

Idaho wolves will not return to endangered species list, Fish and Wildlife Service rules

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Gray wolves in Idaho will not be relisted under the Endangered Species Act despite conservationist concerns, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced in a ruling Friday.

The agency's decision concluded more than two years of analysis in response to multiple petitions regarding the animals' status in the Western U.S. and the Northern Rocky Mountains area, which includes Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and parts of Oregon, Washington and Utah.

Fish and Wildlife Service officials said the Northern Rocky Mountains population doesn't constitute a "valid listable entity" for Endangered Species protections. It said the Western U.S. population qualifies for protections but determined the animals don't meet the threshold to be listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Conservation groups brought relisting petitions to the [federal government](#) in 2021 and 2022 following an expansion of wolf hunting and trapping opportunities in Idaho and Montana. Several of them expressed disappointment at the Fish and Wildlife Service decision.

Nicholas Arrivo, managing attorney for wildlife at the Humane Society of the United States, in a statement called the ruling "reprehensible" and said the agency is standing by as wolves in Idaho and neighboring states are "pushed to the brink of extinction once again."

"The agency is essentially turning their backs on wolves," Arrivo said.

Suzanne Asha Stone, director of the Idaho-based International Wildlife Coexistence Network, told the Idaho Statesman in a text message that the decision "clears the way for states like Idaho to brutally kill as many wolves as they want."

"We have to ask the Biden administration: Why did the American people bring healthy wolf populations back only to see them eradicated from the landscape just a few decades later?" she said.

Friday's ruling adds layers to an already-complex landscape of wolf

protections. With the exception of wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains area, wolves in the Lower 48 states are protected by the Endangered Species Act. The species is considered "threatened" in Minnesota and "endangered" in all other states.

Idaho has managed its wolf population since 2011, when they were removed from the Endangered Species list. The Statesman has reached out to Idaho Department of Fish and Game officials for comment on the ruling.

The Fish and Wildlife Service decision coincides with the agency's announcement of plans to start "a national conversation" about [gray wolves](#). The agency said it will develop a national recovery plan for the species by December 2025.

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