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## **BLM Urged to Shut Down Illegal Coyote-killing Contests in Wyoming**

### ***Coyote Hunts Lack Necessary Permits, Threaten Public Safety, Natural Resources***

JACKSON, *Wyo.*— Animal-protection and environmental organizations are urging the Bureau of Land Management to shut down two upcoming coyote-killing contests in Wyoming that haven't been permitted by the federal agency. These contests are slated to take place partly on BLM-managed federal land, and contest organizers have failed to obtain the required permits and liability insurance. The purpose of such contests is generally to kill as many coyotes as possible, and prizes are awarded to those who shoot the most.

"These contests are cruel and unethical and have no place on our public lands," said Andrea Santarsiere, a senior attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity. "The BLM shouldn't turn a blind eye to rules that are meant to protect wildlife and other natural resources that we all own."

The first of these upcoming contests, the "Wyoming Coyote Classic," is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 7. In light of the impending date, the groups are turning up the pressure, encouraging their members and supporters to contact the agency field office to demand it take action this week.

Federal regulations require that certain commercial and competitive events held on BLM lands have a "special recreation permit" in order to take place lawfully. Both upcoming Rock Springs contests constitute commercial and competitive use of BLM land and therefore require these permits. According to BLM regulations, the purpose of requiring special recreation permits is to manage visitor use, protect natural and cultural resources, minimize recreational-use conflicts and provide for the health and safety of visitors.

These planned contests pose great risk to natural resources, as contestants are freely using public lands to shoot as many coyotes as possible. Without permits, recreational-use conflicts are almost certain, which raises safety concerns for visitors not aware of, or not participating in, the contest.

“These killing contests engage the very issues Bureau Land Management’s permit requirements are designed to manage,” said Animal Legal Defense Fund Executive Director Stephen Wells. “BLM has required hunting contest organizers to obtain permits in numerous other instances and there’s no reason these contests should be treated any differently.”

Federal law also requires the event promoters to obtain liability insurance prior to hosting the contests. Both upcoming events have no age restrictions, and contestants may enter without prior firearm experience. Serious hunting injuries are especially common among younger and inexperienced participants. As property managers, the federal government could be held liable if a participant or bystander is injured during these contests.

“Wyoming coyotes can be legally persecuted in almost any manner imaginable,” said Program Director Kristin Combs of Wyoming Untrapped. “Like trapping, these ‘recreational’ contests are not based on a sound science foundation, and it’s time to reform these archaic ‘wildlife management’ practices.”

The coalition currently pressuring the BLM includes the Animal Legal Defense Fund, Center for Biological Diversity, Good Wolf, Nevada Wildlife Alliance, Project Coyote, WildEarth Guardians, Wyoming Untrapped, Wyoming Wildlife Advocates and Western Watersheds Project.