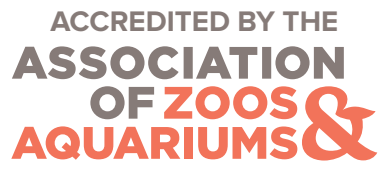




COLORADO WOLF & WILDLIFE CENTER

JULY 2026 • CONSERVATION • EDUCATION • PRESERVATION





The Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center

is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization certified by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA). Look for this logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things.

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| SOCIAL MEDIA HAPPENINGS |

Stay up to date with the animals at CWWC, wolves and wildlife in the news, and advocacy opportunities.



Subscribe to our YouTube Channel: ColoradoWolf&WildlifeCenter We post videos of the training and enrichment we are providing for our animals, and educational vlogs about wolves.



Follow us on Facebook: Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center to get updates on new YouTube video postings, read feel good stories from other wolf/wildlife organizations, and learn about new wildlife findings in the research field.



Follow us on Instagram: @cowolfcenter to see pictures of our beautiful animals, stories of what we are doing around the center, and ways you can help wild wolf populations. Keep your eye on our story for fun videos of the day to day lives of our wolves and keepers.



CWWC is on Bluesky! Follow us: @cowolfcenter.bsky.social



Follow us on Twitter: @Wolves_at_CWWC to see photos of our animals, read fun facts, and hear about events happening at CWWC.



Follow us on TikTok: @cowolfcenter for the videos you won't see on our other social media pages.

We hope to give you something to look forward to every day!



The Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center was honored to be chosen to host the 2026 SAFE American Red Wolf Conference this week. The Red Wolf Recovery Program is the 5th oldest recovery effort in the United States and was the first reintroduction of a carnivore in the world. American Red wolves are also the world's most endangered canid, with as few as 25-29 American Red wolves remaining in the wild. They are truly the "All-American wolf" as they are endemic to the United States, meaning they have never been documented anywhere else.

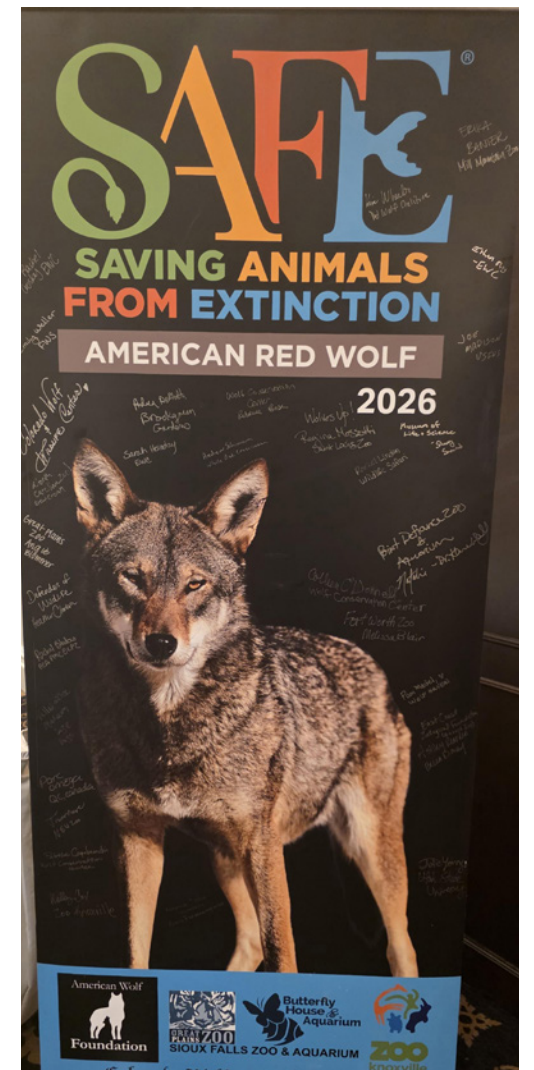
CWWC is home to the only two American Red wolves in the state of Colorado. Although we do not breed, we help free valuable space for genetically valuable animals that can breed and be released back into their native range. Shawnee (SB #1925) and Fender (SB #1422) have helped us educate thousands of guests about the intrinsic value of their species.

The SAFE program (Saving Animals From Extinction) has evolved into a decades-long collaborative effort between USFWS & the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, NGOs, and 53 partner facilities that house them in human care in an effort to restore Red wolf populations and improve genetic diversity in the wild. Attendees included SAFE program leaders, scientists, biologists, USFWS recovery program leaders, wolf keepers and caretakers, and other conservation professionals invested in the recovery of American Red wolves. Together we discussed challenges, biological and scientific findings, and collaborated on ideas that will assist recovery efforts for years to come.

This was an enormous undertaking for our Center. In addition to thanking our incredible team of staff and volunteers, we would like to extend our gratitude and appreciation to North Carolina Zoo, Great Plains Zoo, Zoo Knoxville, and American Wolf Foundation for helping us sponsor this effort. It's rejuvenating and inspiring to be surrounded by brilliant minds from all over the country that share a unified mission of returning this iconic native species back to the landscape where they belong.

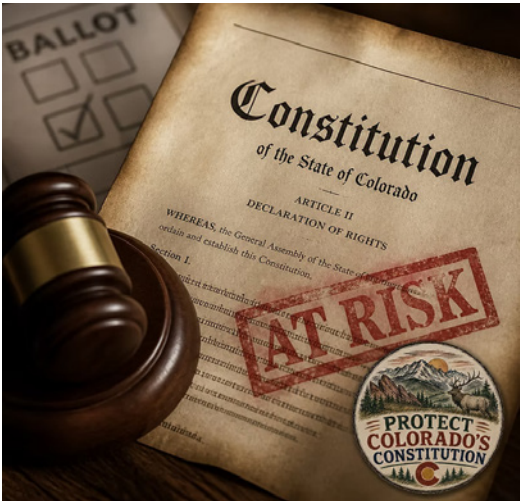


Darlene pictured with Eric O'Dell, who was a speaker at the conference. [Read more about him on page 6.](#) »



Protect Colorado's Constitution

Implications of The Right to Hunt in Colorado



Does the right to hunt belong in the constitution?

Does the “Right to Hunt” belong on the same list as fundamental freedoms? No. Here's why: Colorado's Constitution is meant to protect fundamental rights: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, due process, and the right to assemble peaceably. These protections apply to every citizen equally. Creating a constitutional “Right to Hunt” would prioritize the interests of one specific group above the rights of all other Coloradans. This isn't a debate about the merits of hunting itself; it is a question of whether this activity should supersede the will of all other Coloradans. Constitutional rights are absolute and can bypass the democratic process, effectively stripping voters of their voice in future wildlife management decisions. This amendment would also severely limit Colorado Parks & Wildlife's ability to implement science-based conservation.

