to the losses they’ve already suffered as they seek relief for those losses through the Wolf Depredation Compensation Fund. And it appears from the swift uptick in and frequency of depredations that many more producers are unfortunately poised to experience the same challenges in the weeks and months ahead. The Compensation Fund challenge will stem from, among other matters, the application process being in early stages of development with respect to ease of submitting claims, CPW efficiently handling anticipated claim volume, CPW’s internal processes lacking transparency, and the protracted time it takes for producers to obtain relief.

Despite the burden of CPW’s challenge being shifted to producers in ways Mesa County and likely CPW did not foresee, and the low likelihood of alleviation for producers in the immediate future or in keeping with the vision of the Management Plan, CPW intends to forge ahead with release of fifteen additional wolves this season.

While Mesa County appreciates CPW’s effort in recent days to proactively address the depredation issue on the ground through expansion of the Wolf Conflict Mitigation Program, including

implementing the use of range riders, the County believes moving forward with introduction of additional animals under the current circumstances is imprudent.

Instead of CPW devoting focus and energy on additional introduction efforts to the degree it is, Mesa County believes it should devote that focus and energy to enhancing the Wolf Depredation Compensation Fund processes so that affected producers are burdened as little as possible in presenting claims, understanding CPW's assessment processes, and being adequately and quickly compensated for losses. Further enhancements of the Wolf Conflict Mitigation Program beyond the recent enhancements will probably prove in the coming days or weeks to be warranted as well, demanding much of the time and attention currently being devoted to additional introduction efforts.

Until the Management Plan implementation shortcomings addressed above, at minimum, are resolved, Mesa County strongly encourages CPW to consider suspension of wolf releases planned for the near future. This is in keeping with and supports the desires for the wolf restoration program Mesa County and other local governments have expressed all along, that harm to our citizens, ungulate populations, and livestock producers and outfitters are minimized to the maximum extent possible.

Mesa County appreciates CPW's consideration of this request, and looks forward to CPW better fulfilling its obligations to producers envisioned in the Management Plan.

Sincerely,

Bobbie Daniel  
Mesa County Commissioner

Cody Davis  
Commissioner

Janet Rowland  
Commissioner

CC: Mesa County Administration  
Todd Starr, Mesa County Attorney