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Idaho's Wolf-Killing Atrocity Continues

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When it comes to killing wolves, Idaho has an appetite that just can't be sated.

State lawmakers just approved a bill that sets aside \$400,000 to exterminate 500 wolves.

Adding insult to injury, the bill takes management away from the state wildlife agency and places it in the hands of a "wolf depredation control board" that will consist solely of members appointed and overseen by Governor Butch Otter, who said in 2007 that he wanted to be the first to kill an Idaho wolf after federal protections were taken away.

Just a few months ago, Idaho sent a bounty hunter into the woods to wipe out two wolf packs and more recently announced plans to kill 60 percent of the wolves in another part of the state.

The slaughter continues and Idaho's political leaders seem to bask in the carnage they're leaving behind.

It's exactly the kind of ugly behavior that we feared when Congress in 2011 stripped Endangered Species Act protections from wolves in the northern Rockies, where some 1,600 wolves have been killed since protections were lifted. And it's clear, more mass killing is on the way.

This isn't supposed to be happening. The United States worked for 40 years to return wolves to the American landscape. *Canis lupus* had been driven to the brink of extinction in the lower 48 states as settlement moved west, ranching moved in and government sponsored programs trapped, poisoned and shot wolves into oblivion.

The Endangered Species Act allowed wolves to begin recovery, at least in a few places like the northern Rocky Mountains and Great Lakes states. After reintroductions in Yellowstone National Park and parts of Idaho, wolves came back. New packs formed. Families were built. Ecosystems, now with a keystone predator back in the mix, began to function like they had historically.

Politicians in Congress, though, pulled the plug and unceremoniously stripped federal protections. We were told that wolves could be responsibly managed by state wildlife agencies in places like Idaho.

Truth is, wolves are being persecuted in Idaho with the same kind of repulsive attitude that nearly drove them to extinction 100 years ago. Only now it's happening under the official state flag.

And here's where it gets worse: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service now wants to take away federal protections for nearly all wolves in the lower 48 states. And, just like in 2011, we're

being told that wolves will be fine. They won't be. Wolves today live in just five percent of their historic habitat.

Abandoning wolf protections across the country will not only ensure that wolves never get reestablished in places like the southern Rockies or the Northeast but that any wolves that remain will be subject to the same kind of treatment they're getting in Idaho.

Idaho may have gone too far this time. The rule removing protections for wolves, which was made law by Congress, specified criteria under which wolves would again receive consideration for Endangered Species Act protection and this atrocious bill may just have crossed the line.