

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3102

May 7, 2021

The Honorable Stephanie Garcia Richard
New Mexico State Land Commissioner
310 Old Santa Fe Trail
Santa Fe, NM 87504

Commissioner Richard,

I write with concerns about the handling of Mexican Gray Wolf cross fostering on state lands in Catron County. These activities have put my constituents at risk. I call on your office to rectify this situation and assert that activities that jeopardize the lives of our shared constituents are not welcome on state lands.

In recent weeks, your department has granted permission to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to conduct cross fostering on state lands in Catron County, as a part of the Mexican Gray Wolf Recovery Program. The permission to begin this cross fostering was granted through Natural Resource Authorization # FOD-NR-295 (NRA) on April 22, 2021. These activities are occurring less than two miles away from the home of several of my constituents who have expressed to me their extreme alarm and fear for the safety of their family and livestock. These constituents were only notified several days before the cross fostering was to begin, giving them limited time to voice their opposition.

Wolf depredations are having a catastrophic effect on the communities we represent. For example, there were 151 livestock kills due to the Mexican Gray Wolf in New Mexico and Arizona in 2020. Not only did these losses have a devastating effect on livestock producers, they also had a large impact on local communities where cattle ranching operations are the main economic driver.

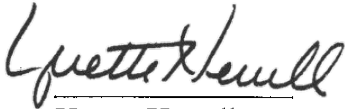
Of particular concern to me, in this case, is that this NRA was granted without a fee being collected, as required by law. The explanation given for not collecting a fee was "access fees are waived due to this project being in the best interest of the trust". I also find this logic to be extremely flawed, given the presence of wolves puts the very cattle operations that help to fund the trust at risk.

It is also apparent the NRA has been violated by the USFWS due to the lack of notification to the lessee most affected by this decision. Section 12 of the NRA provides you with the ability to cancel this authorization, and I call on you to utilize this power. The NRA, as currently written, has both been violated and due to the lack of payment by USFWS, violates the fiduciary

responsibilities of your office. I would also strongly urge you to not grant similar NRA's in the future, as sanctioning cross-fostering only serves to put lessees at greater risk of harm caused by the reintroduction of the Mexican Gray Wolf.

I urge you in the strongest possible terms to protect lessees –my constituents- from unnecessary harm caused by Mexican Gray Wolf Recovery Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Yvette Herrell".

Yvette Herrell
Member of Congress