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Environmental groups plan Portland rally to protect endangered status of gray wolves

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AP

This June 30, 2017 remote-camera image from the U.S. Forest Service shows a female gray wolf and her mate with a pup born in 2017.

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By [Kale Williams | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

A number of conservation groups plan to host meetings about the proposal to strip gray wolves of endangered species protections nationwide, including a meeting in Portland this summer.

The meetings are necessary, said Brett Hartl, government affairs director at the Center for Biological Diversity, because the federal government hasn't planned any public hearings on the proposal.

"It's appalling that the Trump administration couldn't be bothered to hold any public hearings on this. So we'll hold our own," he said in a statement. "If Trump's plan goes through, it'll be the most-damaging decision ever made in the long history of wolf recovery in this country."

Interior Secretary David Bernhardt announced the proposal during a March speech before a wildlife conference in Denver, saying that gray wolves had fully recovered since they received endangered species protections in 1975 when there were about 1,000 of them left. There are now more than 5,000 living across the contiguous U.S.

[Feds plan to lift endangered species protections for gray wolves nationwide](#)

[Acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt announced the proposal during a Wednesday speech before a wildlife conference in Denver.](#)

In Oregon, [at least 137 wolves reside in the state](#). The creatures are protected under the federal Endangered Species Act in the western third of the state and cannot be killed, but have fewer protections in Eastern Oregon where they lost endangered species status in 2015 and can be killed under specific circumstances

Advocates and opponents of wolf conservation have battled for years over the state's management plan for the predatory canids and a draft of the plan was released last week with a vote coming in June.

[Oregon releases long-awaited draft management plan for wolves](#)

[The plan would change current policy governing when a wolf can be killed for attacking livestock.](#)

The public meetings — hosted by the Center for Biological Diversity, WildEarth Guardians, Defenders of Wildlife and the Endangered Species Coalition — will be held in Denver, Colorado on April 29; Sacramento, California on May 2; [and in Portland on May 6.](#)

The groups plan to hold a rally in front of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service headquarters before attendees march to the nearby DoubleTree Hotel where an expert panel on wolves will convene ahead of a public comment period. All comments will be recorded, transcribed and submitted to the federal government, according to a news release about the event.

-- Kale Williams