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Lawsuit seeks subspecies status for protected Mexican wolves

By Julie Cart
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The Mexican gray wolf—although listed as endangered—has languished in bureaucratic limbo with no plan to recover the species, according to a lawsuit filed Monday by the Center for Biological Diversity.

The case seeks to overturn a 2009 rejection of a scientific petition that would have classified the Mexican wolf as an endangered subspecies of gray wolf. Designating the Mexican wolves in Arizona and New Mexico as a distinct subspecies would require federal authorities to come up with a specific plan to increase the number for the animal.

The animals were reintroduced to the Southwest in 1998 but their management by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been fraught with controversy. There are only about 58 wolves in the wild and the agency continues to maintain



A Mexican gray wolf runs around inside a holding pen at the Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico. The wolves are part of a re-introduction program administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. (Luis Sinco/Los Angeles Times / June 10, 2009)

animals in captive-breeding facilities. It has been four years since a new wolf was released to the wild.

Last month the Center for Biological Diversity sued the Fish and Wildlife Service to compel it to adopt reforms suggested by a scientific panel in 2001.