



VIRTUAL
**ANIMAL LAW
SYMPOSIUM**
WILDLIFE

Gray Wolves

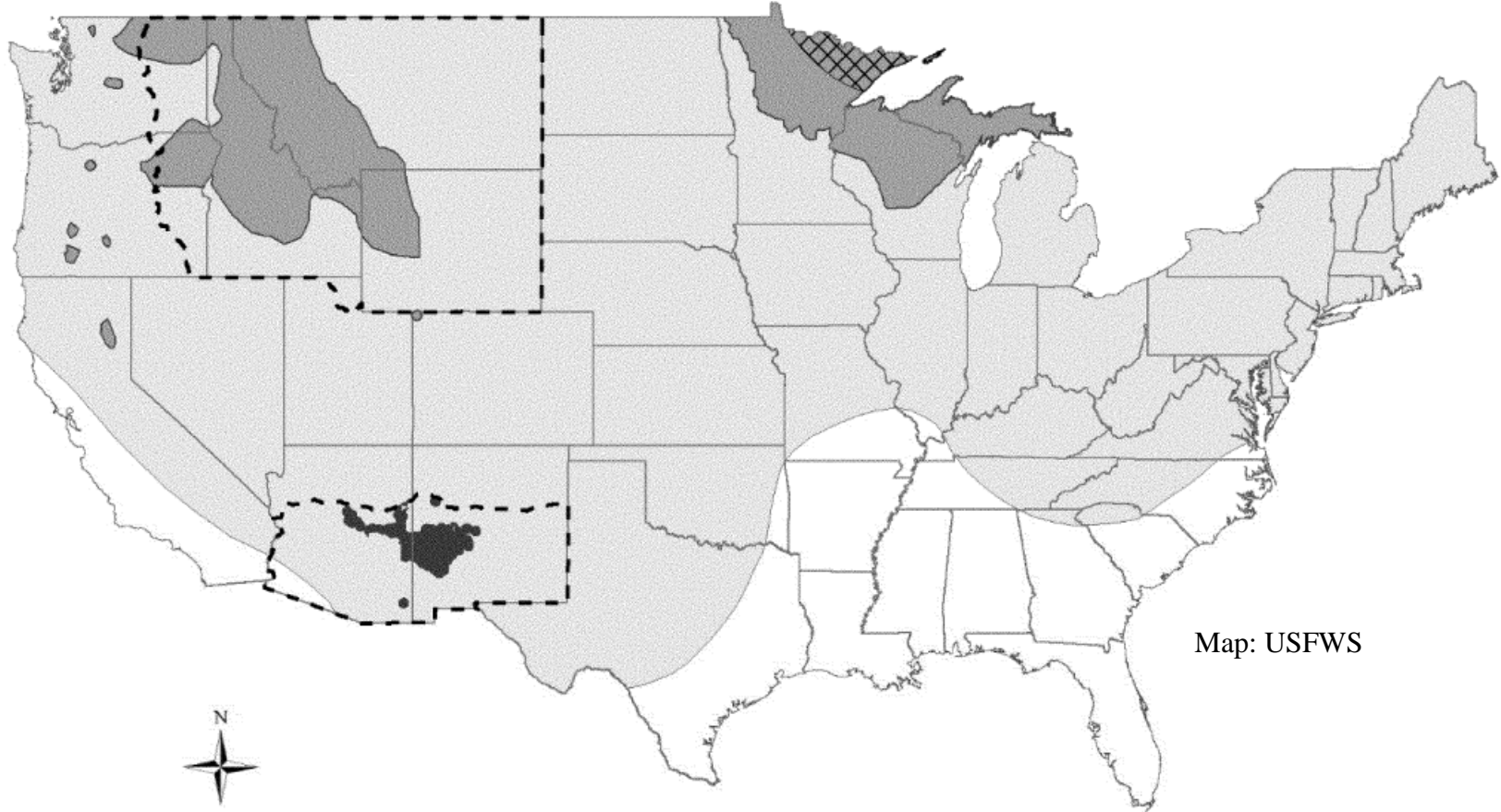
Management and Conflict Prevention
at the
Federal, State, and Ground Levels

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Photo: Holly Kuchera

Gray Wolves Distribution



0 500 1,000 Miles
0 800 1,600 Kilometers

- Historical range ¹
- Approximate range at the time of listing (1978)
- Current range ²
- Current range of the Mexican wolf subspecies (*Canis lupus baileyi*) ³
- Areas outside the listed entities ⁴

