



COLORADO WOLF & WILDLIFE CENTER

OCTOBER 2019 • CONSERVATION • EDUCATION • PRESERVATION



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New Mexico Game Commission to rejoin federal wolf program

By Michael Gerstein | mgerstein@sfnewmexican.com | Oct 28, 2019

A New Mexico wildlife commission has voted to rejoin a pact with the federal government to protect the endangered Mexican wolf. The New Mexico State Game Commission decided unanimously recently to rejoin the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program, allowing the state commission more discretion over conservation efforts meant to rebuild the wolf population. New Mexico had been part of the recovery program from 1998 until 2011, when the commission voted to abandon the recovery effort under former Republican Gov. Susana Martinez. Stewart Liley, chief of wildlife management division for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, said being part of the effort gives the state more management authority “rather than a passive role.” The Mexican wolf is the rarest gray wolf subspecies on the continent, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It nearly became extinct in the 1970s. Environmental groups responded to the news with cautious optimism Monday. Senior Conservation Advocate Michael Robinson at the Center for Biological Diversity called it “a procedural move” and said he’s reserving judgment about what this means for Mexican wolves until he sees how the state tries to shape recovery efforts.

“We’re delighted that the anti-wolf agenda of the Martinez administration is a thing of the past, but we’re seeing a game commission that is still willing to continue trapping,” Robinson said, adding that this is still destructive to the wolf population.

“What the wolves badly need is an advocate in the state government for keeping them in the wild, not removing them despite the political pressure, and stopping the ongoing federal trapping and shooting program and resuming the release of family packs of wolves ... to address a growing genetic crisis.”

Robinson and other environmentalists are critical of the federal government for not allowing entire wolf families bred in captivity to be released into the wild. He and other conservationists say the few wolves released back into the wild each year has led to a wolf population that is too genetically similar after years of inbreeding.

The policy comes as a result of pressure from the livestock industry, which can lose cattle to wolves, environmentalists say.

Liley of Game and Fish said the reason the federal government doesn’t allow whole wolf families to be released is that adult wolves have “a very low survival rate” and in the past were often “killed or brought back because of nuisance behavior,” such as eating dog food from people’s porches or killing livestock.

Mary Katherine Ray, wildlife chairwoman of the Sierra Club’s Rio Grande chapter, praised the move to rejoin the recovery program. She said it “appears that the game commission is recognizing the legitimacy of bringing wolves back,” but said the on-the-ground difference remains to be seen.

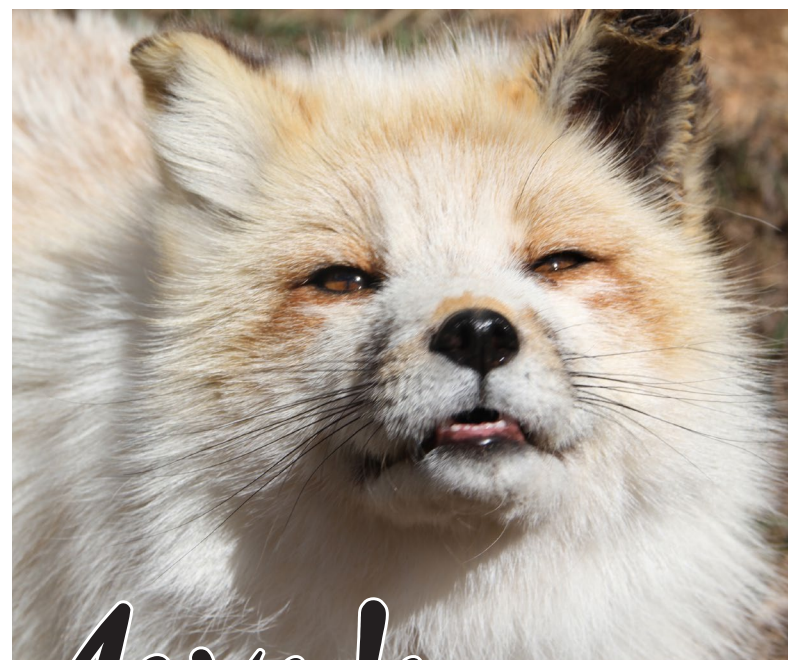
Defenders of Wildlife Representative Michael Dax said the decision to rejoin the federal wolf pact grants greater influence in recovery efforts. For example, Dax said it specifically gives the head of the State Game Commission direct authority over whether more than 12 Mexican wolf pups could be released into the wild each year.

