



SIERRA CLUB

GRAND CANYON CHAPTER

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Trump Issues Executive Order in Effort to Strip Protections from Mexican Gray Wolves

WASHINGTON, D.C. – President Trump today signed an [executive order](#) directing the Secretary of the Interior to consider removing Endangered Species Act protections for gray wolves and Mexican gray wolves, as well as provide recommendations for legislative efforts to do the same. It goes further and encourages the federal agencies to meddle with states' protected species laws to remove protections, and directs the agencies to weaken evidentiary standards related to livestock depredation.

“This is a huge distraction to placate a handful of ranchers and make them believe that wolves are a greater threat than President Trump’s own policies,” said Greta Anderson, deputy director of Western Watersheds Project. “The impact of wolves on the livestock industry pale in comparison to the impacts of recent trade agreements and the reality of ranching in the arid West under changing climate conditions.”

Ranchers are entitled to 100% compensation for their wolf-predation losses under state and federal programs, and state wildlife departments also provide funding for conflict mitigation programs like livestock carcass removal and range riding, which help discourage habituation behaviors.

“Mexican wolves aren’t the problem, but the Administration’s approach to solving purported conflict is. If the Administration truly wanted to support ranchers, they would prioritize increasing

funding for non-lethal initiatives to create long-lasting solutions,” said Regan Downey, director of education and advocacy at the Wolf Conservation Center.

Longstanding mismanagement of the U.S. population of Mexican wolves, which were reintroduced to Arizona and New Mexico in 1998, has led to a decline in the population’s genetic diversity accompanied by birth defects and fewer pups being born and surviving. Just seven Mexican wolves were successfully bred in captivity decades ago to rescue the subspecies from extinction, but since that time most of the genes from those seven last wolves have been lost.

“Today’s executive order puts the future of Mexican wolf protections directly on the federal chopping block and even directs states to remove their own protections,” said Michelle Lute, PhD in wolf conservation and executive director of Wildlife for All. “Look no further than the mismanagement of wolves by other states like Montana to understand what that would mean for one of the world’s most critically endangered canid species. We urge the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to base any recovery determination on the best available science—not political pressure.”

“Once again we see this administration attempting to override the checks and balances provided by bedrock environmental laws like the Endangered Species Act in order to create industry carve outs and distract from other bad policies that are proving unpopular,” said Leia Barnett, New Mexico Conservation Lead for WildEarth Guardians. “Directing federal agencies to pressure states into rolling back their own wildlife protections isn’t just bad policy, it’s an attempt to bypass the very framework Congress built to keep species recovery decisions insulated from political whims.”

“For far too long, endangered animals such as Mexican gray wolves have been subject to the political whims of politicians who know very little about these endangered animals,” said Sandy Bahr, director for Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter. “Mexican wolves are on their way back, but they continue to need the protections afforded by the Endangered Species Act to truly recover and thrive. This executive order is a political stunt at the expense of the wolves and other creatures who depend on the healthy ecosystems wolves help facilitate.”

“The Mexican gray wolf is not recovered simply because the population has grown,” said Claire Musser, executive director of the Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project. “With just 317 wolves in the wild and a population still facing serious genetic challenges, weakening federal protections now would put decades of recovery work at risk. Decisions about the future of lobos must be based on the best available science and what these wolves need for long-term recovery, not political pressure.”

“Mexican wolves desperately need more care and less persecution and Trump’s executive order does the opposite,” said Michael Robinson, a senior conservation advocate at the Center for Biological Diversity. “We’re prepared to prove in court that downlisting Mexican wolves and a steep increase in killings would not only be cruel but also deeply unwise and illegal.”

BACKGROUND

According to a [recent investigation](#) by KUNM, federal data shows that Mexican wolves do not pose a broad economic threat to the livestock industry. Even at the peak of documented conflict in Catron County, New Mexico, investigators recorded 121 probable and confirmed livestock deaths in 2019 – approximately 0.65% of the area's estimated cattle population. By comparison, the average annual calf-mortality rate from other causes is approximately 6%. Documented wolf-related losses have also declined across the recovery area even as the wolf population has grown, and a [2025 University of Arizona study found](#) that wolves' effects on county-level cattle inventories and livestock sales were “not detectable.”

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