

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



News Release

Midwest Region

External Affairs Office

Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building, 1 Federal Drive, Ft. Snelling, MN 55111-4056
612/713-5360 Fax: 612/713-5280 <http://midwest.fws.gov>

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Contacts:
Georgia Parham 812-334-4261 x 1203
georgia_parham@fws.gov

Laura Ragan 612-713-5157
laura_ragan@fws.gov

Status of wolves in the Western Great Lakes Under the Endangered Species Act

Based on the success of the Endangered Species Act in helping the gray wolf population in the Western Great Lakes region recover to healthy levels, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is continuing to move forward toward removing the species from the list of threatened and endangered species.

In April, 2009, the Service first issued a rule to remove gray wolves in the Western Great Lakes from the list of threatened and endangered species. The decision to delist, however, was litigated in District Court. The Court found procedural flaws in the delisting process and overturned the decision, directing the Service to address the Court's concerns.

Based on the court's decision - and because wolves continue to exceed recovery goals and are no longer threatened with extinction - the Service is correcting the issues that the court raised and moving forward again with the delisting process.

The Service is working to publish a new delisting proposal by April 2011. The proposed rule will provide the biological basis for delisting, addressing the current status of wolves in the region and evaluating any continued threats to the species. Following publication of the proposed rule in the Federal Register, stakeholders will have an opportunity to provide information to the Service during a public comment period. After review of comments and other available scientific information, the Service plans to publish a final rule by the end of 2011.

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Background information on the gray wolf in the western Great Lakes.

The Endangered Species Act provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife and plants. This landmark conservation law has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species across the nation and promoted the recovery of many others. The recovery of the gray wolf in the western Great Lakes area is a success story and the Service is confident that the states and tribes are able to manage the wolves once they are no longer listed.

Gray wolves are currently protected under the Endangered Species Act as endangered in the lower 48 states, except in Minnesota where they are designated as threatened. Wolf populations in the core recovery states of the Western Great Lakes Distinct Population Segment – Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin – have exceeded recovery numbers for several years. Wolf numbers total more than 4,000 animals in the three core recovery states. Minnesota's population is estimated at 2,922 wolves; there are an estimated 557 wolves in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and another 690 in Wisconsin.

As part of implementing the Eastern Timber Wolf Recovery Plan, State management plans were put in place to ensure long-term viability of wolves. In addition, the Service and the states will implement an approved post-delisting monitoring plan to track the status of gray wolves in the western Great Lakes once ESA protections are removed.

More information on wolves in the Midwest Region is available at:
<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/wolf/>

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service.

For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit:
<http://www.fws.gov>