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# Green groups sue after Trump administration lifts protections for gray wolf

By [Rebecca Beitsch](#) - 01/14/21 11:52 AM EST

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Environmental groups sued the Trump administration Thursday over its decision to remove endangered species protection for the gray wolf.

The Fish and Wildlife Service delisted the wolf in October, arguing it had begun to recover, but the environmental organizations reject the idea that the species's progress justifies such a move.

“This is no ‘Mission Accomplished’ moment for wolf recovery,” Kristen Boyles, an attorney with Earthjustice, said in a release.

“Wolves are only starting to get a toehold in places like Northern California and the Pacific Northwest, and wolves need federal protection to explore habitat in the Southern Rockies and the Northeast. This delisting decision is what happens when bad science drives bad policy.”

Earthjustice filed the lawsuit on behalf of Defenders of Wildlife, the Center for Biological Diversity, the Sierra Club, the National Parks Conservation Association, Oregon Wild and the Humane Society of the United States.

The delisting ended more than 45 years of protections for the species in the continental U.S., except for a small band of Mexican gray wolves present in Arizona and New Mexico.

The gray wolf population was around 1,000 when the species was first listed, and Fish and Wildlife now says those figures are now closer to 6,000.

“After more than 45 years as a listed species, the gray wolf has exceeded all conservation goals for recovery. Today’s announcement simply reflects the determination that this species is neither a threatened nor endangered species based on the specific factors Congress has laid out in the law,” Interior Secretary David Bernhardt said in a statement when the shift was first announced.

The lack of protections for gray wolves on the federal level would leave any additional protections up to the states.

“We hope this lawsuit finally sets the wolf on a path to true recovery,” Collette Adkins, carnivore conservation director at the Center for Biological Diversity, said in a release.

“Restoring federal protection would allow further recovery in places like California, which is home now to just a single pack of wolves. Without federal protection the future of gray wolves rests in the hands of state governments, many of which, like Utah and South Dakota, are hostile to wolf recovery.”

The suit follows a Wednesday decision by Fish and Wildlife to remove more than 3 million acres of federal forest from protection that was previously deemed critical habitat for the spotted owl, an endangered species that resides in old growth forests.