

With Nation Focused on Pandemic, Trump Interior Dept. to Greenlight Killing of Bear Cubs and Wolf Pups in Their Dens

"Killing has no place in our National Wildlife Refuges."

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President Donald Trump's National Park Service plans to [finalize rules](#) this week that will allow hunters in Alaska to kill bear cubs and wolf pups while they are in their dens, reversing Obama-era regulations meant to prevent destabilization of the state's biodiversity.

The National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) accused the administration of taking advantage of the coronavirus pandemic to push through a rule change against the advice of dozens of natural resource experts and lawmakers.

"Amid the global pandemic, the Trump administration is declaring open season on bears and wolves through its sport hunting rule on national parklands in Alaska," [said](#) NPCA President Theresa Pierno.

Under the new rules, hunters in Alaska will be permitted to:

- use bait including donuts and grease-soaked bread to draw in and kill brown bears;
- use artificial lights to enter dens and kill black bears, including females and their cubs;
- shoot caribou while they are swimming; and
- trap and kill wolves and their pups during denning season.

Alaska Sen. Dan Sullivan, a Republican, [claimed](#) Thursday that the new rules are a matter of "principle" and protecting states' rights. Conservation groups expressed outrage.

"Killing has no place in our National Wildlife Refuges," tweeted the Wolf Conservation Center.

BREAKING

The Feds approved a rule that allows these atrocities in federal preserves in Alaska:

- trapping/killing wolves, pups
- entering dens to kill bears, cubs
- baiting, snaring, aerial gunning

Killing has no place in our Nat'l Wildlife Refuges. <https://t.co/DBqs1olrkm>

— Wolf Conservation Center (@nywolforg) [May 21, 2020](#)

Former Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke drafted the rule before [resigning](#) in 2018 in the face of 17 federal ethics investigations, and the proposal promptly drew condemnation.

Reps. Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.) led more than 70 of her colleagues in demanding the rule be withdrawn.

“The proposed rule would roll back critical protections for America’s beloved, rare and iconic native carnivores, including brown bears, black bears and wolves on the approximately 20 million acres of national preserves in Alaska—land that belongs to all Americans,” [wrote](#) the lawmakers. “The rule would effectively endorse the state of Alaska’s efforts to use extreme practices to reduce bear and wolf populations in order to artificially inflate populations of prey species for sport hunting.”

More than 100 scientists, former National Park Service employees, and academics also [denounced](#) the rule, saying “extremely limited scientific evidence” was being used to justify making it easier for hunters to kill bear cubs and wolf pups.

“Interior Secretary David Bernhardt had the opportunity to halt this rule that includes baiting park bears but chose instead to ignore commonsense and opposition by members of Congress, scientists, and tens of thousands of Americans,” [said](#) Pierno. “Shooting hibernating mama and baby bears is not the conservation legacy that our national parks are meant to preserve and no way to treat or manage park wildlife.”

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Featured image: A bear and her cubs in Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming. (Photo: [Rich Miller/Flickr/cc](#))

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