

Wolf negotiations resume, but no consensus

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(AP) -- Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and governors from three Northern Rockies states resumed negotiations Thursday to remove the region's wolves from the endangered list, but reached no conclusions.

Western lawmakers are pushing bills in Congress that would declare the region's 1,700 wolves recovered and no longer in need of federal protections.

However, Wyoming Gov. Dave Freudenthal says there still is no consensus on how that should be done.

Freudenthal said a Thursday conference call with Salazar marked progress toward balancing [wolf](#) restoration against local concerns about wolf attacks on livestock and wildlife. Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer and Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter also participated.

Montana's two Democratic senators, Jon Tester and Max Baucus, on Thursday released a letter in which they urged Salazar "to keep the governors of the three states at the table to find a unified way forward."

Meanwhile, wildlife advocates were scrambling to head off the push against wolves in Congress, saying it could set a dangerous precedent and severely undermine the Endangered Species Act.

They also fear a struggling population of the animals in the desert Southwest could get swept into the debate, through at least two pending

bills that would strip protections from wolves nationwide. At last count, Arizona and New Mexico had just 42 Mexican [gray wolves](#), a subspecies of the gray wolf.

"If they were stripped of protection altogether, there's no doubt the Mexican gray wolf would go extinct," said Michael Robinson with the Center for Biological Diversity.

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