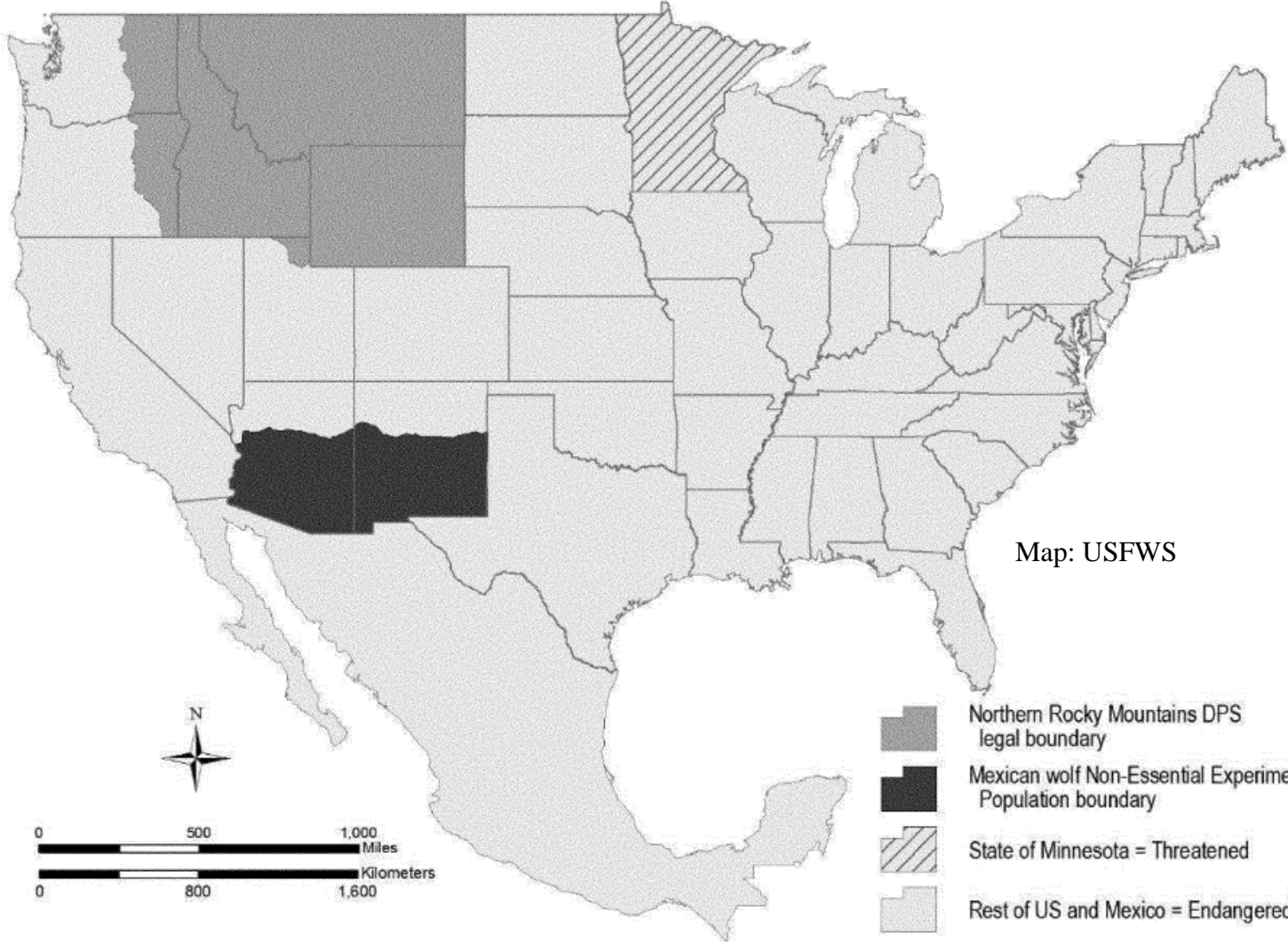
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Gray Wolves

