

**Earthjustice • Defenders of Wildlife
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Center for Biological Diversity • The Humane Society of the United States
Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance
Friends of the Clearwater • Alliance for the Wild Rockies
Oregon Wild • Cascadia Wildlands Project
Western Watersheds Project • Wildlands Project
Hells Canyon Preservation Council**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 15, 2009

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**Bush Administration Moves One Last Time Against Wolves
Conservation Groups Will Challenge Federal Wolf Delisting...Again**

Washington, D.C.— This week the Bush administration announced its decision to eliminate Endangered Species Act protections for wolves in the Northern Rocky mountains except for those in Wyoming. This is the second time in nine months the Bush administration has removed federal protections from wolves. Conservation groups, represented by Earthjustice, successfully sued to get the protections reinstated in July. Just a few months after the federal court ruling discrediting the prior delisting effort, the Bush administration went to work to throw wolves back on the mercy of the northern Rockies states.

Wolves will remain under federal control in Wyoming because the court ruled that Wyoming's hostile wolf management scheme leaves wolves in "serious jeopardy." Conservation groups argue that segregating the northern Rockies wolf population is illegal, noting that the Fish and Wildlife Service has repeatedly stated that a state-by-state approach to delisting was not permitted under the Endangered Species Act, as the Service also acknowledged in the agency's earlier decision to not delist wolves without Wyoming's inclusion.

The Bush team's rush to lift wolf protections comes as the population has suffered significant losses in 2008. Yellowstone Park wolves suffered one of their largest declines and the overall northern Rockies wolf population may have declined for the first time since reintroduction. Independent scientists say that wolves may need to number between 2000 and 3000 to have a sustainable, fully-recovered population. After delisting, the northern Rockies wolf population may be allowed to drop to only 300 to 450 wolves.

Not only Wyoming, but also Idaho and Montana have refused to make enforceable commitments to maintaining viable wolf populations within their borders. On the very day the first delisting took effect in March 2008, Idaho Gov. Butch Otter signed a new law allowing Idaho citizens to kill wolves without a permit whenever wolves are annoying, disturbing, or "worrying" livestock

or domestic animals. The Idaho Fish and Game Commission established rules that would have allowed 428 wolves to be killed in 2008 alone had the court not returned wolves to the endangered species list. Montana also planned a fall wolf hunt.

Real wolf recovery in the region is within reach. But without Endangered Species Act protections, excessive wolf killing under inadequate state laws will turn a potential conservation success story into just another casualty of the Bush administration's failed conservation policies.

Conservation groups, represented by Earthjustice, announced they will again ask a federal court to reinstate federal Endangered Species Act protections for wolves in the northern Rockies until wolf numbers are stronger and the states pledge to responsibly manage wolves.

Earthjustice represents Defenders of Wildlife, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity, The Humane Society of the United States, Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance, Friends of the Clearwater, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Oregon Wild, Cascadia Wildlands Project, Western Watersheds Project, Wildlands Project, and Hells Canyon Preservation Council.

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STATEMENTS OF CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

Andrew Wetzler, Director of NRDC's Endangered Species Project: "This move is not viable legally, politically, or biologically. They have actually come up with a strategy that will anger everyone from ranchers and state officials to conservationists. This simply gets in the way of finding a real solution."

Sierra Club representative Melanie Stein: "This is an attempt to circumvent the protection needed for wolves throughout this region. Removing federal protections for wolves will leave them at the mercy of aggressive state plans that treat wolves as pests rather than a valuable wildlife resource. Releasing yet another flawed delisting rule is simply a last ditch attempt to remove protections for wolves before the Bush administration leaves office."

Suzanne Asha Stone, Defenders of Wildlife representative for the Northern Rockies: "Ramming through a flawed plan that has already been rejected by the courts doesn't make any sense. The bottom line is wolves are a wildlife resource and an important part of our natural resources heritage. Wolves should be managed to maintain sustainable healthy populations, the way we manage mountain lions, bears and other wildlife. The states should not be allowed to kill two thirds of our regional wolf population just because wolves lose federal protection."

Franz J. Camenzind PhD, Executive Director of the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance: "It is incomprehensible that the Fish and Wildlife Service would again remove ESA protection from the Northern Rockies gray wolves when the first attempt was so summarily rejected by the courts. The big difference with this attempt is that it is even worse than the first. This rule effectively signs the death warrant for as many as 800 wolves - wolves that are just now

reclaiming their role as top predator in the wildlands of the Northern Rockies. It ignores the rule of law, it ignores best available science and it ignores the will of the majority of US citizens. It makes no sense and must not be allowed to take effect.”

Michael Robinson, Center for Biological Diversity: “This rule ignores the wise protections of the Endangered Species Act, will result in the deaths of over a thousand wolves, and will unravel the natural balance these wolves have maintained.”

Steve Pedery, Conservation Director with Oregon Wild: “With just six days left in office, and only a few months after a judge told them to take a hike, the Bush administration once again has America’s gray wolves in their crosshairs. They just don’t get it. Instead of using good science and working to protect America's wildlife heritage, they are seeking to appease special interests by pursuing a scheme that is illegal and wastes taxpayer dollars.”

Jenny Harbine, Attorney with Earthjustice: “For three decades, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service consistently maintained that wolf recovery could only be declared if Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana all did their part. Now, on their way out the door, the Bush administration has reversed course and said that partial recovery is sufficient. ‘Good enough for government work’ is not good enough for wolves.”