

State board votes to protect California wolf

June 4 2014, by Scott Smith

California officials have decided to add the gray wolf to the state's endangered species list.

At a meeting Wednesday, the state's Fish and Game Commission voted 3-1 in favor of the listing, which will keep the animal safe from hunters' crosshairs. The decision requires a second vote in August to become final.

Cattle ranchers opposed to endangered or threatened status say the [wolf](#) is a threat to valuable herds. Environmentalists counter there are places where [wolves](#) and livestock exist together.

The debate came as a lone wolf—named OR-7—began roaming Northern California in 2011.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. Check back soon for further information. An earlier story is below.

A state board on Wednesday will take up an impassioned debate over granting the [gray wolf](#) protections in California just as it appears to be making a comeback in its once-native territory.

The California Fish and Game Commission is being asked to list the wolf as threatened or endangered, keeping it safe from hunters' cross hairs. The debate pits cattle ranchers, who consider the predator a threat to valuable herds, against those who wish to see the packs again flourish.

"We are very concerned about listing the wolf under the California Endangered Species Act," said Justin Oldfield, vice president of governmental relationships for the California Cattlemen's Association.

Amaroq Weiss of the Center for Biological Diversity, which leads the push for protection, said there are places where wolves and livestock exist together.

"There are definitely avenues for not only tolerating wolves but accepting wolves," she said. "This was their home before it was ours."

Nationwide, bounty hunting and poisoning drove wolves to widespread extermination in the early 1900s. They have rebounded in recent decades, and federal protections have been lifted in the last several years in the Northern Rockies and western Great Lakes.

The state commission decided to put off a decision at a meeting in April, wishing first to hear more public comment. Any findings made by the commission on Wednesday will be adopted at a later time.

The debate comes into focus as a lone wolf—named OR-7—began roaming into Northern California from Oregon in 2011. That's when the wolf was the seventh in Oregon to be fitted with a GPS tracking collar. There's recent speculation that OR-7 has taken a mate and may be producing young.

State wildlife officials have said they don't support the listing because [wolf packs](#) haven't roamed in California for nearly a century and there's no scientific basis to consider them endangered.

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