Legal Status



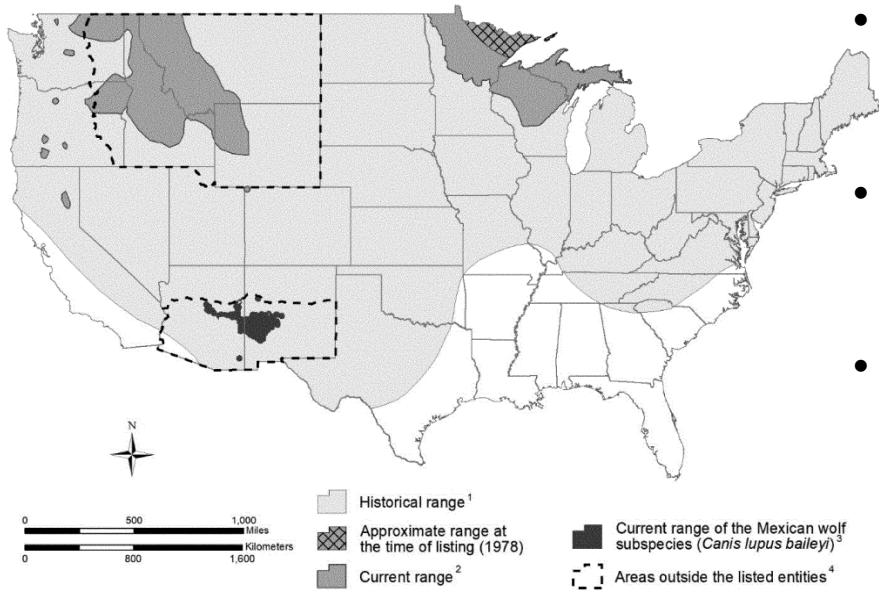
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Federal Level National Wolf Delisting

- Nov. 2020 - USFWS finalized a rule delisting wolves in the lower 48 states, effective Jan. 2021.
- Feb. 2022 - A federal court vacated the rule and restored ESA protections. The Court held USFWS failed to adequately consider:



- the threats to wolves outside the core Great Lakes and Northern Rocky Mountains populations;
- the best available science regarding the distinct genetic characteristics of West Coast wolves; and
- the impact of lost historical range on the status of gray wolves.

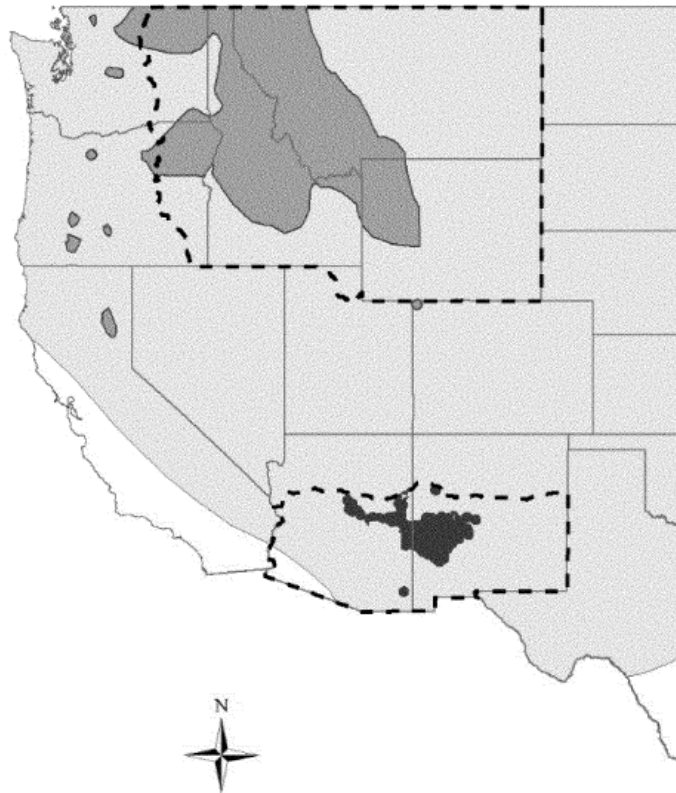
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Federal Level NRM Listing Petitions

- May and July 2021 – numerous wildlife organizations petitioned to relist wolves in the Northern Rockies, due to anti-wolf legislation enacted by the Idaho and Montana legislatures.



- The ESA requires USFWS, within 90 days of receiving such a petition, to make a finding as to whether it presents sufficient information to indicate that relisting may be warranted.
- Sept. 2021 – USFWS found that the petitions did present such data and that relisting of the Northern Rockies may be warranted.
- USFWS must determine within 12 months whether relisting is warranted.

