



# Idaho Fish and Game NEWS

## Wolves in Idaho

### They're Ours: Now What?

Wolves are delisted again, and on many people's minds recently following the news that Secretary of Interior Salazar moved to accept the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's wolf delisting rule.

#### How did we get here?

Wolf recovery started when wolves were listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1974 under the Nixon Administration. Thirty-five years and seven presidents later, wolf populations are recovered and delisted in the Midwest and Northern Rocky Mountain populations. The act is a powerful piece of legislation that requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to recover all species on the list.

#### Why state management is important

States are uniquely set up to manage wildlife. The North American model of wildlife management has worked



This juvenile male wolf was captured and radio-collared in the mountains northeast of Boise in May 2006. Idaho Fish and Game biologists lost track of him in September of that year. This year he turned up in northwestern Montana, during a wolf monitoring flight in March 2009 by Montana biologists.

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IDFG photo by Niels Nokkentved

well over the past 50-80 years and has recovered dozens of species from near extinction to healthy, huntable populations.

The model identifies wildlife as the property of the states, and allows the states to develop laws and regulations to restrict hunting and fishing, and to

charge a fee for the privilege to hunt and fish.

Idaho Fish and Game's mission states: "All wildlife, including all wild animals, wild birds, and fish, within the state of Idaho, is hereby declared to be the property of the state of Idaho. It shall be preserved, protected,

perpetuated, and managed. It shall be only captured or taken at such times or places, under such conditions, or by such means, or in such manner, as will preserve, protect, and perpetuate such wildlife, and provide for the citizens of this state and, as by law per-

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## Science Backs Delisting Rocky Mountain Wolves

*Ed Bangs has served as the lead biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the federal agency's effort to restore the gray wolf population in northern Rocky Mountain states. He has been with the project since 1988, including the release in Yellowstone Park and central Idaho. He has remained in the job through the process of delisting this population of wolves under the Endangered Species Act.—editor*

By Ed Bangs

Wolf delisting is the right thing to do biologically because the best science shows wolves no longer need the protections of the Endangered Species Act in Montana or Idaho. Right now there are about 1,650 wolves in the northern Rockies and they live in about 220 packs and at least 100 of them successfully raised two or more pups in 2008.

The population is highly genetically diverse because of the way we

did the reintroductions and subsequent management relocations. It amuses me that activists, politicians, and lawyers are "demanding" the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service scientists use "best science".

There is nothing short of excessive and prolonged levels of killing by people over a very large area that could affect the wolf population into the future- and that clearly won't happen.

The northern Rockies wolves are simply a 400-mile southern extension of a vast Canadian wolf population of over 12,000 in Alberta and British Columbia and nearly 60,000-70,000 wolves in North America. Wolves are harvested in Alaska and Cana-

da—and most other parts of the world—and generally the populations do just fine.

Wolves are tremendously resilient and adaptable animals and in recent history wolves have the greatest natural distribution of any land mammal on earth except people.

Resident wolf packs occupy nearly all suitable habitat in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming so there really isn't any more room for more wolf packs without lots more livestock and pet damage than we current have. Last year was a record with at least 214 cattle, 355 sheep, 14 dogs and 18 other large domestic animals confirmed killed. Studies indicate only a fraction, perhaps only one in eight of

**The "crying wolf" claims that 1,000 wolves may be immediately killed in the northern Rockies are absolutely not true**

actual wolf-caused losses, are ever confirmed.

In 2008, nearly \$500,000 was paid by private and state wolf compensation programs in the northern Rockies and U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services spent nearly \$1 million doing problem wolf control work.

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# Wolf

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*mitted to others, continued supplies of such wildlife for hunting, fishing and trapping.”*

This law is key to the culture and purpose of Idaho Fish and Game. The professional biologists and managers understand that all species are important. The law also requires Fish and Game to provide the public with continued supplies of wildlife for hunting and fishing.

### **How will Fish and Game manage wolf populations?**

In 2002 the Legislature passed a Wolf Conservation and Management Plan under which wolves in Idaho would not be allowed to drop below the minimum of 10 breeding pairs and 100 wolves, but would also be allowed to persist where they did not cause conflicts.

