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**Federal Court Reinstates Federal Wolf Protections**

Bozeman, MT -- In a victory for the gray wolves of the northern Rockies, a federal judge today granted conservationists' request to stop the slaughter of wolves and reinstate federal Endangered Species Act protections. The ruling prevents wolf hunting from going forward in Montana and Idaho. The court ruled the federal government illegally subdivided the northern Rockies wolf population, eliminating federal protections for the vast majority of the region's wolves even while acknowledging that they remain endangered by Wyoming law.

Today's ruling comes in response to a lawsuit brought by Earthjustice on behalf of 13 conservation groups. The groups argued that the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service violated the Endangered Species Act by removing wolves in Idaho and Montana from the list of threatened and endangered species. As a result of today's ruling, federal protections have been restored. Wolves throughout the rest of the lower-48 United States remain on the list.

The conservation groups also argued that the government's determination that 300 wolves constitute a recovered wolf population in the northern Rockies ignored current science. Independent scientists have concluded that 2,000 to 5,000 wolves are necessary to secure the health of the species in the region. With continued recovery efforts, legitimate wolf recovery in the northern Rockies is readily attainable. However, wolf hunts and aggressive wolf killing by state and federal agencies jeopardize this result.

Both Idaho and Montana held wolf hunts in 2009. Hunters in those states killed 260 wolves.

Earthjustice filed suit on behalf of 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 Network, and Hells Canyon Preservation Council.

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## STATEMENTS OF CONSERVATION GROUPS

“People on both sides of the wolf issue should look at Judge Molloy’s ruling as an opportunity to hit the reset button and develop a legitimate recovery plan for northern Rockies wolves,” said Matt Skoglund, wildlife advocate for the Natural Resources Defense Council. “We’re thrilled with today’s ruling, but now it’s really time to update the recovery standards and come up with a plan that ensures the recovery of wolves in the northern Rockies over the long term.”

“While we are pleased by the restoration of federal protection for wolves, the court’s decision demonstrates the problems inherent in the federal government’s current delisting scheme. We need a new approach. We need a new federal delisting plan based on current science that establishes a healthy, interconnected wolf population and adopts stakeholder-driven solutions to the current conflicts. It’s time to move beyond the gridlock over wolves,” stated Suzanne Stone, Defenders of Wildlife’s Northern Rockies Representative.

Sierra Club Montana Representative Bob Clark: “We are thrilled that the integrity of the Endangered Species Act has been protected and that the court has ruled in favor of science. Now, this ruling gives us a chance at legitimate recovery if all sides can come together. In addition to attracting tourists and boosting the economy, wolves are an important part of America’s wild legacy and living with wolves and other wildlife is a fundamental part of life in the West.”

“This decision is great news for wolves in the northern Rockies, and a strong rebuke for those who would rather see wolves persecuted than protected,” said Jonathan Lovvorn, vice president and chief counsel for animal protection litigation with The Humane Society of the United States. “The government’s decision to delist wolves would have led to widespread killings by trophy hunters, undermined wildlife conservation, and set the stage for the hunting and trapping of other imperiled species.”

Michael Garrity of Alliance for the Wild Rockies said, “We’re pleased that wolves are back under federal care. Since wolves were delisted last year, Montana and Idaho both increased wolf killing in response to livestock conflicts. With federal protections restored, we hope that the states will take a closer look at strategies to avoid livestock conflict, rather than simply reacting with lethal measures after conflicts have occurred.”

“Restoring Idaho and Montana wolves to the protections of the Endangered Species Act is very welcome,” said Jon Marvel, executive director of Western Watersheds Project. “I look forward to limiting the government’s ongoing and unlimited killing of wolves solely to benefit ranchers.”

“This is the sixth court ruling invalidating removal of Endangered Species Act protections for wolves,” said Michael Robinson, conservation advocate with the Center for Biological Diversity. “It is time for the Obama administration to step back from removing wolf protections until they’ve been recovered in a larger portion of their range,

including additional areas like the southern Rocky Mountains, Cascade Mountains and elsewhere.”

Robert Klavins of Oregon Wild said, “We welcome today’s decision, but it’s not the end of the story. Oregon’s wolf population stands at less than 20 and this year’s state-sanctioned wolf hunt proves that federal protections are needed. We hope we have learned some important lessons and will use this reprieve to strengthen protections for wolves in Oregon and move beyond the frontier attitude that shooting wolves is the only way to manage them and prevent conflict. We look forward to the day when we can celebrate the legitimate delisting of wolves secure in the knowledge they are truly on their way to recovery and won’t simply be put back in the gunsights.”

“Wolves are once again protected in the northern Rockies. This is great news for the wolves. Montana and Idaho had plans to allow hunts this fall, hundreds of wolves were scheduled to be killed and now those plans are halted,” said Earthjustice attorney Doug Honnold.