

# Schroeder's stunt no help in delisting wolf

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Didn't Gary Schroeder think Idaho had enough anti-wolf hysterics without him joining their number?

The Moscow state senator's play to the grandstand with legislation requiring the Fish and Game Department to ask other states if they want some of Idaho's wolves transplanted there demeans him, and his state. And it won't help persuade the federal government to turn management of the state's wolf population over to state control.

With the support of most residents across the political spectrum, Idaho has been seeking that control in conjunction with removing the gray wolf from the government's endangered species list. But the history of wolf reintroduction to the state has been marked by anything but consensus.

In its early days, the Legislature so opposed the reintroduction it refused to let Fish and Game have anything to do with it. That led the federal government, with the blessing of many environmentalists, to give the job to the Nez Perce Tribe. And one of the reasons delisting is now an option is the fine job the tribe did conducting its mission.

But as the state's political leaders were coming to their senses, abandoning their blanket condemnation of returning the wolf to its former role in natural systems and seeking to assert authority over a wolf population that is not going away, others picked up their old battle cries.

As they did, they circulated a good deal of nonsense, including claims that the gray wolves brought in from Canada were a different species from those once here and that they pose a significant threat to the safety of humans. And their wild calls to kill every wolf ran counter to the Fish and Game assurance that Idaho sought to manage wolves rather than to exterminate them.

Freshman Gov. Butch Otter didn't bolster that assurance when, in 2007, he stood on the steps of the Idaho Statehouse to declare he wanted to be among the first to shoot a wolf. That called attention to his plan to reduce the wolf population to a level that many biologists said would not sustain the Idaho population.

Since then, Otter has been more circumspect. But now comes Schroeder with another exhibit in the case against trusting Idaho to manage wolves responsibly. He admits the bill his Resources and Environment Committee introduced Monday is not seriously intended to export wolves to other states. But he says the absence of takers will be "the answer why we need to kill some."

The day he said this, Otter and the members of Idaho's congressional delegation sent President Obama a letter asking him to remove the hold he put on a second delisting attempt and other last-minute moves by the Bush administration. The letter calls the president's attention to what its authors call "the consensus-based example Idaho will set in executing its management plan."

Thanks to Schroeder's stunt, Obama couldn't be blamed if he concluded what the letter pointed to was a consensus of crazies. - J.F.