

Feds want wolves taken off endangered list

2 February 2006

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was expected to issue a proposal Thursday removing gray wolves in the northern Rockies from the Endangered Species List.

The move comes a decade after the wolves were returned to the region, USA Today reported, noting a dispute over Wyoming's plan to manage its wolves once federal protection is removed might keep the proposal in limbo.

Ed Bangs, head of the government's wolf recovery program, told USA Today the animals have recovered so well, his agency can no longer manage the animals. Bangs says there are about 1,000 gray wolves in parts of six states.

Wolves nearly became extinct during the nation's westward population movement. But the number of the animals has dramatically increased since biologists released 66 wolves from Canada into Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho in 1995-96. Another protected population of gray wolves lives in northern Minnesota. The species is not threatened in Alaska.

Wyoming wants to allow unlimited killing of wolves in areas outside the northwest corner of the state. Bangs calls that "unregulated human persecution."

Wyoming Gov. Dave Freudenthal says the federal announcement amounts to "political blackmail" to pressure his state.

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