

Citizens Fight for Future of Wolves

Locals rail against Trump administration proposal to delist gray wolves from Endangered Species List.

- By Jimmy Tallal / Special to The Malibu Times

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Gray wolves will be removed from the Endangered Species List if a new government proposal becomes official—one that environmental groups say would bring the iconic species back to the brink of extinction.

The proposal to delist gray wolves in the lower 48 states was published in the Federal Register on March 15, which was the first day of a 60-day review period. During that time, the proposed rule is open for public comment and five independent scientists will review it. The Department of the Interior's Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) has not scheduled any public hearings yet.

This development has environmentalists all over the country upset, including many activists here in Malibu.

“This will be a devastating blow to wolf recovery and would return us to the days when wolves were shot on sight, poisoned in their dens and suffered terrible torture in traps,” wrote local dance teacher Deborah Collodel in a message to *The Malibu Times*. “Apex predators like wolves, long thought to be the dangerous enemy, are actually scientifically proven to be a necessary part of a healthy ecosystem.”

“These creatures have been terribly misunderstood and demonized for centuries. Not only are they majestic with complex social bonds, they give back to nature by keeping prey in check,” she continued. “When wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone Park, the positive ripple effect on the entire ecosystem was amazing.”

Collodel and her dance students are “Flooding [President Donald] Trump’s office with letters to send the message loud and clear that wolves need our protection.” The class is following the Center for Biological Diversity organization’s Ignite Change campaign, SaveourWolves.org and also “Urging everyone to contact Governor Newsom and the White House to protest this delisting.”

Paula Ficara, co-founder and executive director of the Apex Protection Project, a local nonprofit dedicated to protecting wolves and wolfdogs, and co-founder of Sedona Wolf Week, wrote *TMT* that they planned to attend the Ignite Change rally in Santa Monica on Wednesday, April 17, at

7:45 a.m. in front of the City of Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. Although the wolf issue was not on the official meeting agenda, Item 2 allows general public comment for items not on the agenda, and that's when individuals planned to speak on the wolf issue.

“The Trump administration dutifully takes its dictation from the special interest groups representing the ranchers, the National Rifle Association, the Tucson-based Safari Club and other gun worshipping planet-killing organizations,” wrote Dr. Reese Halter, a former *Malibu Times* featured blogger, in *Slanted Media*.

In 1974, the Endangered Species Act began protecting gray wolves, which were reintroduced to Yellowstone and other parts of the Rocky Mountains. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service reclassified them as “threatened” in 2003, which offers less protection. Congress delisted the species in Idaho and Montana in 2011. In April 2017, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia lifted federal protections for gray wolves in Wyoming.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service estimates about 6,000 wolves living in the continental U.S., but in states where wolves are already delisted, their numbers have started to drop again. In 2015, the most recent year for which wolf population data is available, humans caused the deaths of 682 gray wolves in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming alone—28 percent of the total wolf population in those three states.

For nearly 90 years, California had no wolves left at all. Wolves only recently began dispersing into the state again in 2014—they were not reintroduced, but came here on their own. Today, there are perhaps 10 of them in the far northern counties, according to state reports