



January 20, 2025

Governor Jared Polis
200 E Colfax Ave Ste 136
Denver, CO 80203

Dallas May, Chairman
Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission
6060 Broadway
Denver, CO 80216

Director Davis
Colorado Parks and Wildlife Headquarters
6060 Broadway
Denver, CO 80216

RE: Garfield County requests Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission immediately cease with any additional releases of gray wolves and honor reasonable provisions to protect against impacts from Gray Wolf reintroduction

Governor Polis, Chairman May and Director Davis,

The Garfield County Board of County Commissioners requests that the Parks and Wildlife Commission reconsider its current approach and recent decisions regarding releasing gray wolves on Colorado's west slope.

Specifically, we request the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission immediately cease with any additional releases of gray wolves and honor reasonable provisions to protect against impacts from Gray Wolf reintroduction.

We request that CPW be allowed more time to plan, adequately staff, and effectively implement the reintroduction plan. This extension would enable CPW to fulfill its mandate to continue wolf reintroduction efforts while also providing sufficient time to minimize potential negative impacts on affected communities, residents, visitors, livestock producers, and wildlife.

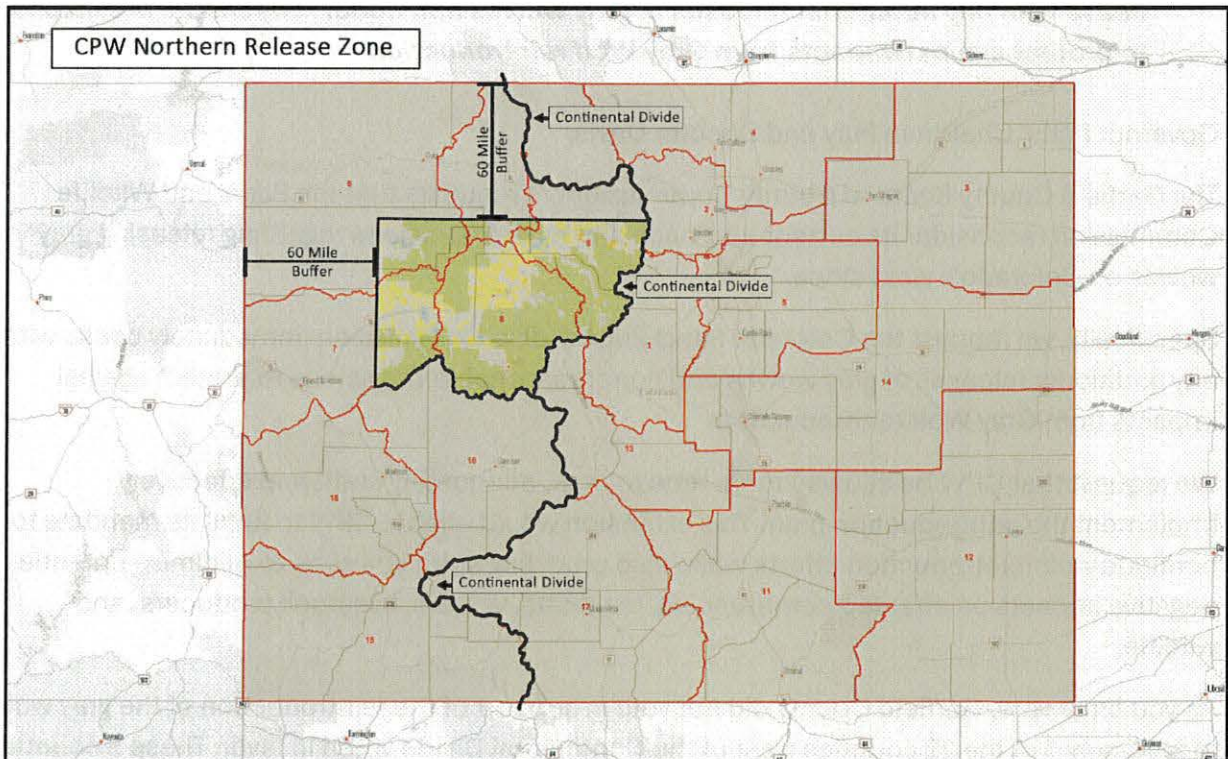
As you are aware, Garfield County did not vote in support of the reintroduction of the gray wolf. In fact, only 5 of the 22 counties west of the Continental Divide voted in favor. These 5 counties only represent 13% of the land mass and 19% of the population west of the Continental Divide. Moreover, only 13 counties (20%) in the entire state voted in favor. Placing this in a state-wide context, 51 out of 64 counties voted against introduction. Most of those counties can be

considered “rural” Colorado. The highest concentration of “no” votes were in the more rural / less urban counties.