If a regulation is found to conflict with a constitutionally guaranteed right, that regulation is unconstitutional and invalid. This proposed mandate shifts authority away from the professional scientists and wildlife experts at Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Colorado would likely face protracted and costly legal challenges, like other states have in cases of Right to Hunt vs Wildlife Agency.

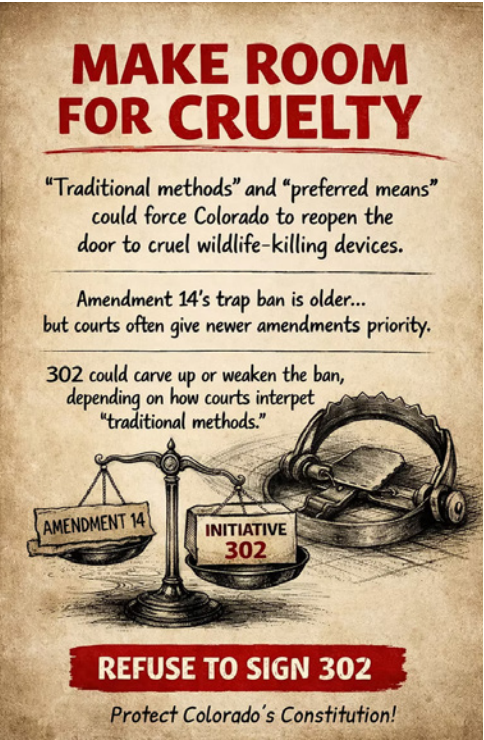
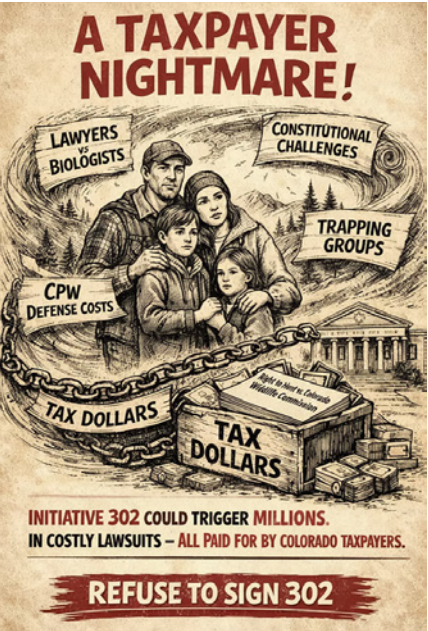
These expenses for litigation are not free; they are funded by you, the Colorado taxpayer. Outdoor activities like hunting and fishing are currently legal and protected under Title 33 of the Colorado Revised Statutes. Since these activities are already secured by state law, why is a constitutional amendment necessary? The reason is that it functions as a method to circumvent the democratic influence of the public, your voting voice. This amendment ensures that even if citizens support a future ballot measure, the constitutional status of this right would invalidate the will of the voters. Stay informed and do not allow your voice in wildlife management to be permanently silenced.



The Financial Consequences: An international trophy-hunting club has put up \$1 MILLION to push this initiative through.

IOTR is using their big money and power connections from out-of-state, Washington DC, and all across the U.S. to try to convince Coloradans that Initiative 302 is a simple right-to-hunt-and-fish (RTHF) constitutional amendment. It isn't. This same big-money gang will send its high-priced, overly litigious lawyers to Colorado to fight Colorado Parks & Wildlife endlessly in court. Just like it did in Wisconsin.

Can taxpayers afford to fight special interest groups? No. Coloradans lose and so does our wildlife commission. NO to Right to Hunt: Uphold integrity in sportsmanship The Wisconsin-based IOTR has had their hands in many such RTHF cases in other states and local communities where voters were duped into voting for similar constitutional amendments on the ballot in other states. And these out-of-state interlopers are leading the charge here in Colorado. And there's no reason to believe their hands won't continue to meddle in Colorado's wildlife business if Initiative 302, The Right to Hunt, somehow manages to become a constitutional amendment in this coming Fall's election cycle.



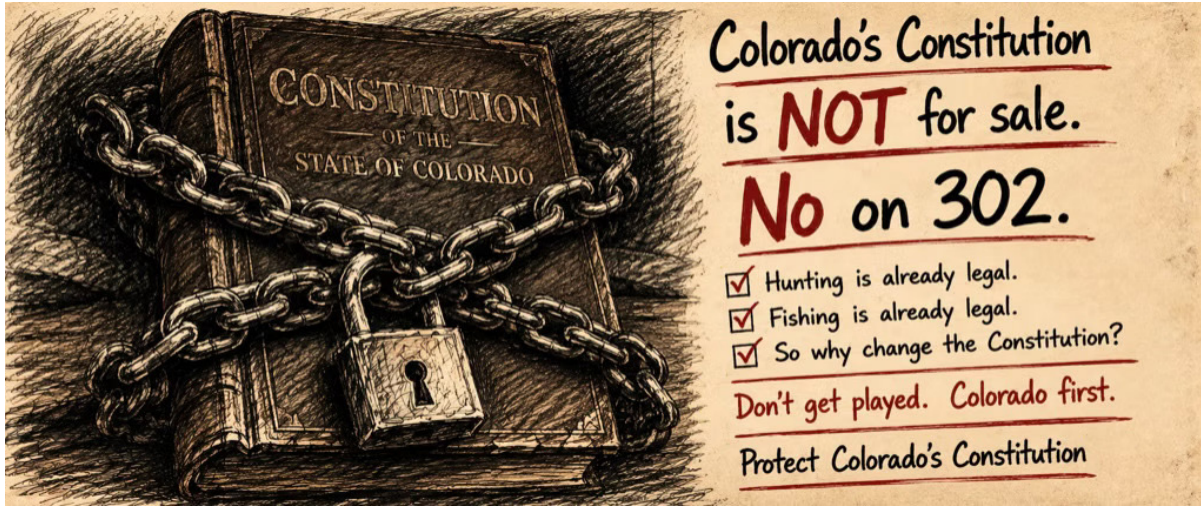
The Most Inhumane Forms of Trapping Could Return

Ballot initiative 302, The Right to Hunt, could crack open Colorado's trap ban by calling cruel devices “traditional methods.” If that happens, steel-jaw leghold traps, body crushing traps, strangling snares and M-44 cyanide bombs could slip back into our wildlife areas through the courts. Refuse to sign 302. Colorado courts follow a long-standing rule: when two constitutional amendments conflict, the newer one often takes priority. Ballot Initiative 302 creates a brand-new constitutional “right to harvest wildlife” using vague terms like “traditional methods” and “preferred means”. If that language conflicts with the 1996 trapping ban (Amendment 14), which banned the cruelest forms of traps, courts could be forced to “harmonize” the two — and Colorado precedent shows that can mean narrowing the older amendment so the newer one can function. That opens the door for advocates of inhumane trapping methods to argue that:

- The leghold-trap ban burdens the new right
- CPW can't restrict certain devices without violating the Constitution
- Courts — not biologists — must decide what counts as a “traditional method”

[See the FL Sea Turtle Example](#)

[Donate to Support Outreach](#)



For more information about #302, visit protectcoloradosconstitution.org

[OR CLICK HERE](#)

[Read More About Trapping](#)

[Full Implications of The Right to Hunt](#)

[See Videos About CO Ban on Trapping](#)

VOTE NO ON #302!

