

Doug Vincent-Lang
Commissioner

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Department of
Fish and Game

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Listing Southeast Alaska Wolves Under Endangered Species Act Not Warranted

August 22, 2023 (Juneau) – The State of Alaska is pleased the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) correctly found that listing of wolves in Southeast Alaska under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is not warranted. This ESA listing was proposed in a 2020 petition submitted to the USFWS by conservation groups, and the USFWS announced today, Aug. 22, 2023, that the listing is not warranted.

“Alaska is pleased with the Service’s decision that listing the Alexander Archipelago wolf is not warranted at this time,” said Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. “The Service found these wolves are not at risk of becoming endangered with extinction, and that Alaska’s management of these wolves is sustainable.”

This is the third time since 1993 that conservation groups have petitioned the USFWS to list the Alexander Archipelago wolf (*Canis lupus ligoni*) under the ESA and to designate critical habitat for the population.

The August 2020 petition requested the USFWS to designate the Alexander Archipelago wolves as a Distinct Population Segment (DPS) and consider the DPS for listing as threatened or endangered. Alternatively, the petition requested that the USFWS evaluate Alexander Archipelago wolf subspecies for listing, where Southeast Alaska constitutes a significant portion of the range.

The petition asserted that listing may be warranted due to potential threats associated with logging and road development; illegal and legal trapping and hunting; the effects of climate change; and loss of genetic diversity and inbreeding depression.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service determined ESA listing was not warranted following petitions in 1993 and 2011 that cited similar threats. The latest petition was submitted following one season of high harvest in one Game Management Unit (GMU 2) during fall/winter of 2019. GMU 2 consists of Prince of Wales (POW) and adjacent islands.

ADF&G acknowledged the high harvest in 2019 and has adapted management efforts to better track in-season take of wolves and ensure the sustainability of harvests over the long-term. Annual hunting and trapping seasons incorporate recent trends in harvest numbers and hunter and trapper effort.

Since fall 2020, harvest in GMU 2 has varied from 62-68 wolves per year and annual population point estimates have ranged from 286-386 wolves. Even with the high 2019 harvest, annual population estimates confirm that the population has always met or exceeded the GMU 2 population objective of 150-200 wolves set by the Board of Game. The adaptive management strategy is working well, and the GMU 2 population is considered stable and sustainable.

ADF&G is conducting numerous research and management projects to evaluate potential threats and to inform management needs for wolves in Southeast Alaska. In addition to annual population estimates in GMU 2, ADF&G is currently gathering data on wolf diet and kill rate, movements and habitat use, disease exposure, alternate ways of estimating wolf abundance, and genetic diversity and relatedness within and among wolf populations in Southeast Alaska and with wolves in coastal British Columbia. Under the department's leadership, ADF&G biologists and collaborators at several universities have undertaken this broad information gathering effort to inform sustainable and responsible wolf management across Southeast Alaska.

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