Despite the fact that this biologically complex question should have never been put to the voters, the reality of actual release zones has only now come to light, which is radically different from what voters were asked in Proposition 114.

Specifically, the geographic area put to Colorado voters for wolf release was all the land west of the continental divide. In reality—because of a 60-mile arbitrary buffer from the Utah and Wyoming borders, exclusion of the Brunot Treaty lands, a 60-mile buffer from exterior boundaries of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe Reservation, no federal permission for release, and the fact Rio Blanco just cut a deal with CPW to remove them as a release county—the actual release areas are now limited to only few Western Slope counties all of which voted to deny introduction of gray wolves except Pitkin County. **(See Figure 1 below.)** Under the direction of the CPW Commission, the cost of Colorado wolves has increased, the land available for wolf release has decreased, and none of these significant changes were voter-approved. Had the voter known that actual release zones for this apex predator were to be born on the backs of only 3 counties in the State, perhaps the resulting vote would have had a much different outcome.

Figure 1 – Northern Release Zone (Courtesy of Parks and Wildlife)



The result of all this is an epic failure of responsible governance. As elected and appointed leaders, at its foundation, you are charged with the duty to protect the public health, safety and

welfare of all of the citizens in the State of Colorado. While the vote is what it is, you still have the opportunity to provide reasonable and responsible tools to the landowner/citizen so that they can safely exist with an apex predator they did not ask for. Consequently, your actions have forced a very small section of Coloradoans (Garfield, Eagle and Pitkin Counties) to bear the State's burden to accept wolves on our backs.

In December, three significant public meetings and listening sessions were held in Garfield, Eagle and Pitkin Counties, drawing substantial public interest, including over 300 at the Garfield County meeting. Notably absent from these critical public discussions (with the exception of Commissioner Haskett who was in attendance but not recognized) were CPW Commissioners and CPW/DNR Leadership that officially presented and engaged the public. Instead, local CPW Staff were sent to represent your positions and bear the brunt of the public's concerns. By choosing to stay away, you abdicated a fundamental responsibility of your roles, leaving your staff to manage public frustration without your support. This was not just a misstep—it was a profound failure of civic leadership.

Let me be clear, the local CPW staff who attended are highly respected members of our communities. They demonstrated professionalism, integrity and dedication in a challenging situation, and they deserve our gratitude for their work. However, their efforts only highlight the stark failure and absence of leadership at higher levels.

This significant public policy failure has exacerbated the already strained rural-urban divide and muzzled a once great Department of Wildlife. Worse still, the current secrecy by CPW and state leadership has done more damage than the introduction itself. It has further eroded public trust in a historically respected state agency. As a direct consequence, you have severely damaged relationships with private landowners that you desperately need, and which may take a generation or more to repair.

We believe, the Wildlife Commission has already met its commitment to the State of Colorado with the currently released wolves and no more are needed to fulfill the intent of the vote on Proposition 114. We believe the agency has failed to provide the support to those affected that was promised by the CPW Commission. Knowing that these desperately needed tools are not yet in place, you continue to ignore the reasonable requests and push forward with more wolf releases.

In this current circumstance, you do have an opportunity to keep the promises made to the citizens. We request you consider and act on the following points immediately:

- 1) There must be a "pause" in the introduction of wolves – There should be no more wolves introduced in 2025/2026 to ensure the programs being put in place are working and successful before we add more burden to these ranching families.
- 2) The state law must be clarified to make it clear that a hiker, a camper or a rancher has a right to defend their family, pets and livestock from a wolf. Currently, a person may only

try to scare away a wolf with non-lethal/non-injurious methods. And, one may not shoot a wolf that is actively attacking one's pet.

