that 71 percent of Coloradoans supported wolf restoration. More recently, Decision Research, a national polling firm, determined that 66 percent of registered voters in Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona favored the wolf’s return. Majority support was widespread among various demographic groups.

The appropriateness and importance of the Southern Rockies is not lost on the conservation community. Recently, 17 conservation organizations launched the Southern Rockies Wolf Restoration Project. The project has a simple mission: restore wolves to their full ecological role in the Southern Rockies (information about the project can be obtained from http://www.rockywolf.org).

Despite the improved conservation status of Canis lupus, the job of recovery is incomplete. Nothing concerning wolf recovery in the western United States can be put forth until there has been a serious discussion about restoring the species to the Southern Rockies. Such discussion is justified because of widespread and persistent public support, and because no other region in the U.S. offers the same potential to support a population of wolves on a vast expanse of public land that is currently unoccupied by them.

Restoring wolves to the Southern Rockies would provide nature with gum for recreating a wolf population that stretches from the Arctic to Mexico. No other region in the world does such a stable opportunity exist to achieve conservation of a carnivore over such an extensive landscape.

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For years consideration has been given to restoring wolves to the Southern Rockies Ecoregion. The Southern Rockies: Next Step in Wolf Recovery by Mike Phillips

Two studies have estimated the carrying capacity of the ecoregion for wolves. The first, conducted in 1994, estimated that if the carrying capacity of the area alone could support more than 1,000 wolves, the second study concluded, after application of sophisticated modeling of variables that affect wolf survival (e.g. distribution/abundance of native prey), that the SRE could support 2,000 wolves.

Fortunately, the public is broadly supportive of restoring wolves to the SRE. A public opinion poll conducted in 1994 revealed that 71 percent of Coloradoans supported wolf restoration. More recently, Decision Research, a national polling firm, determined that 66 percent of registered voters in Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona favored the wolf’s return. Majority support was widespread among various demographic groups.