In 2008, with the help of representatives of interest groups, Fish and Game developed, and the Idaho Fish and Game Commission approved, the

Idaho Wolf Population Management Plan. This plan is similar to other Idaho big game species plans. The commission set the statewide population goal to stabilize the population between the 2005 and 2007 population levels, levels at which the population appeared have exceeded recovery goals and seemed to saturate the optimal and available habitat.

Fish and Game divided the state into 12 wolf zones based on livestock conflict levels, elk population health, and similarity in habitat and conditions. These wolf zones will be used to focus wolf management and harvest based on conflict levels, health of the wolf population, and social issues.

Wolf harvest will be delineated as follows:

Mortality limits will be based on statewide population goals and on wolf zone objectives.

Annual mortality limits will be calculated for each zone based on the annual increase due to the birth rate, and the number of reported and estimated unreported wolf mortalities.

Once mortality limits are reached, the hunting season for the zone will

be closed. If the mortality limit for the state is reached first, all zones will close.

Season length and methods of take were set at the March commission meeting following public input.

Harvest quota based on remaining mortality limits will be set just prior to the hunting season by Commission directive.

The Fish and Game director has emergency closure authority to shut down the hunting season in any location or statewide should the need exist.

### **Won't hunting endanger wolves?**

Wolves live in packs, are territorial, and have large territories that they actively defend. They are relatively easy to count when compared to solitary predators, such as cougars and bears. Eighty-eight wolf packs were documented in Idaho at the end of 2008, and wolves in 58—or two-thirds—of those packs were radio marked. The estimated population is at least 846 wolves. They can reproduce at remarkable rates of 40 to 50 percent annually, without mortality.

In Idaho over the last several years, despite annual mortality of 20 to 30 percent, the population continues to grow at a rate of 15 percent annually. Their growth rate is greater than any other big game animal, and a higher percentage of the population is monitored than any other big game animal. Hunting wolves is sustainable in Idaho.

### **Is hunting the only thing Fish and Game will do to manage wolves?**

Wolf management is complex enough to warrant the need and use of many tools. Hunting would be the primary tool, preferred by biologists as well as most licensed hunters. But by itself hunting will not eliminate all conflicts.

Fish and Game will continue to use the tools and legal techniques developed during recovery to enhance management and control of conflicts—measures such as wolf hazing and aversive conditioning, increased vigilance of flocks and herds of domestic animals with guarding dogs and herders and hazers, visual and psychological barriers known as fladry, Radio Activated Guard device, or RAG box, and others.

Research continues on technology and methods to improve responses to problems and to increase knowledge of wolves. Fish and Game will continue its intensive research efforts looking at elk, moose, and deer populations across the state to determine the effects of wolf predation under various conditions.

# Science

*continued from page 1*

Montana has committed to manage for over 400 wolves, Idaho for over 500 wolves, and the Fish and Wildlife Service will manage wolves in Wyoming at about 300. So delisting in Montana and Idaho will not affect the Yellowstone Park wolves or any of the wolves in the Greater Yellowstone area in Wyoming and no one is suggesting there will be anything but very limited and highly regulated fair chase (no aircraft or snow machines) hunting in Montana and Idaho which will absolutely not threaten the wolf population and will maintain it at more than 1,200 wolves.

The “crying wolf” claims by some that 1,000 wolves may be immediately killed in the northern Rockies are absolutely not true. Montana and Idaho have already been managing wolves for about five years in their states under cooperative agreements with the Fish and Wildlife Service, so they have the expertise, field staff, and organization to continue to do a great job, just as they have done with managing mountain lions, black bears, elk, deer, moose, etc. Wyoming is another story and that’s why we are not removing the ESA protections for wolves there until Wyoming can de-

velop an acceptable regulatory framework and wolf management plan.

Based on some of what you have probably heard, I’d be upset too. However, most of it isn’t accurate. What is happening (as is typical when you mix wolves and people anywhere in the world) is that people are using wolves as a symbol of other human values and opinions to debate with other people.

So some of the people who don’t like the idea of wolves being killed by people (although we killed 265 wolves last year because of record levels of livestock depredation and the population still increased eight percent from 2007 levels) are making stuff up or presenting partial facts to justify their opinions.

