Good Morning! My name is Laurie Kerr. I reside in Battle Ground, Washington. I am the leader of the local chapter of the Great Old Broads for Wilderness, a national women-led organization aspiring to preserve and protect public lands and wild places.

I am speaking today to urge the Commission to reject the proposed rule to downlist Washington’s wolves on the endangered species list which is based on the recommendations in the Washington Dept of Fish and Wildlife proposal.

The environment needs wolves. Wolves are a critical keystone species in a healthy ecosystem. By regulating prey populations, wolves enable many other species of plants and animals to flourish. In this regard, wolves have a trickle-down effect on other populations. When present in an ecosystem, wolves “touch” songbirds, beaver, fish, and butterflies. Without predators, such as wolves, the system fails to support a natural level of biodiversity and may cease to exist altogether.

In the places where wolves have returned like Yellowstone, wolves have managed explosive deer and elk populations. Wolf reintroduction also helped bring back trees and shrubs. Birds and beavers returned. The wolves helped to provide food for other animals who scavenge like bears and raptors.

The preponderance of scientific evidence supports the view that wolves generally kill prey that are vulnerable, such as weak, sick, old, or young animals.In doing so, wolves remove infectious agents from the environment, reducing transmission to other prey.

Washington wolves have not recovered and have not met the legal threshold for downlisting. They are not only “likely” to become extinct in a “significant portion” of their range; they are still extinct or near extinct in a substantial portion of their range. The Washington wolf population has not met the plan’s requirements in both the Southern Cascades and Northwest Recovery zones.

I urge the Commission to reject the proposed rule to downlist Washington’s wolves.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.