

Trump Administration Finalizes Rule Limiting Habitat Protections for Endangered Species

By [Center For Biological Diversity](#)

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The Trump administration [finalized](#) a rule today that severely limits the government's ability to protect habitat that imperiled animals and plants like grizzly bears and whooping cranes will need to survive and recover.

Today's rule myopically defines "habitat" for the purposes of designating "critical habitat" for threatened and endangered species. Under the rule protections are limited to areas that could *currently* support the species — but not areas that were previously occupied and could be restored, or to areas that will provide additional habitat for future recovery as climate change shifts where species can live.

"President Trump has cemented his legacy as the most anti-wildlife president in history," said Stephanie Kurose, a senior policy specialist with the Center for Biological Diversity. "Today's rule will have devastating consequences for some of America's most iconic species, including the grizzly bear, whooping cranes and Pacific salmon."

The definition finalized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today limits habitat to the "abiotic and biotic setting that currently or periodically contains the resources and conditions necessary to support one or more life processes of a species," likely limiting it to only those places that could support a species now. Most endangered species, however, have lost extensive areas of their historic range to habitat loss and fragmentation, and thus need habitat restoration to recover.

"Our most vulnerable species are barely clinging to survival after being forced from their homes into smaller and smaller spaces," said Kurose. "We can't expect them to ever recover if we don't protect the areas they once lived."

In September a bipartisan group of more than 100 members of Congress sent a [letter](#) to the Trump administration opposing the regulation.

Today's rule is one of many actions the administration has taken to weaken habitat protections for endangered species. In 2019 the administration finalized sweeping changes to the rules implementing the Endangered Species Act that, among other things, specified that species would not get protected critical habitat unless habitat destruction was the primary threat. In September the administration proposed new regulations that radically alter the existing process for deciding when to exclude a particular area from a critical

habitat designation.

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