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Biden Brings Hope for Spotted Owls

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Earlier this month, Western Democrats led by Oregon Senators Jeff Merkey and Ron Wyden, sent a letter to the Interior Department requesting an immediate review into the previous administration's decision of removing protection for northern spotted owl's habitat. On [February 22](#), the Interior Department announced it will review the decision and the effective date of the changes will be delayed from March 16 to April 15.

The most recent revisions to the Endangered Species Act, which is detrimental to spotted owl and other species, was published on Jan. 15 by the soon-to- depart administration.

According to the rule, spotted owl protected habitat would be slashed by 3.4 million acres in the coastal contiguous states while U.S. Fish and Wildlife had proposed removing protection from only 200,000 acres in 15 Oregon counties. The efforts to “uplist” the owl from threatened to endangered species failed last December, as reported by [OPB](#).

In their letter, Western Democrats questioned whether previous Interior Secretary David Bernhardt ignored scientific recommendations made by Fish and Wildlife staff.

The Center for Biological Diversity’s Endangered Species Director Noah Greenwald agreed that, based on the timing of the Trump administration decision last month, the decision was not based on scientific findings provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

“David Bernhardt ended his corrupt and destructive tenure at Interior with this parting blow to science and the public interest, raising even more questions about scientific meddling by Trump political appointees,” Wyden said in an emailed statement. “I’m glad to see Biden’s Interior understands the urgency of stopping this dangerous rule from going into effect.”

Wyden hopes that the reversal of Trump Administration’s rollbacks will not stop at Northern Spotted Owl protection, and that they will be permanent.

By Joanna Rosińska