

Conservation Groups' Statement Supporting Tribal Consultation, Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Gray Wolf Protection

The undersigned groups acknowledge and welcome the recent commitments made by the Biden administration to elevate and prioritize consultation with Tribal Nations. Announced during the Tribal Nations Summit (November 15-16th), these [commitments](#) include a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) recognizing the importance of Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) relating to federal decision making and the protection of lands and the environment.

We recognize these positive steps forward in prioritizing engagement with sovereign Tribal Nations and elevating the voices and participation of Native American communities in policymaking that affects our shared environment and natural resources, and underscore that these directives and commitments must translate into real action. Tribal nations have repeatedly called for government-to-government consultation on gray wolf and grizzly bear management. The Biden administration's commitments this week present a fresh opportunity for meaningful engagement of Tribes on matters of importance to them, including gray wolf management.

Wolves, like other apex carnivores, retain a special and revered status within many Indigenous cultures, holding biological, physical, cultural and spiritual significance as documented in ["Family,"](#) by Rain (Náhkôxho'óxeóó'êstse), film director (*Family/Somebody's Daughter*) and executive director of the Global Indigenous Council (GIC). [The Wolf: A Treaty of Cultural and Environmental Survival](#), authored by the GIC in 2019 and signed by over 700 Tribal and First Nations in the U.S. and Canada, provides the blueprint for nation-to-nation consultation and utilization of Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge in protection and management of gray wolves.

Under the Trump administration, despite overwhelming Tribal and public opposition, Endangered Species protections were removed for gray wolves across the lower 48 states, resulting in a slaughter of 218 wolves in 60 hours in Wisconsin. Montana and Idaho, where wolves were legislatively delisted in 2011, have recently enacted regulations allowing the killing of 85% and 90% of those states' wolf populations, respectively.

Recently, a Tribal delegation met with Department of Interior officials to explain the dire situation that gray wolves are facing, and directly called for meaningful consultation and prior and informed consent --as required by previous [Executive Orders](#)-- and immediate relisting of gray wolves to ensure their protection from state-sanctioned hunts while consultation takes place.

Leadership within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has acknowledged that no Tribes were engaged by the Trump Administration in government-to-government consultation on the wolf delisting rule -- a violation of previous Executive Orders. The new commitments by the Biden administration to consultation and recognition of the importance of Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge provide an opportunity to rectify that wrong.

We look to the Biden administration to expeditiously honor its commitments to meaningful consultation with Tribal Nations. Time is of the essence for the gray wolf because of extreme state management policies currently in motion that aim to decimate wolf populations. The direct observations, oral and written knowledge, practices, and beliefs of Tribal Nations in relation to wolves have evolved over millennia and must be fully considered in any decisions on gray wolf management.

Groups

Center for Biological Diversity
Oceanic Preservation Society
Endangered Species Coalition