

New Rule Halts Wolf Recovery in Lower 48 States

WASHINGTON, D.C.— The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finalized a rule Oct. 29 that removes protection from all gray wolves in the lower 48 states except for a small population of Mexican gray wolves in Arizona and New Mexico. The Service made its decision despite the fact that wolves are still functionally extinct in the vast majority of their former range across the continental U. S.

“This is no ‘Mission Accomplished’ moment for wolf recovery,” Kristen Boyles, an Earthjustice attorney said. “Wolves are only starting to get a toehold in places like Northern California and the Pacific Northwest, and wolves need federal protection to explore habitat in the Southern Rockies and the Northeast. This delisting decision is what happens when bad science drives bad policy — and it’s illegal, so we will see them in court.”

“We should be putting much more effort into coexistence with wolves, working to ensure that populations in the lower 48 are thriving and are able to play out their ecological role balancing our natural systems, instead of stripping critical protections still needed for their full recovery,” Bonnie Rice, Sierra Club senior campaign representative said. “The science is clear that to protect our communities and prevent future pandemics, we need to be doing more to protect nature and wildlife, not less.”

“Again and again the courts have rejected premature removal of wolf protections,” Collette Adkins, carnivore conservation director at the Center for Biological Diversity stated. “But instead of pursuing further wolf recovery, the Fish and Wildlife Service has just adopted its broadest, most destructive delisting rule yet. The courts recognize, even if the feds don’t, that the Endangered Species Act requires real wolf recovery, including in the southern Rockies and other places with ideal wolf habitat.”

“Removing protections for gray wolves amid a global extinction crisis is shortsighted and dangerous to America’s conservation legacy,” Bart Melton, wildlife program director for the National Parks Conservation Association said. “Rather than working alongside communities to support the return of wolves to parks and surrounding landscapes including Dinosaur National Monument, North Cascades and Lassen National Forest, the administration essentially today said ‘good enough’ and removed Endangered Species Act protections. The Fish and Wildlife

Endangered Species Act protections stripped from gray wolves

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Service's proposal ignores the requirements of the Endangered Species Act, science and common sense."

"Stripping protections for gray wolves is premature and reckless," Jamie Rappaport Clark, president and CEO for Defenders of Wildlife said. "Gray wolves occupy only a fraction of their former range and need continued federal protection to fully recover. We will be taking the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to court to defend this iconic species."

"It is far too early to declare wolves recovered and to strip protections from them in the Western two-thirds of Oregon," Danielle Moser, wildlife program coordinator for Oregon Wild said. "Removing wolves from the endangered species list would turn their management entirely over to Oregon's embattled Department of Fish and Wildlife, which continues to push for hunting and trapping of the state's already fragile wolf population."

Last year 1.8 million Americans [submitted](#) comments opposing this delisting. Additionally, 86 members of Congress (in both the [House](#) and [Senate](#))
[ate](#)
, 100
[scientists](#)
, 230
[businesses](#)
, and 367
[veterinary professionals](#)
all submitted letters opposing the wolf delisting plan. Even the scientific
[peer reviews](#)
commissioned by the Fish and Wildlife Service itself found that the agency's proposal ignored science and appeared to come to a predetermined conclusion, with inadequate scientific support.

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