

Idaho wolf-killing proposals prompt petition for feds to ban 'barbaric' aerial hunts

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A group of environmental organizations has submitted a petition to the federal government to ban wolf killing by shooting from helicopters, calling the practice "barbaric."

The Center for Biological Diversity, Western Watersheds Project and International Wildlife Coexistence Network said they were prompted by Idaho's Wolf Depredation Control Board's October decision to approve the scope of proposed lethal wolf control plans at two Wood River Valley ranches. The proposals, which included plans for aerial gunning, were submitted by Trevor Walch, the owner of a predator control corporation, without the knowledge of the ranches involved.

The petition, which cited the Idaho Statesman's reporting on the decision, asks the U.S. Forest Service to prohibit aerial gunning on national forest land. The petition noted that five proposals submitted to the wolf board included control efforts in Idaho Fish and Game management units that overlap five of the seven national forests in Idaho.

The Statesman reported that owners of two ranches involved in the Wood River Wolf Project "were unaware of the proposal" and had not agreed to partner with the predator control company." Those ranches have since asked to be withdrawn from the proposals to the board, the petition said.

Board co-chairs Jim Fredericks, who heads Fish and Game, and Chanel Tewalt, director of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, told the Statesman the proposals were part of an effort to include ranchers in wolf management and are still in early stages.

The groups asked the Forest Service to ban private contractors from killing wolves via aerial hunting—though [government agencies](#), like U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services and Idaho Fish and Game, would not be barred from the practice.

Petitioners said the proposed aerial gunning over forest lands isn't for the benefit of wildlife or livestock, citing a healthy population of elk in

Idaho and ranches' claims that they suffered no livestock depredations from wolves in the last year.

"This is essentially illegal sport hunting from aircraft and there is no reason for the government to allow the state's anti-science bloodlust for wolves to be slaked on federally managed lands," said Talasi Brooks, a Western Watersheds Project attorney, in the news release.

The [environmental groups](#) also said they believe aerial gunning could be disturbing or dangerous to outdoor recreators and could prove detrimental to endangered species like grizzly bears, wolverines and Canada lynx.

The groups said they will consider [legal action](#) if the Forest Service does not respond to the petition.

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