

Obama reverses Bush rule changes on endangered species

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A polar bear cub seeks the attention of its mother on the frozen tundra. President Barack Obama on Tuesday restored rules requiring assessment by wildlife experts on the impact of government projects on endangered species, revoking the policy of the former Bush administration.

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"The work of scientists and experts in my administration, including right here in the Interior Department, will be respected," Obama said.

"For more than three decades, the endangered species act has successfully protected our nation's most threatened wildlife."

"We should be looking for ways to improve it, not weaken it."

The Bush administration last year changed rules under the Endangered Species Act that let government projects go ahead without an independent review by the Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Critics and environmental groups said the move could result in further harm to already endangered species and welcomed Obama's executive order.

"The Bush rules would have allowed agencies with little or no wildlife expertise to make decisions that could mean life or death for animals like the polar bear," said Carl Pope, executive director of the Sierra Club.

"When it comes to protecting wildlife, we should listen to the scientists who spend their lives studying these animals."

"Our wildlife are clearly in much better hands now. President Obama is bringing science back into decision-making."

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