That could also make recovery decisions happen faster, with the commission director able to make some decisions without waiting for the full commission to meet. The full commission meets seven times a year.

Liley said the State Game Commission has recommended striking the hard cap on the number of pups that can be introduced into the wild each year.

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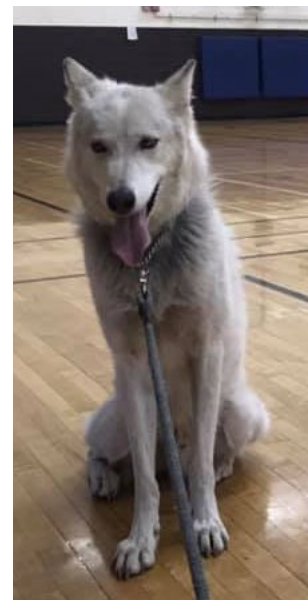
Nevada (white snow)

Nevada was the last remaining sibling from Yuma and Malika. He survived to 16 ½ years which is simply amazing. That is about 4-6 years older than most in captivity and 10-12 years older than most in the wild. He was so very special and he will be terribly missed. He also served as a key ambassador fox that educated thousands about fur farms. He was a special angel. He went peacefully in his home on Friday, October 25th. Ceremony will be in the next couple of weeks. You can call or email the Center after November 10th and we should have a date if anyone would like to attend. You can also send a memento and we will include that at his memorial service.



Orenda and Shaya say hello to guests during a “meet and greet”

Shaya at Palmer High School where we did a program. We discussed the possibility of restoring wolves in Colorado and what that would mean for our ecosystems, as well as dispelled the top three “big, bad, wolf” myths (human safety, big game, and livestock).



CALIFORNIA DEFENDS WOLVES, ARGUES AGAINST FEDS REMOVING PROTECTIONS

California is pushing back on the federal government’s proposal to delist wolves from the Endangered Species Act in the lower 48 states. This step would remove wolves’ federal protections, transferring decisions about wolf management to individual states and tribes.

The proposal, announced in March, frames the wolves’ current status as “one of the greatest comebacks in conservation history.” But environmentalists and now the California Fish and Game Commission have argued that, to make a full recovery, wolves still need Endangered Species Act protections.

On July 15, the Commission sent a letter to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, strongly opposing the proposed delisting. The letter, signed by president Eric Sklar, states the ruling would end recovery efforts prematurely.

“The limited gray wolf return to some of the states that will be impacted by the proposed rule, including California, has been for only a brief period in the thousands of years history of gray wolf as a species,” states Sklar, “and most of the suitable habitat in these states has not yet been repopulated.”

Recently, California also announced its intent to file a lawsuit against the Trump administration’s overhaul of the Endangered Species Act. If the changes are implemented, federal agencies would be able to publicly share the economic impact of protecting endangered species. Threatened species, considered by biologists on their way to being critically endangered, would not receive the same protections as endangered species, as they do currently. The review process for actions taken by agencies affecting listed species would simplify. It is unclear how wolves would be affected by these modifications.

WHERE WOLVES SHOULD ROAM

Though California wolves would retain their listing in the state’s Endangered Species Act no matter the ruling, the Commission’s stance against delisting is not purely symbolic. The ruling would likely affect the state’s wolf population by restricting the numbers of wolves that enter from other states. After the last wolf in California was shot in 1924, wolves only started reappearing in the state in 2011, when one wandered over the Oregon border. Biologists say that California’s future wolf population will depend on expanding from other states.

“It’s good to see West Coast states that have an interest in wolf recovery speaking out about ... the proposal that would undermine wolf recovery in their states,” said Brett Hartl, the government affairs director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “California is a good example of why their proposal doesn’t make sense, because wolves are definitely not recovered in California.”

Determining the success of wolf recovery hinges on a discussion of where the predator should roam. Some controversy does exist over wolves’ historical range. In the proposal, the USFWS chooses to define ‘historic range’ as most of the continental United States except western California, southwestern Arizona, and the southeast United States.

Although 6,000 wolves now live in the continental United States, only one pack frequents California. Most people agree that

populations have recovered in the northern Rocky Mountains and western Great Lakes, but the Commission points out that this range is only a tiny fraction of both the wolves’ historic range and the habitat scientists consider suitable. It calls the proposal’s definition of range “nonsensical.”

