

# Local, State & Nation

## Feds release proposal to remove wolves from endangered species list

By Matthew Brown and John Flesher  
Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. — Gray wolves in the U.S. would be stripped of federal protection and subjected to hunting and trapping in more states under a proposal released Thursday that declares the predators recovered following a decades-long restoration effort.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wants to revoke the wolves' endangered and threatened species status and put them under authority of state wildlife agencies across the Lower 48 states. The Associated Press reported last week that the proposal was in the works.

"The facts are clear and indisputable — the gray wolf no longer meets the definition of a threatened or endangered species," acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt said.

Wildlife advocates and some members of Congress say the move is premature because wolves occupy only a fraction of a historical range that once stretched across most of North America.

But state officials, livestock interests and hunters want the government to make it easier to kill wolves. The predators periodically prey on livestock such as cows and sheep and have been blamed for declining numbers of elk, moose and other big game in some areas.

Trapping, poisoning and hunting campaigns early last century exterminated wolves across most of the Lower 48 states by the 1930s. More than 6,000 of the animals now live in portions of nine states, officials say.

A final decision on lifting protections will follow a public comment period that begins Friday and runs through May 14.

Government officials said their goal was to protect wolves from extinction, not return them to everywhere they were once found.

The Endangered Species Act is not "a means to keep species from being hunted in perpetuity once they've met the threshold of recovery," said Gavin Shire, spokesman for the Fish and Wildlife Service.

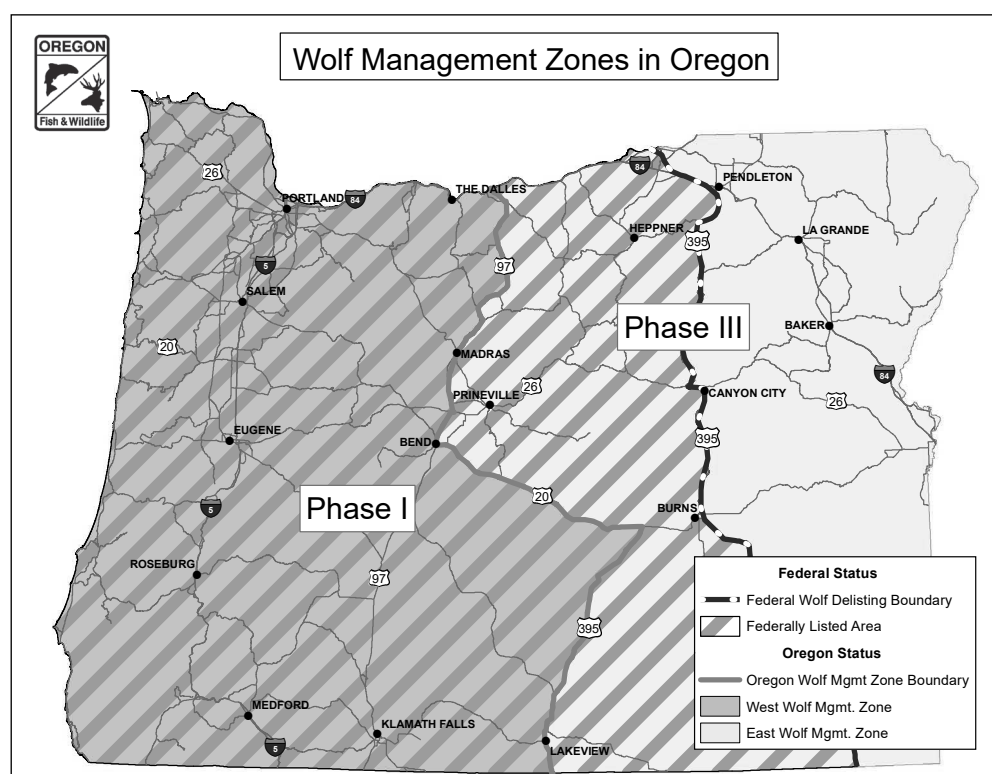
Environmentalists and animal advocacy groups have pledged to challenge in court any action to ease or eliminate protections.

Putting gray wolves under state control would allow



Three wolves from the Walla Walla pack in Umatilla County photographed in January 2017.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife photo



### Delisting wouldn't affect wolves in Northeastern Oregon

The proposal to remove federal protections for gray wolves would not affect most of the wolves living in Oregon — those in the state's northeastern corner including Baker County.

That's because wolves living in the eastern third of the state — east of a line formed by Highways 395, 78 and 95 — were removed from the federal endangered species list several years ago. Wolves east of that line, which make up the majority of the state's more than 115 wolves, are managed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife under the state's wolf management plan.

Wolves west of that line are still federally protected, and the lead agency in their management is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

— Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

S. John Collins / Baker City Herald photo  
three states — Montana, Idaho and Wyoming — currently allow the public to hunt wolves.

More than 600 were killed in the Northern Rockies states during the most recent hunting and trapping seasons.

Court rulings delayed hunting in the Northern Rockies for years after wolves reached the government's benchmark for recovery in the early 2000s. Members of the region's Congressional delegation ultimately inserted a rider into a budget bill that forced the animals off the endangered list.

Protections will be retained under Thursday's proposal for two small populations of related species — the Mexican gray wolf in New Mexico and Arizona and the red wolf in North Carolina.

Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin to resume hunting and trapping blocked by a 2014 court ruling that returned them to the endangered list.