The Fish and Wildlife Service’s job as defined by Congress and the ESA is to have the best science and use it to make rational fact-based decisions. We have a situation now where the science—and all the expert scientists we relied on as peer reviewers—is clearly saying the northern Rockies wolf population is fully biologically recovered and will never be threatened in the future unless states fail to carry out their commitments to regulate human-caused mortality.

There are some folks who don’t like that and are attempting to sway things politically to their value systems by “stretching” the truth or confusing science (facts) with human values and opinions. Science can’t resolve human moral issues. I have no problem with folks saying “I don’t want wolves hunted because I think that is morally wrong,” but I do take issue with twisting the facts and science to falsely justify that their values are somehow based on “true science”.

Anyway, the northern Rockies wolf population is doing great, at least biologically. The legal issues and human-value issues are legitimate ones for people to argue about and ask the courts or politicians for clarification or to better address their concerns. But the science is clear-cut, biologically the northern Rockies wolf population is in outstanding condition and is fully recovered.

The level of highly-regulated hunting that is planned by the states (just as bear, lion, elk, deer, etc, hunts have helped conserve those populations/herds) isn’t going to affect the overall wolf population or its future health. For more fact-based information about wolves and the NRM see <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov>

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Commissioner's Corner

# Wolf Management: Idaho Has a Proven Record

By Gary Power,  
Salmon Region Commissioner

Wolf delisting is once again on the horizon.

As the Idaho Department of Fish and Game prepares to assume management of this controversial species, groups on either end of the spectrum are doing what they can to forestall the delisting process. Those that support wolves believe that the state is set to eradicate the species while those opposed to the animals just as strongly believe that the state will not do enough to reduce wolf populations.

Both sides give wolves mythical stature and supernatural powers that cast the animal in either a positive or negative light. Such wide-ranging views illustrate how the wolf re-introduction and impending delisting process have been and will continue to be the most highly charged emotional issue facing wildlife management in the state.

Without a doubt, wolves are recovered in Idaho and the Northern Rockies. Their population is growing annually with a total population estimate of 1,645 wolves currently occupying Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. Fifty-one percent of these animals live in Idaho. Based on historic production, the total number of wolves will increase to more than 2,100 in the tri-state region in 2009.

This is well above the recovery level of 100 wolves and 10 breeding pairs in each of the three states listed in the recovery plan. Idaho's population is estimated to increase to a minimum of 1,100 this year.

Many groups have stated that wolf recovery and management should be science-based. This science-based approach has been used throughout the history of the wolf re-introduction project from its inception to re-introduction in 1995 and 1996, and biological recovery in 2002. Sound science provided the foundation for the first

delisting rule published in 2008, but this rule was subsequently enjoined in a lawsuit. The science was recently reviewed by the present administration, and the new delisting rule published on April 1, 2009. While the political administrations changed throughout the process, many of the scientists originally involved with the project



Gary Power wrangles an elk to fit her with a tracking collar, part of a study of big game survival.

Photo courtesy Gary Power

remain. World-renowned wolf scientists including Dr. L. David Mech and Dr. Douglas Smith have stated that the wolf is fully recovered in the Northern Rockies and should be delisted. In addition, the Nez Perce Tribe, which has played a major role in this project, has added its support to delisting.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game is ready to move forward with wolf management in the state using science-based, adaptive management. The department has been involved on

a daily basis with partial management of wolves in its role as a designated agent for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is now time for Fish and Game to assume full management.

It is in our collective best interests to properly manage wolves along with all other big game animals

to prevent the listing or re-listing of any of Idaho's wild animals. In fact, Idaho code requires Fish and Game to preserve, protect, perpetuate and manage all wildlife within the state. More specifically, Idaho code states that "It (all wildlife) shall be only captured or taken at such times or places, under such conditions, or by such means or in such a manner, as will preserve, protect and perpetuate such wildlife, and provide for the citizens of this

state, and as by law permitted to others, continued supplies of such wildlife for hunting, fishing and trapping." The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has taken its mandate seriously. More than 30 years of management of mountain lions and black bears illustrate the department's ability to successfully manage large predators as game animals.

Historically, both cougars and black bears were hunted indiscriminately. Idaho had no seasons or limits for either species. In fact, a bounty was paid on mountain lions until 1958. Although the bounty was eliminated, the mind-set remained that cougar populations needed to continue to be reduced for human safety and protection of deer populations.