“Discounting California and other vital, historic habitats ignores science and the law,” the letter states.

RELYING ON OUTDATED SCIENCE

In the letter, Sklar says that much of the rule bases its analysis of the extent of recovery on “decades-old science.” The Commission argues that the criteria the USFWS uses to measure recovery are based on outdated science.

Peer reviewers of the proposal echoed this sentiment, adding that the cited studies were chosen haphazardly. In many cases, the reviewer wrote, “results in the best journals (ranked independently on a worldwide scale of impact factors) were ignored or overlooked, in favor of non-peer-reviewed interpretations or results from lower ranked journals.” The same reviewer notes that “in a few cases, the stronger evidence was paid for by the USFWS or was co-authored by USFWS staff.”

WHAT’S NEXT FOR WOLVES?

There is, perhaps, no more polarizing endangered species than the gray wolf. Even as environmentalists celebrate the return of wolves, some ranchers view the predators as a threat to their livestock and livelihoods. The federal proposal chooses largely to ignore the threat anti-wolf communities may pose to wolf populations, stating that the motivations behind such attitudes are poorly understood. But the California Fish and Game Commission says that the ability of public opinion to impact wolf populations has been studied and should be considered more substantially in the delisting proposal.

“Since targeted extirpation of the species was one of the main factors that led to gray wolf’s near extinction in the U.S.,” the letter argues, “it behooves USFWS to conduct a thorough analysis to demonstrate that such attitudes will not become a detriment to the future of the species.”

Hartl says he’s seen this happen before, when wolves were delisted in the Great Lakes in 2011 and public tolerance for them declined. When wolves are prematurely delisted, Hartl warns, “it creates the perception, especially in rural areas, that it’s okay to shoot a wolf.”

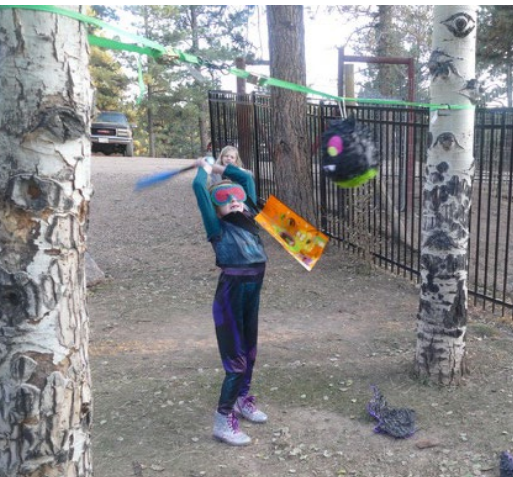
USFWS will now review the public comments on its proposal. Some 750,000 comments are currently listed on the USFWS website. Some environmental groups believe the number may balloon to nearly 2 million once the mail-in comments are counted. Hartl expects the USFWS will take at least a year to review all substantive comments, and anticipates a final decision in fall 2020.

The Obama administration also proposed delisting the gray wolf in 2013, and faced a similarly extensive comment period. The ruling was largely abandoned, though people disagree why; USFWS cites logistics, and environmentalists say the proposal languished in the face of inescapable facts and public outrage.

--- Alessandra DiCorato | www.kqed.org



HOWL-O-WEEN EVENT for KIDS!



CRITICS GEAR UP FOR RESPONSE TO LEASE SALE IN ARCTIC REFUGE

Anchorage, Alaska - Opponents of oil drilling in America’s largest wildlife refuge have a message for oil drillers and the people who finance them: Don’t become the company known for the demise of America’s polar bears. The Dept. of the Interior hopes to conduct a lease sale in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge by the end of the year, but environmental groups say they will challenge those plans in federal court and the court of public opinion. “We ill not tolerate the administration’s brazen attempt to paper over the impacts of this disastrous proposal, and we will see them in court,” said Jamie Rappaport Clark, executive director of Defenders Of Wildlife.

Fun was had by all
at Our annual
Howl-O-Ween Event!



10 INTERESTING BAT FACTS

1. Did you know: There are over 1,400 species of bats worldwide
2. Not all bats hibernate
3. Bats have few natural predators -- disease is one of the biggest threat
4. Without bats, say goodbye to bananas, avocados and mangoes
5. Night insects have the most to fear from bats
6. Bats are the only flying mammal
7. Bats may be small, but they're fast little creatures
8. Conservation efforts are helping bat species recover
9. The longest-living bat is 41 years old
10. Like cats, bats clean themselves

More at doi.gov/blog/13-facts-about-bats



Bats perform valuable services, including pollinating plants and crops. This bat is covered in pollen.



