

**Earthjustice • 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**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ELEVEN CONSERVATION GROUPS CHALLENGE FEDERAL WOLF DELISTING**

Washington, D.C.— Eleven conservation groups are fighting to protect wolves in the northern Rockies. The groups notified the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today that it violated the Endangered Species Act by removing the northern Rocky Mountain gray wolf population from the list of endangered species despite the genetic inadequacy of the present population and the refusal of Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana to make meaningful commitments to wolf conservation. The groups intend to challenge the Service's decision in federal court. In an effort to overturn the Service's delisting rule before hundreds of wolves can be killed in Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana, the conservation groups served their letter within hours of the publication of the delisting rule in the Federal Register. Under the delisting rule, states will assume legal management authority of wolves in the northern Rockies on March 28, 2008.

In the past two decades, the wolves of the northern Rocky Mountains have made remarkable progress toward recovery. While this progress deserves celebration, it is not yet complete. At present, wolves in central Idaho, northwestern Montana, and the Greater Yellowstone area remain largely disconnected from each other and wolves in Canada. The wolves of the Greater Yellowstone area, in particular, have remained genetically isolated since 31 wolves were introduced into Yellowstone National Park more than a decade ago. Moreover, the region's population of 1,500 wolves still falls short of the 2,000 to 5,000 wolves that independent scientists have determined to be necessary to secure the health of the species. Wolves in the northern Rockies are endangered due to genetic isolation, lack of interchange between wolves in Yellowstone, central Idaho, and northwestern Montana, and an insufficient number of wolves. With continued recovery efforts, legitimate wolf recovery in the region is readily attainable. Delisting would further endanger wolves because of increased wolf killing, reduced wolf numbers, and less genetic exchange between wolf populations.

The Fish and Wildlife Service's premature decision to strip the protections of the Endangered Species Act from the northern Rocky Mountains' wolves promises to undo the progress of recent years. The state plans that will guide wolf management in the wake of delisting betray the states'

continued hostility toward the presence of wolves in the region. While ensuring that wolves can and will be killed in defense of property or recreation, Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana have refused to make enforceable commitments to maintaining viable wolf populations within their borders. The states have also neglected to secure funding for essential monitoring and conservation efforts, relying on continued federal financing of all wolf-related activities following delisting.

Earthjustice submitted the notice letter 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, and Western Watersheds Project.

#### Conservation Group Statements:

“Wolves in the northern Rockies are simply not ready to lose federal protections. America has come too far, and worked too hard, to throw away the successes of the past decade and see wolves in the Yellowstone region end up back where they started.” Suzanne Asha Stone, Defenders of Wildlife

“There is nothing in the state management schemes or delisting rule itself to prevent the killing of up to 80 percent of wolves in the northern Rockies. Attempts by the Fish and Wildlife Service to assure the public otherwise have no factual basis.” Louisa Willcox, Natural Resources Defense Council

“Wolves in the northern Rockies are just now on the cusp of biological recovery. State management after delisting will allow the current wolf population to dwindle to three tiny, isolated groups totaling only 300 wolves. No species, including wolves, can survive in those conditions.” Melanie Stein, Sierra Club

“Just as disturbing as the state management plans that permit killing of hundreds of wolves is the expected increase in federal predator control, including ramped up aerial gunning, leghold traps and even poisoning of wolves. Federal predator control on behalf of the livestock industry is what exterminated wolves in the first place, and that was before the era of helicopter sharpshooters pursuing radio-collared wolves. We will bring this alarming prospect to a court’s attention.” Michael Robinson, Center for Biological Diversity

“Idaho wins the prize for wanting to kill the most wolves. Wyoming wins for the most blatant hostility toward wolves enshrined in state law. And Montana wears the crown for killing the most wolves 8 of the last 10 years despite having the smallest wolf population of all three states.” John Grandy, Ph.D., senior vice president of The Humane Society of the United States

“We are concerned that Wyoming will strictly adhere to the language in the state legislation and aggressively eliminate wolves that now occupy Jackson Hole and parts of Grand Teton National Park. With Wyoming’s current plan, wolves two miles from Jackson’s Town Square could be killed by anyone at any time—this is reprehensible.” Franz Camenzind, Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance

“As evidenced by the of State of Idaho's proposals to aerial gun wolves in the Frank Church Wilderness and to kill up to 75% of the wolves on the Upper Lochsa while wolves remained protected, delisting at this time poses a great risk to the Northern Rockies wolf population, which is still recovering.” Will Boyd, Education Director, Friends of the Clearwater

“Legal action is necessary to prevent the states from implementing management schemes that have the primary purpose of eliminating, rather than conserving, wolves.” Michael Garrity, Alliance for the Wild Rockies

“Wolves are just starting to cross the Snake River and begin the process of recovery in the state of Oregon where wolves remain endangered. Prematurely removing the gray wolf from the federal Endangered Species list and allowing Idaho and Wyoming to dramatically reduce wolf populations will delay or even prevent the recovery of the wolf in Oregon.” Doug Heiken, Oregon Wild, formerly Oregon Natural Resources Council

“Wolves are not recovered in the west. There are still public lands with abundant elk and deer populations that can and should sustain these magnificent animals throughout the western states.” Jon Marvel, Western Watersheds Project

“Gray wolves in the northern Rockies are near biological recovery, but they aren't there yet. Now, wolves are staring down the barrel at hostile state management schemes that would ensure the wolf population never achieves sustainable numbers and genetic connectivity.” Jenny Harbine, Earthjustice

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