

# U.S. Ends Protections for Wolves in 3 States



Canon USA/Reuters

Gray wolves, like these, nearing a Bison in Yellowstone National Park, will no longer receive federal protection.

Sign In to E-Mail or Save

This

Print

Print

### More Articles in US »

### MOST POPULAR

E-Mailed Blogged Searched

1. Judith Warner: The Mirrored Ceiling
2. Paul Krugman: The Resentment Strategy
3. Bob Herbert: Running From Reality
4. In Palin's Life and Politics, Goal to Follow God's Will
5. Editorial: The Real John McCain
6. 36 Hours in San Diego
7. For the Brain, Remembering Is Like Reliving
8. U.S. Rescue Seen at Hand for 2 Mortgage Giants
9. Gail Collins: McCain's Grizzly Politics
10. Economic View: Is History Siding With Obama's Economic Plan?

Go to Complete List »

The New York Times

AUTOS  
nytimes.com/autos

Share

---

ARTICLE TOOLS  
SPONSORED BY

CLICK FOR WIDGET

By KIRK JOHNSON  
Published: February 22, 2008

DENVER — The Bush administration on Thursday announced an end to federal protection for gray wolves in [Montana](#), Wyoming and [Idaho](#), concluding that the wolves were reproductively robust enough to survive.

**Related**

[Dot Earth: Howling Over Federal Plan to Expand Wolf Killing](#)

“Wolves are back,” said Lynn Scarlett, the deputy secretary of the [Department of the Interior](#), in a telephone conference call with reporters. “Gray wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains are thriving and no longer need protection.”

A coalition of wildlife and environmental groups dismissed the government’s claims and announced plans for a lawsuit to reverse the decision, which is to take effect next month.

Advocates for the animals said there were too few wolves to make a genetically sound population, and that state plans to manage wolf populations were underfinanced and fueled by a long-simmering animosity against wolves that could drive them back to threatened status.

“The numbers are inadequate and the state programs are, too,” said Louisa Willcox, a senior wildlife advocate at the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#), a conservation group that is participating in the planned lawsuit.

From a base population of 66 wolves introduced into Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho in the mid-1990s, there are now nearly 1,300, with an additional 230 or so in Montana that have drifted down from Canada. State management plans allow for wolf hunting, or outright eradication in some places — including most of Wyoming — with a target population of 150 in each of the three states.

Biologists cited by the environmental and wildlife groups say that target population is too small, and suggest instead that 2,000 to 3,000 animals are the minimum needed.



**Touring in French deco style**

Also in Autos:

- [A 2009 Chevrolet with hand-cranked windows](#)
- [Harley-Davidson's 105th anniversary](#)
- [A new top banana throws Mercedes a curve](#)

Advertisements

**Need to know more?**

Get 50% off home delivery of The Times.

**Get your small business big-time attention.**

Self-Service Advertising on NYTimes.com

**Get Started »**

Gray wolves were first protected in 1974, one of the first animals to be covered by the Endangered Species Act, which was passed a year earlier. But it turned out there were none left to protect across most of the West. That led to the idea of reintroduction, which began in 1995.

“We’re not at recovery yet,” said Doug Honnold, the managing attorney at the Northern Rockies office of Earthjustice, a nonprofit legal group based in Oakland, Calif. “We’re in the neighborhood, we’re close, but we’re not there.”

Removing federal protections now, Mr. Honnold said, would violate the language of the Endangered Species Act that requires decision makers to use the best possible science in determining a viable target population.

Federal officials said their science was sound.

“Wolves are resilient, and their social structure is resilient,” said Ed Bangs, the gray wolf recovery coordinator for the federal [Fish and Wildlife Service](#). Mr. Bangs said that even with federal protections in place almost one in four wolves die each year, either naturally or from human action, and yet the population has still been rising at a rate of about 24 percent a year.

The director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, H. Dale Hall, said that if the population dipped below the state’s pledged management levels, federal monitoring would be extended and other options explored as well, including a restoration of protection.

Environmentalists said those provisions were too vague to affect what the states do in the next few crucial months.

But people’s perceptions of wolves are also changing. Wealthy second-home owners, recreation enthusiasts and retirees began moving into the corridor of communities around Yellowstone about the same time as the wolves did.

Even in Wyoming, which has the harshest measures in place for controlling wolves, a majority of residents who spoke up during a public comment period on the state’s plan opposed it, according to an analysis by the Wyoming Department of Game and Fish.

[More Articles in US »](#)

Enjoy the convenience of home delivery of The Times for less than \$1 a day

**Tips**

To find reference information about the words used in this article, double-click on any word, phrase or name. A new window will open with a dictionary definition or encyclopedia entry.

**Past Coverage**

- [Humans Divided as Wolves Rebound in a Changing West](#) (January 2, 2008)
- [Off Endangered List, but What Animal Is It Now?](#) (November 13, 2007)
- [National Briefing | Rockies: Protest Against Easing Of Wolf Protection](#) (May 15, 2007)
- [2 Wolf Groups to Lose Endangered Status](#) (January 28, 2007)

**Related Searches**

**Inside NYTimes.com**

Travel »



**The Grand Tour:  
Frugal Europe**

Books »



**Annie Proulx's True  
Grit**

Opinion »

**Op-Ed: The  
Two Weeks  
You Missed**

Catching up with the  
news, post-conventions.

Music »



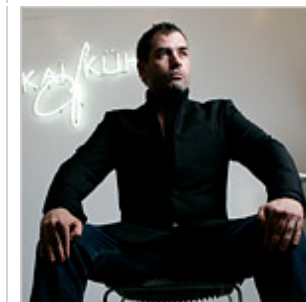
**At Both Conventions, a  
Band Salutes Anarchy**

Opinion »



**Letters: McCain Makes  
His Pitch to America**

Fashion & Style »



**Can Fashion Forgive  
Kai Kühn's Past?**

[Home](#) [World](#) [U.S.](#) [N.Y.](#) / [Region](#) [Business](#) [Technology](#) [Science](#) [Health](#) [Sports](#) [Opinion](#) [Arts](#) [Style](#) [Travel](#) [Jobs](#) [Real Estate](#) [Automobiles](#) [Back to Top](#)

Copyright 2008 The New York Times Company [Privacy Policy](#) [Search](#) [Corrections](#) [First Look](#) [Help](#) [Contact Us](#) [Work for Us](#) [Site Map](#)