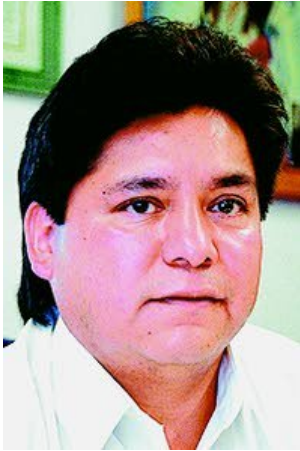


## Tribe supports delisting of wolves

Nez Perce officials urge Obama administration to take wolves off the endangered species list across Rockies

By Eric Barker of the Tribune

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Sam Penney

Letters supporting the delisting of wolves in much of the Northern Rockies are piling up on the desks of President Obama and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.

The Nez Perce Tribe, which helped usher in wolf reintroduction in Idaho, has gone on record supporting the federal government's latest move to delist wolves. Idaho Attorney General Lawrence Wasden also sent a letter in support of delisting as did several hunting groups. Other pro delisting letter writers include Idaho Gov. (C.L.) Butch Otter, all four members of the Idaho congressional delegation and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Tribal Chairman Samuel N. Penney wrote to Salazar last month endorsing wolf delisting in Idaho, Montana and parts of Oregon, Washington and Utah.

"It is with great pride the wolf managers in Idaho write to affirm that wolf populations within the tribes treaty territory and Idaho exceed the targets established by the federal government," Penney wrote. "The Nez Perce Tribe fully supports the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's decision to remove Endangered

Species Act protections from wolves in Idaho, Montana, eastern Oregon, northern Utah and eastern Washington."

Penney went on to say the tribe wants wolves to be preserved and briefly outlined the case for delisting including citing wolf population levels that have exceeded delisting criteria since 2002.

"It's time for wolf management to return to local governments," he wrote.

Keith Lawrence, director of the tribe's wildlife department, said Penney and the Nez Perce coordinated the letter to coincide with a letter sent by Idaho Department of Fish and Game officials. "We coordinated with the department on getting the letter out and making sure we were letting folks know the tribe and state had gone through all the hoops and were supportive of wolf delisting." After the Idaho Legislature banned the Idaho Department of Fish and Game from participating with wolf reintroduction and management in 1995, the tribe stepped in and agreed to lead on-the-ground wolf reintroduction activities in the state. The Legislature later allowed state wildlife professionals to join wolf management efforts, and the state and tribe now co-manage the states estimated 800 wolves under authority from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Wasden appealed to Salazar's experience as Colorado attorney general in a letter sent to the secretary late last month and said it is important for the federal government to live up to delisting criteria laid out in the wolf reintroduction plan.

"As a former state attorney general, I know you can appreciate how the failure of the federal government to honor its commitments can erode public support for federal programs and thereby also erode future state/federal cooperation," he wrote.

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and a coalition of other hunting conservation groups wrote Obama urging him to allow delisting of wolves in the Northern Rockies and western Great Lakes states to move forward.

A coalition of environmental groups also wrote the new administration asking it to convene a panel of nongovernmental scientists to review wolf population goals needed to sustain genetic diversity.

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Barker may be contacted at [ebarker@lmtribune.com](mailto:ebarker@lmtribune.com) or at (208) 848-2273.