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# Conservation group to sue Trump administration over lack of action on endangered species

Conservation group says Trump administration must protect 274 species.

By [Jennifer Bjorhus](#) Star Tribune

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Sam Cook – Duluth News-Tribune

*A moose is seen near Isabella, Minn., in 2016. Minnesota's moose population, while steadily declining partly because of a parasite carried by deer, is a species of special concern, according to the DNR.*

Minnesota's moose are among the 274 plant and animal species that a prominent environmental group says are in urgent need of federal protection but are on hold due to an agency backlog.

The Center for Biological Diversity said Wednesday it intends to sue the Trump administration over the backlog, claiming the U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are violating the Endangered Species Act.

To date, the Trump administration has listed only 19 species under the act, the lowest number of any administration at this point, the conservation group said in a news release. That compares with 360 species under the Obama administration, 523 under Bill Clinton and 232 under George W. Bush.

"The Trump administration's hostility toward wildlife is appalling," said Noah Greenwald, the center's endangered species director. "The extinction crisis is an emergency of epic proportions, and habitat loss is playing a huge role. If we're going to have any real shot at saving these species, we need to protect more of the land and water in this country that they need to survive."

The Arizona-based nonprofit group sent its ["notice of intent"](#) letter Wednesday saying it will seek a judicial order to compel action if the agencies don't remedy the violations within 60 days. The center said in the letter that the 274 listed species "are already past the deadlines established by the Endangered Species Act in most cases by more than five years."

The letter was addressed to Interior Secretary David Bernhardt; Gary Frazer, the USFWS assistant director for endangered species; and USFWS principal deputy director Margaret Everson.

The USFWS did not respond to a request for comment.

Minnesota species on list

The list includes several species that call Minnesota home: the Blanding's turtle, golden-winged warbler, northwestern moose, plains spotted skunk, regal fritillary, salamander mussel, tri-colored bat and wood turtle.

Only one of them however, is considered endangered by the state of Minnesota. That's the salamander mussel, now found only in the lower St. Croix River, where it lives under flat rocks or ledges.

Minnesota's moose population, while steadily declining partly because of a parasite carried by deer, is a species of special concern, according to the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR). That means it's extremely uncommon or has unique or highly specific habitat requirements and needs careful monitoring. There are about 4,000 moose in the state.

For now, the moose are holding their own, said the DNR's Michelle Carstensen, who runs the state's moose mortality project. Minnesota's moose herd is about half what it was in the mid-2000s but has been stable for the last five years, she said.

"We don't know which way it's going to go," Carstensen said.

Last month, Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison joined a federal court challenge to President Donald Trump's rollbacks of the Endangered Species Act. The case challenges a move by the USFWS and the National Marine Fisheries Service to allow officials to include economic considerations when determining whether to protect certain species.