

## New wolf pack found

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PORTLAND, Ore. — More than 60 years after the eradication of gray wolves from the state, a wolf pack has once again taken up residence in Oregon. According to biologists with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), increasing signs of wolf activity over the last several months led to Friday's discovery of two adult gray wolves and two pups north of La Grande. The new evidence of wolves returning to Oregon was found on the same day that a federal judge reinstated Endangered Species Act protections for the species.



"It is hard not to link these two events as symbolic," said Steve Pedery of Oregon Wild, a conservation group working to reinstate protections for wolves. "Without the essential protections of the Endangered Species Act, there is no chance that we would be celebrating the return of an Oregon wolf pack today."

The wolves were found outside the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness in northern Union County during a howling survey. ODFW biologists reported hearing distinct howls from four animals and left open the possibility that there could have been more. The northeastern part of Oregon is largely remote, with hundreds of thousands of acres of prime wolf habitat.

"With all the roadless wildlands in eastern Oregon, there is every reason to believe that wolves can make a successful recovery here," added Tim Lillebo, Eastern Oregon Wildlands Advocate with Oregon Wild. "We just need to give them a little bit of breathing room and make sure they can get back on their feet out here."

Friday's court ruling by Judge Donald Molloy put on hold plans in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming to hunt wolves as trophy animals. These hunts could have led to over 500 wolf killings. In his ruling, Judge Molloy specifically cited Wyoming's management plan—a plan that allows unregulated wolf killing in 90 percent of the state—as inadequate for protection of the species.

While Friday's decision puts a temporary stop to state management, the final ruling on the legality of the delisting is still to come. Judge Molloy did hint that conservation groups are likely to succeed in their argument that the current population of wolves in the northern Rockies failed to achieve the level of recovery U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had previously said was necessary to assure the long-term persistence of the wolf.

Meanwhile, Oregon officials committed yesterday to continue efforts to locate and track wolves in Oregon.

"Wolves need big wild country in which to roam, along with laws that protect them from poachers and reckless development," said Doug Heiken of Oregon Wild. "The court wisely recognized that recovering wolf populations in Oregon need to be linked to wolf packs in other states to ensure the long-term health of the species, so that our children and grandchildren have a chance to enjoy these majestic animals."

[Earthjustice filed the delisting suit on behalf of Oregon Wild, 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, Cascadia Wildlands Project, Western Watersheds Project, and Wildlands Project.