

# ENDANGERED EARTH



CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY • SUMMER 2025



# 5 Things to Know ABOUT THE START OF TRUMP'S SECOND TERM

**W**e're halfway through the first year of President Donald Trump's second term, and there are some key differences compared to his first. Here's some of what we've learned so far.



## 1. This time Trump and his people are meaner, more manipulative, and more dismissive of the laws and norms of governing.

They're far more willing to rip out some of our most important environmental laws by the roots, eviscerating protections we've relied on for decades or longer that make sure we have clean air and water, public lands with some degree of protection, and healthy wildlife. They're more willing to dismiss court rulings, gut regulations, bypass Congress, let corporations do what they want, and push the bounds of governance to see how much they can get away with.

## 2. Wildlife and the Endangered Species Act are being targeted.

They've already scapegoated endangered delta smelt and ordered more water to be drained from habitat in California's Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. They've reversed course on migratory bird protections and want to allow baiting and aerial gunning of carnivores in parts of Alaska. They've issued a damaging proposal to redefine what it means to "harm" an endangered species, threatening Florida panthers, Chinook salmon, spotted owls and others. Meanwhile they've drastically cut staffing, for the two agencies responsible for protecting species from extinction.

## 3. Public lands are up for grabs.

Not only is this administration rolling back regulations and cutting staff but they're determined to rewrite the rules that protect national monuments, parks, forests and wildlife refuges — places critical for endangered species, clean water, and clean air. Trump has told federal land managers to seek ways to bypass environmental laws and ramp up logging on more than 200 million acres of national forests and other public lands. Other executive orders call for more oil, gas and coal production on public lands and oceans. Mining, too, is getting a significant push.

## 4. They're doubling down on fossil fuels and driving the climate emergency.

Right out of the gate, the Trump administration pulled the United States from the Paris climate agreement and began undermining the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's landmark 2009 decision that greenhouse gas emissions endanger human health and the environment. They have exempted dozens of coal plants from mercury-pollution rules and declared a bogus energy "emergency" to justify a dramatic ramping-up of drilling, including in the Arctic. They're gutting the Federal Emergency Management Agency, throwing disaster plans into chaos, bending over backward for fossil fuel corporations, and throwing away climate science.

## 5. Resistance takes many forms.

Just as we did during the first Trump administration, we've been moving quickly to launch legal challenges every step of the way, including against the so-called Department of Government Efficiency on the administration's first day. We're filing one lawsuit about every four days and counting on the courts to pump the brakes on some of Trump's most egregious ideas. We're also organizing our supporters, mobilizing actions, hounding members of Congress, and working overtime to get our voices in the media to call out every attempt to roll back wildlife protections, destroy public lands and damage the climate. Every bit helps — and the rest of his term will require each of us to do our part to save life on Earth.

*Brett Hartl is the Center's  
director of government affairs.*







# BRING THEM HOME

## New Feasibility Study Offers Roadmap for Returning Grizzlies to California

**G**rizzly bears are, by far, the most ecologically and culturally significant species that's been lost from California.

Some 10,000 grizzlies lived in California when the Gold Rush began. Decades of persecution took a heavy toll. The last reliable sighting of a wild grizzly bear in California was in 1924 in Sequoia National Park. Although they still adorn the California flag and seal, there are none in the wild.

**It's time to bring them back.**

A new peer-reviewed study by the California Grizzly Alliance (which the Center is part of) found no insurmountable ecological, economic, or legal obstacles to returning California's official animal to the state.

The study takes a deep dive into California grizzlies' history, biology, ecology and relationship with humans.

It also examines existing suitable habitat for the species and the likely ecological, economic and social impacts of bringing the animals back to the state. We also looked at grizzlies as a cultural keystone species.

Last year the California State Senate unanimously passed a resolution declaring 2024 the "Year of the California Grizzly Bear" to mark the 100th anniversary of the last grizzly sighting in the state. The California Fish and Game Commission similarly passed a resolution marking the centennial of the grizzly's extirpation and called for studies to inform "any consideration of the future of the grizzly bear in California."

Polling makes clear that most Californians support restoring grizzly bears to the state, and there's plenty of suitable habitat.