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Federal Level Legislation

- Jan. 2021 – Rep. Tiffany (R-WI-7) introduced the Managing Predators Act (H.R. 286), which would exclude gray wolves in Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wyoming from ESA protections.
- March 2022 – Sen. Johnson (R-WI) introduced a bill (S. 3738) requiring the USFWS to delist wolves in the Western Great Lakes and exempting that rule from judicial review.



Photo: Architect of the Capitol

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Federal Level

Appropriations – Wildlife Services

- March 2022 – President Biden signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act (H.R. 2471), funding the government through the remainder of FY2022.
 - The spending bill included \$1.12 million for USDA Wildlife Services to hire employees to implement nonlethal measures to prevent conflicts with wolves and other wildlife.
 - Advocated for by two conservation organizations, and is in addition to another \$1.38 million secured by them this year and the previous two fiscal years.
- As a result of this funding, Wildlife Services has developed a “Nonlethal Initiative for Livestock Protection” involving 13 states.



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Federal Level Appropriations – USFWS



- The appropriations bill also provided \$1 million to the USFWS to continue administering the Wolf Livestock Loss Demonstration Program.
- Established in 2009, the program distributes funding annually to states and tribes to help pay for nonlethal conflict-prevention measures and compensation for livestock losses due to wolf depredation.

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Federal Level Appropriations – USFWS

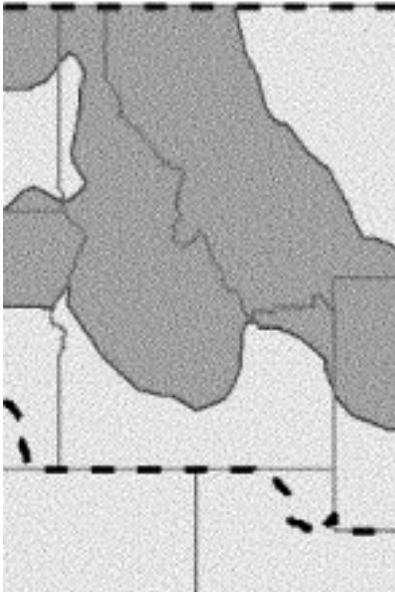
WLLDP Funding Received by States FY20		
State	Conflict Prevention	Depredation Compensation
Arizona	\$150,000	\$120,000
California	\$16,017	
Idaho	\$100,000	\$150,000
Michigan	\$10,520	
Minnesota	\$69,305	\$55,955
Montana	\$80,000	\$35,000
New Mexico	\$60,000	\$150,000
Oregon	\$130,000	\$15,000
Washington	\$100,000	
Wisconsin	\$10,000	\$60,000

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State Level Idaho



- May 2021 – Idaho passed SB 1211 designed to reduce Idaho’s wolf population of ~1,500 by 90%.
- The law authorized:
 - Wolf trapping and snaring to occur on private property year-round;
 - Individuals to purchase an unlimited number of wolf hunting and trapping tags;
 - Wolves to be hunted over bait;
 - Wolves to be hunted at night with spotlights and night vision equipment;
 - Private contractors to be hired to kill wolves;
 - Substantial increase in state funds allocated specifically toward killing wolves.
- Wolf mortality from July 1 through Dec. 31, 2021, was 300 wolves, which is 37 more than the same period in 2020, and 36 fewer than in 2019.

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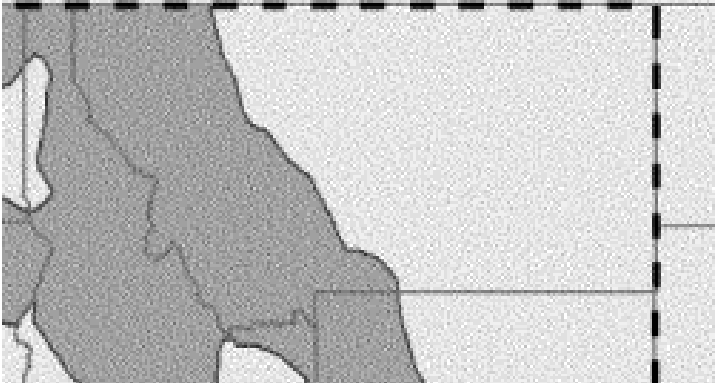
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State Level

Montana

- April 2021 – Montana passed several laws expanding wolf hunting and trapping authorizing:
 - Snaring of wolves (HB 224);
 - Extending the wolf trapping season by a month (HB 225);
 - Reimbursements for the expense of hunting and trapping wolves (SB 267); and
 - Night hunting, unlimited killing of wolves per permit, and the use of bait to hunt and trap wolves (SB 314).
 - 273 wolves killed during 2021-22 season—fewer than the 329 killed in 2020-21, 293 in 2019-20, and 295 killed in 2018-19. However, 25 Yellowstone wolves were killed.

