February XX, 2025

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse

Chair Ranking Member

Committee on Environment and Public Works Committee on Environment and Public Works

U.S. Senate U.S. Senate

410 Dirksen Senate Office Building 456 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20510 Washington, D.C. 20510

**Re: Oppose the Nomination of Brian Nesvik for Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Dear Chair Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse,

On behalf of our XX organizations and millions of members and supporters, we strongly urge

you to oppose the nomination of Brian Nesvik to be the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Mr. Nesvik’s extreme record on wildlife issues — many of which mirror the policies in Project 2025 — underscores how ideologically opposed he is to the Service’s fundamental mission. If confirmed, he will be in charge of overseeing approximately 9,000 Service employees who work to protect over 1,600 endangered species, countless wildlife and plants, and nearly 860 million acres of national wildlife refuges. Like other Trump appointees, Mr. Nesvik will almost certainly work to dismantle every aspect of the agency, and with it our best chance of fighting the biodiversity and extinction crises. For these reasons, outlined in more detail below, we urge you to reject Mr. Nesvik’s nomination for the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

As the former director of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Mr. Nesvik led one of the most anti-conservation wildlife agencies in the country. In 2024, Nesvik faced major national blowback after his agency failed to take strong action against a man who ran over a young female wolf with his snowmobile. Instead of immediately putting the wolf out of her misery, a published photo showed the man posing with the injured animal, who had her muzzle taped shut.[[1]](#footnote-1) The man, who ultimately killed the wolf, received a mere $250 fine. Mr. Nesvik’s lackadaisical response to the tormenting of the young Wyoming wolf speaks volumes about his lack of care for wildlife and is a foreshadowing of the attitude he will bring to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Further, his larger record demonstrates his deep opposition to the Endangered Species Act and the role the Service plays in implementing the popular law. For example, in 2020 Nesvik joined the Wyoming Stock Growers Association in stating that the Endangered Species Act “must be pruned.”[[2]](#footnote-2) The Stock Growers Association is a trade organization that represents the interests of cattle ranchers in Wyoming and has long opposed protections for endangered species as well as some of the nation’s most prized public lands like Grand Teton National Park. Mr. Nesvik himself runs a cattle ranch and has deep ties to the industry. For years he has worked to strip protections for wolves and grizzly bears—even testifying before Congress that grizzlies should lose endangered species protections “by whatever means is necessary.” More recently, Mr. Nesvik vocally opposed efforts to protect and conserve sage grouse populations from threats to their habitat from the oil and gas industry, as well as grazing, after the first Trump administration weakened protections for the bird.

Mr. Nesvik has also supported some of the most sweeping attacks on the Endangered Species Act in the law’s 50-year history. For example, he supported former legislation from Senator Barrasso (R-Wyo.) that would have given state governors, who often oppose protections for endangered species, the power to veto scientific decisions about those protections. The bill would have cut off the ability of the public to go to court to obtain lifesaving protections for imperiled animals and plants and would have weakened the Act’s “best available science” standard to make it harder for the Service to protect species in the first place. Mr. Nesvik supported similar efforts by former Wyoming Governor Mead to cripple the law, which called for weaker protections for all species listed as threatened, ignoring climate change’s threats to endangered species, increasing “regulatory flexibility” for extractive industries to harm endangered species, and transferring management to the states. Remarkably, Mr. Nesvik supported these extreme attacks even though Wyoming is one of only three states that does not have any state-level legislation designed to protect and conserve endangered species.

In nominating Brian Nesvik to lead the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Trump administration is once again declaring war on our nation’s wildlife. If confirmed, Nesvik would use his contempt for the Endangered Species Act, and the federal government as a whole, to wreak havoc on the Service and push our most endangered animals and plants closer to extinction. For these reasons, we strongly urge you to reject his nomination for Director.

Sincerely,

Center for Biological Diversity

GROUPS

1. <https://cowboystatedaily.com/2024/04/08/director-says-wyoming-game-and-fish-not-hiding-anything-in-wolf-torment-case/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/News/ESA-reform-essential-for-Wyoming> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)