Fortunately the tragic loss of California's grizzlies isn't irreversible. One of the next crucial questions is simply whether our political leaders and wildlife managers have the boldness of vision to make it happen. I believe they do. Stay tuned.



Brendan Cummings is the Center's conservation director.

# Trump's Goal for Public Lands: PRIVATIZE AND INDUSTRIALIZE

**A**merica's public lands — our national forests, wildlife refuges, high deserts, rivers and streams — are under threat like at no other time in history.

President Trump is holding true to his campaign promise to drill, baby, drill, but also mine, baby, mine and log, baby, log. His slew of executive orders directs federal agencies to open public lands and oceans for more oil, gas and coal production. He's also immediately expanding logging and mining, especially across the West.

The Trump cabinet secretaries in charge of public lands haven't fully revealed how those directives will be carried out, but it's clear they want to put corporations in charge. A leaked draft of the five-year strategic plan for the Department of the Interior, the largest federal land-management agency, clearly puts extraction and the sell-off of public lands as its top priority. Conservation, protection, and recreation are at the bottom of the list.

Their primary means of executing these orders is to speed through environmental reviews designed to analyze and disclose harm to public lands, waters and wildlife and allow time for the public to weigh in. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum has ordered that environmental review happen as fast as 14 days and take no longer than 28 days; he also says that consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — whose mission is to protect threatened and endangered species — will proceed under "emergency authorities" that allow formal consultation to occur *after* harm is done.

Trump's team is overturning protections from prior administrations in places like the Pecos River watershed in New Mexico and the iconic Ruby Mountains in Nevada. Both had been shielded from extraction because of their important recreational and wildlife values. Slashing national monuments — for example, Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni-Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument — is also likely on the list.

Anticipating this onslaught, we're staffing up, adding skilled attorneys and issue experts to our national team. We're ready to take this on.



Randi Spivak is the Center's public lands policy director.



# CATCH UP QUICK: 10 Things to Know



## FLY ON

Responding to our petition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed Endangered Species Act protection for the **bleached sandhill skipper**, an extremely rare subspecies of butterfly that lives in alkali wetlands in far northern Nevada. Recent surveys have located fewer than 1,000 individuals annually.



## FOR THE SALAMANDERS

We've filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration for delaying protection for two salamanders in California's southern Sierra Nevada. **Kern Canyon slender salamanders** and **relictual slender salamanders** have been hit hard by decades of livestock grazing, logging and development.



## EMERGENCY HELP

After a Center petition, the Fish and Wildlife Service gave emergency protections to **blue tree monitors**, Indonesian lizards highly coveted in the pet trade. They only exist in the wild on Batanta Island, where their population has been devastated. The biggest driver is the exotic pet market in the United States. The new rule bans the import and sale of blue tree monitor lizards in the United States.



## TOO MANY COWS

In Arizona and New Mexico, half of the roughly 2,400 miles we've surveyed since 2017 show significant damage to critical habitat from livestock grazing. Hopefully it's a wake-up call for federal land managers to protect these fragile habitats, home to **rare fish, reptiles, birds and amphibians**.



## GOOD BUZZ

The feds have finally agreed on deadlines to make protection decisions for **American bumblebees, variable cuckoo bumblebees, blue calamintha bees, and Southern Plains bumblebees**. We and our allies have been pushing for safeguards, but the agency dragged its feet for years — so we sued. Now decisions are due as soon as 2027.



## SQUEAK UP

We've petitioned for state protections for one of the smallest native mammals in California. The **Pacific pocket mouse** is only found in three locations on the coast of Orange and San Diego counties. Threats include coastal development, climate change and disease.



## LANDMARK WIN

In one of our federal cases, a judge has ordered the Trump administration to assess the harm that five pesticides are causing to hundreds of endangered plants and animals across the country, including **monarch butterflies** and **California red-legged frogs**.



## UNCOMMON FLOWER

We've petitioned to protect rare Oregon flowers called **Ochoco lomatium** under the Endangered Species Act. These rare plants in the carrot family are limited to only four populations on rocky scablands in central Oregon. Their largest population has been in steep decline in recent years.



