



PRESS STATEMENT

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Bush Administration Issues Parting Shot to Gray Wolves

US Fish and Wildlife Service pushes forward with gray wolf delisting despite court ruling

Portland, Ore—For the second time in less than a year, the Bush administration is attempting today to remove federal protections for the gray wolves in the Northern Rockies—a region that includes the eastern third of Oregon. The announcement by Deputy Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett comes just three months after the federal government placed gray wolves back under the protections of the Endangered Species Act. Wolves regained protections on October 14, 2008 after a federal judge found a similar initiative to strip wolves of ESA protection to be illegal.

"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," said Steve Pedery, Conservation Director with Oregon Wild, one of the groups that challenged the original delisting in court. "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."

The new rule will go into effect 30 days after it is published in the federal register, a move that is expected in the days before President Bush leaves office. Today's announcement also included the revelation that US Fish and Wildlife will not remove protections for wolves in Wyoming. The move was prompted by the July ruling by District Judge Donald Molloy. In his ruling, Judge Molloy pointed to the inadequacy of Wyoming's state management plan as a replacement for federal protections. Legal experts have questioned the legality of the decision to decide protections for gray wolves on a state by state basis, saying that the Endangered Species Act does not allow it.

Once common in Oregon, wolves were hunted to extinction by the 1940s as part of a concerted effort to shoot, trap or poison every wolf in the western United States. In 1974, wolves were protected as an endangered species under the federal Endangered Species Act. In July 2008, wolf biologists discovered the first resident wolf pack in Oregon in over 60 years. The species is expected to expand into tens of thousands of acres of roadless backcountry habitat in Oregon if adequate protections remain in place.

Background on wolves in Oregon and previous court rulings can be found here:

http://www.oregonwild.org/fish_wildlife/bringing_wolves_back