

Trump Administration Terminates Key Grants Supporting Biden Administration Plan to Kill Nearly 500,000 Barred Owls

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle demand that government neither fund nor orchestrate the unprecedented slaughter of North American owls

WASHINGTON , DC, UNITED STATES, July 21, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In an additional blow to the Biden-era plan to shoot over 450,000 barred owls in the Pacific Northwest, the Trump Administration has terminated three federal "bridge" grants critical to launching the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) unprecedented "Barred Owl Management Strategy." The plan, approved in September 2024, was designed to take aim at barred owls in national parks, national forests, and other public and private lands across California, Oregon, and Washington over a three-decade period to reduce competition with rarer northern and California spotted owls.

The Trump Administration's action, first reported by the Los Angeles Times in a front-page investigation Saturday, signals the Trump Administration's first public pronouncements on a plan it inherited from the Biden Administration. "Under President Donald J. Trump's leadership, we are eliminating wasteful programs, cutting unnecessary costs and ensuring every dollar serves a clear purpose," a spokesperson for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said in a statement to the Los Angeles Times when asked whether the grants had been terminated.

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*Wayne Pacelle, president of
Animal Wellness Action*



Barred Owl photo by USFWS

[Animal Wellness Action](#) and the [Center for a Humane Economy](#), which have led the national fight against the plan and helped assemble a coalition of over 350 organizations opposing it, applauded the move as a turning point in the debate.

“The vastness of physical geography of the 'control area’

makes the plan unworkable and impractical,” said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy. “And the kill plan has very little political support, making it impossible for sustained funding deep into the second half of the 21st century. Americans don’t want to finance shooting North American owls in national parks from Olympic to Crater Lake to Yosemite.”

In March and May, letters to Interior Secretary Burgum were sent by 19 Republicans and 18 Democrats, urging Interior Secretary Doug Burgum to abandon the kill plan. Among their reasons for concern, the lawmakers cited cost, ethics, and impracticability. In May, in response to a congressional inquiry, the Government Accountability Office determined the rule is subject to the Congressional Review Act, giving Congress the power to rescind it by a simple majority vote in both chambers followed by the president’s signature.

A Costly and Futile Strategy

Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy estimate the plan could cost taxpayers up to \$1.35 billion, based on real-world contracts such as the \$4.5 million grant awarded last year to the Hoopa Valley Tribe to kill 1,500 owls over four years—a cost of roughly \$3,000 per bird. Given the plan’s target of 450,000 owls, critics warn the final cost could rival one of the largest wildlife control expenditures in U.S. history, and with a “vanishingly remote chance of success.”

Protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act since the first half of the 20th century, barred owls are a widely dispersed, native species that now occupies most of the United States. Like so many hundreds of other North American birds, it has engaged in range expansion throughout its natural history.

There are now 350 organizations in opposition to the plan, including 29 local Audubon societies, some based in California, Oregon, and Washington. Former U.S. Forest Service wildlife biologist Dr. Eric Forsman, who helped pioneer protections for spotted owls, said this about the plan: “Control across a large region would be incredibly expensive, and you’d have to keep doing it forever. In the long run, we’re just going to have to let the two species work it out.”

Legal Battles Underway

Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy have also filed suit against the FWS in federal court in Washington state, challenging the legality of the plan under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Wayne Pacelle
Animal Wellness Action
+1 443-865-3600
[email us here](#)

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