



**Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance**  
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***News Release***

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***Endangered species protections sought for U.S. wolverines***

*Global warming and other threats ignored by Bush administration,  
species survival punted to Canada*

WASHINGTON – The United States must protect endangered wildlife from global warming and other threats within its own borders and not rely on another country to do the job, according to a coalition of 10 conservation organizations that announced today its intention to file a legal challenge against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

The groups contend that FWS violated the Endangered Species Act (ESA) when it refused to protect wolverines in the U.S. because a healthy population still persists in Canada. FWS' decision is its latest justification for denying long overdue protections to this imperiled animal -- protections which were first petitioned for nearly a decade ago.

“With the wolverine decision, the Bush administration is essentially outsourcing responsibility for our wildlife to other countries,” said David Gaillard, the Rocky Mountain region representative of Defenders of Wildlife. “Wolverines are as American as the bald eagle, gray wolf and grizzly bear, all of which might have vanished from the lower 48 if the same reckless policy were applied to them. Now with global warming compounding the many threats facing snow-dependent wolverines, protections are needed more than ever to ensure that this magnificent animal continues to call the U.S. home.”

Earlier this year, FWS conceded that if nothing is done, “the [lower 48 wolverine] population will be at risk of extinction.” Yet FWS decided that it would not take steps to protect the species. According to the coalition, the fewer than 500 wolverines left in the lower 48 represent a distinct population that is only tenuously linked to the Canadian population of wolverines and in desperate need of habitat and other protections.

FWS' decision not to list the wolverine as a threatened or endangered species underscores the current trend by the Bush administration to deny full ESA protections to at-risk species whose range extends beyond U.S. borders, including the cactus ferruginous pygmy owl, Montana fluvial arctic grayling, Mexican garter snake and others. FWS also recently refused to create a recovery plan for the jaguar, citing the existence of jaguars in Mexico.

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“This policy essentially tells our children and grandchildren to go to Alaska or Canada to see wildlife. That is not right, and it’s certainly not what Congress intended in the Endangered Species Act,” said Tim Preso, an attorney with Earthjustice, which is representing the coalition in court. “We will do everything we can to reverse this stunning new interpretation of the law.”

The wolverine, already suffering in the U.S. from trapping, habitat loss, and other human actions, is especially vulnerable to the effects of global warming because it depends on deep snow for everything from travel corridors to snow dens where they raise their young. Wolverines once roamed across the northern tier of the U.S. and as far south as New Mexico and southern California. But now wolverines have been reduced to small, fragmented populations in Idaho, Montana, Washington and Wyoming.

“Americans pride themselves at looking after their own, and this absolutely includes our wildlife and the places they need to survive,” said Joe Scott, international programs director for Conservation Northwest. “How can we ask poor, developing nations to protect their rainforests if we won’t lift a finger to protect nature in our own backyard? It is time that we live up to our responsibilities and provide the conservation leadership that the world desperately needs right now.”

“The decision to deny the wolverine protection is characteristic of the Bush administration's disdain for the nation's wildlife,” said Noah Greenwald, science director for the Center for Biological Diversity. “The Bush administration has protected the fewest new species under the Endangered Species Act of any administration since the landmark law was passed, to date having only protected 60 new species compared to 522 under the Clinton administration and 231 under the senior Bush administration.”

Earthjustice filed the 60-day Notice of Intent to Sue on behalf of Defenders of Wildlife, Center for Biological Diversity, Conservation Northwest, Friends of the Clearwater, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Idaho Conservation League, Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance, Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Alliance and Wyoming Outdoor Council.

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*The Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance is a non-profit organization dedicated to responsible land stewardship to ensure that human activities are in harmony with the area's irreplaceable wildlife, scenic and other natural resources.*

*The organization has 2,000 members from Jackson Hole and across the nation.*