

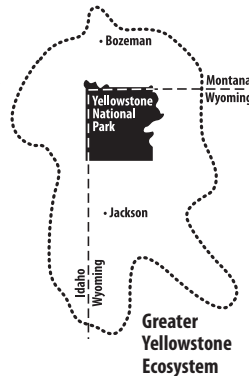
Wyoming's Wolves Targeted

Your comments are needed by May 9 to stop the impending slaughter of our state's wolves.

The return of the wolf to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is one of the greatest conservation success stories of our generation. From the initial release of 31 wolves during 1995 and 1996, an estimated 311 wolves – including 25 breeding pairs – now inhabit this region. But if the state of Wyoming gets its way, we could soon witness the slaughter of more than 100 of these wolves and the destruction of eight or more packs. This is what will happen if Wyoming convinces the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to accept its plan to manage wolves once they are taken off the Endangered Species list. **We urge everyone who wishes to have wolves living free in northwestern Wyoming to tell the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to not delist the wolves until a sound state management plan is in place.**

Background: In January 2007, federal officials announced their intention to remove gray wolves from Endangered Species Act protection throughout the Northern Rockies, except for the northwest corner of Wyoming. There, wolves would remain protected – unless state officials satisfy the federal government's requirement that Wyoming take measures to ensure survival of the species around Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks. Wyoming legislators passed a bill this past winter granting Gov. Dave Freudenthal the power to negotiate its wolf management plan – and the fate of Wyoming's wolves – with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Wyoming's Wolf Management Plan: Fish and Wildlife's delisting criteria specify that Wyoming must maintain a minimum of 15 breeding pairs of wolves – seven within Yellowstone National Park and eight outside. In the past, the federal government said it wouldn't delist Wyoming's wolves unless the state agreed to grant Trophy Game status to all delisted wolves, meaning that Wyoming Game and Fish would set wolf hunting quotas and seasons. In a major concession, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is now willing to accept a "dual classification" system proposed by Wyoming – part of northwestern Wyoming would be declared a Trophy Game Area, while wolves inhabiting the rest of the state would be classified as predators that could be shot on sight. Fish and Wildlife has proposed a Trophy Game Area encompassing the northern two-thirds of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem; Wyoming insists that it be much smaller. Federal officials have also said they'll continue their efforts toward delisting all wolves outside the Trophy Game Area while they negotiate its final boundaries with the state. But even *within* the nebulous Trophy Game Area, Wyoming's plan calls for wolves to be managed "aggressively" – a strategy clearly aimed at keeping wolf numbers at the minimum recovery threshold, which would put Wyoming's wolves on a narrow line between recovered and endangered.



Disturbing Development: The process to remove Wyoming's wolves from the Endangered Species list could take several years. In the interim, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced at the end of March that it plans to make it easier for states to kill wolves that harm "wildlife numbers." According to Fish and Wildlife regional director Mitch King, the agency plans to alter its "10(j) rule," which gives states the authority to kill wolves that attack livestock and other animals under certain circumstances. The 10(j) rule also allows states to kill wolves if they can show wolf depredation led to wildlife populations dropping below state objectives. The proposed revised rule would lower the standard of proof and allow states to kill wolves based on "indicators" such as elk cow-calf ratios. Perhaps not coincidentally, a Wyoming Game and Fish study released in late March concluded that "wolves are causing significant declines in...four [elk] herds" in northwestern Wyoming. The conclusion was based solely on winter counts of the ratio of calves to cows, and did not look at other possible causes for declines.

What YOU Can Do: Please help convince the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to: 1) reject Wyoming's plan and 2) expand the Trophy Game Area to *at least* the entire Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, if not the entire state. Also, please help persuade Gov. Dave Freudenthal that maintaining an abundant wolf population is environmentally responsible and an asset to the state.

- Send your comments on the delisting proposal to WesternGrayWolf@fws.gov (put "RIN #1018-AU53" in the subject line) or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Western Gray Wolf Recovery Coordinator, 585 Shepard Way, Helena, MT 59601 by the **May 9 deadline**. Email a copy to Gov. Freudenthal at governor@state.wy.us or mail it to his attention to State Capitol, Room 124, 200 West 24th St., Cheyenne, WY 82002.
- Attend the final public hearing on Fish and Wildlife's plan to delist gray wolves in the Northern Rockies. It's set for 6-8 p.m., Thursday, April 19, at the Cody Auditorium, 1240 Beck Ave., in Cody, Wyoming. An informational open house right before the public hearing will run from 3-5 p.m.

Wolf facts vs. fiction

- **Are wolves overrunning northwestern Wyoming?** *No.* About 311 wolves now inhabit the 22-million-acre Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. That works out to about one wolf per 110 square miles. Almost no wolves live in Wyoming outside the Greater Yellowstone region.
- **Are wolves decimating Wyoming's elk herds?** *No.* The seven elk herd units around the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem are on average 22 percent above the state's own objective. With between 20 and 30 wolves in the Jackson Hole region, the Jackson elk herd also remains above objective, the ratio of its calves to cows is at the 20-year average, and the hunter success ratio for Wyoming elk remains far above that of surrounding states.

• **Are wolves harming the economy of the Northern Rockies?** *Nope.* No local economies have collapsed due to the estimated 1,250 wolves who now call Montana, Wyoming and Idaho home. To the contrary, a recent study found that more than 35 million dollars were spent by people visiting Yellowstone National Park in 2005 specifically to view wolves. When these dollars turned over in local communities, they pushed the beneficial economic impact to about \$70 million in the three-state region.

• **Are wolves destroying Wyoming's livestock?** *No.* According to the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, in 2005, for the seven counties with wolves or reporting livestock killed by wolves, only 68 out of 313,000 cattle died due to confirmed or probable wolf kills. Only 60 deaths out of 55,900 sheep and lambs were attributed to wolves.

Visit www.jhalliance.org/whatsnew.html for more information.