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Groups Ask Court to Halt Federal Wildlife Killing in Idaho

New Lawsuit Seeks to Stop Wildlife Services From Exterminating Native Wildlife

BOISE, Idaho – Conservation groups filed a lawsuit in federal court today to stop the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s wildlife-killing agency from shooting, trapping, and poisoning Idaho’s wild animals.

In the suit, Western Watersheds Project, WildEarth Guardians, the Center for Biological Diversity and Predator Defense, represented by Advocates for the West and a staff attorney at Western Watersheds Project, asserted that Wildlife Services has written itself a broad, statewide authorization to kill native predators like coyotes and mountain lions along with ravens and other animals without taking a hard look at the impacts of its unscientific slaughter. The agency has also never revealed to the public the potential consequences of its actions, as the National Environmental Policy Act requires.

The lawsuit asks the court to order Wildlife Services to complete an “environmental impact statement” and to halt the ongoing and expanded killing of native wildlife until a proper environmental analysis is completed.

“Wildlife Services is stuck in the barbarism of the early 19th century, before the full value of predators in ecosystems was understood,” said Erik Molvar, executive director of Western Watersheds Project. “This is 2017, and the agency’s current plan to wage war on Idaho’s wild animals is scientifically unjustified and ignores the important role of these animals in the landscape.”

The suit points out that ravens and other native wildlife are targeted for extermination in an effort to increase sage-grouse populations, even though predator-killing programs have been discredited as a means of significantly improving the survival of grouse populations.

“Wildlife Services wants to expand its activities to include killing native predators at the behest of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game,” said Talasi Brooks, Associate Attorney with Advocates for the West. “Yet, Wildlife Services’ own analysis suggests that many of these activities are unwarranted and won’t boost prey species populations as intended. It’s time for Wildlife Services to embrace science-based management.”

“Most people in Idaho would be shocked to learn how many animals Wildlife Services already kills in our state,” said Andrea Santarsiere, a senior attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. “Now this reckless agency wants to slaughter even more of our black bears, mountain lions, coyotes, ravens, and other wildlife using nightmarish methods like poisons and aerial gunning, without even studying the environmental consequences. Such a lackadaisical approach to wildlife management is not permitted by the law.”

Many of the methods used to kill native predators are indiscriminate, with the potential to impact nontarget animals including lynx, wolverine and even pets. Methods like the controversial M-44 “cyanide bomb” also present a potentially deadly safety hazard for the public.

“It isn’t just wildlife that is directly harmed by the killing programs,” said Brooks Fahy of Predator Defense. “These lethal weapons pose a risk to recreational users of public lands, their pets and the ‘nontarget’ species that die by the hundreds every year.”

The groups also pointed out the high cost and lack of benefits for funding Wildlife Services’ killing programs for native species.

“Wildlife Services needs to be accountable to the public for the harm their actions cause to Idaho’s natural ecosystems,” said Kelly Nokes, carnivore advocate for WildEarth Guardians. “Not only are Wildlife Services’ killing schemes cruel and unnecessary, the best available science is clear that they are largely ineffective too. It is past time that Wildlife Services’ needless killing regime is documented in a complete environmental review so that the public can fully realize how their tax dollars are being wasted.”

A copy of today’s complaint can be accessed [here](#).

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