DON'T BE FOOLED!!!

CWWC has created these 2 billboards to put up in Colorado Springs and Denver, but we need your help financially. They are \$2,500 a month and we would like to have them up until November. If you would like to contribute, please send a check to:

Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center
PO BOX 713
Divide, CO 80814
Subject line: Billboards for #302

Thank you,
Darlene



Wolf Update: Eric Odell's experience helps guide Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) through adoption of gray wolf plan

John Livingston | Colorado Outdoors | June 6, 2023



Blending policy and science always appealed to Eric Odell. During a 23-year career at Colorado Parks and Wildlife, he's found himself at that intersection more often than not. That has been especially true since November of 2020.

When Colorado voters passed Proposition 114 to direct Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to develop a plan to reintroduce and manage gray wolves in the state, CPW quickly leaned on the experience of Odell to initiate and carry out the process to draft the wolf plan that aims to balance not only the

biological needs of the species but also the societal impacts its reintroduction will have.

Thirty months after voters approved the initiative, the wolf plan was approved by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission on May 3, 2023. It all came after a lengthy process of stakeholder meetings, public outreach and the collective work of many CPW employees, with Odell often at the forefront.

"I always wanted to find a way to make a meaningful, lasting impact," Odell said. "As luck would have it,



continues on next page...

I've had an incredible opportunity to do so here at CPW over the past two decades working on a very interesting suite of species.

"Whether it is wolves, or Canada lynx or black-footed ferrets, conservation of wildlife species is at the core of what CPW is about. To be able to be part of re-establishing a species to its native habitat and have it persist and to know we made a difference in wildlife populations in Colorado, there's satisfaction in that."

The process played on every aspect of what Odell loves most about his job. It required intersecting the social aspect of how people from all backgrounds feel about wolves along with the best available science while aiming to create new policy.

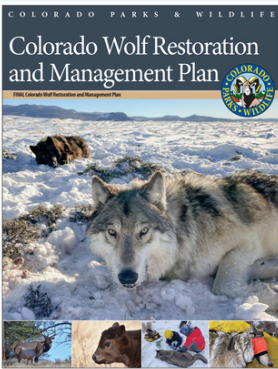
For his work in guiding the wolf restoration plan, Odell was



CPW honors Eric Odell and Reid DeWalt for their work on the wolf restoration and management planning effort. Pictured left to right: Terrestrial Section Manager Brian Dreher, DNR Executive Director Dan Gibbs, Assistant Director of Aquatic, Terrestrial and Natural Resources Reid DeWalt, Wolf Conservation Program Manager Eric Odell, CPW Director Jeff Davis, Parks and Wildlife Commission Chair Carrie Hauser, Species Conservation Unit Supervisor Dave Klute

Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan

Through the passage of Ballot Initiative 114 in the November 2020 state election, codified at Colo. Rev. Stat. § 33-2-105.8, as amended (attached as Appendix A), the voters of Colorado mandated that the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission (hereafter, Commission) restore the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) to the state. This Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan (hereafter Plan) describes how this will be achieved and fulfills the planning components of the statutory requirements of CRS 33-2-105.8.



[Download the plan.](#)

honored with CPW's Jim Jones Outstanding Employee of the Year award.

'Embraced his role'

Odell began his CPW career in 2000 as a Habitat Biologist and has served as the agency's Species Conservation Program Manager for the last 17 years. He has been instrumental in the conservation success of swift fox, black-footed ferrets, lesser prairie-chickens and black-tailed prairie dogs during his CPW



Eric prepares to release a black-footed ferret into the wild.

career. As CPW's foremost terrestrial non-game carnivore species expert, he also brings vast experience in issues related to river otters, Canada lynx, wolverines and gray and Mexican wolves, serving as Colorado's point of contact.

In his position, he has been able to influence policy and program formulation within Colorado and with partners including federal agencies and private organizations as it relates to the enhancement and conservation of threatened and endangered terrestrial wildlife species and their habitats.

"From the very beginning, and even before the passing of Proposition 114, Eric fully embraced his role as the biological lead for wolves in Colorado," Dreher said. "Eric formed relationships with many experts in wolf management and fostered relationships with other states that will ultimately help implement a successful restoration and management program."

Planning for species reintroduction to the state is not new to Odell, as he also researched and helped design a draft reintroduction plan for wolverines to Colorado back in 2010, a plan that is being revitalized once more. Note: A stakeholder process for wolverine reintroduction was undertaken in 2010, resulting in an extensive report and plan for how that reintroduction could be accomplished. Recently, the agency has been looking back to determine whether that process,

with any necessary updates from the past 12 years, may still be workable for Colorado.

Odell said wolf reintroduction has been different from other programs he and CPW have been part of in the past, specifically because this initiative was driven by a ballot measure passed by voters. But while that makes it unique, he said being able to rely on lessons learned from past wolf reintroduction efforts in the Rocky Mountains has helped with logistics.

"With lynx, we had to learn how to capture and move those animals from source sites to Colorado," he said. "That involved the logistics of transporting animals across international borders and getting them in good body condition in order to survive once they were released. And nobody has ever done a wolverine reintroduction before. That's carving entirely new ground – new ground we hope to lead the way in for others."

'How the pieces fit together'

Odell grew up in Colorado Springs and is a graduate of Cheyenne Mountain High School. He obtained degrees in Biology and Environmental Studies from Middlebury College in Vermont and also worked in field ecology at Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory in Gothic, Colorado. Odell would go on to earn a Master of Science degree in Wildlife Biology from Colorado State University in 2000. He joined CPW as a habitat biologist, and he's been making history ever since.