## SAVE THE WHALES (STILL)

We and our allies are launching a lawsuit over the Trump administration's move to strip measures that were aimed to protect endangered **Rice's whales** from deadly ship collisions. These incredible whales live in the Gulf of Mexico, and just a few dozen remain on Earth.



## FIGHT FOR THE FLORIDA 11

We and our friends have sued the Trump administration for delaying federal protections for some of our South Florida neighbors, including a lizard, two snakes and eight plants. Among them: **Florida Keys mole skinks, Key ring-necked snakes, Rim Rock crowned snakes** and a shrub called the **Big Pine partridge pea**.



# FLOCKING TO THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

It's no secret that northern Alaska's 19-million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is home to polar bears, caribou, musk ox, Dall sheep, wolves and wolverines. But birds from all over the world — and from all 50 states — come to the refuge each summer to nest, rest, feast on insects and plants, and rear their young.

Unfortunately the refuge, one of the planet's last and largest unspoiled ecosystems, is now in the sights of the Trump administration, which wants to open it up to oil and gas drilling, especially the vast coastal plain. That would be a disaster for wildlife at the refuge, including the birds who visit every year and those who live there year-round. Here are just a few of the many bird species that rely on the Arctic refuge's coastal areas:



Male **snow buntings** come to the Arctic first (often when it's still frigid and their white plumage blends in) to snag the best nesting spots in rocky crevices. The females follow several weeks later.



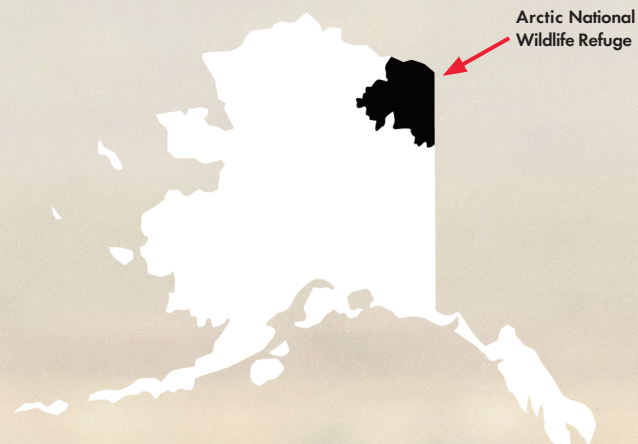
**Pacific loons**, the most common in North America, spend most of the year in Pacific coastal waters but migrate to Arctic tundra lakes in summer to breed and raise their young.



**Golden eagles**, with up to 7-foot wingspans, arrive from across North America to perform "sky dancing," a courtship ritual where they can reach speeds of 200 mph.



**Northern pintails**, one of the world's most widespread ducks, gather each summer in the Arctic refuge, a vital spot for breeding, resting and rejuvenation.



**Pectoral sandpipers** migrate thousands of miles from South America each year to the refuge, passing through the Great Plains and both coasts. Males use an inflatable chest sac to "hoot" for mates over the Arctic tundra.



**Sandhill cranes**, with wingspans that can exceed 7 feet, can sometimes be spotted in the coastal plains doing spectacular skips, bobs and bows in the hopes of finding love.



**Snowy owls**, one of about 25 birds species that eke out a living at the refuge year-round, sport large, feather-covered feet to guard against the cold.



**Tundra swans**, sometimes arriving in great migrating flocks of 100 or more, love to gather on the lakes and ponds of the Arctic.



Following an elliptical pattern, **American golden plovers** swoop in from the grasslands of South America on a 20,000-mile journey to breed on the soft tundra before heading south again when the weather cools.

# A CRISIS IN NEW MEXICO

## Protecting People and Wildlife From Fossil Fuel Pollution

New Mexico is in the midst of an oil and gas pollution crisis. Last year the Land of Enchantment claimed the dubious distinction as the second-largest oil-producing state in the country.

The Permian Basin — some 300 miles long and 250 miles wide — holds vast underground reserves of fossil fuels, making it a giant global carbon bomb. Profit-hungry companies have descended on the region, leading fracking in New Mexico to double in the past five years, with expansion predicted for at least another decade.

This has come at a steep cost to New Mexicans. Air quality in regions with heavy oil and gas is among the worst in the country and out of compliance with federal health standards. Some 34,000 children go to school close to harmful fracking sites. Daily toxic spills contaminate our land and water. And tens of thousands of inactive oil and gas wells remain unplugged, continuing to pollute our air and desecrate our landscapes.

