

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

July 23, 2004

The Honorable Steven A. Williams
Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, N.W., Room 3012 MIB
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Williams:

I am writing in regard to the black-tailed prairie dog's status as a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

I believe that it was a mistake for the Fish and Wildlife Service to declare that listing the prairie dog as endangered was "warranted, but precluded." As anyone from my state can testify, prairie dogs are thriving in South Dakota. This decision has created considerable frustration and anxiety for landowners in South Dakota who are understandably concerned about the serious and far-reaching consequences a listing decision would have for South Dakota's agricultural economy.

Recent information from the multi-state Prairie Dog Conservation Team and the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks indicates that, contrary to initial assessments, prairie dogs populations are biologically viable. It is my understanding that the Fish and Wildlife Service regards this new information as significant and intends to publish a new finding for prairie dogs in August. This is a positive development. I believe that careful consideration of this information will lead to the conclusion that the prairie dog should be removed from the candidate list.

I encourage you to take all appropriate steps to remove the prairie dog from the candidate list. Resolving this issue would come as a great relief to the farmers and ranchers of my state.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Herseth
Member of Congress