

# OPPOSE THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S ATTACK ON GRAY WOLVES

**Wolves are a symbol of the wildness of North America. These highly social, intelligent animals have for centuries played a crucial role in maintaining healthy and diverse ecosystems.**

But after years of relentless persecution, they nearly disappeared from the lower 48 states and became one of the first species protected by the Endangered Species Act. Thanks to the Act, today wolves are slowly making a comeback in portions of the Rocky Mountains and Great Lakes region, restoring the balance of nature, and providing economic benefits from ecotourism. However, the Trump administration's latest proposal to prematurely strip federal protections from wolves threatens their recovery.

## Wolves Still Need Federal Protections

Wolves are still functionally extinct in the vast majority of places where they used to live. Scientists estimate that there were once hundreds of thousands of wolves in the lower-48 states,<sup>1</sup> but today there are only roughly 6,000.<sup>2</sup> In Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, where wolves have already lost federal protections, trophy hunters, trappers, and others have killed **more than 3,500 wolves** just since 2011. Gray wolves continue to need the protection of the Endangered Species Act in order to return to where suitable wolf habitat still remains, just as the bald eagle was allowed to expand before its federal protections were removed.

## Wolves Drive Economic Growth

Local economies and small businesses are supported by tourists who flock to wolf habitats for a glimpse of wolves or to hear their multi-pitched songs. A 2006 study of Idaho, Montana and Wyoming found that wolf presence in the Yellowstone ecosystem created a \$35.5 million annual revenue stream. The FWS found that wildlife watchers outspent hunters in 2016 by a ratio of nearly 3 to 1. While wildlife watching expenditures increased 28% between 2011 and 2016 to a whopping \$76 billion, total expenditures by hunters fell 30% to \$26 billion.

## Wolves Are Not a Significant Threat to Livestock

According to the government's own reports,<sup>3</sup> the primary causes of cattle and sheep deaths in the U.S. come from health problems, weather, theft, and other maladies—**not** wolves or other native carnivores. In fact, data show that **nine times** more cattle and sheep die from these causes, than from all carnivores combined, including wolves, coyotes, domestic dogs and cougars. Of the 119 million cattle and sheep inventoried in the U.S. in 2014 and 2015, less than one percent (0.4 percent) died from any type of carnivore.

## Other Administrative Attacks to Endangered Species

Trump's plan to strip federal protections from wolves is the latest in a series of efforts by this administration to slash protections for wildlife and gut the Endangered Species Act. The Act is America's most effective law for protecting wildlife in danger of extinction. It serves as an essential safety net when state management has failed to protect imperiled plants, fish, and wildlife. Since its enactment, 99 percent of listed species have survived and hundreds more have been set on a path to recovery.

Last year, the Trump administration proposed a set of sweeping regulatory changes which would drastically undermine this landmark law and make it much harder for species to recover. The administration has also sought to undermine vital protections for numerous imperiled species including Yellowstone grizzly bears, sage grouse, and now wolves.

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<sup>1</sup> Legacy Lost: Genetic Variability and Population Size of Extirpated US Grey Wolves (*Canis lupus*), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1365-294X.2004.02389.x>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Gray Wolf: Current Population in the United States, <https://www.fws.gov/midwest/wolf/aboutwolves/wolfpopus.htm>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-Veterinary Services, "Death Loss in U.S. Cattle and Calves Due to Predator and Nonpredator Causes, 2015", [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/nahms/general/downloads/cattle\\_calves\\_deathloss\\_2015.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/nahms/general/downloads/cattle_calves_deathloss_2015.pdf) (2017); U.S. Department of Agriculture-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, "Sheep and Lamb Predator and Nonpredator Death Loss in the United States," <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/usda/current/sgdl/sgdl-05-27-2010.pdf> (2015).