He never imagined that in 2021 he would place the first GPS collar on a gray wolf in Colorado or that in 2022 he would



place the first collar on a wolf born in Colorado. Odell led those efforts when wolves naturally migrated into North Park from neighboring Wyoming.

"Being able to put the first radio collar on a wolf in Colorado, was a day I will never forget," he said. "For us to find that first den up there, it was just awesome."



Eric Odell addresses commissioner questions at Parks and Wildlife Commission meeting.

"Since being hired with CPW, I've been everywhere in the state and seen the breadth of our many communities and seen how diverse the geography of the state really is. For me, one of the great educations I have received is understanding how the on-the-ground work that CPW does in each area relates to how different each area is. Seeing how all the pieces fit together is really exciting."

Odell said acknowledging those differences across the state helped him keep multiple perspectives at the forefront while drafting the wolf plan. He hopes to have many of the questions asked about the success of wolves being reintroduced answered within the next decade.

But no matter what old questions are answered and which new ones arise, Odell said he will look back on this process fondly and will always take great pride in the work.

"This entire process has highlighted diverse viewpoints," he said. "We are a group of people with very different perspectives and personalities trying to solve challenging situations. But we are all people. I am proud of the respect we have all shown one another and the support our team has received. We've developed relationships on a much deeper level, and we have all been strengthened by that."

Amid blistering drought, feds tap New Mexico aquifers to build border wall without permits

Peter O'Dowd | wbur | July 10, 2026



The site of a groundwater well in Arizona along the U.S.-Mexico border as seen from a drone. (Courtesy Myles Traphagen)

In its dash to build President Trump's signature border wall, the federal government is drilling unpermitted wells into already-depleted aquifers in New Mexico, according to state officials.

The New Mexico Office of the State Engineer told Here & Now it counted at least six wells under development along the border, but none have the necessary permits required by state law.

One of the wells is on Russell Johnson's cattle ranch, which shares an 8.5-mile border with Mexico.

"That's where they're currently drilling right now. It looks like they've hit water, too," said Johnson, president of the Luna County Farm and Livestock Bureau.

Johnson said another well is near completion on his neighbor's ranch.

He hosted a meeting Thursday night in the border community of Deming, New Mexico, where he said more than 160 people showed up to express their concern.

Johnson relies on a natural spring to supply water for his cattle and his home.

"These wells that they're drilling for border wall construction, they're talking about trying to attain 300-plus gallons a minute, and it's going to pump us dry," he said. "When you have livestock, you've got to water, they can't wait. You can't haul enough water to keep them in good supply, so it becomes an immediate disaster."



The Trump administration is building a new wall where a wall already exists. The double wall is designed to deter migrants from crossing into the United States. (Courtesy of Myles Traphagen)

A punishing drought has already hurt ranchers across the West. Groundwater makes up more than half of New Mexico's water supply, and that reserve is shrinking.

"Most all of our wells are kind of struggling," Johnson said.

Construction crews use groundwater to mix cement for Trump's wall. Myles Traphagen, a borderlands biologist who has been documenting border wall construction since it began in Trump's first term, said he's identified six wells along a 27-mile stretch of construction in Arizona.



A basin filled with groundwater was used to mix cement for the border wall under construction during President Trump's first term. This photo was taken in 2021, soon after he left office. (Peter O'Dowd/Here & Now)

During the first Trump administration, ponds at the San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge dried up after crews pumped millions of gallons of water to mix cement for the wall. The wetlands are home to endangered fish.

Now, construction across the region has started again. The 30-foot wall is going up in places workers didn't get to the first time around, and a second barrier is going up where a wall already exists.

Customs and Border Protection calls it a "smart wall," which includes new technology like sensors, lighting and cameras. Congress gave the administration nearly \$47 billion to finish the project.

"This is a staggering amount of money and a staggering amount of resources that are being used for a border wall," Traphagen said. "And it's largely out of sight and out of mind."

The issue is on the radar of state officials in New Mexico.

The wells are on federal property, within a 60-foot strip of land that runs along the international boundary known as the Roosevelt Reservation. In April, Customs and Border Protection sent a letter to the state engineer's office that said the federal government is "immune" from state law that requires a permit to pump groundwater.

"We do disagree with that," said Nat Chakeres, general counsel for the state engineer. "In New Mexico and it's the

same in all Western states, it doesn't matter really if you're on federal land or land of other ownership. To drill water wells, you need permits from the state engineer."

CBP applied for and received permits to drill water for border wall construction in the first Trump administration, Chakeres said. But without permits this time, it's impossible to know how much water the government is using and what kind of impact it could have on local ranchers.

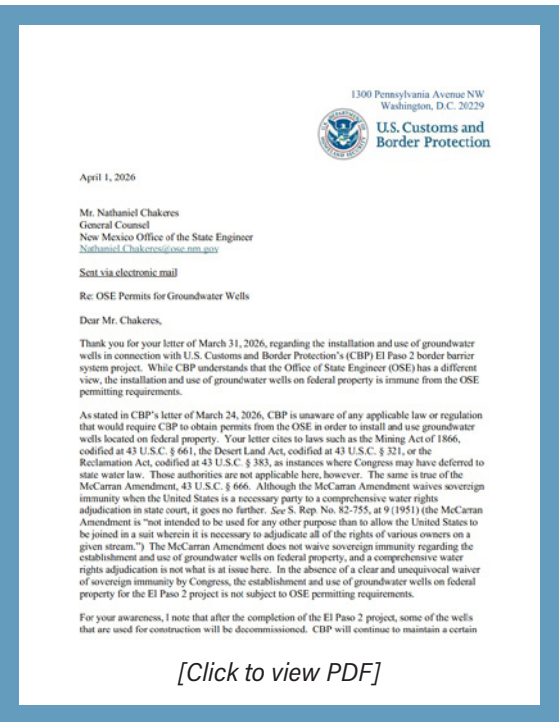
The Department of Homeland Security also maintains it has the authority to waive environmental laws to get the wall built. CBP provided a statement to Here & Now, saying water is required for road construction, concrete production and dust suppression. The agency said it is working with New Mexico to develop a groundwater management strategy.

"CBP's goal is to minimize water use and to work collaboratively with local landowners to ensure that construction activities do not adversely impact their water needs," the statement said.

Meanwhile, New Mexico rancher Russell Johnson supports tighter security. He's a former Border Patrol agent, and he doesn't want people crossing illegally through his ranch, which he says used to happen all the time.

But he's not sure about the government's decision to build a second wall in places where one has already been built, especially if it puts his water supply at risk.

