

Proposed Status Change for the Gray Wolf

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Julia Smith, Endangered Species Recovery Manager
Wildlife Program



The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is proposing to reclassify the gray wolf in the state of Washington. This proposed change, if adopted, would change the gray wolf from endangered status under WAC 220-610-010 to sensitive status under WAC 220-200-100.

Public comment themes (Support)

Themes from commenters who agreed:

- Washington wolves have demonstrated 14 consecutive years of growth – wolves are not in decline
- The wolf population continues to grow and expand geographically
- Two recovery regions alone have exceeded the recovery objective for total number of wolf breeding pairs in the state
- The Eastern recovery region has exceeded the recovery objective by 5 times
- Wolf populations remain stable in all states where lethal control or harvest is implemented
- Wolves have shown remarkable recovery in a short period of time
- Current wolf biological status fits the Sensitive definition in WAC 220-610-110
- If wolves are endangered when there are zero packs as when listed, or 5 packs in 2011, and still when they are well established in two of the three recovery zones with a total of 37 packs, 26 breeding pairs, and a growing population trend, the term “endangered” is meaningless
- It is important to recognize the progress that has been made toward full recovery
- Reclassifying wolves to Sensitive does not put the wolf population at risk of decline and does not bring them closer to an eventual hunt or other management practices that increase deliberate human-caused mortality

Public comment themes (Oppose)

Themes from commenters who disagreed (believed wolves should maintain Endangered status):

- Washington's wolf population is fragile and recovery is in its infancy
- Wolves are not recovered by state standards
- WDFW is not following the Wolf Plan
- Wolves are not present in a significant portion of their range
- Wolf management in neighboring states and provinces jeopardizes wolves in Washington
- The PSR relies too much on the population model (Petracca et al. 2024) and/or the population model is flawed/has too much uncertainty

- Reclassifying wolves is counter to public opinion
- Reclassifying wolves will result in increased wolf poaching
- Reclassifying wolves would bring Washington closer to delisting wolves and opening wolf trophy hunting and trapping seasons
- WDFW shouldn't use data from the Confederated Tribes of the Colville

Public comment themes (Oppose)

Themes from commenters who disagreed (believed wolves should be delisted):

- The data and analysis in the PSR support delisting
- Wolves are neither vulnerable nor declining in Washington nor are they likely to become endangered or threatened in a significant portion of their range
- Wolves should be delisted and managed as protected wildlife
- The recovery of the species in eastern Washington occurred without the protections of the federal Endangered Species Act
- Even with tribal hunting, lethal removal, poaching, and natural mortality the wolf population continues to grow
- There is no data or analysis that indicates vulnerability

Questions and discussion



Only the mountain has lived long enough
to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf.
—Aldo Leopold, 1949