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Issuing 'Death Sentence' to Gray Wolves, Trump Admin Moves to Gut Federal Protections

"By removing protections across the country, the Trump Administration is essentially abandoning all efforts to restore this iconic American species to millions of acres of wild habitat."

by
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Start hiding, gray wolf. (Photo: [JasonBechtel/flickr/cc](#))

Conservation groups were up in arms Wednesday after the Trump administration moved to strip federal protections from gray wolves.

"This disgusting proposal would be a death sentence for gray wolves across the country," [said](#) Collette Adkins, a senior attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. "The Trump administration is dead set on appeasing special interests that want to kill wolves."

From the [Associated Press](#):

Acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt announced the proposal during a Wednesday speech at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Denver, a weeklong conservation forum for researchers, government officials and others, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Spokesman Gavin Shire said in an interview with the AP.

After an [effort](#) in 2013 by the then-President Barack Obama administration's Fish and Wildlife Department to strip the protections—in place since the 70s—failed, the Trump administration [refloated](#) the proposal last year. The new plan will reportedly [appear](#) in the federal register in the coming days.

The Fish and Wildlife Service argues that the population has bounced back well enough to warrant lifting Endangered Species Act protections for the animals in the lower 48, but groups including the Endangered Species Coalition says that's just not true. The animals now roam less than 10 percent of their historic range, and with a population of roughly 5,000, they are at a fraction of their historic numbers, the groups note.

"Wolves have only been restored in a tiny fraction of their historic and suitable range," said Leda Huta, executive director for the organization. "By removing protections across the country, the Trump Administration is essentially abandoning all efforts to restore this iconic American species to millions of acres of wild habitat."

Drew Caputo, who serves as Earthjustice's vice president of litigation for lands, wildlife, and oceans, concurred.

"Wolf recovery is still underway in the U.S. with wolves just starting to reappear in places like Northern California and the Pacific Northwest where they had been hunted to extinction."

Moreover, say the groups, just look to the populations in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, where protections have already been lost and the animals there find themselves in the crosshairs of hunters or livestock owners.

Defenders of Wildlife, Earthjustice, and Western Environmental Law Center vowed to fight the move.