



JACKSON HOLE CONSERVATION ALLIANCE  
P.O. Box 2728 • Jackson, WY 83001 • (307) 733-9417 • [www.jhalliance.org](http://www.jhalliance.org)

## **Federal Court Reinstates Wolf Protections**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 21, 2008**

**CONTACT:** Suzanne Asha Stone, Defenders of Wildlife, (208) 424-0932  
Louisa Willcox, Natural Resources Defense Council, (406) 222-9561  
Franz Camenzind, Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance, (307) 733-9417  
Liz Bergstrom, The Humane Society of the United States, (301) 258-1455  
Doug Honnold, Earthjustice, (406) 586-9699

Missoula, MT -- In a victory for the gray wolves of the northern Rockies, a federal judge in Montana on Friday reinstated federal Endangered Species Act protections for wolves, thus preventing Idaho, Montana and Wyoming from implementing fall wolf hunts.

The court ruled that conservation groups are likely to succeed on the majority of their claims that removal of wolves from the federal list of endangered species was unlawful. The decision notes that, while the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had stated that genetic exchange between wolf populations in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming was necessary for the wolf's survival, Yellowstone's wolves remain genetically isolated. Further, hunting and state predator-control laws that took effect upon delisting would likely "eliminate any chance for genetic exchange to occur."

The court also ruled that the conservation groups are likely to succeed on their argument that Wyoming law, which allows unregulated wolf killing in nearly 90 percent of the state and fails to commit to maintaining sufficient wolf numbers, is inadequate. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had long maintained that these aspects of Wyoming law precluded delisting. The court found that "[t]he agency flip-flopped without explanation" when it approved Wyoming's wolf management scheme with "the same deficiencies" in 2007.

Since wolves were delisted on March 28, states have assumed management authority for wolves, leading to the killing of at least 106 wolves. All three states had plans to allow hunts this fall. Those hunts would have permitted more than 500 wolves to be killed.

Friday's ruling came in response to a lawsuit brought by Earthjustice on behalf of 12 conservation groups.

Earthjustice filed suit on behalf of Defenders of Wildlife, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity, The Humane Society of the United States, Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance, Friends of the Clearwater, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Oregon Wild, Cascadia Wildlands Project, Western Watersheds Project, and Wildlands Project.

###

## Statements of Conservation Groups

“The delisting of wolves was inappropriate and illegal in large part because existing state management plans are inadequate to ensure the long term conservation of wolves in the region, allowing far too many wolves to be unnecessarily killed. Responsible, balanced management by the states would benefit wolves, ranchers, hunters and all northern Rockies residents. While the court continues to weigh our challenge to the delisting decision, we will continue to work to improve the current state plans so that they maintain a healthy wolf population,” said Suzanne Asha Stone, northern Rockies wolf conservation specialist for Defenders of Wildlife.

“Recovery requires allowing wolves in different populations to reach each other in order to mate and raise their pups,” said Michael Robinson of the Center for Biological Diversity. “Even before they were unlawfully removed from the endangered species list, the government was gunning down so many wolves that the Yellowstone population was reproductively isolated, a recipe for extinction. This injunction will give the wolves a fighting chance.”

“This injunction is necessary to prevent the states from implementing management schemes that have the primary purpose of eliminating, rather than conserving, wolves,” said Michael Garrity, executive director of the Helena-based Alliance for the Wild Rockies.

“The federal court just offered a badly needed lifeline to wolves in the Northern Rockies,” said Louisa Willcox of the Natural Resources Defense Council. “Wolves have been getting killed at a rate of about one per day since the federal government stripped them of Endangered Species Act protections. The court’s ruling means the slaughter must stop.”

“This is one step in a long process towards improving wolf management. The ruling puts an immediate stop to the wolf-killing that has taken place in the Northern Rockies since delisting. The states lack responsible, science-based management plans that ensure the wolf’s recovery into the future and the judge’s ruling reflects this. We applaud Judge Molloy’s decision as we need to craft responsible management plans that will allow wolves to prosper and will benefit ranchers, hunters, the public and our local economies,” Melanie Stein, a Sierra Club representative, said.

“We consider this as one important step toward developing state management plans that will focus on wolf conservation, not wolf control,” said Franz Camenzind, Executive Director of the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance. It’s now time for the three states to work together to frame a single management plan that will treat the wolves in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming as a single population, not as discrete populations. With these guidelines, each state should bring together all the interests and shape individual plans that will ensure long-term sustainability of this important wildlife population.”

“This is a crucial step toward protecting wolf populations in the Northern Rockies and sends a clear message that the Administration cannot circumvent the protections of the

ESA through the use of unlawful delisting schemes,” said Jonathan R. Lovvorn, vice president of animal protection litigation for The Humane Society of the United States.

“This ruling is not just great news for wolves in the Rocky Mountains, it is also great news for the future of wolves in Oregon,” said Dan Kruse of the Oregon-based Cascadia Wildlands Project. “Wolves are returning to Oregon now for the first time in sixty years, and the Rocky Mountain wolves are our source population. The plan to kill the Rocky Mountain wolves is the single greatest threat to the recovery of wolves here in the Pacific Northwest.”

“Wolves are once again protected in the Northern Rockies. This is great news for the wolves. All three states had plans to allow hunts this fall. 500 wolves were scheduled to be killed and now those plans are halted,” said Earthjustice attorney Doug Honnold.