

PRESS RELEASE



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Animal Welfare, Conservation Groups Announce Intent to Sue in Wake of Wolf's Killing in Wyoming

Rundown and torture of Wyoming wolf a reminder the nation that state politicians are calling the shots and cannot be trusted to responsibly handle wolves in their states.

(Washington, D.C.)—On the heels of [the recent](#) drawn-out torture of a captured and bound gray wolf, a coalition of organizations has filed their 60-day Notice of Intent to Sue the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for their refusal to restore Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections to the Western gray wolf. The Notice of Intent may be viewed [at this link](#).

In July 2021, this coalition—Animal Wellness Action, the Center for a Humane Economy, Project Coyote, Kettle Range Conservation Group, Footloose Montana, and Gallatin Wildlife Association—along with dozens of other organizations [filed a petition](#) with the FWS requesting federal ESA protections for gray wolves in the Western United States.

The FWS released an initial 90-day finding in September 2021 that relisting the Western gray wolf as endangered “may be warranted.” The agency then inexplicably reversed course on February 7, 2024, when it found in its [final decision on the petition](#) that the Western gray wolf is not entitled to ESA protection.

Three weeks after this decision, a man in Wyoming ran down a gray wolf with a snowmobile, captured her, taped her muzzle shut, paraded her in a local bar while subjecting her to extended abuse—including going so far as to kiss the dying wolf

while being filmed, the wolf too weak to do anything but bare her teeth—and finally killing her. While Animal Wellness Action [argues that these actions are punishable under Wyoming criminal law](#), and [numerous veteran law enforcement professionals have called for felony charges](#), he was required only to pay a \$250 fine for live possession of wildlife.

“States have proven they cannot be trusted to sustain the wolf species,” commented Jessica Karjala, executive director of Footloose Montana, based in Missoula, MT. “They not only allow but endorse bounties on wolves. They have encouraged increased hunting and quotas on wolves, spotlighting, baiting, trapping, snaring, hound hunting. Here, Wyoming is turning a blind eye to the heinous acts of Cody Roberts. The delisting of wolves has led to the failure of state wildlife agencies to protect wolves.”

“It is so disappointing to see one of our Nation's federal agencies, the only agency that has the responsibility to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants in their native habitat, become so disengaged from their mission and from reality on the ground,” said Clint Nagel, president of the Gallatin Wildlife Association, based in Bozeman, MT. “Our Nation’s wildlife deserve so much better.”

“It was illegitimate for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to continue to deny gray wolf relisting protection under the ESA for our small population of state-listed endangered gray wolves in Washington state,” said Timothy Coleman, director of Kettle Range Conservation Group, based in Republic, Washington. “Outside of Northeast Washington, just a couple of wolf packs exist, and there are no packs in the entire southern Cascade and Pacific Coast wolf recovery region that includes high quality habitat in Olympic National Park. Slaughter of gray wolf source population stifles migration from Idaho and Montana and will likely delay wolf recovery for decades across Washington state.”

The biggest threat facing the gray wolf is human-caused mortality. Since 2021, Rocky Mountain states have liberalized legal killing of wolves and removed discretion from their fish and wildlife agencies in favor of letting lawmakers use wolves as a political cudgel. Unlawful killings, including poaching and poisoning, are on the rise too. Higher mortality rates will result in further loss of genetic diversity and connectivity between wolf populations across the Western U.S. And worse, in their refusal to list the wolf, the FWS is relying heavily on highly suspect data on wolf populations from states that use population-estimate methodologies that have been criticized by scientific experts.

“Despite having [admitted](#) that Rocky Mountain states use means and measures ‘at odds with modern professional wildlife management,’ the FWS has still failed to properly account for the impact of the uptick in human-caused mortality on Western wolf populations, as they are required to do under law,” said Kate Chupka Schultz,

senior attorney with the Center for a Humane Economy, who prepared the Notice. “Compounding that error, FWS is also failing to apply best available science to the analysis—ignoring the good science and instead relying on the bad. These are just two of the multiple ways the FWS is violating federal law.”

Now, this coalition of conservation organizations has formally sent their notice, arguing that the FWS’ failure to list the Western gray wolf violates both the ESA and the Administrative Procedure Act (APA). This notice is the third filed in recent months by various organizations against the FWS for failing to protect the gray wolf.

“The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is continuing to allow the same unlimited and unregulated killing practices that nearly wiped wolves off the landscape in the 20th century,” said Renee Seacor, carnivore conservation director with Project Coyote. “Time and time again, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has lost in court when challenged over gray wolf protection. We fully expect the same with this deeply flawed decision.”

The coalition is now awaiting the expiration of the 60-day notice period before filing their lawsuit in federal court.

ABOUT

[Animal Wellness Action](#) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) whose mission is to help animals by promoting laws and regulations at federal, state and local levels that forbid cruelty to all animals. The group also works to enforce existing anti-cruelty and wildlife protection laws. Animal Wellness Action believes helping animals helps us all. X: @AWAction_News

[The Center for a Humane Economy](#) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(3) whose mission is to help animals by helping forge a more humane economic order. The first organization of its kind in the animal protection movement, the Center encourages businesses to honor their social responsibilities in a culture where consumers, investors, and other key stakeholders abhor cruelty and the degradation of the environment and embrace innovation as a means of eliminating both. The Center believes helping animals helps us all. X: @TheHumaneCenter