"To me, it almost seems a little bit overkill," he said. "There's going to be fiber-optic sensor systems that are put in, cameras, different lighting and everything; it seems like if everything is working properly, and you've got the Border Patrol agents back on the border where they're supposed to be, a secondary wall seems a little redundant."



Map shows recent Colorado wolf activity as CPW announces new wolf pack — with pups — in central mountains

Elise Schmelzer | The Denver Post | July 22, 2026



This video still from a remote camera video shows a wolf pup from the King Mountain Pack and was taken in Routt County during the summer of 2025. At least four pups were born to the pack in 2025. The mother of the pup was killed on the Nottingham Ranch after allegedly threatening cows and their calves. (Video still via Colorado Parks and Wildlife)

A new reproducing wolf pack has formed in Colorado's central mountains, adding to the four already established in the state.

The Piney Ridge pack has claimed territory in Eagle County, Colorado Parks and Wildlife announced Wednesday as it also put out a monthly map tracking wolf movements.

Along with the Piney Ridge pack, CPW biologists confirmed that pups were born to three of the state's already established packs: the One Ear pack in Jackson County, the Three Creeks

pack in Rio Blanco County and the Copper Creek pack in Pitkin County.

CPW officials did not provide a total number of pups born this spring, noting that it is difficult to accurately count pups when they are young. The agency said it would provide more detailed numbers in its 2027 wolf report, to be published next spring. A wolf litter averages four to six pups.

"Detection of pups in late spring or early summer is inherently challenging, because of their use of remote habitats in dense

cover, (the) secretive nature of very young animals, and time potentially underground," CPW's Wolf Conservation Program manager, Eric Odell, said in a news release.

Last year, at least 14 pups were born to four packs.

One of the already-established packs, the King Mountain pack, did not reproduce this year after the deaths of its mating pair. The male died after being captured by CPW staff, and a ranch hand shot and killed the female. The pair had produced four pups before their deaths.

The formation of wolf packs benefits wolves and wildlife managers alike, CPW officials said in the news release.

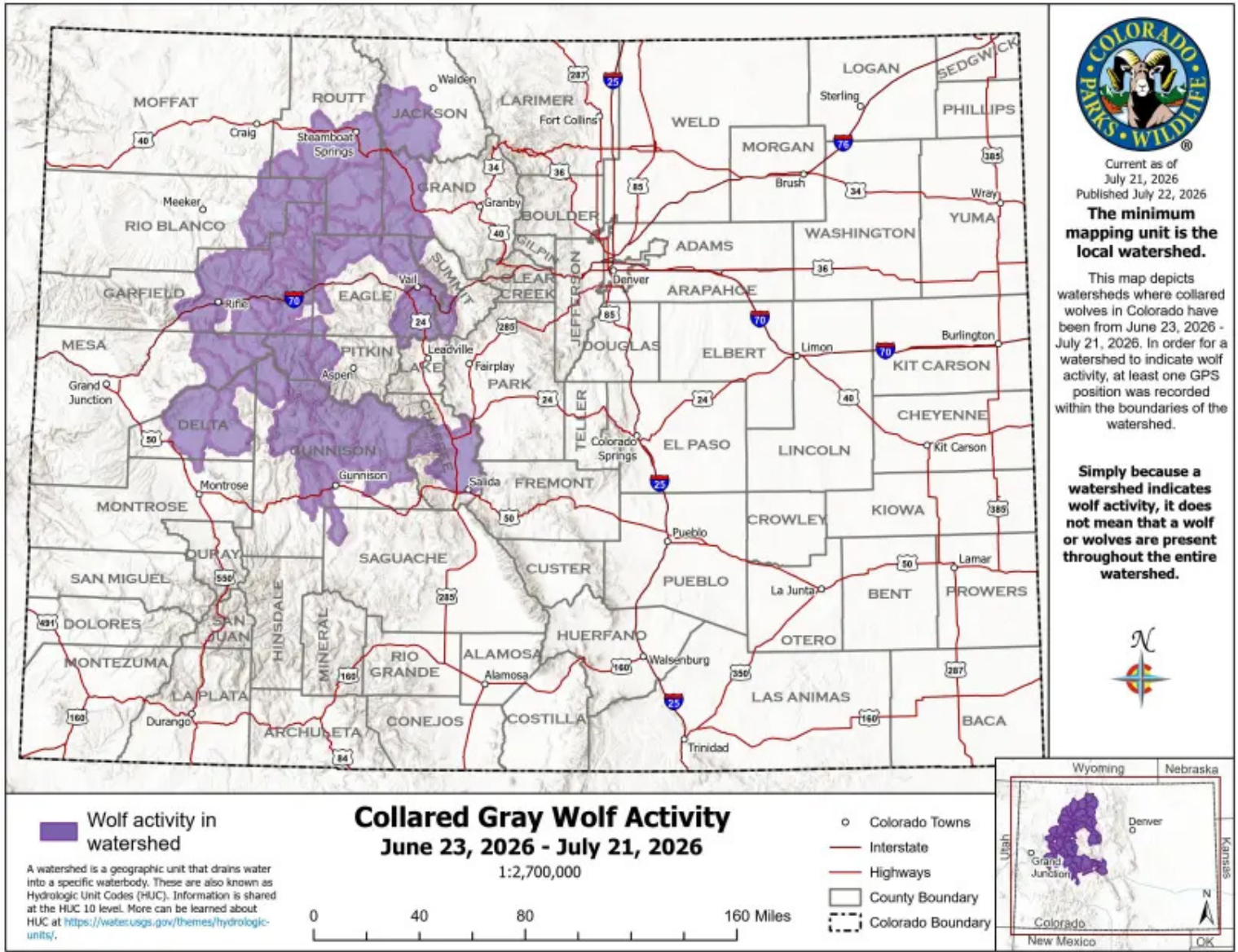
Wolves that have established territory become easier to

monitor and keep away from livestock, according to the agency.

Wolves in packs also have better survival rates, according to the agency's data. Seven of the 10 wolves that died during the last wolf biological year — April 2025 to March 2026 — were not pack members.

Colorado's collared wolves remained in the state's central and western mountains in July, a new map of their general locations shows.

The wolves roamed the land between Walden, Rifle, Gunnison and Vail, according to the map, with the wolves' travels more geographically constrained than in the previous month.



A Colorado Parks and Wildlife map shows the watersheds (shaded purple) where collared gray wolves wandered between June 23, 2026, and July 21, 2026. (Courtesy of Colorado Parks and Wildlife)

Trump administration opens endangered species' habitats to development, reversing 50 years of environmental law

Ella Nilsen, Kit Maher | CNN Climate | July 14, 2026



A Northern Spotted Owl sits on a tree stump on August 4, 2009. Tom Szczerbowski/Getty Images/File

The Trump administration reversed decades of longstanding environmental law protecting endangered species on Friday, opening up sensitive habitats of those protected species to drilling, mining, farming and real estate development.

