



TRUMP ADMINISTRATION GRIZZLY BEAR PROPOSAL

TOOLKIT

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TLDR

If finalized, the Trump administration's proposal for grizzlies would:

- Create a tiered management system that shifts increasing management authority to states and other agencies through U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved agreements.
- Expand exceptions to the ESA's "take" prohibitions, and give state and other wildlife agencies broader authority to kill, capture, relocate, and otherwise manage grizzly bears.
- Weaken ESA protections by allowing more grizzly bear "take" with less federal oversight.
- Signal the administration's broader effort to transition grizzly bear management away from the Endangered Species Act and toward state management before recovery is complete.

COMMENTS ARE DUE BY AUGUST 17, 2026

WHAT'S HAPPENING

On July 16, 2026, the Trump administration proposed sweeping revisions to the grizzly bear's Endangered Species Act (ESA) species-specific 4(d) rule, significantly weakening the federal protections the species receives while it remains listed as threatened. While the administration did not propose delisting grizzlies in this action, it announced that it is considering issuing a separate final rule on the species' listing status, potentially creating a pathway for future action to remove ESA protections altogether.

Grizzly bears remain listed as threatened under the ESA because they have not recovered across a significant portion of their historic range. Although populations have grown in parts of the northern Rockies, grizzly bears occupy only a fraction of their historic range. **Long-term**

recovery depends on reconnecting isolated populations, protecting habitat, and maintaining strong federal protections and oversight.

Just 18 months ago, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) rejected petitions from Wyoming and Montana seeking to delist grizzly bears, concluding that removing ESA protections would be premature because the species had not fully recovered. Instead, the agency proposed retaining ESA protections while revising the grizzly bear's Distinct Population Segment (DPS) and updating the species' 4(d) rule.

The Trump administration's new proposal would create a tiered management system that gives federal, state, and tribal wildlife agencies greater flexibility to manage grizzly bears with less direct federal oversight. It also expands exceptions to the ESA's prohibitions on “take” (a legal term that includes killing, harming, harassing, trapping, capturing, or otherwise injuring protected wildlife) by allowing additional management activities, incidental take, conflict management, trapping of other species, and other agency actions that previously required greater federal oversight or authorization.

Although grizzly bears would remain listed as threatened species under this proposal, the revised 4(d) rule would substantially reduce the practical protections afforded by the ESA. Coupled with the administration's announcement that it may issue a separate final rule on the grizzly bear's listing status, the proposal signals a broader effort to shift from federal recovery to state-led management before recovery is complete.

Comments are due by August 17, 2026. Submit using the [Bears Belong action alert](#) or directly on the [federal register](#).

TOP LINE MESSAGE

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was clear when it determined in 2025 that grizzly bears should stay protected under the ESA: they are not recovered and therefore need continued ESA protections. The USFWS was right to reject Montana and Wyoming's delisting petitions and the Trump administration should not now undermine that scientific determination by weakening the very protections that have made recovery possible. With grizzly mortality hitting a record high last year and populations still fragmented across much of their historic range, now is the worst time to reduce federal oversight and expand state management authority that will result in more bears being killed. Instead of weakening ESA protections, the administration should strengthen habitat protections, prioritize nonlethal conflict prevention, restore connectivity between isolated populations, and ensure grizzly bears remain fully protected until recovery is actually achieved.

TALKING POINTS

- The USFWS should not permit ‘take’ from trapping for other species, which already threatens grizzly bear conservation. [Lamb et al. \(2022\)](#), [McKim \(2017\)](#).

- Conflict with livestock is already a leading cause of grizzly bear death, and giving states authority over ‘management’ (i.e., conflict) take will further increase mortality. The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem has set mortality records in recent years even with current protections in place. [USGS \(2025\)](#).
- Now is not the time to further reduce protections by increasing take. The Administration’s intent to rescind the Roadless Rule and the ESA ‘harm’ rule rescission both threaten to destroy grizzly habitat. [Mattson \(2024-1\)](#).
- Giving management authority to hostile northern Rockies states like Montana will undermine grizzly bear recovery by decreasing connectivity between core populations. [Mattson \(2021\)](#). Montana’s own grizzly bear management plan states it would “not actively manage for grizzly bear presence between core areas”—precisely where management is needed for a connected metapopulation and ultimately recovery.
- The proposal is too vague. The public cannot meaningfully weigh in because it leaves details about what grizzly bear ‘take’ will be allowed to future contracts between states and the USFWS.
- Killing more grizzly bears will not increase social tolerance, and may actually decrease it. [Mattson \(2020\)](#). Further, studies on other predators also show poaching may increase after more killing is legalized. [Chapron and Treves \(2016\)](#).

ACTION ALERT

You are free to use the Bears Belong action alert for comment submission:

<https://www.bearsbelong.com/4drule>

If you would prefer to submit comments directly, you can do so [by clicking here](#). **Please note:** Comments that oppose the proposal without supporting information may not influence the rulemaking process, *so it is critical that you include citations and/or point to the ones we have provided in the talking points above and state the following:* “Literature cited in this comment has been added to the administrative record by WildEarth Guardians.”

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Post 1: The Trump administration is one step closer to turning grizzly bears over to the states. The new proposal weakens Endangered Species Act protections, reduces federal oversight, and gives state and other wildlife agencies greater authority to kill grizzly bears before recovery is complete. Take action before Aug 17: [bearsbelong.com/4drule](https://www.bearsbelong.com/4drule)

Post 2: States have repeatedly sought to delist grizzly bears and resume trophy hunting. Now the Trump administration is weakening federal protections and moving one step closer to putting grizzly bears under state control. Take action before Aug 17: [bearsbelong.com/4drule](https://www.bearsbelong.com/4drule)

Post 3: Record-high grizzly bear mortality should be a wake-up call, not an excuse to weaken protections. Yet that's exactly what the Trump administration's proposal would do. Take action before Aug 17: bearsbelong.com/4drule

GRAPHICS

>>Download Graphic 1<<	>>Download Graphic 2<<	>>Download Graphic 3<<
 GRIZZLY BEARS AREN'T RECOVERED. The Trump administration is weakening Endangered Species Act protections and moving one step closer to state management. SPEAK UP BEFORE AUG 17. bearsbelong.com	 STATE CONTROL = MORE DEAD GRIZZLIES Trump's new proposal expands exceptions to the ESA's "take" prohibitions, giving state and other wildlife agencies broader authority to kill grizzly bears. SPEAK UP BEFORE AUG 17. bearsbelong.com	 GRIZZLY BEAR MORTALITY REACHED A RECORD HIGH. As grizzly bear deaths reach record highs, the Trump administration wants to weaken the very protections that helped bring the species back. SPEAK UP BEFORE AUG 17. bearsbelong.com