



For Immediate Release

September 25, 2023

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Conservation groups file for injunction to halt Montana wolf trapping, protect grizzly bears

Advocates seek stop to Montana's 2023 wolf trapping season pending a court decision on alleged Endangered Species Act violations

MISSOULA, Mont. – Conservation groups moved on Friday to enjoin Montana's 2023 wolf trapping season on the grounds that the trapping harms federally-protected grizzly bears in the state. The groups, the Flathead-Lolo-Bitterroot Citizen Task Force and WildEarth Guardians, [called for the preliminary injunction](#) as part of a lawsuit against the State of Montana alleging that new trapping regulations, which expand wolf trapping in grizzly habitat, cause unlawful "take" of grizzlies in violation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Traps and snares set for wolves and other carnivores can cause severe physical harm to bears, including dismembered toes, feet, and forearms. This summer, the Montana Fish & Wildlife Commission ("the Commission") expanded the wolf trapping season by allowing traps and snares in new areas of occupied grizzly habitat during the non-denning season, authorizing ten wolves to be killed by hunting and ten by trapping per person, and allowing baiting in occupied grizzly habitat. The Commission made the changes at the same time the State is calling on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to remove ESA protections for grizzly bears.

"We sent Montana a 60 day Notice to Sue in May. We got our answer on August 17th when the Fish & Wildlife Commission doubled down on its archaic approach to wildlife management by expanding snaring and trapping across grizzly bear range in Montana," said Patty Ames,

President of the Flathead-Lolo-Bitterroot Citizen Task Force. "This proves Montana cannot manage grizzly bears if they are delisted."

The groups' motion for an injunction is being supported by a number of prominent grizzly bear experts, including a former federal trapper and former grizzly bear biologists for the State of Montana, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the National Park Service. All agree that wolf traps in Montana are reasonably certain to cause future take of grizzly bears.

"Over the past two years, experts and outraged Montanans have told the Commission that expanded wolf trapping and snaring will illegally harm grizzly bears," said Lizzy Pennock, carnivore coexistence attorney at WildEarth Guardians. "The Commission has ignored these warnings at its own peril. We look forward to seeing them in court."

An estimated 50,000 grizzly bears once roamed the American West. But government-funded bounty programs and habitat loss reduced grizzlies to less than two percent of their historical range in the lower-48 states. When the Fish and Wildlife Service listed grizzlies in the lower-48 as "threatened" in 1975, just 700 to 800 bears remained. Grizzly bears have expanded since listing, but still only occupy four to six percent of their historical range.

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