The change, finalized by the Interior and Commerce Departments, redefines what constitutes "harm" to endangered species and habitats under the 1973 Endangered Species Act. The longstanding law had long prohibited "habitat modification or degradation" because it could harm or kill endangered animals by impacting their ability to breed and find food or shelter. That definition of harm was upheld by the US Supreme Court in a 1995 ruling.

The Trump administration called the previous definition of harm "outdated" in a statement released Friday, arguing its move "returns the interpretation of the ESA back to its actual text and original intent, which will end years of federal overreach."

Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said in a statement that the law's approach had "turned routine activity into a regulatory trap, drove up costs that impacted people's lives, and expanded federal authority beyond what Congress intended."

"For years, federal agencies abused the ESA to obstruct lawful land use and burden American families and businesses," Burgum added, calling the administration's action a "common sense" move that "follows the statute Congress actually passed."

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick added in a

statement that the new rule would benefit fishermen who suffered from "overly broad and burdensome regulations."

The rule has been published in the Federal Register. Environmental groups decried the move and said they planned to challenge the change in court imminently.

"For the first time ever, a presidential administration now claims that species protected by the Endangered Species Act shouldn't be safe from habitat modification that destroys where they live, raise their young, or search for food," Earthjustice attorney Kristen Boyles said in a statement. "There is no support for the Trump Administration's rule — no scientific support, no legal support, no public support"

Interior and Commerce insisted narrower "core protections" for endangered species would still be enacted, adding their definition of the bedrock environmental law would prevent "actions that directly injure or kill listed wildlife."

However, environmental groups will challenge that narrower definition, pointing to the 1995 Supreme Court case, which upheld the broader definition of harm, including habitat destruction. But if legal challenges to the Trump administration's reversal make it up to the Supreme Court again, environmentalists will be facing a far more conservative court.

"Habitat loss is the number one cause of extinction," Gib Brogan, senior campaign director at Oceana, said in a statement. "When you remove habitat protections, you remove one of the law's most important safeguards."

The Trump administration has attempted to claw back the Endangered Species Act throughout President Donald Trump's first and second administration, with varying levels of success.

Earlier this year, several high-ranking Trump officials, including Burgum, voted to gut longstanding Endangered Species Act regulations in the Gulf of Mexico for the critically endangered Rice's whale, exempting all oil and gas drilling from the federal law.

And last year, Interior and Commerce proposed restoring rules from the first Trump administration that stripped safeguards for plants and animals threatened by human development and a warming planet. However, some of those changes were recently struck down in federal court.

The Trump administration revives a plan that could drain the Mojave Desert 'excited' to care for trio of maned wolves

@Rainmaker1973 (Massimo) | x.com | July 11, 2026



On July 9 the Bureau of Land Management issued a pipeline permit for the long running Cadiz groundwater project. This decision revives a proposal that has faced repeated delays due to environmental concerns.

This is not the first attempt. During President Trumps first term the Bureau of Land Management approved a similar permit. A federal court later rejected it ruling that the government had not adequately assessed the potential effects on the Mojave Deserts groundwater. The Trump administration has now issued a new permit allowing the project to proceed once again.

The enormous scale of the proposal has raised serious alarms among scientists Tribal leaders environmental organizations and California state officials.

Opponents warn that Cadiz intends to pump groundwater from beneath the Mojave Desert at a rate 25 times faster than the aquifer can naturally recharge. This means water would be extracted much more quickly than rain and snow can replenish it.

That groundwater sustains rare desert springs such as Bonanza Spring which is the largest water source within a 1000 square mile area. These springs support desert bighorn sheep tortoises birds native plants and many other species in one of the most arid regions of North America.

The aquifer also lies beneath lands that hold deep cultural and spiritual importance for the Chemehuevi and Fort Mojave Tribes.

Cadiz plans to extract the groundwater transport it via pipeline and sell it to communities in California and possibly other states.

Critics contend that the water supply is neither renewable nor sustainable. Much of the groundwater dates back thousands of years. Once depleted it could take an extremely long time to recover if it recovers at all.

Opponents further argue that the latest permit was granted without the comprehensive environmental review required to fully evaluate the projects potential effects on desert springs wildlife public lands and local communities.

As Agencies Pursue Mexican Wolf Downlisting, Coalition Urges New Mexico to Close Protection Gaps

Wolf Conservation Center | July 15, 2026



Fifteen organizations urge New Mexico leaders to close trapping loopholes following trapping deaths of endangered Mexican gray wolves.

Santa Fe, N.M. — As federal and state wildlife agencies prepare to pursue downlisting of Mexican gray wolves under the Endangered Species Act, a coalition representing 15 wildlife conservation, environmental, and animal protection organizations is urging New Mexico leaders to strengthen—not weaken—protections for the endangered subspecies. Following the recent spate of trapping incidents, including the deaths of two federally endangered Mexican gray wolves from the Sawtooth Pack and at least 23 documented trapping incidents since 2022, the coalition called on state leaders to take immediate action. Last Friday, the coalition delivered a letter to Governor

Michelle Lujan Grisham, Lieutenant Governor Howie Morales, New Mexico Department of Wildlife director Michael Sloane, Attorney General Raúl Torrez, Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard, Senate President Pro Tempore Mimi Stewart, and Speaker of the House Javier Martínez, urging coordinated action to prevent future trapping incidents and strengthen protections for Mexican gray wolves. The letter comes amid growing concern over the increasing number of wolves caught in traps. Since 2022, at least 23 Mexican gray wolves have been documented in trapping incidents across New Mexico. While some wolves survived, others suffered serious injuries or died, underscoring the