Ironically, it was cougar hunters that worked with Fish and Game to get legislation passed in 1972 making the big cats a game species. Landmark research conducted by Dr. Maurice Hornocker, provided a scientific foundation to support the legislation. With cougar populations significantly de-

pressed or non-existent in many areas, Fish and Game set seasons, limits, and area closures along with tagging requirements. Cougar populations rebounded, prompting the development of Idaho's first cougar management plan in 1986. The plan used the best science to insure the health of cougar populations as well as their prey animals. Season lengths, limits, and occasional quotas help reduce conflicts with livestock and prey species while maintaining a healthy mountain lion population statewide. Today, cougar populations are flourishing with an estimated 2,000 – 3,000 in the state.

Like mountain lions, black bears have a long history of indiscriminate hunting. Although they became a big game animal in 1943, management began in the 1970s as a result of extensive research efforts. Management objectives were instituted to monitor harvest and insure the health of black bear populations. Season limits and mandatory checks help maintain population objectives. They also allow for extra harvest to deal with conflicts between black bears and livestock, other wildlife, or humans, particularly in cases where bears have learned to associate humans with food. Through good science-based management, the black bear population in Idaho is healthy with an estimated 20,000 roaming the state.

The wolf has already been classified as a big game animal in Idaho. The Commission has adopted the Wolf

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## Commission Calendar

### May – Quarterly Meeting

May 13,14, 15

(Public Hearing May 13)

Pocatello

Season setting: Chinook salmon;

FY11 budget approval; Nonbiological rules briefing for game animals;

Season setting: sandhill cranes.

### July – Quarterly Meeting

July 22,23,24

(Public Hearing July 22)

McCall

Rules: nonbiological for all game animals; Rules: nonresident deer and elk tag quotas; nonresident deer and elk tag outfitter set-aside;

Rules: nonbiological for 2010-2011 fishing seasons;

Consider release of bighorn sheep tags for auction and lottery; Commission direction on the expenditure of Animal Damage Control funds; legislative proposals; Migratory game birds briefing.

### August – Special Meeting or Conference Call

August TBD

### October – Conference Call

October 29 or 30 TBD

Season setting: Migratory game birds (waterfowl seasons and limits for firearms and falconry);

Season setting: Sage-grouse seasons;

FY11 budget request.

Ratification of rules.

### November – Quarterly Meeting

November 18,19,20

(Public Hearing November 18)

Coeur d'Alene

Season setting: 2010-2011 Fishing Seasons; Appoint Commission representative to WAFWA; Election of Commission chair, vice-chair.

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collective  
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# Local Wolf Makes Good in Montana

In late May, 2006, Idaho Fish and Game wolf biologist Michael Lucid set out traps in the mountains north of Boise to catch one of the wolves of the Timberline pack.

He wanted to trap and radio-collar one or more of the wolves in the pack that had been without a radio-collared member since the previous fall.

“We try and keep two collars on every pack in the state,” Lucid said. “And this pack had been off the air for about six or seven months now.”

On Wednesday, May 24, he and fellow Fish and Game staff biologist Steve Nadeau trapped two healthy males one to two years old, gray and weighing about 80 pounds each. Both were caught in roadside traps baited with dog food and wolf scat. Both tranquilized wolves were examined, ear-tagged and fitted with new radio collars.

One of them was labeled B279M. After administering an antidote, Lucid and Nadeau watched as the animal woke up to make sure he was not injured. The wolf staggered drunkenly before getting his legs under him and disappearing into the timber on the hillside above the road.

The newly radio-collared wolf and others like it help Fish and Game biologists track wolf packs and monitor



The gray wolf at the right, marking his territory, was one captured by Idaho Fish and Game biologists in May 2006 (seen on page 1), photographed here by Liz Bradley of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, northwest of Missoula on March 26, 2009. Photo courtesy Liz Bradley, MFWP

their activities. And the collared wolf may lead Lucid to the pack’s den or a rendezvous site.

“I do an aerial flight every month, so I’ll get a location from the air,” Lucid said. “And hopefully these radio collars will lead me to their pups, and let me count how many pups that they have and determine if this pack has reproduced this year.”

