



California Wolf Center

Education, Conservation, Research

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State Department of Fish and Game Says Protections for Gray Wolves under California Endangered Species Act May be Warranted

SAN FRANCISCO, *Calif.* — Protecting the gray wolf under California’s Endangered Species Act may be warranted, according to a report prepared by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and presented to the state’s Fish and Game Commission today at a public hearing in Ventura. The report was made in response to a petition to list the wolf, filed by four conservation groups in February after OR-7, a lone wolf from Oregon, made conservation history by crossing the border and becoming the first wild wolf confirmed in California in nearly 90 years.

“We support CDFG’s science-based evaluation and recommendation,” said Amaroq Weiss, Northern California Representative for the California Wolf Center. “The return of this iconic native species is astounding. What better place than California, a world leader in conservation and environmental protection. Listing the gray wolf under the California Endangered Species Act will ensure the implementation of a full spectrum of needed conservation measures and we hope the Commission follows through by accepting CDFG’s finding.”

The gray wolf is a California native and the state today still contains suitable habitat for wolves. Though historic wolf population numbers here are unknown, CDFG’s report notes that “wolves were likely broadly distributed in California historically”. Explorers and settlers reported the presence of wolves from the California coast to the eastern reaches of the state, both north and south. The wolf’s presence is also prominent in the languages, dance regalia, artwork, stories and other cultural practices of native peoples who lived here for more than 10,000 years prior to European arrival.

OR-7 is but the first of his species that will disperse to California in the future, a factor taken into account in CDFG’s evaluation. But wolves arriving here face threats to their existence and their ability to reestablish natural populations. A century ago, it took just a few short decades for the U.S. government’s eradication program to kill several hundred thousand wolves in most of the lower 48 states and, as CDFG’s report notes, this included the full extirpation of wolves in California. Today, in areas where this species is being recovered, wolves are killed in response to wolf-livestock conflicts, by illegal poaching and, in some states, through the recent institution of hunting and trapping seasons on wolves.

Noted Patrick Valentino, the Center’s northern California director, “We only have one wolf in California. An animal doesn’t get much more endangered than that. Let’s protect it. If there is any place in the world where it’s going to be done right, it’s California.”

California Wolf Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit wildlife conservation, education and research center committed to increasing public awareness and understanding of the importance of all wildlife by focusing on the history, biology, behavior and ecology of the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*).

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