In other areas, such as the Pacific Northwest, wildlife officials say they have no immediate plans for hunting but could consider it in the future. Aside from Alaska only

## Democrats, tribal leaders criticize plan to shrink Utah monuments

By Brady McCombs and Matthew Brown  
Associated Press

Congressional Democrats and tribal leaders renewed criticism Wednesday of President Donald Trump for scaling back two national monuments in Utah following a wider review of lands protected around the country by past presidents.

The 2017 national monument review had a predetermined outcome and didn't take into account tribal interests despite some of the lands being sacred to them, lawmakers and tribal leaders said during a House Natural Resources Committee hearing in Washington.

The hearing brought the contentious review carried out by ex-Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke back into the spotlight and rehashed many of the arguments that surrounded that assessment. The review led Trump to downsize two Utah monuments that protected wide expanses of lands home to tribal artifacts, dinosaur fossils and wildlife habitat.

Republicans on the committee and a few local representatives from Utah defended the review of 27 national monuments created since 1996 as a necessary re-evaluation of misuse by past presidents of a law that is supposed to be used to create small monuments around areas with particular historical or archaeological value. They said Trump's decision to follow Zinke's suggestion to downsize in December 2017 the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments was necessary to correct abuses by Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton.

Democratic Rep. Raul Grijalva, the committee chairman, called the monument reductions "the largest public lands

rollback in modern American history" and said questions persist about whether the process was illegal and improperly influenced. The Interior Department's office of inspector general report cleared Zinke of wrongdoing following a complaint that he redrew the boundaries of a national monument in Utah to benefit a state lawmaker and political ally.

Zinke was asked to appear but declined, Grijalva said. He also said there had been multiple requests sent to Interior on how the decision was made, but many of those inquiries have gone unanswered.

Several tribal leaders testified that the downsizing of Bears Ears National Monument in southeastern Utah by about 85 percent peeled back protections, exposing lands that are sacred to several Native American tribes.

"In Hopi, we never just leave an area. . . . Yes, maybe there is nobody there today, but we know spiritually they are still there," said Clark Tenakhongva, vice chairman of the Hopi Tribe. "It would hurt all the nations that have ties to Bears Ears if oil, mining and other activities were to occur there. How would you feel if I took an ATV and rode around in your church area?"

A coalition of tribal, conservation, outdoor recreation and paleontology groups have sued to block the downsizing of the monument. Those lawsuits are pending.

Zinke and Trump have openly advocated for a return to American energy dominance. But so far, no mining has occurred on lands stripped from the Utah monuments despite exploratory interest from companies, according to state and federal officials who approve permits.

### BRIEFING

#### Beto O'Rourke running for president

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Former Texas Democratic Rep. Beto O'Rourke announced Thursday that he's running for president in 2020, pledging to win over voters from both major parties as he tries to translate his political celebrity into a formidable White House bid.

Until he challenged Republican Sen. Ted Cruz last year, O'Rourke was little known outside his hometown of El Paso. But the Spanish-speaking 46-year-old former punk rocker became a sensation during a campaign that used grassroots organizing and social media savvy to mobilize young voters and minorities. He got within 3 percentage points of upsetting Cruz in the nation's largest red state — and shattered fundraising records in the process — immediately fueling chatter that he could have higher ambitions.

"This is going to be a positive campaign that seeks to bring out the very best from every single one of us, that seeks to unite a very divided country," O'Rourke said in a video announcement with his wife on a couch. "We saw the power of this in Texas."

#### Students sue over college bribe scandal

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Two college students have filed a lawsuit against the University of Southern California, Yale University and other colleges where prosecutors say parents paid bribes to ensure their children's admission.

The lawsuit was filed Wednesday in federal court in San Francisco and alleges the students were denied a fair opportunity for admission.

Erica Olsen and Kalea Woods say they were denied a fair opportunity to apply to Yale and USC.

They say the alleged scheme allowed "unqualified students" to be admitted to "highly selective universities."

The lawsuit also named the University of California, Los Angeles, Wake Forest, Georgetown University and others.

## Massive blizzard moves east

By Dan Elliott and Bob Moen

LONGMONT, Colo. — National Guard troops used specialized vehicles with tank-like treads to rescue stranded drivers in Colorado

in the wake of a massive late-winter storm that unleashed heavy rain and snow on parts of the Midwest plains early Thursday.

South Dakota's governor closed all state offices Thursday as the blizzard conditions moved in, while wind, blowing snow and snow-packed roadways also made travel treacherous in western Nebraska. Heavy rain caused flooding in eastern parts of both states and in Iowa.

Wednesday's blizzard in Colorado caused widespread power outages, forced the cancellation of hundreds of flights and wreaked havoc on roadways as drivers became overwhelmed by blinding snow. A wind gust clocked in at 97 mph in Colorado Springs.

The storm also contributed to the death of Corporal Daniel Groves, a Colorado State Patrol officer who was hit and killed by a car as he helped another driver who had slid

off Interstate 76 near Denver.

About 200 vehicles were disabled on Interstate 25 near Colorado Springs, and many more drivers were being rescued on secondary roads, said Kyle Lester with the transportation department's Division of Highway Maintenance.

The window-rattling storm brought blizzards, floods and a tornado across more than 25 states Wednesday, stretching from the northern Rocky Mountains to Texas and beyond.

"This is a very epic cyclone," said Greg Carbin, chief of forecast operations for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Weather Prediction Center. "We're looking at something that will go down in the history books."

The culprit was a sudden and severe drop in ground-level air pressure in Colorado, the most pronounced dive since 1950, Carbin said.

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