Idaho biologists lost track of B279M in September of 2006. They

just recently learned what had happened to it.

On March 27, 2009, Nadeau and Lucid got an e-mail from Montana wolf biologist Liz Bradley, with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. During a monitoring flight on March 26, biologists found the collared wolf from Idaho mingling with Montana wolves.

“It looks like B279M originated with the Timberline pack northeast

of Boise and has been missing from that pack since September of 2006,” Bradley wrote in her e-mail.

B279M had grown up to become the alpha male of the Mineral Mountain pack near St. Regis, Montana, northwest of Missoula and about 250 air miles from his birthplace in the Boise Mountains.

The trip would have taken him through some of the wildest, most rugged country in Idaho.

## Proven Record

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Management Plan that was developed for wolves and is similar to plans used for mountain lions and black bears. This plan sets management objectives at between 500 – 700 wolves in the state. Regulated wolf hunting, as established by the plan, would occur during the fall. Hunters would be required to have a license, tag, and participate in a mandatory check. Limits would be applied to management areas statewide to include wolf mortality from all causes. As with mountain lions and black bears, harvest limits would be highest in areas with documented conflicts with wolves and livestock, and in areas where prey populations have declined below management objectives because of documented wolf predation.

The impact of wolves on elk varies around the state. Some units and zones show increasing elk populations. Other areas are of concern because elk numbers are decreasing rapidly. The Lolo Elk Zone in north-central Idaho is an area where wolves are definitely impacting prey populations.

Long-term research on elk in this zone has scientifically demonstrated that wolves are responsible for 79 percent of mortality on cow elk. Wolves kill 67 percent of calf elk over six months of age. Over time, habitat conditions have deteriorated in this zone and management objectives have been reduced to reflect habitat changes. However, the elk population has continued to decline at about 13 percent each year. This zone is an example of an area where more liberal regulated hunting would be allowed to help reduce predation pressure on elk. In addition, control actions may also be implemented.

Depredation control has been used to manage wolves since their re-introduction. This type of control deals with problem animals killing cattle, sheep, or dogs. It does not, however, address the increasing number of wolves in or near the towns and subdivisions found along

the edges of core wolf habitat. Prey animals wintering along these edges attract wolves, potentially leading to conflicts with people. Conflicts such as those seen in Sun Valley this winter are bound to be most significant in this type of setting, and will always require some control action. In spite of control actions, the overall wolf population is quite resilient. Last year, 151 wolves in Idaho died through control actions or other causes. Yet the population still increased roughly

## The Lolo Elk Zone in north-central Idaho is an area where wolves are definitely impacting prey populations

15 percent from 732 to 846 because of their high reproductive rate.

The idea of a control action may be viewed unfavorably by some, but it is often the best management tool in some specific instances. When problem animals habitually kill livestock, control is often the only option available. When wildlife become habituated to humans, control may become necessary because habituated animals are a danger whether they are wolves, bears, deer or even waterfowl.

The Canada goose is a good ex-

ample of a species that has increasingly come into conflict with people. In metropolitan areas, city parks, golf courses, and other open spaces, geese have become habituated and aggressive. In addition, they pose a potential health risk from their droppings. Overpopulations of geese even pose a threat to air travelers as Captain “Sully” Sullenberg can testify.

While regulated hunting can help with wildlife conflict, certain conditions necessitate a stronger management action. Regulated hunting will remain the preferred option because it provides opportunity for sportsmen but also because it is much less expensive. Additionally, regulated hunting can help reduce the need for control actions overall.

The Idaho Fish and Game Department is up to the challenge of managing wolves as it does all other wildlife. The department’s mandate is to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage all wildlife within the state. It is time to put aside emotional debates, and begin the scientific management of wolves in Idaho. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has a proven record of big game management. That record will serve it well as the department takes on the responsibility of managing the wolf as it has all other big game animals.

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# Eleven Years with Wolves – What We've Learned

By Jim Lukens, Salmon Region Supervisor, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Probably no other animal has generated the degree of emotions that the gray wolf has. This may be in part because of folklore and human nature.

Literature, song and history are filled with references to the wolf as a vicious or demonic creature. Native cultures in North America and elsewhere credit the wolf with almost mythical power. Neither is true. Wolves are predators.

