

# Animal Welfare, Conservation Groups Announce Lawsuit Against U.S. Fish & Wildlife For Failure to Protect Gray Wolves

*Federal government allows ruthless exploitation of wolves, fails to prevent assault*

WASHINGTON,, DC, UNITED STATES, July 10, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Following an earlier Notice of Intent to Sue, a coalition of organizations [has filed a lawsuit](#) against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for its refusal to give Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections to the gray wolves in the West, in violation of the ESA and the Administrative Procedure Act (APA).



Wolves on the open range

The Case Number is: Case No. 9:24-CV-00097-KLD, pending in THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MONTANA, MISSOULA DIVISION



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Three years ago, 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.

Despite the FWS' initial finding that listing the Western gray wolf under the ESA "may be

warranted," the agency inexplicably reversed course more than two years later, when it decided that the Western gray wolf is not entitled to ESA protection.

"A modern 'war on wolves' has been waged on public and private lands across the western United States since around 2021," said Kate Chupka Schultz, senior attorney for Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy. "Since then, Rocky Mountain states have liberalized the legal killing of wolves and have also removed discretion from their fish and wildlife agencies, letting lawmakers run wild and unleashing ruthless campaigns to kill wolves by just about any and all means."

In addition, rates of known poaching appear to be surging in the Pacific Northwest, and it is likely that unreported and undiscovered "cryptic" poaching is occurring at similarly astronomic rates across the rest of the Rockies. Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming have been executing plans to reduce their wolf populations to bare minimum numbers under the pretense that the states are fulfilling their responsibilities to maintain viable populations. In large parts of these states, wolves can be killed any day of the year and in any number. More than twice as many wolf trapping tags were sold in the 2021-2022 Idaho wolf season as were sold in the 2017-2018 season. It is also legal in these states to allow private citizens to run over wolves with snowmobiles in a manifestation of unalloyed hatred toward wolves.

The coalition includes multiple organizations located within the battlegrounds of the war against wolves, such as western and central Montana, the greater Yellowstone area, and northeastern Washington.

"Based on our frontline fight to protect wolves from the onslaught of inhumane and cruel policy decisions harming and endangering wolves, Footloose Montana has come to the conclusion that states like Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho have proven they cannot be trusted to sustain the wolf species," said Jessica Karjala, executive director of Footloose Montana, based in Missoula, MT. "By allowing wolves to remain delisted, it will further endanger their sustainability as a species. We believe wildlife biologists who say that there is likely incorrect or manipulated population estimates of wolves [in Montana] that overestimate their numbers through use of the integrated Patch Occupancy Model. We believe the continued existence of wolves will continue to be jeopardized until wolves are relisted."

Clint Nagel, president of the Gallatin Wildlife Association, which is based in Bozeman, Mont., agrees. "To see one of our federal agencies, specifically the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, not fulfill the implementation of using the best available science in the management of one of our truly iconic apex predators is sad and disappointing. And for them to stand by and allow the abuse and senseless killing of wolves as the norm in wolf management is appalling."

But this is not just a Northern Rockies issue: the persecution of wolves in Northern Rockies states will have trickle-down effects on other gray wolf populations and the ecosystems they inhabit elsewhere in the western United States.

“The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is continuing to allow decades of wolf recovery to unravel and is failing not just the wolves of the Northern Rockies, but wildlife and wildlands at large that benefit and rely on healthy and abundant wolf populations to serve their keystone roles in our ecosystems,” said Renee Seacor, carnivore conservation director with Project Coyote. “This is why we won't sit idly by and are taking the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to court because all wolves are deserving of full, enduring protections that will allow them to live self-determined lives free from persecution.”

The coalition is represented by Jessica Blome of Greenfire Law, PC, and Robert Farris-Olsen of Morrison, Sherwood, Wilson, & Deola, PLLP. Kate Chupka Schultz represents Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy.

#### 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

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