continued risks of trapping posed to one of North America’s most endangered mammals. Yesterday, the Arizona Game and Fish Department announced that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the New Mexico Department of Wildlife, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department are preparing a petition to downlist the Mexican gray wolf from endangered to threatened under the Endangered Species Act, citing recent population growth and progress toward recovery plan criteria. “New Mexico made important progress with the passage of Roxy’s Law and preliminary population growth, but recent events demonstrate that significant and alarming gaps remain,” said Michelle Lute, Ph.D. in wolf conservation and executive director of Wildlife for All. “True recovery means ensuring wolves can survive and thrive in perpetuity. The plague of both intentional and incidental trapping deaths makes clear that serious gaps remain in the protections for this still very rare species. Downlisting should follow durable recovery, not substitute for it.” “The trapping deaths of two endangered wolves in New Mexico last year were preventable and deeply disturbing,” said Cyndi Tuell, the Arizona and New Mexico director at Western Watersheds Project. “We’re concerned that we’ll see more of these kinds of tragic deaths under a downlisting scenario that turns more management over to the states. New Mexico should be closing loopholes, not trying to open more of them.” “The loss of even a single Mexican gray wolf is a setback for the recovery of one of North America’s most endangered mammals. These deaths underscore the urgent need to ensure existing protections are fully enforced, suspected violations are thoroughly investigated, and the remaining gaps that continue to place wolves at risk are addressed, not to weaken protections or pursue premature delisting,” said Claire Musser, executive director of the Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project. “Recovering Mexican wolves requires more than reintroducing animals to the landscape; it requires creating conditions where they can survive and thrive.” “The tragic deaths of the Sawtooth wolves underscore the need for New Mexico’s elected officials to close loopholes in New Mexico law, dedicate resources for

outreach and education, and commit to enforcing existing laws intended to protect endangered Mexican wolves and other wildlife,” said Sally Paez, staff attorney at New Mexico Wild. “The agencies’ premature downlisting proposal ignores the ongoing threats of human-caused mortality and genetic vulnerability.” “If New Mexico is to continue to protect and recover native wildlife, its leaders need to continue to update and improve laws that anchor us to a moment in history when wildlife was seen as a nuisance and a pest, rather than a neighbor and a relative,” said Chris Smith, wildlife and wild places director for WildEarth Guardians. “Wolves and other species don’t see lines on maps and they don’t read statute and regulation – they need stronger protections across the board. Weakening protections while deadly loopholes remain on the books is nonsensical.” “New Mexico officials must learn from these tragic killings and create a safer state for Mexican gray wolves. It’s terrifying to know that wolves, including wolves released from facilities like the Wolf Conservation Center, can be trapped without significant repercussions. This needs to change, especially with agencies prematurely attempting to decrease protections,” said Regan Downey, director of education and advocacy at the Wolf Conservation Center. “The brutality exhibited by the humans in the recent wolf trapping deaths was heinous,” said Mary Katherine Ray, Wildlife Chair of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club. “If these acts are not legally addressed, perpetrators will become emboldened and more wolves will not only be killed, but will suffer in the same way. Removing protections by downlisting in addition will ensure more of the same.” Among other recommendations, the coalition is calling on state leaders to:

- Publicly condemn the recent deaths of the Sawtooth Pack wolves.
- Expand education and outreach regarding the legal protections afforded to Mexican gray wolves and steps to take if a wolf is unintentionally trapped.
- Ensure that suspected violations of state and federal law are thoroughly investigated.
- Work with the Legislature to close statutory

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loopholes that continue to place endangered wolves at unnecessary risk.

- Continue coordinating across federal, state, tribal, and local agencies to strengthen wolf recovery and reduce future trapping incidents.

The coalition noted that while investigations into the deaths of the Sawtooth Pack wolves remain ongoing, the recent incidents highlight the need for both immediate action and longer-term reforms to reduce the risk of future trapping injuries and deaths.

Signatories include:

- Wildlife for All
- WildEarth Guardians
- Western Watersheds Project
- The Rewilding Institute
- Wolf Conservation Center
- Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project
- Rio Grande Chapter, Sierra Club
- Grand Canyon Chapter, Sierra Club
- Upper Gila Watershed Alliance
- Madrean Archipelago Wildlife Center
- Animal Protection New Mexico
- New Mexico Wild
- Western Wildlife Conservancy
- White Mountain Conservation League
- Wild Arizona

About Wildlife for All

Wildlife for All is a national organization dedicated to reforming wildlife management to be more democratic, just, compassionate and focused on protecting wild species and ecosystems. Through research, advocacy, and education, we aim to protect wildlife and ensure

that policies reflect the values of all Americans.

About Western Watersheds Project

Western Watersheds Project is a nonprofit conservation organization with more than 50,000 members and supporters who care about protecting western public lands for watersheds and wildlife.

About Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project

The Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project is a nonprofit dedicated to bringing back wolves to help restore ecological health in the Grand Canyon region, while also recognizing wolves as sentient beings with intrinsic value and worth.

About WildEarth Guardians

WildEarth Guardians protects and restores the wildlife, wild places, wild rivers, and health of the American West.

About New Mexico Wild

New Mexico Wild is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) grassroots organization dedicated to the protection, restoration, and continued enjoyment of New Mexico's wildlands and wilderness areas.

About Sierra Club

The Sierra Club's mission is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the Earth, practice and promote the responsible use of its ecosystems, and educate humanity to protect the natural environment.

