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Contact: Sharon Rose (FWS) 303-236-4580
Kendra Barkoff (DOI) (202) 208-6416

Statement of Assistant Secretary Strickland Regarding Court Ruling on the Northern Rocky Mountain Gray Wolf

WASHINGTON – Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Tom Strickland today issued the following statement regarding a decision in U.S. District Court on the Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolf population:

“For more than 15 years, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state wildlife agencies, tribes, conservation organizations, ranchers and other landowners have worked hard to recover gray wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains. Our collective efforts have brought this population to the point where it no longer requires Endangered Species Act protection.

“Despite this extraordinary success, today’s ruling means that until Wyoming brings its wolf management program into alignment with those of Idaho and Montana, the wolf will remain under the protection of the Endangered Species Act throughout the northern Rocky Mountains. Since wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains are now again subject to ESA protection, in the days ahead we will work closely with Idaho and Montana to explore all appropriate options for managing wolves in those states.

“Reintroduced from Canada, in the mid-1990s, to remote areas of central Idaho and Yellowstone National Park, the wolf population flourished and reached sustainable recovery levels as early as 2002. It has continued to grow and has now far surpassed these recovery plan targets.

“The Service’s decision to delist the wolf in Idaho and Montana reflected the strong commitments from the states of Idaho and Montana to manage gray wolves in a sustainable manner. Today’s ruling makes it clear this wolf population cannot be delisted until the State of Wyoming has instituted an adequate management program, similar to those of Idaho and Montana.

“In the meantime, we will continue to work closely with the states, tribes, conservation organizations, and ranchers and other landowners to manage wolves and ensure the species continues to thrive and coexist with livestock, other wildlife populations, and people.”

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