

U.S. opts out of jaguar recovery plan

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The U.S. government has opted out of a recovery plan for jaguars, one of the largest and rarest cat species in North America.

The Center for Biological Diversity, a conservation group that has called for an official plan to protect the big cats, decried the move, The Arizona Daily Star reported Friday.

The jaguar was put on the federal endangered-species list in 1997.

The decision not to create a recovery plan doesn't change anything about the protection afforded the jaguar under the Endangered Species Act, said Elizabeth Slown, spokeswoman for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwestern Region headquarters in Albuquerque.

"We'd rather put our efforts into on-the-ground efforts: participating in the Jaguar Conservation Team led by (the state of) Arizona, continuing to fund research we do throughout Central America," Slown said.

The Fish and Wildlife Service's argument that a recovery plan is inappropriate because only a few jaguars exist in the United States is flawed, said Kievan Suckling, policy director for the Center for Biological Diversity.

He said a federal recovery plan re-established populations of the Mexican gray wolf in the U.S. when none had been living here.

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