

Idaho Wolf Management Progress Report June 2009

Wolf Delisting Litigation Status

June 2, a lawsuit was filed in federal District Court in Missoula by a coalition of 13 environmental and animals rights groups. Another separate lawsuit challenging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service delisting criteria was filed shortly after by the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. Both groups have their own attorneys, but those two cases have now been consolidated in the Missoula District Court in Missoula under Judge Donald Molloy. Their complaint alleges the Northern Rocky Mountain wolf population is not recovered and that the delisting violates the Endangered Species Act for many legal reasons, including that delisting cannot occur without an adequate Wyoming regulatory framework in place. A request for a preliminary injunction has not been filed at this time. In addition, the state of Wyoming filed a lawsuit in Cheyenne, Wyoming, challenging the Fish and Wildlife Service's rejection of Wyoming's regulatory framework and the Wyoming state wolf management plan.

Additional information, past wolf updates, and publications are available at:
<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>.

Monitoring

The Idaho Fish and Game 2008 annual report on Wolf Conservation and Management in Idaho is available at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/manage/>. The minimum year-end population estimates for 2008 for Idaho are 846 wolves, in 88 packs, with 39 documented breeding pairs. This is about a 15 percent increase over the 2007 minimum population estimate of 732.

Wolves have denned and produced pups. Numerous monitoring flights have occurred over the past three months, including efforts to look for lost radio-collars or missing wolves. As of the end of June, 25 packs had been confirmed to have produced pups across Idaho.

In June, biologists radio-collared eight new wolves and replaced radio-collars on two additional wolves. Between January 1 and June 30, Idaho Fish and Game, the Nez Perce Tribe, and USDA Wildlife Services personnel captured and placed radio-collars on 44 new wolves and replaced radio-collars on 10 previously collared wolves.

Management and Control Actions

During June USDA Wildlife Services verified 22 wolf depredations, two black bear depredations and three mountain lion depredations. Wildlife Services confirmed that wolves killed six calves, 65 sheep and a guard dog. Wildlife Services also confirmed wolves injured four calves, two sheep and one guard dog; and determined one calf and 32 sheep were probable wolf kills, and one calf and one sheep suffered injuries that were probably caused by wolves.

During the same time frame, Wildlife Services confirmed that black bears killed one calf and injured another, and a mountain lion killed eight sheep. Wildlife Services killed 10 wolves in June, and captured, radio-collared, and released three.

Between January 1 and June 30, 2009 (all preliminary figures), Wildlife Services verified 56 wolf depredations, two black bear depredations and five mountain lion depredations. Wildlife Services confirmed that wolves killed 33 calves, 67 sheep and three dogs. Wildlife Services also confirmed that wolves injured seven calves, two sheep and one guard dog. Wildlife Services also determined that six calves and 32 sheep were probable wolf kills, and one calf and one sheep were probable wolf injuries. During the same time frame, Wildlife Services confirmed that black bears killed one calf and injured another and mountain lions killed 18 sheep.

Wildlife Services killed 30 wolves and one mountain lion, and captured, radio-collared, and released six wolves to aid in future monitoring.

Table 1. Confirmed wolf depredations and wolf mortality in Idaho from 2003 to June 30, 2009.

YEAR	Depredations ¹				Wolf Mortality			
	Cattle	Sheep	Dogs	Total	WS ²	10j / 36-1107 ³	Other	Total
2003	7	130	3	140	7	0	8	15
2004	19	176	4	199	17	0	21	38
2005	29	166	12	207	24	3	16	43
2006	41	237	4	282	35	7	19	61
2007	57	211	10	278	43	7	27	77
2008	104	215	14	333	94	13	44	151
Jan 1 – Jun 30, 2009	40	69	4	113	30	4	19	53

¹ Includes confirmed wolf depredations resulting in death or injury.

² Authorized take by USDA Wildlife Services.

³ Authorized take under 10j; or legal take after delisting under Idaho Code 36-1107 for protection of stock and dogs under state law.

Research

On the North Fork Clearwater River study area, Idaho Fish and Game research biologists attempted to capture wolves in a helicopter-darting operation in the Pot Mountain and Fish Creek Packs to deploy additional Argos-GPS radio collars. They were unable to capture any wolves in the Pot Mountain Pack, but they recaptured Wolf 187 and replaced her Argos-GPS radio collar and also captured and collared a yearling male. The research crew will be trapping in July to deploy radios in the Pot Mountain and Deception packs.

In the Lowman study area, a sub-adult male (B448) in the Casner Pack was captured in May and collared with an Argos-GPS collar, as part of a pilot wolf diet study. The research crew back-tracked it during June and examined sites the wolf visited and collected diet information. Fish and Game research staff also provided pack/den site locations from the ARGOS collars to Dave Ausband for further investigation.

University of Montana researchers continue to develop wolf population monitoring techniques. In June, one UM crew obtained pup counts in several wolf packs in the three research study areas (Lowman, Salmon, Coeur d' Alene). This crew also continued testing howl boxes and rub stations near occupied rendezvous sites. An additional UM crew began rendezvous site-DNA surveys in the Salmon area in June. Both UM crews will continue working in the three study areas through July and August. For more info on this research see:

<http://www.umt.edu/mcwru/PERSONNELPROFILES08/PPDaveAusband2008.htm>

Information and Education

Further information and updates can be viewed at the Fish and Game Web site:

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

A reminder: wolves are fully protected under state law. For more detailed information on the laws and policies protecting wolves in Idaho, and what people are allowed to do to protect livestock and pets, please visit the Fish and Game Web site or call local Fish and Game offices.

Please help us manage wolves by reporting wolf sightings on the Fish and Game observation form at: http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/apps/wolf_report/

Delisting: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Status (WY, MT, ID): The rule that removed the gray wolf in the Northern Rocky Mountains from the endangered species list became effective May 4.

The “Final Rule to Establish a Gray Wolf – Northern Rocky Mountain Distinct Population Segment and Remove it from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Species” was published in the *Federal Register Vol. 74, No. 62 pages 15123-15188* on April 2. The rule, the literature cited, and questions and answers about the delisting rule are posted on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site at <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov>. The rule delists wolves in Montana, Idaho, eastern third of Washington and Oregon, and a small part of north central Utah. Wolves in Wyoming will remain under the protection of Endangered Species Act. The Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to manage wolves in all of Wyoming under the provisions of the 1994 nonessential experimental population rules. Management under the ESA will continue until Wyoming develops a regulatory framework that the Service determines meets the purposes of the ESA. After that happens Fish and Wildlife may initiate the mandatory federal regulatory process, including public review and comment, to turn management over to Wyoming.

As of May 4, all wolves in Idaho, Montana, eastern Washington and Oregon, and a portion of northern Utah are delisted. In Idaho wolves are being managed as a big game animal. They will be protected by state laws already approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Idaho legislature, and Idaho Fish and Game Commission. The Fish and Game Commission approved 2009 wolf hunting season dates in March and will set the statewide and wolf zone harvest quotas in August.

Information, past wolf updates and publications are available on the Idaho Fish and Game wolf webpage at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>