- 3) Chronic Depredation must be clearly defined. For example, if a wolf has killed two livestock within 30 days, it is a chronic depredator and must be removed. CPW has been working on a definition for months. There must be a transparent process with the Commission adopting the definition as a rule. CPW guidance is not enough.
- 4) When a suspected wolf kill has occurred, the local CPW officer must have the training and direction to be on the scene within hours and have the authority to determine whether or not it was a wolf kill. In situations where the evidence is unclear because of the time that has passed due to agency delay, or there is damage to a carcass from other scavengers, the "decision" must go to the rancher.
- 5) Site Assessments: Delays in scheduling site assessments through CPW have become a growing concern for many landowners and producers in Garfield County. These delays, particularly with the calving season approaching, hinder ranchers' ability to implement timely deterrent measures.
- 6) Range Rider Program Development: Finding qualified range riders is already a challenge for Garfield County ranchers. While there is interest in the program, securing a living salary for ranger riders along with adequate housing should be required for funding the qualified personnel. Compensation should reflect not only the requirements and responsibilities of the job but also the cost of living within the community it serves. A well-funded, professionally staffed, and adequately trained range rider program is essential for protecting livestock from wolf predation. We request that this program be fully implemented, allowing for appropriate training and operational readiness.
- 7) Garfield County requests additional strategies for managing health and human safety conflicts. Tourism is vital to the Garfield County economy, with the White River National Forest estimating over 17.8 million visitors annually. Increased human-wolf conflicts may arise as wolves encroach on agricultural lands and valley floors where people live, work, and recreate. CPW should develop a robust education campaign to inform residents, visitors, outfitters, guides, and others about wolf interactions, conflict avoidance techniques, and how to coexist with wolves in this landscape.
- 8) While Garfield County remains vehemently opposed to any releases in our County, the most logical and suitable habitats for wolf release are the extensive tracts of federal land. NEPA analysis is necessary for releases in these areas. We strongly urge CPW to halt all wolf releases until more appropriate, remote locations can be identified. The two suggested release locations in Garfield County are State Wildlife Areas and are far from remote. They are near populated communities or private ranches. Releasing

wolves where people live is irresponsible and will lead to direct conflicts with livestock, pets and residents. Time is needed to thoroughly evaluate future release sites that prioritize wolf survivability while minimizing potential conflicts such as ranches, communities, and/or high-use recreational areas.

- 9) We request CPW and the State negotiate with the Southern Ute Tribal Nation to allow releasing wolves in the Brunot Treaty Counties in southern CO as well the narrow band of Counties in central CO. This also aligns with San Miguel, San Juan and La Plata Counties who voted in favor of reintroduction.

In summation, we respectfully request the CPW Commission to reconsider its decision, pause wolf releases for at least one year and honor these reasonable requests to support our communities. You have an opportunity to bring value to a very challenging circumstance and an obligation to protect public health, safety, and welfare of the citizens you serve.

Sincerely,



Tom Jankovsky, Chairman
Garfield County Board of County Commissioners



Mike Samson, Commissioner
Garfield County Board of County Commissioners



Perry Will, Commissioner
Garfield County Board of County Commissioners

Copy Provided by Email to:

Eagle County Board of County Commissioners & County Manager Shroll
Pitkin County Commissioners & County Manager Peacock
The Honorable Jeff Hurd, Colorado's 3rd Congressional District
The Honorable Julie McCluskie, Colorado House District 13, Speaker
The Honorable Elizabeth Velasco, Colorado House District 57
The Honorable Lauren Boebert, Colorado's 4th Congressional District
The Honorable Dylan Roberts, Colorado Senate District 8

The Honorable Marc Catlin, Colorado Senate District 5
The Honorable Jeff Crank, Colorado's 5th Congressional
The Honorable Gabe Evans, Colorado House District 5
The Honorable John Hickenlooper
The Honorable Michael Bennet
Chairman Melvin J. Baker, Southern Ute Indian Tribe
Chairman Manuel Heart, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
Rep. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources
Sen. Joe Manchin III, Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
Doug Vilsack, State Colorado BLM Director
Robert Anderson, Solicitor for the Department of the Interior
Bonnie (Brown) Eddy, Executive Director Colorado Wool Growers Association
Tom Harrington, President, Holy Cross Cattlemen's Association
Rio Blanco County Board of County Commissioners
Moffat County Board of County Commissioners
Mesa County Board of County Commissioners
Matt Yamashita, Area Wildlife Manager, CPW
Kirk Oldham, Area Wildlife Manager, CPW
Travis Black, Northwest Regional Manager, CPW