

# Democratic Courage Blog

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## Bill Richardson Courageously Bolsters Green Cred

Bill Richardson [courageously acted this week](#) to save the highly endangered wolves of New Mexico by calling for suspension of a brutal Bush administration policy that puts taxpayer dollars toward hunting down endangered species like the wolf.

Richardson was spurred to act when a federal wildlife agent, acting under the auspices of the Bush administration policy, on July 5 shot and killed a female wolf pack leader in New Mexico (one of only about 55 mature wolves still alive in the wild in New Mexico).

According to the Center for Biological Diversity, the Bush administration sharpshooter pointed his gun at a New Mexico state biologist who objected to his shooting the wolf before he slaughtered the animal.

Richardson is already being attacked for his decision, most bizarrely by some anti-environment extremists venting [on the John Edwards](#) blog (though not, it seems, official members of the campaign staff).

It's bizarre because Edwards and Richardson each have very pro-environment platforms, though apparently these posters on the Edwards web site don't share their candidate's [concern](#) for the planet and its creatures.

Instead, they're recycling the arguments of [welfare ranchers](#) who have no shame about whining to the government any time a wolf eats a sheep or cow and demanding that our taxpayer dollars go to pay the salary of endangered species hunters - even when the wolf being targeted for destruction is a mother with pups or an alpha wolf on whom the rest of the pack depends.

Their whining has historically got them results: between 1915 and 1972, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service systematically poisoned, trapped, and shot the wolves of the American Southwest and Mexico until only five Mexican grey wolves remained in the wild. Fortunately, these wolves were captured between 1977 and 1980 in Mexico and entered into a captive breeding program.

Here's what happened next, courtesy of the Center for Biological Diversity:

Reintroduction of their offspring began in 1998, and the population was expected to reach 102 animals in 18 breeding pairs by the end of 2006 -- as a first step in recovery.

Instead, the Fish and Wildlife Service set up a predator-control regimen remarkably similar to their old extermination program. Today there are only around 55 mature Mexican wolves in the wild and five or fewer breeding pairs.

That wildlife agent who shot the ma wolf wasn't the first time the Bush administration has brought shame on the government by transforming its officers into rogue wildlife exterminators. In another incident, a Bush exterminator shot a wolf for eating a calf who was illegally occupying National Forest land.

To me, there should be a simple policy: if you're a farmer or rancher, you've got to learn to live with your surroundings. That means doing your job and living your life in a way that's not harmful to the land, the water, or the animals of the area. At the very least, as Governor Richardson is recognizing, the government shouldn't help private farmers and ranchers kill off the wildlife that is our common natural legacy (not anywhere, but especially not on public land!)

This isn't the first time Richardson has been a green champion. His [global warming plan](#) is perhaps the most ambitious of any of the candidates; when President Bush was trying to let oil and mining companies loose on Valle Vidal (The Valley of Life) in the Sangre de Cristo mountains, Richardson not only opposed it but so effectively helped nationalize the campaign (along with other New Mexicans) to protect it that in 2006, that the same President Bush who just a few years earlier had been [pressing](#) to erect oil and gas drills across the area now [signed legislation](#) to protect it.

And he's been the single most outspoken governor at the national level calling for protection of America's remaining pristine forests; when I worked in the environmental movement, he was always [the first one](#) we would call to join us on a conference call for the forests or mobilize his fellow governors.

Email Governor Richardson to thank him - and encourage more heroic acts like this one by clicking on [this action alert](#) set up by the Center for Biological Diversity.