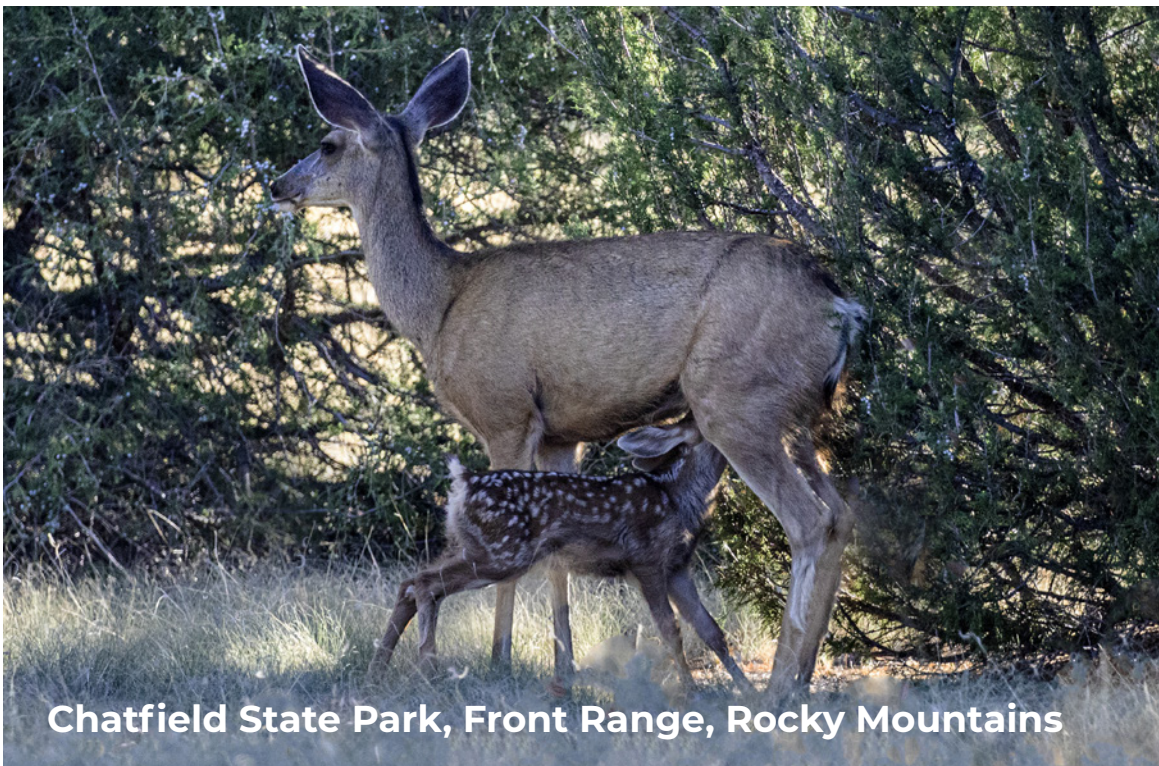
About Wolf Conservation Center

The Wolf Conservation Center advances the survival of wolves by inspiring a global community through education, advocacy, research, and recovery, and is an active participant in the SAFE Mexican Wolf Program.



Bureau of Land Management - National (@BLMNational) on X

Did you know? The Ferruginous Hawk is the largest hawk in North America! These raptors thrive on our public lands, relying on healthy grasslands, shrublands, and open spaces to hunt, nest, and raise their young. When you explore these areas, let's work together to keep wildlife wild! Remember to give nesting birds plenty of space, stick to designated trails, and recreate responsibly. By doing so, we can ensure that these incredible birds continue to soar over our shared landscapes for generations to come. Photo Credit: Ferruginous Hawk nest; Matt Fischer, BLM Idaho / X



Chatfield State Park, Front Range, Rocky Mountains



Red Wolf Specialty License Plate Initiative



HELP US SECURE A RED WOLF SPECIALTY PLATE TO FUND
RECOVERY IN NORTH CAROLINA

Our Goal & Your Impact

- **300-500 NC residents signed up** with fees paid by February 14, 2027!
- Proceeds will go to **Red Wolf recovery** for front line work such as coexistence efforts, field supplies, acclimation pens, educational outreach, and more!

Show Your Interest

- **Scan** the QR code to fill out our interest form!
- Check "yes" to **sign up** for campaign newsletters!
- **Follow along** for updates on new campaign roll-outs that include how you can get involved, license plate artwork unveiling, outreach efforts, and more!

SHARE SHARE SHARE!

- **Share** with your North Carolina community!
- **Learn more** about Red Wolf recovery by visiting www.fws.gov/project/red-wolf-recovery-program

SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE!



SUPPORTING ENDANGERED RED WOLVES AND
THEIR FUTURE IN NORTH CAROLINA

WWW.REDWOLVES.COM

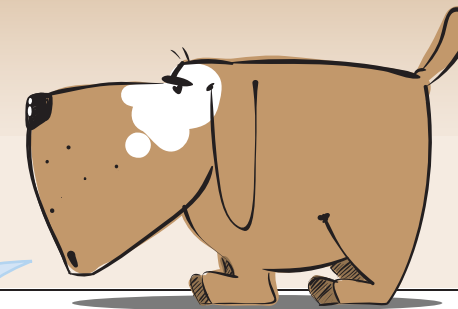
Adoption corner

TCRAS

Teller County Regional Animal Shelter
tcrascolorado.org · 719.686.7707

SLVAWS

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



[NOTE - Our shelter is still open for adoptions, but we are asking that you call ahead and make an appointment before coming in to the shelter - 719-686-7707.]

LOOK »

I'm a sweet, easy-going fella looking for a new family! I love being with people, and I enjoy a good brushing which is good because I have a lot of fur! I tend to howl when left alone, but it's just because I want you to know you are missed. If you have other dogs I'd like to meet them first before I enter my new home to make sure we get along. I'm a little older, so I can be a bit grumpy with some dogs.



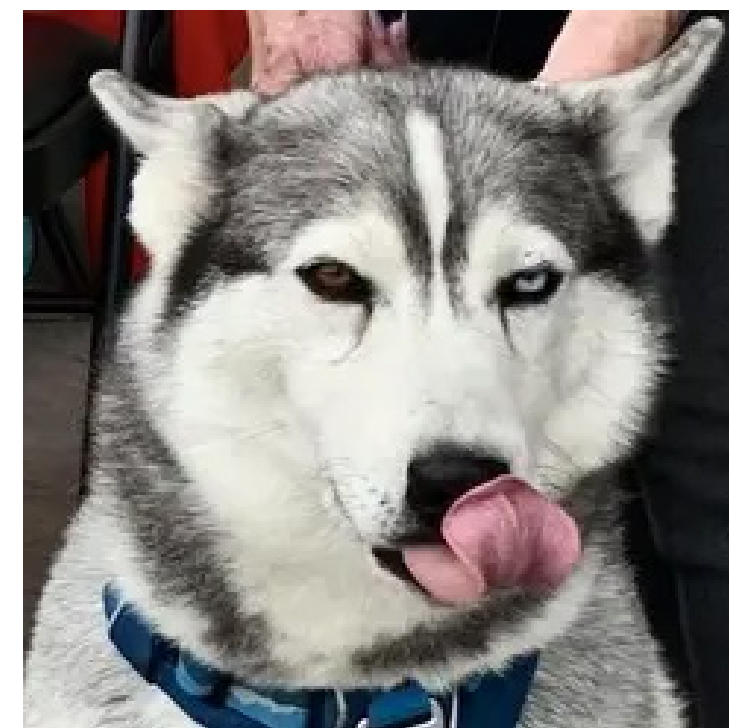
« KUNOICHI

Hi, I'm Kunoichi! Unfortunately in all my time in foster I have not really warmed up to anyone. The shelter staff thinks I would do best as a barn cat. I'm looking for someone that will give me my space but provide me with a safe space to reside when I am not out hunting. As I will need a good acclimation process, I am looking for someone that has some experience dealing with barn cats or is open to learning about the process.



SLVAWS

Please check our website, www.slvaws.org for our next adoption fair in Colorado Springs, every Saturday 10am-3pm.



LUCY & LOBO

We have had these huskies Lobo and Lucy for several years because we were hoping to get this brother and sister a home together.

We have decided it is best to separate them for a better chance to be rehomed. Both sweet, neutered, spayed, all shots, chipped. 4-5 years old.

If together, very low adoption fee.