



PRESS RELEASE

Broad-Based Wolf Coalition Serves Notice of Intent to File Civil Suit

On April 3, 2009, a coalition of associations and entities which are directly affected from the impact of introduction of non-native Canadian gray wolves into Wyoming filed a formal 60 day notice of intent to sue the federal government over its refusal to delist wolves in the state. The coalition, currently comprised of the Wyoming Wool Growers Association, Wyoming Stock Growers Association, Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation, Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union, Wyoming Association of County Predatory Animal Boards, Niobrara County Predatory Animal Board, Wyoming Outfitters & Guides Association, Cody Country Outfitters and Guides Association, and Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife Wyoming, (hereafter collectively referred to as the “Wolf Coalition”), served their notice of intent to commence a civil lawsuit against the Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, USFWS Acting Director Rowan Gould and Stephen Guertin, USFWS Acting Regional Director for the Mountain Region.

The Wolf Coalition intends to seek injunctive relief for violation of the Endangered Species Act and its related regulations and policies. The

Wolf Coalition's claims arise from the FWS's continued rejection of the Wyoming Wolf Management Plan, its failure to delist the gray wolf population in Wyoming, and from its decision to proceed with delisting in Montana, Idaho and parts of Oregon and Washington.

The Wolf Coalition's Notice of Intent summarizes at least sixteen different ways in which the FWS has violated the Endangered Species Act or other federal law. One of the primary violations relates to the FWS's failure and refusal to follow and implement the Recovery Plan that formed the basis for introduction of non-native Canadian gray wolves into the Yellowstone Recovery Area. The Notice also points out that the FWS violated the ESA by rejecting Wyoming's Plan, despite the fact that the gray wolf population has not only met, but has exceeded the recovery criteria set forth in the Recovery Plan and other FWS documents.

In way of example, the FWS previously defined a "viable recovered wolf population" as "ten breeding pairs in each of the three recovery areas for three consecutive years." The FWS anticipated that a "recovered" population would total approximately 300 wolves. It was expected that ten of those breeding pairs (or approximately 100 wolves) would be located in the Yellowstone Recovery Area. In 2007, the FWS estimated that there were a minimum of 1,531 wolves, including 107 breeding pairs, within the Northern Rocky Mountain Area. By the end of 2007, there were at least 171 wolves in 11 packs living inside of Yellowstone Park and 188 wolves in 25 packs living in Wyoming outside of Yellowstone Park. The total number of breeding pairs within the state of Wyoming in 2007 was conservatively estimated at 24, 2.4 X's the number needed for delisting. Despite having exceeded their own goals by more than double, the FWS refuses to allow Wyoming to manage the exploding Canadian gray wolf population. In fact, the FWS is not only demanding that Wyoming protect the Canadian gray wolf throughout the entire State, but is also insisting that Wyoming assume a larger share of the load than either Idaho or Montana.

The Wolf Coalition is also challenging the FWS's decision to reject the Wyoming Plan, despite the fact that ten of the eleven peer reviewers hand-picked by the FWS concluded that it provided the necessary regulatory mechanism to protect and preserve the Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolf population.

The Coalition notes in its 60-Day Notice, "The FWS's decision to reject the Wyoming Plan violates the Endangered Species Act, which requires the Secretary and Directors to base decisions 'solely upon the best scientific and commercial data available...' Rather than support and defend Wyoming's Wolf Management Plan-a Plan that meets all of the requirements of the ESA- the FWS has hung the State of Wyoming out to dry" (emphasis added).

The Coalition's Notice calls further attention to one of the most frustrating aspects of the Obama Administrations handling of the wolf delisting issue when it states, "...the FWS continues to allow itself to be hijacked and controlled by certain organizations that have no intention of allowing the Canadian gray wolves to be delisted, regardless of what the "best scientific and commercial data available" may show."

Harriet Hageman, attorney for the Coalition, points out that the FWS is also seeking to dramatically expand the geographic region for the gray wolf. "The deal from the beginning was that the gray wolf would be introduced into and managed in the Yellowstone area. The FWS is now trying to force Wyoming to adopt a management plan that ensures that the wolves move throughout the State. That is directly contrary to everything that the FWS told us when they brought the wolves into Yellowstone."

The Notice of Intent has started the 60-day period for later filing a civil lawsuit against the FWS.

While the Coalition was initially comprised of 10 groups when the 60-day Notice was sent, additional groups have been added since that time and more groups are anticipated to join prior to the actual filing of the lawsuit in federal district court in Cheyenne.

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