

OPPOSE the Trump Administration's National Wolf Delisting Plan (2019)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed a rule on March 15, 2019 to delist gray wolves across the contiguous United States.

Wolves Still Need Federal Protections

- Thanks to the Endangered Species Act, wolves have now started to recover in the continental United States after human persecution brought them to the brink of extinction. But wolves are still functionally extinct in the vast majority of places where they used to live.
- Wolves are the wild ancestors of all the domestic dogs we know and love today. These remarkable creatures are icons of our landscape and their presence is vital to maintaining the balance of their native ecosystems. Wolves regulate the behavior of elk and deer populations, keeping herds from overgrazing. This allows trees to grow in greater abundance, grasses to grow taller, and other animals down the food chain to flourish, strengthening the resiliency of the entire ecosystem.
- In Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, where wolves have already lost federal protections, trophy hunters, trappers, and others have killed *nearly 3,500 wolves* just since 2011. Federal protections are still essential to help wolves return to still suitable parts of where they used to roam, just as the bald eagle was allowed to expand before its federal protections were removed.

The Trump Administration and Wildlife

- This anticipated plan to strip federal protections from wolves is the latest in a series of efforts by the Trump administration to slash protections for wildlife. While picking off individual species like gray wolves, the administration is also seeking to gut the Endangered Species Act, the very backstop that wildlife have against extinction. The Endangered Species Act is America's most effective law for protecting wildlife in danger of extinction. It serves as an essential safety net when state management has failed to protect imperiled plants, fish, and wildlife. Since its enactment, 99 percent of listed species have survived and hundreds more have been set on a path to recovery.
- Last year the Trump administration proposed a set of sweeping regulatory changes which would drastically undermine this landmark law and make it much harder for species to recover. The Administration has also sought to undermine vital protections for numerous imperiled species including Yellowstone grizzly bears, sage grouse, and now wolves.

Responding to Concerns about Livestock Losses and/or Human Safety

- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports¹ show that the primary causes of cattle and sheep deaths in the U.S. come from health problems, weather, theft and other maladies, but *not* wolves or other native carnivores.
- USDA data show that *nine times* more cattle and sheep die from causes such as illnesses, birthing problems, weather, poisoning, and theft (4,003,847), than from all predators combined (461,159). Of the 119 million cattle and sheep inventoried in the U.S. in 2014 and 2015, less than one percent (0.4 percent) died from *any* type of predator.
- In order for wolves to persist for future generations, we must learn to co-adapt with wolves. Although only a fraction do, livestock growers can use a host of non-lethal solutions to protect their herds.
- Humans pose a far greater threat to wolves than wolves pose to us. No human has ever been killed by a wild wolf in the lower-48 states.

Background

Gray wolves are currently protected under the Endangered Species Act in the continental states outside of Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, and parts of Oregon, Washington, and Utah. Historically, gray wolves were present throughout most of the continental United States but they were trapped, shot, and poisoned to the brink of extinction because they were viewed as a threat to livestock. By the time gray wolves received Endangered Species Act protections in the early 1970s, outside of northern Minnesota, only a few small pockets of survivors remained.

Because of the Endangered Species Act, gray wolves have started to recover across the Northern Rocky Mountains and the Upper Midwest. However, they are still missing from the vast majority of their former range. Scientists estimate that there were once hundreds of thousands of wolves in the lower-48 states², but today there are only roughly 5,000.³ Gray wolves continue to need the protection of the Endangered Species Act to return to the places across the country where suitable wolf habitat still remains.

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-Veterinary Services, "Death Loss in U.S. Cattle and Calves Due to Predator and Nonpredator Causes, 2015", https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/nahms/general/downloads/cattle_calves_deathloss_2015.pdf (2017); U.S. Department of Agriculture-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, "Sheep and Lamb Predator and Nonpredator Death Loss in the United States," <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/current/sgdl/sgdl-05-27-2010.pdf> (2015).

² Legacy Lost: Genetic Variability and Population Size of Extirpated US Grey Wolves (*Canis lupus*), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1365-294X.2004.02389.x>

³ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Gray Wolf: Current Population in the United States, <https://www.fws.gov/midwest/wolf/aboutwolves/wolfpopus.htm>