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Feds Stop Using M-44 Cyanide Bombs, Other Cruel Tools to Kill Colorado Wildlife

Pause Participation in Controversial Predator Control Plans Pending New Review

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Denver, CO— Today, in response to a lawsuit challenging its activities in Colorado, Wildlife Services, the federal wildlife killing program, [agreed](#) to complete a new environmental analysis and end the use of many of its most controversial killing tools in the interim. The [case](#), brought by WildEarth Guardians and the Center for Biological Diversity in April, includes a challenge to the U.S. Department of Agriculture program's involvement in Colorado Parks and Wildlife's controversial plans to kill cougars and bears in a scientifically baseless attempt to boost mule deer populations.

"Today's agreement is the latest step in ensuring the federal government and the state of Colorado follow the law and the best science in managing wildlife," said Stuart Wilcox, staff attorney for WildEarth Guardians. "Ending the use of dangerous sodium cyanide bombs, traps and snares in Colorado makes our public lands safer for people and wildlife."

Under today's [stay of the lawsuit](#), Wildlife Services is required to complete a new environmental assessment by Aug. 1, 2018. According to the agreement, Wildlife Services will not use or fund the use of M-44 sodium cyanide capsules on public lands in Colorado. It will also not participate in, fund, or authorize the hunting or trapping of black bears or mountain lions to "study" the effects on ungulate populations. And Wildlife Services will not deploy or use traps or snares that violate Colorado Constitutional Amendment 14, pending the release of the new analysis.

"This agreement represents a sign of good faith moving forward to do the right thing when it comes to Colorado's wildlife and ecosystems," said Matthew Bishop with the Western Environmental Law Center. "It's a big swing to go from deciding to ignore the best available science to halting potentially harmful wildlife killing while improving the science."

In December 2016, Colorado Parks and Wildlife approved two highly controversial plans to kill large numbers of black bears and mountain lions to assess the impacts on mule deer populations. The plans charge Wildlife Services with carrying out much of the killing using public funds. Wildlife Services' involvement in the experiment lacks proper review as demanded by federal law.

"We're thrilled that Colorado wildlife are getting a break from Wildlife Service's deadly work," said Collette Adkins, an attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity. "The additional analysis spurred by our lawsuit will reveal that Wildlife Services' wildlife killing is scientifically unsound, ineffective and cruel."

Together, the Piceance Basin Predator Management Plan and Upper Arkansas River Predator Management Plan would kill between 15 and 45 mountain lions and 30 to 75 bears over three years in a 500-square-mile area west of

Meeker and Rifle, Colorado, as well as over half of the mountain lions in a 2,370-square-mile area in the south-central part of the state.

The Piceance Basin plan calls for using Wildlife Services to deploy cage traps, culvert traps and foot snares to capture mountain lions and bears, which would then be shot to death. Colorado's wildlife agency ignored overwhelming public opposition — including the advice of the state's own leading scientists — in deciding to proceed with the killing. Colorado Parks and Wildlife is also refusing to disclose how many animals it and Wildlife Services have killed thus far under the plans. Under today's agreement, Wildlife Services will no longer participate in the bear and cougar killing, at least until the new analysis is released.

The organizations are represented by attorneys Matt Bishop and John Mellgren of the Western Environmental Law Center and Stuart Wilcox of WildEarth Guardians.