

# Grizzlies may lose 'threatened' status

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The Bush administration says it plans to remove Yellowstone's grizzly bears from the nation's endangered species list.

The plan to again allow bear hunting has alarmed environmentalists and highlights contrasting views of the 32-year-old Endangered Species Act, The Washington Post reported. Proponents of the government's move say the grizzly's recovery marks a rare victory for the controversial law; others say the decision may undermine protections for a still-vulnerable group of animals.

The plan -- to be effective at the end of 2006, following a public comment period -- would remove the bears' "threatened" status and allow limited hunting.

Interior Department officials say Yellowstone's grizzly population now

numbers more than 600, up from a low of about 200 in 1982.

But Louisa Wilcox, director of the Natural Resources Defense Council's wild bears project, told the Post delisting would place the grizzlies' critical habitat in jeopardy.

Under the administration's plan, one-third of the bears' current habitat could be opened to drilling, logging and human development.

Said Wilcox: "If you want to protect bears for future generations, you have to protect the habitat they need. This plan doesn't do it."

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