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Arizona House of Representatives

August 13, 2025

House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife & Fisheries
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Letter of Support for H.R. 4255 – Enhancing Safety for Animals Act of 2025

Dear Chairman and Committee Members:

As members of the Arizona House and Senate Natural Resource Committees, we stand in strong support of H.R. 4255—the *Enhancing Safety for Animals Act of 2025*—to remove the Mexican wolf from the list of threatened and endangered species, defund the Mexican Wolf Reintroduction Program, and return management to the states. For the following reasons, this bill should be reported favorably from committee and advanced to the full House for consideration.

Ranching is the heart of Arizona, yet with growing wolf populations and increased encroachment into rural areas, the customs, culture, traditions, and economies of our ranching communities are at risk. Often portrayed as a victim of human development, the Mexican wolf has become a dangerous, human-habituated predator that threatens our livelihoods and public safety. Horses have been slaughtered, cattle have been maimed, and—in some cases—children have been stalked and pets attacked. Federal livestock loss figures likely undercount the true scope of depredations due to unrealistic reporting requirements, which accept only evidence of subcutaneous hemorrhaging to confirm kills—while other states allow broader, science-based indicators. These attacks erode property rights and undermine the principle of “consent of the governed” that is embodied in both our state and national constitutions.

Our ranchers never agreed to have their livestock used as prey to sustain this “experimental” and “nonessential” program. Yet that is exactly what happened when the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) imposed an eight-year, 320-wolf moving average on southeast Arizona—well above the region’s natural carrying capacity. Cattle are not part of the wolf’s historical diet, and southeast Arizona lacks the large herds of ungulate prey, such as elk, necessary to sustain large populations. Low natural prey forces wolves to target livestock, horses, pets, and even garbage. Recent scat analyses show over 70% of samples contain cattle DNA—proof the current wolf population is surviving on artificial food sources rather than native prey.

The Endangered Species Act was intended to recover species to a point where federal protection is no longer needed. In the Southwest, that benchmark should be tied to natural carrying capacity. The original 1982 recovery plan set the goal at just 100 wolves—a number reached by 2014. By the end of 2024, there were at least 286 confirmed in the wild and another 356 in captivity. Without cattle as an artificial food source, these numbers would never have been sustained—yet the 2017 revised plan raised targets even higher, decoupling them from ecological limits and ensuring subsidization by livestock would remain a part of the equation.

Over 90% of the Mexican wolf’s historical range is in Mexico, yet Arizona and New Mexico ranchers bear the majority of the cost. Congress never authorized the USFWS to rely on nonhistorical food sources to meet inflated population targets. By doing so, the agency has turned a “nonessential” population into a perpetual mandate that privileges wolves over people, property rights, and public safety, turning private herds into government feedlots.

Meanwhile, ranchers are prevented from protecting their herds and livelihoods. Although ranchers can defend their property on private land, federal restrictions prohibit lethal control on federally managed parcels, where most grazing occurs. Additionally, the USFWS’s operating protocols withhold tracking data from ranchers, preventing proactive measures to avoid conflict. When depredations happen, federal compensation programs exclude many indirect losses—such as reduced weight gain, veterinary costs, breeding impacts, and herd disruptions—which can be as high as \$162,000 for a single wolf. One Arizona ranch lost \$325,000 in a single year, with countywide losses reaching \$1.4 million to \$3.4 million. Local governments like Cochise County have already spent hundreds of thousands to protect their citizens. If management authorities were returned to those closest to the land, wildlife agencies could design practical protection measures, share location data in real time, and implement fair compensation programs to account for both direct and indirect losses, reducing conflicts and ensuring local needs are prioritized.

The program also imposes heavy costs on taxpayers. Since 1998, the experimental project has cost over \$220 million—roughly \$500,000 to \$1 million per wolf—with another \$50 million projected through 2030, not counting compensation or administrative overhead. These dollars flow primarily to a network of government bureaucrats and NGOs whose priorities conflict with the customs, culture, and traditions of the area. Many share the same anti-ranching mentality that drove the campaign for “Cattle Free by ’93”—showing the program is more about ideology than ecology. Those funds would be better spent on truly endangered species and genuine habitat restoration, not on forcing Arizona ranchers to feed wolves against their will.

Delisting the Mexican wolf now would not risk a future re-listing. The political and environmental conditions that led to its near-extinction in the early 20th century—which included federally funded predator eradication programs and abhorrent methods like poison and traps—no longer exist. No one is advocating for a return to such excessive methods today. Ranchers simply want to protect their property and see wolves at unsubsidized population levels, feeding on natural prey alone. With modern wildlife management, state agencies can balance ecological, economic, and public safety priorities while maintaining viable wolf populations within natural carrying capacities. Without government-sanctioned extermination programs, there is no threat of extinction if H.R. 4255 passes.

We urge Congress to support H.R. 4255 and delist the Mexican wolf by 2026. This species is no longer threatened or endangered and no longer needs the protections afforded by the ESA. It is time to end this nonessential experimental program and return management to the states. Advancing H.R. 4255 is the surest way to stand with rural Arizona, defend private property rights, and safeguard our communities for the future.

Respectfully,



Gail Griffin, Chair
Arizona House of Representatives, District 19



Thomas "T.J." Shope, Chair
Arizona State Senate, District 16



Chris Lopez, Vice-Chair
Arizona House of Representatives, District 16



Timothy "Tim" Dunn, Vice-Chair
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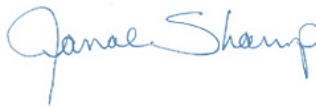
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