Unfortunately, with New Mexico's budget increasingly dependent on oil and gas revenues, the state doesn't require any environmental or public health assessments before authorizing more fossil fuel extraction.

To address this crisis head on and hold the state accountable, the Center has dramatically ramped up operations in New Mexico.

As part of this work, in 2023 we partnered with Indigenous groups, frontline communities, and youth to file a landmark lawsuit against the state for failing to uphold its constitutional duty to control pollution and protect our environment from the ravages of oil and gas production.

We've also been advocating for legislative and policy changes, including banning new oil and gas wells near schools, phasing out fracking and transitioning to clean energy, stopping the discharge of fracking waste into our water sources, and making operators clean up their messes. Taking on the fossil fuel industry is an uphill battle, but we stand resolute — holding the line to protect this beautiful state.

Gail Evans is the Center's New Mexico climate director.





# STATUS REPORT: West Coast Wolves

Wolves on the West Coast continue to expand, but we’re keeping a close eye on some key developments.

In Oregon the wolf population grew by 15% in 2024, marking the first year of double-digit growth since 2019. So while we’re pleased to see there were 204 wolves at the end of the year, we’re troubled by the number of poachings and authorized killings. There were 26 known wolf deaths in the state last year, including 14 approved by state officials or allowed under state law and seven killed illegally. Research has shown that for every illegally slain wolf who’s found, another one or two wolves have been killed and remain undiscovered.

To the north, Washington’s overall wolf population in 2024 decreased by almost 10%. The total number fell from 254 wolves in 42 packs to 230 wolves in 43 packs. Alarmingly, the number of successful breeding pairs — the best indicator of how the population is doing — declined by 25%. Of the 37 reported deaths, five wolves were killed over livestock conflicts. Nineteen died from Tribal hunting by the Confederated Tribes of the Colville, which retain Tribal treaty rights for hunting on their reservation and on ceded lands, and by the Spokane Tribe. There were also seven known wolves killed illegally, including three in western Washington, where wolves retain full federal protection.

In California there are now at least 50 known wolves, up by just one from the year before, who are spread among seven packs and a handful of small groups of wolves that don’t yet qualify as packs. Nine packs were recorded in September 2024, but two of them merged into one family, and the other no longer exists. The packs are in Siskiyou, Lassen, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Tehama and Tulare counties. New areas of wolf activity were also documented, including by small groups of two or three wolves in Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta and Tehama counties.



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# From the Director: SAFE PASSAGE

It’s easy to get overwhelmed by all that’s coming out of Washinton, D.C. So much of the chaos is intended to exhaust and distract.

We’re not going to let that happen. A crucial part of weathering turbulent times is staying focused on what’s actually being proposed, where we can have an impact, and what’s at stake.

For a lot of the Center's work, that means understanding the potential effects on endangered plants and animals. That’s why we mobilized so quickly when the Trump administration proposed changes to how the Endangered Species Act would be implemented. Specifically, it’s trying to rescind habitat protections for endangered species across the country — opening the door for industries to mine, log, bulldoze, drain, pollute and otherwise destroy habitat that’s fundamental to the survival of these species.



It's not an abstract proposal. If it goes through ...

- Whooping cranes will have fewer safe places to land during their epic annual migrations.
- Desert tortoises in the Mojave will have more of their burrows trampled by cows and off-road vehicles running roughshod over some of their remaining havens.
- Chinook salmon trying to negotiate ancestral pathways will have to contend with more dams and water diversions.

We’re actively fighting this extinction plan and mobilizing against every other proposal that would deepen the extinction crisis, harm public lands, and worsen the climate emergency. We’re ramping up our staffing, including legal teams, and are charging headlong into whatever this administration throws at us.

Our resistance will come on many fronts, including lawsuits, grassroots activism, political pressure, and media. We’re built for this work and will do it with a relentless aim toward protecting all that’s wild — now and far into the future.

I appreciate the support of every member of the Center. We couldn’t do it without you.

Kieran Suckling  
Executive Director







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## ENDANGERED

# EARTH

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