



Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians

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Red Cliff Tribal Council

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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

U.S. House of Representatives
Members of the Natural Resources Committee and Subcommittee
U.S. Senate and Senate Committee Members

RE: Comments on the *House of Representatives Bill 845: Pet and Livestock Protection Act of 2025*

The Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, hereafter Gaa-Miskwaabikaang, respectfully submits the following comments regarding H.R. Bill 845 and our absolute opposition to removing Ma'iingan (grey wolf/*Canis lupus*) from the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The title of Bill H.R. 845 "The Pet and Livestock Protection Act" is first a misrepresentation purely by its name. Wolves are statistically less of a threat to livestock and pets than avian influenza.¹ In the state of Wisconsin last year, the WI Department of Natural Resources data indicates 31 farms reported 63 verified wolf complaints involving livestock, representing 0.06% of the state's 58,500 farms. Additionally, there were only nine confirmed pets attacked in the state of Wisconsin by wolves; pets are more likely to be killed by motorized vehicles than wolves. To misconstrue that this is a wolf issue and therefore requiring protection of livestock and pets is an abuse of power by the House of Representatives.

Gaa-Miskwaabikaang retains our inherent authority as a sovereign nation and as Anishinaabe, the First Original People, who have lived in the homelands of Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin for thousands of years as the caretakers of our natural relatives and resources. During the treaty era, our ancestors thought generations ahead as they ceded many acres of our homelands to the United States Federal Government. This included the 1837 Treaty of St. Peters (northern WI and eastern MN), 1842 Treaty of LaPointe (northern WI, much of the western Upper Peninsula of MI and the western portion of Lake Superior), and the 1854 Treaty of LaPointe (northeastern MN) which also ensured the retention of inherent hunting, fishing and gathering rights for their people in these ceded territories in perpetuity. The U.S. has a trust responsibility to manage ceded territories with input from tribes in the best interest of tribes.

Ma'iingan are a sacred part of the Anishinaabe creation story. We are taught that Ma'iingan and Anishinaabe were instructed by the Gitchi Manidoo, the Great Creator of all things, to walk all over Turtle Island (North America) upon its rebirth naming all that they saw. At the end of their grand journey, Ma'iingan and Anishinaabe were told by the Creator that they would remain forever as brothers, that their fates would be forever tied to one another, and that they would be feared and misunderstood. Ma'iingan are not a resource to be managed but are a relative to be protected and loved. Our sacred culture teaches us that harm, hunting or killing done to Ma'iingan is harm done to the Anishinaabe people. Gaa-Miskwaabikaang opposes any action by the United States Government that jeopardizes the safety and wellbeing of our relative Ma'iingan and views it as a violation of our sacred teachings and inherent right as Anishinaabe.

¹ Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Poultry January 13, 2025 ([DATCP Home Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Poultry](#))

The Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (henceforth IRFA), clearly states that:

Whereas the religious practices of the American Indian, Native Alaskan and Hawaiian are an integral part of their culture, tradition, and heritage, such practices forming the basis of Indian identity and value stems; Whereas the traditional American Indian religions as an integral part of Indian life, are indispensable and irreplaceable; Whereas the lack of a clear, comprehensive, and consistent Federal policy has often resulted in the abridgement of religious freedom from traditional American Indians;... Whereas traditional American Indian ceremonies have been intruded upon, interfered with, and in a few instances banned;... henceforth it shall be the policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians.”

The IRFA acknowledges harm done to native communities and religious practices by the U.S. government or with the permission of the Federal government and states will be protected. The Ma'iingan are an integral part of Anishinaabe culture and are reason enough for the United States to uphold its trust responsibility and not delist the grey wolf from the endangered species act and threaten its existence.

Ma'iingan are a keystone canine species which indicates overall health of an ecological system. As such they act as a protector of the land. Ma'iingan provide priceless ecosystem services such as disease control in prey species to maintain ecological balance allowing *all* plants and animals to thrive. Protecting Ma'iingan is part of the United States upholding its trust responsibility for our religious practices as well as ensuring our treaty rights for seven generations to come. Allowing the hunting and murdering of our sacred relatives not only violates IRFA and United States trust responsibility but is also a regressive act of federal American Indian policy.

H.R. Bill 845 would remove federal protection from our relative, and all protection efforts would fall upon the tribal and state authorities. While many regional tribes share the perspective of protecting and managing wolves with non-lethal practices, our sovereign authority is not always respected across our ceded territories by local law enforcement, departments of natural resources, and recreational hunting groups. In 2013, the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife member tribes issued a ban on harvesting Ma'iingan in the portion of our ceded territory; however, the State of Wisconsin, which is not bound by tribal law, proceeded to authorize a vile over-killing wolf hunt and established harvest quotas completely defeating the purpose of protecting this species from extinction.

H.R. Bill 845 would enable the State of Wisconsin through the 2011 WI Act 169 to hold a wolf hunting season that will cause significant adverse effects to the wellbeing of those of us in ceded territory and explicitly harm our relatives and Anishinaabe way of life. As such, any harm to our treaty protected relative due to this federal action may constitute the United States of America violating treaties signed with our great chiefs over 170 years ago.

We remain committed to protecting the rights of all our relatives, including the water, land, beings, and air of our current and ancestral homelands for our people and the generations to come. Preserving the environment means preserving our Treaty Rights and our traditional life ways. Miigwech (thank you) for the opportunity to submit comments. Questions and follow-up can be directed to my office and we appreciate your time.

Sincerely,



Chairwoman Nicole L. Boyd

Cc: Melonee Montano, Gaa-Miskwaabekaang Interim Treaty Natural Resources Administrator