

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2022

The Honorable Martha Williams  
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Williams,

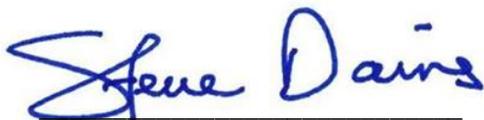
On December 17, 2021 on behalf of the State of Montana, Governor Gianforte and the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks submitted a formal petition to identify and delist the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) Distinct Population Segment of the grizzly bear. It has come to our attention that the 90-day statutory timeframe for the agency to respond to the petition elapsed today. We urge you to respond both expeditiously and favorably to the Governor's petition.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Five-Year Status Review, utilizing the best available scientific information, concluded that grizzly bears in the NCDE have met requisite biological recovery criteria and projected that the ecosystem's "high resiliency" would remain into the future under several scenarios. The recovery criteria has been achieved for eight consecutive years, and during this time, the State, Tribes, local government, and private entities have collaborated to ameliorate threats to the species and establish regulatory mechanisms to conserve habitat and the species into the future. Not only does Montana have conservation mechanisms in place, the State has also committed to the translocation of bears into the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) and is pro-actively advancing forward-looking regulations to assure grizzly bear populations are sustained in perpetuity.

Some have argued that issues with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's previous proposed delisting of the GYE identified by the courts could implicate an NCDE delisting. Governor Gianforte's petition sufficiently responds to any potential implication along with the items raised in your April 2021 letter to our office on this subject. Administration officials have consistently pledged to collaborate with states on a path forward to grizzly bear state management. As such, if for any scientifically-based reason the Service identifies an aspect of the petition lacking, we urge you to work with Montana on changes in order that we may proceed to a delisting decision rather than deny the state that opportunity.

We are encouraged that an individual with first-hand knowledge of Montana's wildlife conservation legacy is tasked with this decision. We respectfully urge you to respond timely and favorably to this petition and look forward to continuing to work with you on Montana wildlife issues.

Sincerely,



Steve Daines  
U.S. Senator



Matthew Rosendale, Sr.  
Member of Congress