



Chimpanzee Sanctuary Northwest Applauds Fish and Wildlife Proposal to End Split Listing of Chimpanzees

Cle Elum, WA, June 11, 2013 – Chimpanzee Sanctuary Northwest (CSNW) applauds the proposal announced today by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to expand the protection of chimpanzees in captivity under the Endangered Species Act.

As a sanctuary that cares for seven chimpanzees formerly used as pets, entertainers, and biomedical test subjects and works for the protection of all great apes, CSNW has eagerly awaited a decision which would recognize the perilous situation that our closest living relatives face, both in their native habitat and in captivity. The FWS announcement comes just two days before the celebration of the fifth anniversary of the arrival of the chimpanzees to the sanctuary and the honorary 40th birthday of the oldest resident, Negra, who spent 35 years in biomedical laboratories before coming to the sanctuary.

Jennifer Whitaker, Executive Director of CSNW, said, “This is a happy day for people like me, who care and advocate for chimpanzees. It could be the turning point for how we view and treat chimpanzees within this country, and I hope will ultimately lead to better protection of chimpanzees in the wild.”

In 1976, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed all chimpanzees (*pan troglodytes*) as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), however the agency enacted a special rule making captive chimpanzees exempt from most restrictions that apply to the treatment of a threatened species, allowing the commercial trade of chimpanzees in captivity and their use in biomedical research, the entertainment industry, and as “pets.”

In 1990, due to increased habitat loss and poaching, chimpanzees were upgraded from threatened to endangered under the ESA, but an unusual and controversial “split-listing” was created, which classified free-living chimpanzees as endangered, but captive chimpanzees in the United States as threatened. This cemented the practice of the commercial trade of chimpanzees within the U.S. and the species continued to be bred in captivity, sold to private owners, exploited in circuses and on television, and used in biomedical research. The FWS announcement stated this about the split-listing, “The rule proposed today would correct this inconsistency after the Service determined that the ESA does not allow for captive-held animals to be assigned a separate legal status from their wild counterparts.” The ESA requires that any use of an endangered species that could cause harm to the animal promotes their conservation, and the FWS would be tasked with evaluating proposed uses. The FWS is accepting public comments on the proposal through August 12, 2013.

A growing understanding of the highly intelligent and social nature of chimpanzees has resulted in public outcry over the exploitation of chimpanzees and increasing pressure has been put on individuals and agencies that benefit from this exploitation. CSNW has an advocacy program called Eyes on Apes that has worked to inform the public about the exploitation of non-human great apes and has helped to convince companies to end their use of chimpanzees for advertising and entertainment purposes.

About Chimpanzee Sanctuary Northwest

Chimpanzee Sanctuary Northwest is one of only a handful of sanctuaries in the country caring for chimpanzees. Located on 26 acres near Cle Elum, Washington, the sanctuary is home to seven chimpanzees rescued from biomedical research in 2008. The daily activities of the chimpanzees and their continued recovery from their lives as test subjects are shared through the sanctuary’s blog. For further information about the sanctuary, its advocacy work, the seven resident chimpanzees, and the five-year anniversary celebration: www.ChimpsNW.org.

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For more information contact: Diana Goodrich, diana@chimpsnw.org, 509-470-4440