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**Subject:** From Greenwire -- ENDANGERED SPECIES: Greens, scientists seek federal protection for Fla. black bear  
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KC

Nice coverage!

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# Greenwire

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## ENDANGERED SPECIES:

### Greens, scientists seek federal protection for Fla. black bear

Corbin Hiar, E&E reporter

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Nearly 20 conservation groups and a half dozen scientists yesterday called on the Fish and Wildlife Service to protect the Florida black bear under the Endangered Species Act.

In a [petition](#) to FWS, the coalition argued that Florida's largest land mammal is at risk from habitat loss, vehicles and state-sanctioned hunts. Last year, for instance, humans were responsible for killing at least 590 bears out of an estimated population of fewer than 3,500.

"Years of out-of-control sprawl have pinched the Florida black bear between roads and homes, threatening its long-term survival," said Jaclyn Lopez, Florida director at the Center for Biological Diversity, one of the organizations behind the request. Other groups included the Animal Legal Defense Fund, Animal Welfare Institute, Humane Society of the United States and Sierra Club's Florida chapter.

They want FWS to add the species to the threatened or endangered species list and to set aside critical habitat, in which developments undertaken or permitted by the federal government should alleviate threats to bears.

The Florida black bear was once found throughout the Southeast, but it now occupies 18 percent of its original range in seven isolated subpopulations.

Until 2010, the bear was protected under the state's endangered species law.

Last year, however, Florida wildlife officials sanctioned the first bear hunts in more than two decades. These events, the petition said, led to the deaths of at least 304 bears in two days -- above the mortality targets the state had set in some areas.

The state decision alarmed some academics, who do not often back petitions like this.

"Scientists have an obligation to speak up when agencies are not using the best available science to protect our wildlife," Adrian Treves, an associate professor at the Carnivore Coexistence Lab at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, said in a statement. "The state's apparent mismanagement of the Florida black bear not only puts the bear at risk of extinction but appears to violate state and federal public-trust obligations."

The Fish and Wildlife Service did not immediately comment on the petition. Under the law, it has 90 days to formally respond to the request.

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