

## Judge Rules on Idaho Wolf Derby



By Alison Gene Smith - [alismith@magicvalley.com](mailto:alismith@magicvalley.com)

December 27, 2013

SALMON, Idaho • After a phone hearing Friday morning, a federal judge has decided the fate of a disputed coyote and wolf derby planned for this weekend in central Idaho.

U.S. District Magistrate Judge Candy Dale ruled that organizers are not required to get a special Forest Service permit and the derby can go on as scheduled.

In Friday's 9:30 a.m. hearing, an attorney for WildEarth Guardians told Dale she should halt the event because the U.S. Forest Service shirked its own rules by not requiring that derby organizers get a special permit normally required for competitive events.

Forest Service officials concluded that while hunting would take place in the forest, the competitive portion of the event — where judges would determine contest winners for the biggest wolf — would take place on private land.

Hunters will receive a \$1,000 prize for the largest wolf killed. There is a \$1,000 prize for shooting the most coyotes.

WildEarth Guardians and other environmental groups contend the U.S. Forest Service ignored federal laws by allowing the competition to proceed this Saturday and Sunday near Salmon without requiring organizers to first secure a special-use permit for a competitive event on public land. They've asked Dale to issue a temporary restraining order that would halt the event. The U.S. Forest Service says its rules don't require a special permit.

"This twisted 'wolf derby' is a horrific demonstration of what happens when wolves are prematurely stripped of Endangered Species Act protection," the Defenders of Wildlife organization posted on their website. "Over 154 wolves have already been killed in Idaho since this year's hunting season began. Idaho wolves can't bear to lose more pups, mothers and pack leaders than they already have. It's up to you and me to stop this." Opponents have called the derby a "killing contest."

These claims aren't true, Alder said.

Data from Idaho Fish and Game shows that wolf harvest will be minimal, he said. Cold weather is mostly to blame, he said.

"There's so much misinformation out there," he said. "The threat of a big wolf slaughter is a joke."

Alder said he doubts hunters who show up will even see a wolf.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.