

## **For Immediate Release**

March 28, 2017

### **Contact:**

Erik Molvar, Western Watersheds Project, 307-399-7910

Brooks Fahy, Predator Defense, 541-520-6003

Gary Macfarlane, Friends of the Clearwater, 208-882-9755

Andrea Santarsieri, Center for Biological Diversity, 303-854-7748

Michelle Lute, WildEarth Guardians, 406-848-4910

Natalia Lima, Animal Legal Defense Fund, 201-679-7088

### **Immediate Ban Sought on Use of M-44 'Cyanide Bombs' in Idaho**

HAILEY, Idaho— In the wake of the poisoning death of a family dog near Pocatello and the hospitalization of the dog's 14-year-old owner, a coalition of conservation and wildlife organizations today formally petitioned (<https://www.westernwatersheds.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/WS-M-44-APA-petition-final-1.pdf>) the highly secretive arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture known as [Wildlife Services](#) for an immediate ban on the use of M-44 devices in Idaho.

The petition also asked for the immediate removal of all existing devices from the state. M-44s, also known as "cyanide bombs" and "coyote getters," lead to the agonizing death of thousands of animals every year, many of them nontarget animals.

"Clearly, it is unsafe and immoral for Wildlife Services to use these poisonous land mines to target native wildlife for killing on lands of any ownership," said Erik Molvar, Executive Director of Western Watersheds Project. "Our petition calls upon Wildlife Services to take action to eliminate these brutal and indiscriminate chemical weapons before more kids and pets get hurt."

In November Wildlife Services responded to pressure from conservation groups by publishing a [decision](#) that supposedly prevented the use of M-44s on public lands. Even so, the device that killed the Mansfield family dog Casey and injured young Canyon Mansfield had been installed on Bureau of Land Management land in February.

"This incident is exactly why extremely dangerous M-44 cyanide bombs, or other indiscriminate killing tools like traps and poisons, should not be placed on our public lands," said Michelle Lute, wildlife coexistence campaigner for WildEarth Guardians. "It would be a mistake to call this tragedy an accident. It's not an accident if federal employees are knowingly placing deadly devices where children and companion animals play; that's extreme and inexcusable negligence."

The groups were united in calling the killing of native wildlife “morally reprehensible,” and pointed to the absence of any scientific basis for lethal control of native predators.

“Cyanide bombs are indiscriminate killers that must be banned,” said Andrea Santarsiere, a senior attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity. “Any animal that might pull on the baited trigger is at risk, including endangered wildlife like Canada lynx and grizzlies, as well as people and pets. And in just the past few weeks these cruel devices have injured a child and killed an endangered wolf and several family dogs. Enough is enough.”

“Taxpayers should not be expected to continue funding the cruel slaughter of wildlife at the behest of livestock producers,” said Animal Legal Defense Fund Executive Director Stephen Wells. “Cyanide bombs are an indiscriminate and inhumane method of ‘predator control,’ and given their proven danger to humans and companion animals, these devices have no rightful place in wildlife policy.”

The groups also pointed out the long history of unintentional killing of pets and injuries to people that have resulted from the accidental triggering M-44s in residential areas and on public lands. And in a [recent documentary](#), former Wildlife Services employees made public statements regarding the agency’s repeated and habitual flouting of regulations and common-sense safety practices.

"The fact that Wildlife Services continues to state that incidents of M-44s killing domestic dogs and exposing people to poison are 'rare' is an outrage," said Brooks Fahy, executive director of the national wildlife advocacy group Predator Defense. "Those of us involved with this issue know these incidents are commonplace and that countless more will never be known because of Wildlife Services' repeated cover-ups."

Federal law requires the agencies petitioned, the USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the ironically-named Wildlife Services, provide a final decision in writing to the petitioners. Petitioning for the statewide M-44 ban were Western Watersheds Project, Predator Defense, WildEarth Guardians, the Center for Biological Diversity, Friends of the Clearwater, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Western Wildlife Conservancy, Nevada Wildlife Alliance, Gallatin Wildlife Association, Environmental Protection Information Center, the Wolf Conservation Center, Wilderness Watch, Klamath Forest Alliance, Northeast Oregon Ecosystems, Yellowstone to Uintas Connection, Footloose Montana, Animal Legal Defense Fund, Project Coyote, Voices of Wildlife, and the Mountain Lion Foundation.

-END-