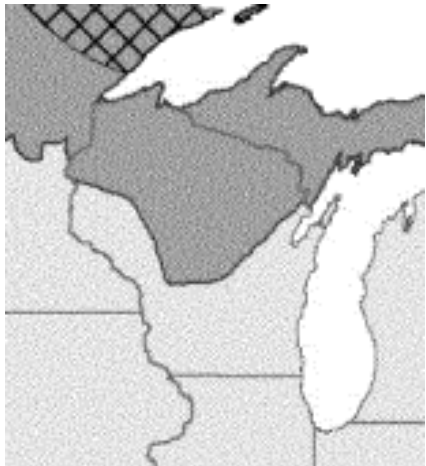


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State Level Wisconsin



- Jan 2021 – USFWS rule delisting wolves went into effect.
- Wisconsin law requires DNR to hold a wolf hunt between Nov. and Feb. if wolves are not on the federal or state endangered species lists.
- Wisconsin DNR initially planned to wait until Nov. 2021 to hold a hunt, but was required by a Wisconsin Circuit Court to hold a hunt before the end of Feb.
- Feb. 2021 – 216 wolves were killed in less than 3 days—exceeding the state quota of 119 by nearly 100 wolves.
- DNR began planning another hunt for Nov. 2021, but a different Wisconsin Circuit Court judge blocked it from moving forward, and a few months later, wolves were relisted.

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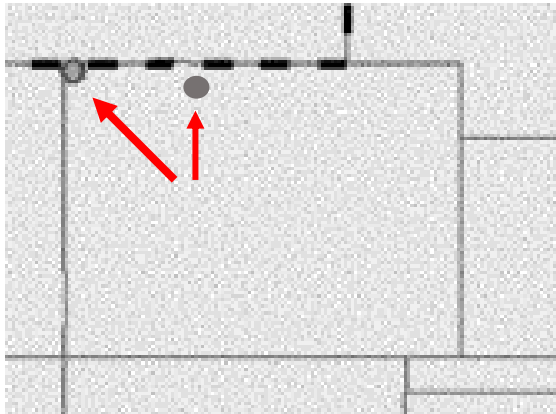
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State Level Colorado



- Nov. 2020 – Colorado ballot initiative Proposition 114 narrowly passed 50.1% to 49.9%.
- The law requires the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission to develop a plan and take steps to reintroduce wolves to western Colorado by the end of 2023.
- Because wolves have been relisted under the ESA, reintroduction will likely need USFWS approval and the completion of environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act.



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Ground Level

Elk

- Many elk hunters and elk hunting outfitters in states like Idaho and Montana claim that wolves decimate elk populations.
- However, elk populations are above or within management objectives in most elk management units in both Montana and Idaho.
- In addition, there are 8,000 more elk in the Idaho today (120,000) and 30,000 more in Montana (140,000), than there were in 1995, the year wolves were reintroduced into the Northern Rockies.
- Research from places like Yellowstone National Park indicates that wolf presence has a positive, stabilizing effect on elk populations.



Photo: MT FWP

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Ground Level Livestock

- Many ranchers claim that wolves kill large numbers of livestock. However, wolves kill only a tiny fraction of livestock each year.
- For example, there were about 2,450,000 head of cattle and 200,000 sheep in Montana in January 2021.
- In 2021, there were 64 confirmed wolf depredations of cattle, and 15 confirmed depredations of sheep.
- By comparison, tens of thousands of cattle and sheep die each year from causes such as disease, bad weather, and birthing complications.
- Lethal control is rarely a long-term solution to prevent wolf-livestock conflicts. Instead, we can use a variety of effective, nonlethal prevention measures.



Photo: WS Montana

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Photo: NRDC

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Thank you!

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Photo: Kjetil Kolbjornsrud