

GAZERS

Previously Endangered Wolves
Can Now Be Exterminated In Idaho



Pierce Nahigyan - 23 March, 2014

Three years after the Northern Rocky Mountains Gray Wolf was removed from the Endangered Species list, it is now slated for a state-sponsored cull in Idaho.

On March 20, Idaho passed House Bill 470, which provides for the creation of the "Wolf Depredation Control Board." This board will receive \$400,000 from the state and be com-

posed of representatives from the agricultural, livestock and hunting communities. The board is expected to kill approximately 500 wolves, leaving a population of about 150.

Prior to conservation efforts, Gray Wolves nearly disappeared due to decades of human encroachment and overhunting. They were removed from the federal Endangered Species list in 2011 when their populations returned to "healthy levels."

Former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar took great pride in removing it from the list, saying, “The recovery of gray wolves in the United States is a tremendous success story of the Endangered Species Act.... It is now time to return their management to states that are prepared to ensure the long-term health of the species.”

No longer endangered, wolves can now be hunted legally in Idaho, Montana, Utah, Oregon and Washington. An estimated 1,592 wolves have since been killed.

While wolves are hunted for sport and to protect livestock, Amaroq Weiss, the West Coast Wolf Organizer at the Center for Biological Diversity, says that, as apex predators, they are an essential part of a healthy ecosystem.

Speaking on the creation of the Wolf Depredation Control Board, Weiss remarked, “Yet again, Idaho has put a black eye on decades of tireless work to return wolves to the American landscape. This bill sets aside \$400,000 in state funds to wipe out as many wolves as legally possible in Idaho. Reducing these wolf populations to below even the absolute bare minimum sets a dangerous precedent and ensures that true wolf recovery will be little more than a pipe dream in Idaho.”

Idaho Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter is expected to sign 470 into law soon. In 2007, he announced that he looked forward to being the first to kill an Idaho wolf when their Endangered status was removed.