

Wisconsin Institute for Liberty & Law: ICYMI: WILL in Wall Street Journal on federalism matter

Posted on Monday, Jul 30, 2018

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For more information, contact:

Cameron Sholty | WILL Communications Director

cameron@will-law.org | 414-727-7416 | 262-409-9816

Delisting wolves would be a win for federalism, property rights

July 30, 2018 - Milwaukee, WI — In case you missed it, over the weekend, WILL Writer and Research Associate Cori Petersen published an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal on the importance of delegating federal management of wolves to the states. Having interviewed farmers across Wisconsin, Petersen highlights the plight of how they are left defenseless against a growing and aggressive wolf population. Yet federal law (the Endangered Species Act) prevents the state of Wisconsin from regulating the wolf population, leaving local legislators unable to do anything about the problem.

Paul and Judy Canik raise bighorn and hair sheep near the small town of Butternut. Their herd has grown to about 400, each sheep worth around \$1,500. Guarding the prized flock are nine Spanish mastiffs, worth \$2,500 a piece. While checking on their animals two years ago, the Caniks found that 17 pregnant ewes and one dog had been killed by wolves. All that remained of the dog was its skull. This was the second Spanish mastiff that wolves had eaten on their property. Last fall on the nearby farm of Daniel and Kathy Postical, wolves killed three angus beef calves.

The Caniks “worry all the time” and count their sheep every day. “There’s a place for wolves, but not here on the farms,” says Ms. Canik. “In summers like this with

the windows open I can't sleep when I hear the dogs barking."

Since gray wolves in Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota are protected under the Endangered Species Act, farmers are forbidden from shooting the predators that devour their livestock. The penalty for "knowingly violating" the law can reach \$50,000 and a year in prison. But after decades of federal protection, the wolves have more than rebounded.

But there may be hope with the Trump Administration looking into corrective action. Petersen continues.

Once the wolves are delisted, Wisconsin could allow farmers to shoot the predators coming after their animals. The state could set up hunting seasons, which would help control the population without putting the species back in danger. "Wolves were eliminated in the past because there was a very large bounty on them, and other methods we would never use were being used, such as poison," Ms. Groskopf says. "Simply using trapping and hunting and response to incidents could never ever eliminate them. The main problem will be their numbers continuing to increase in spite of these controls."

Delisting the gray wolves in the Great Lakes region would be a significant delegation of authority back to the states, giving Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan the power to decide how to control their wolf populations. Since state legislators are closer to the citizens, they're more attuned than the federal government to the needs of farmers in Butternut. That's why delisting would be a win not only for the Caniks and Posticals but also for federalism and property rights.

Read the full piece [here](#).