

# Judge restores protections for Yellowstone grizzlies, hunts canceled

September 24 2018

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Hunts of the Yellowstone grizzly bear were canceled

A US federal judge has restored endangered species protections to the Yellowstone grizzly bear a year after it was taken off the list by the Trump administration, preventing the animal from being hunted for the

first time in decades.

In his ruling issued Monday, US District Judge Dana Christensen in Montana said the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) had acted "arbitrarily and capriciously" in its delisting of the species from the Endangered Species Act in June 2017.

"This case is not about the ethics of hunting, and it is not about solving human- or livestock-grizzly conflicts as a practical or philosophical matter," Christensen said, adding his sole responsibility was to determine whether the agency had exceeded its legal authority.

He found that that FWS had failed to consider how delisting the Yellowstone-area grizzly bear would impact other grizzly populations, adding that a pair of studies the government had quoted to back its decision themselves noted that the species' long term health depends on the introduction of new genetic material.

The Crow Indian Tribe and several other Native American groups, who had opposed the decision to restore hunting that threatened around 700 bears at Yellowstone National Park, petitioned the court last year.

In late August, Christensen blocked the first hunt that would have taken place in the park, which is mostly in Wyoming but also spreads to Idaho and Montana. Up to 23 bears could have ended up as trophies as a result.

"The grizzly is a big part of why the Yellowstone region remains among our nation's last great wild places," said Tim Preso, a lawyer for Earthjustice which represented some of the litigants.

"This is a victory for the bears and for people from all walks of life who come to this region to see the grizzly in its natural place in the world."

Lawrence Killsback, president of the Northern Cheyenne Nation, said: "The Northern Cheyenne Nation views the grizzly bear as a relative entitled to our respect and protection from harm.

"We have a responsibility to speak for the bears, who cannot speak for themselves," he added.

"Today, we celebrate this victory and will continue to advocate on behalf of the Yellowstone grizzly bears until the population is recovered, including within the Tribe's ancestral homeland in Montana and other states."

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