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## **Approximately One Million Americans Speak Out Against Stripping Federal Protections From Wolves**

### ***Federal Proposal Would Halt Wolf Recovery, Allow More Wolf Killing***

Washington, DC— Approximately one million Americans stated their opposition to the Obama administration’s proposal to strip endangered species protections from gray wolves in a comment period that closed today. This is one of the largest numbers of comments ever submitted on a federal decision involving endangered species and reflects broad dissatisfaction with the Obama administration’s politically driven move to turn wolf management over to states across most of the lower 48.

“Americans overwhelmingly oppose removing protections for wolves, and for good reason. Wolves have recovered to just a fraction of their range and are severely threatened by state-sanctioned hunts intended to decimate them,” said Kierán Suckling, executive director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “We hope the Obama administration will hear the pleas of hundreds of thousands of citizens and maintain these still critically needed protections for wolves.”

The 750,000 + comments, being delivered today to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by multiple conservation groups, will bring the total number to well over one million.

There were once up to 2 million gray wolves living in North America, but the animals had been driven to near-extinction in the lower 48 states by the early 1900s. After passage of the federal Endangered Species Act in 1973 and protection of the wolf as endangered, federal recovery programs resulted in the rebound of wolf populations in limited parts of the country. Roughly 5,500 wolves currently live in the continental United States - a fraction of the species’ historic numbers.

“The North American gray wolf’s recovery in certain areas of the United States is something to celebrate, but an abundance of evidence shows the work is not yet complete,” said International Fund for Animal Welfare president and CEO Azzedine Downes. “I applaud actions to help protect this critical species, and I strongly urge the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to not go through with this proposal.”

The Obama administration's proposal would remove existing protections for wolves everywhere except Arizona and New Mexico, where the Mexican wolf is struggling to survive with an estimated population of just 75 wolves. This proposal would abandon protections for wolves in places where wolf recovery is just in its infancy, such as Oregon and Washington, and would prevent wolves from recovering in other places where good wolf habitat has been identified, including northern California, the southern Rocky Mountains, and the Northeast.

"Oregon wolves have taken the first tentative steps towards recovery in the last few years," said Sean Stevens, executive director with Oregon Wild. "If the Obama administration takes away the strong protections of the Endangered Species Act, we pull the rug out from the fragile success story here on the West Coast and leave the fate of wolves in the hands of state agencies in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming who have proven incapable of balanced management."

"The restoration of the gray wolf could be one of the great American wildlife conservation success stories if Secretary Jewel would just finish the job." Leda Huta, executive director of the Endangered Species Coalition.

Nicole Paquette, vice president of Wildlife Protection for The Humane Society of the United States said: "Anti-wolf sentiments nearly led to the extermination of America's wolves, and just when populations are starting to bounce back, the federal government is considering a plan that could place them in jeopardy. Rather than catering to interests from trophy hunters and fear mongering, we hope the federal government rejects this proposal and works towards the recovery of this species."

"The incredible volume of comments give voice to a sad fact: the delisting proposal is a radical departure from the optimism and courage we need to promote endangered species recovery in this country. The comments show that Americans believe the Fish and Wildlife Service's proposal falls well short of the conservation ideals this country stood for 40 years ago when the Endangered Species Act was signed." said Defenders of Wildlife President Jamie Rappaport Clark.

"The national wolf delisting scheme is simply too much, too soon," said NRDC President Frances Beinecke. "It is a potential death sentence for new populations and prevents wolves from ever reaching areas where they could be a boon for habitat in need of their stabilizing influence. The return of wolves to the continental United States still stands as one of the greatest conservation stories ever written and we stand ready to fight to prevent it from being undone by this short-sighted policy move."

"Americans are outraged and hundreds of thousands are saying it loudly and clearly; the job of wolf recovery is not done," said John Horning Executive Director of WildEarth Guardians. "The Fish and Wildlife Service is not only wildlife wrong on the science of wolf recovery but also wildly out of step with the desires of most Americans who want to see federal protections for wolves maintained."

"The number of public comments is a testament to the importance of wolves to our American story. Now is the time we should be pressing in to continue the job of wolf recovery, not abandoning wolves to the same kinds of destructive forces that endangered them in the first place," said Dan Chu,

director of Sierra Club's Our Wild America Campaign.

"You don't spend 40 years nursing a species back from the brink of extinction, only to suddenly declare 'open season' on them. There are only a few dozen viable packs in an area that used to be home to over a millions wolves. There's plenty of room in America for wolves, people and an abundance of other species. But If Secretary Jewell allows this plan to go ahead, she'll be responsible for the destruction of one of the most amazing, intelligent and iconic species in America." said Drew Hudson, Environmental Action

Camilla Fox, Executive Director, Project Coyote said: "As wolves come under the gun in an upcoming wolf/coyote killing 'derby' in Idaho where prizes awarded for the largest killed, it is abundantly clear that the very practices that sent wolves to the brink of extinction still endanger their persistence."

"Fish and Wildlife Service is snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. Instead of restoring wolves to their rightful places from coast to coast -- as it did for bald eagles -- the agency wants to abandon wolf recovery before the job is done," said Trip Van Noppen, Earthjustice president. "Today hundreds of thousands of citizens told FWS to go back to work and protect our wolves."

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