Photo by
USFWS

The Mexican long-tongued bat is a vital pollinator in desert systems. They have a long, bristle-like tongue, allowing them to sip nectar from agave and cacti.



TRICK OR TREAT?

THE FRIGHTENING THREATS TO BATS

Iconic symbols of Halloween, bats have long suffered a spooky reputation. They've been accused of harboring vampiric spirits, entangling themselves in human hair and are often associated with witches and warlocks. Few other mammals seem to frighten us with so many misunderstandings. But bats, because of their incredible echolocation abilities, rarely fly into or touch people, and provide valuable and essential ecological roles in our country and across the world.

Unfortunately, white-nose syndrome (WNS), a fatal fungal disease of hibernating bats, has killed over six million bats since 2006, and may well lead to the extinction of certain bat species. Bats are also susceptible to being killed or injured by wind turbines.

"People often ask why we should care about bats, and evidence strongly suggests that bats are saving us big bucks by gobbling up insects that eat or damage our crops," said Paul Cryan, a bat ecologist with the U.S. Geological Survey. "It is obviously beneficial that insectivorous bats are patrolling the skies at night above our fields and forests, and these bats deserve help."

Unlike the dreaded vampire bat typically associated with Halloween, insect-eating bats perform services valuable to humans. Research by Cryan and his colleagues shows that insect-eating bats, through their free pest-control services, save the agricultural industry billions of dollars each year. A single little brown bat, which has a body no bigger than an adult human's thumb, can eat four to eight grams (the weight of about a grape or two) of insects each night. The loss of millions of bats in the Northeast has likely resulted in between 1.4 and 2.9 million pounds (equivalent to about two to three full Boeing 747-8F airliners) of insects in the region no longer being eaten each year by bats. - USGS 29 OCTOBER 2019

READ MORE AT usgs.gov/news/trick-or-treat-frightening-threats-bats-0

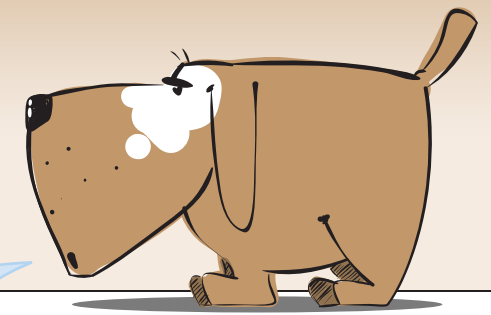
Adoption corner

TCRAS

Teller County Regional Animal Shelter
tcrascolorado.org · 719.686.7707

SLVAWS

San Luis Valley Animal Welfare Society
slvaws.org · 719.587.woof (9663)



**SLVAWS
ADOPTION FAIR**
Every Saturday 10am-4pm
at the Petco in Colorado Springs
5020 N. Nevada

BOSCO: the Veggie Loving Dog



Bosco, a 2-year-old husky/
malamute would love to go hiking
with you in the mountains and live
in the mountains or in the wide
open spaces. He turns down meat
dog treats for sprigs of frozen
broccoli. He gets along with other
dogs. Affectionate, playful.
He has had some trauma from past
homes. 2 years old, neutered,
chipped, all vaccinations.

Coco

11 y 11 m · Female/Spayed
Black/White Mixed Breed, Medium
(up to 44 lbs fully grown)/Mix

Coco is a very active senior who needs
room to run and would love daily
walks and playtime. She has lived with
another dog and children, and is well
mannered.



MOTOKO

2 y 1 m · Female/Spayed
White/Black Domestic Shorthair/Mix

Look into her eyes- she will tell you a story.
This beautiful cat is asking to be part of
the family and to warm your lap. She is
litterbox trained and loves to be petted.
Come by to spend time with her.

ANNUAL THANKSGIVING DAY TURKEY TOSS

Thursday, November 28th at 9-11am

We will be feeding our wolf, coyote, and fox families.

Watch them enjoy their turkey dinner.

(No turkeys will be alive or harmed with this event)

RSVP

719.687.9742

12 and older \$35

6-11 \$15

(pre-paid event)

Limited space available

**COLORADO WOLF
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