

Idaho Wolf Management Update June, 2011

Wolves were delisted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the 2009 delisting rule and wolf management responsibility was returned to the State of Idaho on May 5, 2011. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to manage wolves in Wyoming until the state of Wyoming has a Fish and Wildlife Service-approved regulatory framework for wolf management.

Upon delisting, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game immediately resumed lead responsibility for resolving livestock depredations by authorizing control actions and issuing kill permits when appropriate, and resumed responsibility for wolf monitoring. Fish and Game initiated its predation management plan in the Lolo elk management zone days after management authority was returned to the state. Fish and Game staff continues to closely monitor and research the impacts of wolf predation on ungulates. During June, Fish and Game's personnel from around the state focused on development of a proposal for hunting and trapping seasons for this fall and winter.

Hunting and trapping season proposals are available for public review and comment on the Fish and Game website. <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/hunt/wolf/proposals.cfm>.

Fish and Game will present a final recommendation for wolf seasons to the Idaho Fish and Game Commission for consideration at the meeting in Salmon on July 27 – 28.

Nez Perce Tribe wolf program staff continue to share wolf monitoring responsibilities in central and north-central Idaho through Memorandums of Agreement with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the state of Idaho.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services personnel continue to respond to suspected depredations on livestock or pets. Calls about depredations should be directed to Wildlife Services at 866-487-3297 or 208-378-5077.

Additional information is available on the Fish and Game website:
<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>

Monitoring

The 2010 annual report on Wolf Conservation and Management in Idaho was prepared by the Nez Perce Tribe wolf program staff. It is available through the Fish and Game website at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/manage/>.

Nez Perce Tribe and Idaho Fish and Game staff are back in the field working throughout the state to confirm reproduction and breeding pair status (at least two pups produced and still alive) and capture and radio-collar additional wolves to aide in monitoring and completing year-end counts. Telemetry flights are conducted about once a month.

USDA Wildlife Services staff captured, radio-collared and released one new wolf during June.

Through June 30, Nez Perce Tribe and Idaho Fish and Game staff had documented successful reproduction of a minimum of 48 pups in 15 packs, including 12 packs which tentatively qualify for "breeding pair" status (at least two pups produced and surviving).

Management and Control Actions

Idaho Fish and Game continues efforts to reduce the wolf population in the Lolo Elk Management Zone (Game Management Units 10 and 12) under Fish and Game's predation management plan. Fish and Game has authorized several licensed outfitters and their guides to kill wolves they encountered during their spring bear hunts in units 10 and 12, but as of June 30, no wolves had been taken. Fish and Game also authorized conservation officers to take wolves encountered during performance of their regular duties in those units. One wolf was taken by a Fish and Game conservation officer during June.

In response to recurring sightings of wolves and depredation of pets and livestock in the town of Elk City, Fish and Game authorized the Idaho County Sheriff and two deputies, the U.S. Forest Service law enforcement officer and local Fish and Game conservation officers to kill wolves encountered in Elk City township. One wolf was taken under this control authorization during June.

Defenders of Wildlife ended their program to compensate ranchers for livestock losses confirmed to have been caused by wolves last fall. The Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation manages the state wolf compensation program.

During June, USDA Wildlife Services personnel confirmed that wolves killed 11 calves and two sheep. Wildlife Services also determined that another five calves and one sheep were probable wolf kills. In response to these and previous depredations, Wildlife Services killed five wolves and radio-collared and released one wolf.

From January 1 – June 30, 2011, USDA Wildlife Services personnel confirmed wolves killed or injured 41 cattle, 18 sheep and one dog. In comparison, during the same period in 2010, they confirmed wolves killed or injured 34 cattle, 26 sheep and no dogs. During January 1 – June 30, 2009, Wildlife Services confirmed wolves killed or injured 40 cattle, 69 sheep and four dogs. Confirmed wolf depredations and mortalities from 2003–2011 are reported in Table 2.

Research

Idaho Fish and Game wildlife research biologists continue to monitor wolves, elk, and moose in the North Fork Clearwater study area and wolves and elk in the Lowman study area. Fish and Game research efforts have documented that wolf predation is the leading cause of mortality of cow and calf elk in some elk management zones. As a result, calf recruitment is insufficient to offset adult cow mortality, causing these elk populations to continue to decline.

The Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at The University of Montana is continuing their test of "biofencing". A biofence uses human-distributed wolf scats and urine to attempt to manipulate wolf pack movements. A pilot test on three wolf packs in 2010 suggested biofencing may be effective. A crew is working in the Sawtooth Zone and will finish work in late August. As time permits, this crew is also field-testing howl boxes (automated devices that broadcast and record wolf howls) which may be useful for wolf population monitoring. In mid-June, the 2010 big game hunter survey was mailed to about 12,000 randomly-selected deer and elk hunters all across Idaho to query them about wolf observations during the 2010 hunting season. The resulting data (as well as other survey techniques) are being used to populate a patch occupancy model and estimate wolf population size. For more information on University of Montana research please visit: <http://www.umt.edu/mcwru/personnel/ausband/default.aspx>.

Information and Education

Idaho Fish and Game staff presented an overview of wolf reintroduction, population status, and management in Idaho to students at Broadview University on June 13.

Additional information and updates can be viewed at:
<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>

Table 1. Total known wolf mortality by cause, Jan. 1, 2011 – June 30, 2011.

Wolf Mgt Zone	WS Control	IDFG Control	Harvest	Illegal	Legal (protection of livestock or pets)	Other	Unk	Total
Dworshak-Elk City	1					2		3
Lolo		6						6
McCall-Weiser	2				3	1	1	7
Middle Fork								0
Palouse-Hells Canyon				1				1
Panhandle								0
Salmon	1			1	1		3	6
Sawtooth	5			1	3	2	1	12
Selway								0
Southern Idaho					1			1
Southern Mountains					1			1
Island Park						1		1
Total	9	6	0	3	9	6	5	38

Table 2. Confirmed wolf depredations and mortalities in Idaho, 2003 to June 30, 2011.

YEAR	Depredations ¹				Wolf Mortality					
	Cattle	Sheep	Dogs	Total	WS ²	IDFG Control Action ³	10j / 36-1107 ⁴	Other ⁵	Hunter Harvest	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		14	45		153
2009	76	295	14	385	87		6	45	135	273
2010	75	148	0	223	67		13	18	46	144
2011 (1/1 – 6/30)	41	18	1	60	9	6	9	14	0	38

¹ Includes only confirmed wolf depredations of cattle, sheep, and dogs that resulted in death or injury.

² Wolves taken by USDA Wildlife Services in response to depredation on livestock.

³ Wolves taken as authorized by IDFG to address unacceptable predation on ungulates.

³ Authorized take under 10j, or legal take under state law for protection of stock and dogs (Idaho Code 36-1107) while wolves were delisted, or authorized by kill permit while wolves were delisted..

⁴ Other includes of mortalities of unknown cause, documented natural mortality, collisions with automobiles, and illegal take.