

Idaho Wolf Management Progress Report March 16 – April 3, 2009

News on Delisting

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 becomes effective May 4, 2009. It was published in the *Federal Register* Vol. 74, No. 62 pages 15123-15188 on April 2, 2009. The rule, the literature cited, and questions and answers about it are posted on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Website at <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov>. The rule delists wolves in Montana, Idaho, eastern one-third of Washington and Oregon, and a small part of north central Utah. Wolves in Wyoming will remain under the adequate regulatory mechanisms of the 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 Fish and Wildlife Service determines meets the purposes of the ESA. After that, Fish and Wildlife may initiate the mandatory federal regulatory process [including public review and comment] to turn management over to Wyoming.

Until May 4, 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. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game is the designated agent for the Fish and Wildlife Service in day-to-day management of wolves under an 2006 agreement between the federal government and Idaho.

Once wolves are delisted they will be managed as a big game animal in all of Idaho. 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 Commission approved 2009 wolf hunting season dates during their March meeting, and they will set the statewide and wolf zone harvest quotas in August before the fall hunting seasons.

Past wolf updates are available on the Fish and Game wolf Web page along with pertinent wolf information at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>

Monitoring

Idaho’s annual report on wolf management has been completed and sent to the Fish and Wildlife Service. It is at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/manage/> . The minimum population estimates for 2008 are 846 wolves for Idaho, in 88 packs and 39 breeding pairs. This is about a 15 percent increase over the 2007 minimum population estimate of 732.

Wolves are just beginning to select and dig den sites. Aerial surveys over the next few weeks will attempt to locate den sites to allow biologists to verify reproduction and conduct pup counts. Wolf pups are typically born in mid April.

Management

From January 1 – April 3, 2009, agencies have documented 17 dead wolves in Idaho. Of those, nine were depredation control actions by USDA Wildlife Services; two were legal kills; two illegal kills; one natural kill; and three other or unknown.

From January 1 – April 3, Wildlife Services confirmed that wolves killed 11 calves, one sheep, two dogs; probably killed two calves; and probably injured two calves.

A wolf pack has been drawing a crowd near Ketchum-Sun Valley recently as they prey on herds of elk that have been fed by local residents through the winter. This pack of wolves continues to be seen at times close to human development and high-use trails and roads. Ground hazing by Idaho Fish and Game continues in an attempt to dissuade the group from remaining in an area where problems may develop. Hazing and aversive conditioning occurs across the state when wolves are in close proximity to humans and pose a threat to livestock, dogs or human safety. Nonlethal harassment is allowed by the public as well. Also, under current federal law, individuals are allowed to kill a wolves harassing or attacking their livestock or dog on public or private land. Once delisted, a similar state law will provide similar protections and allowances.

Table 1. Confirmed wolf depredations and wolf mortality in Idaho from 2003 to March 15, 2009 (tentative).

YEAR	Depredations ¹				Wolf Mortality			
	Cattle	Sheep	Dogs	Total	WS ²	10j 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
2009	11	1	2	14	9	2	6	17
Total	268	1136	48	1448	229	32	141	402

¹ Includes confirmed depredations resulting in death or injury

² Authorized take by Wildlife Services

³ Authorized take under 10j or while delisted for protection of stock and dogs

Control

From March 16 – April 3, Wildlife Services conducted five wolf depredation investigations. Wildlife Service confirmed that wolves killed four calves, and Fish and Game confirmed that wolves killed one dog - all on private land. In response to these and previous depredations, Wildlife Services shot and killed three wolves. During the same time in 2008, Wildlife Services conducted 10 wolf depredation investigations and confirmed that wolves killed seven calves and a cow, and determined that another calf and cow were probable wolf kills. In response to depredations, Wildlife Services shot and killed five wolves.

Research

Nothing new to report.

Information and Education

Michael Lucid, of Idaho Fish and Game gave a presentation to 20 members of the Fish and Game Master Naturalist program on March 24 at the MK Nature Center.

Curt Mack, of the Nez Perce Tribe gave a presentation to Dr. Matt Carroll's Natural Resource Policy Law course at Washington State University on March 26. Forty students were in attendance.

Further information and updates can be viewed at:

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

A reminder: wolves are protected under the endangered species act and killing one illegally is a federal offense. When they are delisted, they will be fully protected under state and federal laws.

Please help Fish and Game manage wolves by reporting wolf sightings on the Fish and Game observation form found at:

http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/apps/wolf_report/