

Draft rule ends protections for gray wolves

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A wolf in Yellowstone National Park. Photo courtesy of Yellowstone National Park

Federal wildlife officials have drafted plans to lift protections for gray wolves across the Lower 48 states, a move that would end a decades-long effort that has restored the animals but only in parts of their historic range.

A draft U.S. Department of Interior rule obtained by The Associated Press says roughly 6,000 wolves in the Northern Rockies and Great Lakes are enough to prevent the species' extinction. The document was first reported by the Los Angeles Times.

It says having [gray wolves](#) elsewhere—such as the West Coast, parts of New England and the [Southern Rockies](#)—is unnecessary for their survival.

The rule would give control of wolves to state wildlife agencies, which wildlife advocates warn could effectively halt the species' expansion.

A small population of Mexican wolves in the Southwest would continue to receive federal protections.

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