



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

October 12, 2018

H.R. 6784 **Manage our Wolves Act**

*As ordered reported by the House Committee on Natural Resources
on September 26, 2018*

H.R. 6784 would direct the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to issue a rule that removes the gray wolf from the endangered species list in the 48 contiguous states and to reissue a 2011 rule that delisted the gray wolf in the Western Great Lakes. The bill also would prohibit judicial review of those rules and of a recently reinstated 2012 rule delisting the gray wolf in Wyoming.

According to USFWS, the agency is reviewing the status of the gray wolf in the 48 contiguous states. If the agency determines that the species has exceeded recovery goals, it will propose a rule to delist the gray wolf. Conversely, if the finding is that recovery goals are unmet, the agency will not propose a rule. Using information from USFWS, CBO estimates that directing USFWS to issue a rule to remove the grey wolf from the endangered species list would cost less than \$500,000; such spending would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

Under current law, plaintiffs who challenge the federal government under the Endangered Species Act may be entitled to the repayment of attorneys' fees. Such payments are made from the federal government's Judgment Fund, which has a permanent indefinite appropriation. By prohibiting judicial review, CBO expects, H.R. 6784 could reduce the number of civil actions that otherwise would be filed and thus the potential for payments from the Judgment Fund. Based on the amount of such payments in the past, CBO estimates that any decrease in direct spending would be insignificant over the 2019-2028 period.

Because enacting H.R. 6784 could affect direct spending, pay-as-you-go procedures apply. The bill would not affect revenues.

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 6784 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2029.

H.R. 6784 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act.

On November 8, 2017, CBO transmitted a cost estimate for H.R. 424, the Gray Wolf State Management Act of 2017, as ordered reported by the House Committee on Natural Resources on October 4, 2017. Both pieces of legislation contain similar provisions, but H.R. 6784 would require USFWS to issue a new rule and would prohibit judicial review of that rule. The estimates of budgetary effects reflect those differences.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Janani Shankaran. The estimate was reviewed by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.