The first 50 days of the Obama administration have been heady days indeed for the environmental community. EPA has promised to reconsider its denial of California’s request for permission to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from cars and to think about regulating CO2 emissions from new stationary sources; the Department of Interior has put the brakes on a Bush administration proposal to open new areas to offshore drilling; and presidential memoranda have called for a new era of scientific integrity and stalled the Bush administration’s ESA consultation rules pending their withdrawal.

There was bound to be a disappointment at some point. That point came for the first time last Friday, when Interior Secretary Salazar announced that he would go ahead with a Bush administration decision to delist the gray wolf in the western Great Lakes and some Rocky Mountain states. As Andrew Wetzler points out at NRDC’s Switchboard, the Rocky Mountain delisting “paints with far too broad a brush.” Wolves will not be delisted in Wyoming, which has yet to come up with a post-delisting management plan that would provide any real protections. They will be delisted in Idaho and Montana, which have both substantial wolf populations (because the Clinton-era reintroduction has been a wild biological success) and wolf management plans FWS thinks are sufficiently protective (although not everybody agrees). But they will also be delisted in parts of Washington, Oregon, and Utah, where occasional wandering wolves have been spotted but there is not yet an established population. The delisting decision seems to endorse a future where wolves are not extinct, but are limited to a few small portions of the west. Perhaps the most disappointing thing about it, though, is that the new administration has missed a chance to reconsider the Bush-era Interior solicitor’s opinion interpreting the term the ESA’s definition of an endangered species as a species “in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range” to refer only to the current, rather than the historic, range.