

# IDAHO WOLF MANAGEMENT PROGRESS REPORT September 13 – September 26, 2008

## **Monitoring**

Idaho Department of Fish and Game and U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services verified more than seven wolves, including several pups, in a new pack near the Canadian border. The wolves were localized near cattle on public land. There are no apparent depredations, and cattle are scheduled to be removed from public land in a few days. Producers were contacted and contact was made with the local U.S. Forest Service district biologist and ranger. A capture effort was unsuccessful.

The Nez Perce Tribe captured and radio-collared two wolves in Unit 20A in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. The tribe obtained pack/pup count on a pack in Unit 10, with a minimum of six gray adults and four gray pups present.

Idaho provided the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with preliminary population estimates that will likely change by the end of the year. As of mid September, Fish and Game and the Nez Perce estimated 771 wolves and 89 packs, and biologists verified at least 155 pups. Counting wolves is best done from November through mid- January prior to peak dispersal and breeding times, and when snow covered ground provides better observations conditions from the air. End of year counts are completed and published in the annual reports in March. In 2007, the end of year estimate was 732 wolves in 83 packs. Previous years' progress reports at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/manage/>

## **Management**

From January 1 – September 26, agencies have documented 118 dead wolves in Idaho. Of those, 78 were depredation control actions by Wildlife Services, five were illegal kills, 13 legal kills, three natural deaths and 17 others. An additional nine wolves were suspected dead (reported road kills not verified, collars on mortality not picked up, etc.).

From January 1 through September 26, WS confirmed that wolves killed nine cows, 75 calves, 193 sheep and 13 dogs; injured one cow, seven calves, six sheep and seven dogs; probably killed five cows, 19 calves and 57 sheep; and probably injured one cow, three calves and one sheep.

## **Control**

From September 13 through 26, WS confirmed five wolf depredations and determined that another one was a probable wolf depredation. WS confirmed

that wolves killed a cow, two calves, four sheep and a guard dog. WS also confirmed that wolves attacked and injured three guard dogs, and determined that another five sheep were probable wolf kills. During the reporting period, WS killed six wolves and trapped and released three wolves (two with collars) in response to these and previously confirmed depredations. During the same time frame last year, WS investigated six confirmed and one probable wolf depredation

Non-lethal control efforts are ongoing as per the Idaho Wolf Population Management Plan in the area between Leodore and Yellowstone along the boundary with Montana. Radio collars have been placed on wolves in the area that have been implicated in depredations to further knowledge of wolf movement in the area and pursue non-lethal options prior to lethal control. Discussions of and use of non-lethal tools are ongoing with livestock producers to assist them in reducing livestock/wolf problems along this potential corridor.

Additionally, non-lethal efforts continue in a cooperative effort near Ketchum to reduce livestock/wolf conflicts. Four producers, U.S. Forest Service, USDA Wildlife Services, Idaho Fish and Game, Blaine County Commission, and Defenders of Wildlife are experimenting with the use of paid non-lethal personnel (funded by Defenders) who use fladry and penning for sheep at night, and attempt to scare wolves away from sheep during the night. Wolves have been around the sheep on a regular basis but to date only one sheep has been confirmed killed by wolves.

### **Research**

The University of Montana research crews wrapped up their summer efforts last week. The goal of this project is to find reliable, alternative population monitoring tools that are cheaper to implement than traditional radio-collaring methods. University crews had a successful summer, testing "howl boxes" near multiple wolf rendezvous sites and collecting nearly 2,000 genetic samples from scats and day beds while surveying more than 500 predicted rendezvous sites in central Idaho. Data analysis is under way.

Thanks to Dave Ausband the research leader, and Morgan Anderson, Barbara Fannin, Sean Howard, Ryan Kalinowski, Teresa Loya, Doug Miles, Adrian Roadman, Lacy Robinson, Adia Sovie, Jennifer Stenglein, and Ryan Wilbur for another great, productive summer.

### **Information and Education**

Hunting season is upon us. We have received several reports of wolves being attracted to hunters calling elk, and wolves visiting hunter camps or eating poorly hung carcasses. Idaho Fish and Game recommends that hunters be aware that hunting increases chances of running into or attracting wolves and other

carnivores. Carcasses and gut piles attract bears, lions and wolves and should be treated carefully to avoid problems, such as having your meat fed upon. The rule of thumb is to try to get the carcass out of the woods the same day it is killed. It helps to place the gut pile on a tarp and drag it away from the carcass. If that is not possible, hang meat 10 feet off the ground. You should leave clothes, human scent, tarps, etc. to deter carnivores from scavenging your meat. When returning to your kill, approach the carcass carefully and view it safely from a distance.

Carnivores, especially bears, may be close by and might attempt to defend the carcass. Some bears, wolves, coyotes and other scavengers may venture into campsites if they smell meat or other foods. Place your game pole down wind of your camp and make sure the meat is secured 10 feet off the ground and three feet from a tree. Bears and wolves may eat carcasses hung within reach.

Also, wolves are protected under the endangered species act and killing one illegally is a federal offense.

The new Fish and Game Wolf Webpage is online. The new webpage includes information on the lawsuit and injunction that caused wolves to be temporarily relisted under the Endangered Species Act. It also has updated information on the new 10j rule under which Fish and Game is acting as the “designated agent” for the Fish and Wildlife Service, and conducting day to day wolf management. What the public can and can’t do under the new rules is discussed. The new webpage is at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>

We also would like to remind people that when wolves are in the area, please be aware that they may attack or injure dogs. It often helps to keep dogs in kennels or inside buildings at night and to not let them roam freely when humans are not around. When fresh wolf sign is found, place dogs on restraints and keep supervised. The 10j rule allows individuals to harass or kill a wolf attacking or molesting their livestock and stock animals including pets. If you are having concerns or problems with wolves close to your residence, please inform the nearest Fish and Game office.

Please help us manage wolves by reporting wolf sightings on our Fish and Game observation form found at: [http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/apps/wolf\\_report/](http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/apps/wolf_report/)

**New: FWS – Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Status (WY, MT, ID):** The U.S. District Court in Missoula, Montana, issued a preliminary injunction July 18, 2008, that immediately reinstated temporary Endangered Species Act protections for gray wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains pending final resolution of the case. This includes all of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming, the eastern one-third of Washington and Oregon, and parts of north-central Utah. On September 22, the United States filed its motion to vacate the delisting rule, return the gray wolf to the list of endangered and threatened species, and remand the matter to the Fish

and Wildlife Service. Fish and Wildlife, the states, and Department of Justice await the court's decision. All wolves to the north of Interstate- 90 in Idaho remain listed as endangered. All wolves in the southern half of Montana, all portions of Idaho south of Interstate-90 and all of Wyoming are being managed under the 2005 and 2008 Endangered Species Act nonessential experimental population 10j regulations. Idaho Fish and Game is the designated agent for the Fish and Wildlife Service in day-to-day management of wolves under the MOU between the secretary of interior and governor of Idaho signed January 2006.

Delisting wolves and assuring their proper long-term management is and has been of highest priority for the state of Idaho and the Fish and Game Department. We continue to work with the departments of interior and justice, other states and interveners toward the delisting wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains, and toward state management under the state Wolf Conservation and Management Plan and the Wolf Population Management Plan.

You may review past wolf weekly publications on our wolf webpage and links along with all pertinent and updated wolf information and publications at:

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>