Since 1995 when they were reintroduced in Idaho, Idaho Fish and Game biologists have been observing wolves in their natural state. Below is a summary of some of what they have learned.

## Distribution, Number and Ancestry

By the end of 2008, biologists documented 88 resident wolf packs in Idaho, observed a minimum of 846 wolves. The Salmon Region was occupied by 13 documented resident packs, and by three documented and one suspected border packs during 2005.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recognizes only the gray wolf, *Canis lupus* for recovery purposes. Wolves from Canada moved to northwest Montana and northern Idaho on their own before reintroductions and since.

There is little evidence to support the claim that wolves used to be smaller than the reintroduced ones. All animals tend to be larger the farther north they are in their species range, and the less animals have to eat, the smaller their body size tends to be. When wolves were eliminated in Idaho at the beginning of the twentieth century, homesteaders, miners, American Indians, and others had depleted wolves' natural prey. Prey is more abundant now than when wolves were eliminated, thus, they may weigh more.

They are not a different species.

When considering trapping locations for the wolves to be released into Idaho, biologists selected populations already preying on elk. This increased the suitability of these wolves for life in Idaho.

## Wolf Predation

Wolf predation data from one area does not necessarily represent predation characteristics from other wolf-prey systems. But the tendency for wolves to select prey that are disadvantaged in some way, such as the young, the old, and the sick, injured

or weak individuals. Because of their pursuit-style of hunting, wolves tend to encounter prey that are slower or weaker in some way, thus vulnerable to being singled out by wolves.

Jason Husseman, the Salmon Region wolf biologist, examined 120 wolf kills as part of a winter wolf and mountain lion predation study in Unit 28 as part of his Master's degree from 1999 – 2001. The wolf kills comprised 77 percent elk and 23 percent deer.

Of the elk kills 60 percent were calves; 32 percent were cow elk; and 8 percent were bulls. The average age of adult elk killed by wolves was 12.6 years; the average age of a sample of 31 cow elk killed by hunters was 7.3 years. And 65 percent of deer taken by wolves were fawns.

Each wolf pack in the study area made a kill every two to three days. Once prey adapted to wolves, however, predation rates by wolves declined. Prey animals are more difficult to kill on dry ground when they are in good condition than in winter when prey condition is poorer and snow makes it tougher to escape.

Husseman found that 80 percent of kills were more than three-quarters eaten, and all kills were at least partially eaten. While "surplus killing,"—



"Surplus killing" by wolves has been seen but 80 percent of kills are mostly eaten and wolves usually return for "leftovers." IDFG photo

usually occur under atypical conditions, such as unusually deep snow. And wolves often return to eat the "leftovers."

Husseman classified the health of each prey animal killed by wolves or lions by measuring bone marrow fat content. Bone marrow fat is the last fat reserve used by deer and elk during winter. Once bone marrow fat falls below a certain level, the animal will not survive.

He found that 25 percent of the animals killed by wolves would have died of malnutrition. He also found the condition of elk killed by wolves was consistently poorer than that of elk taken by mountain lions, and elk condition worsened through the winter.

## Status of Big Game Herds

Obviously wolves prey on deer and elk along with lions, black bears and several other predators. To determine

the effect on game herds, biologists monitor the status of game herds with aerial surveys and hunter harvest information.

At the time wolves were released into Idaho, the elk herd in Salmon Region numbered about 28,000 animals. The latest estimate is about 21,300 animals.

Since wolves were reintroduced, deer herds have remained near objectives. The most likely limiting factors for mule deer in the Salmon Region are habitat conditions and weather.

## Threat to Humans

All wild animals can be hazardous to humans with outcomes ranging from discomfort to death. Two behavioral changes can increase animals' likelihood of injuring humans: when an animal becomes habituated to humans by repeated contacts without injury, and when an animal becomes food-conditioned by a reward of food for a given behavior.

The first probable human fatality in North America since 1900 attributed to wolves occurred in November 2005, in northern Saskatchewan. Wolves in the area had been attracted to a garbage dump, may have been fed at a nearby mining camp and been food-conditioned, and regularly photographed by humans thereby becoming habituated.

In *A Case History of Wolf-Human Encounters in Alaska and Canada*, Mark McNay documents 80 cases of wolf-human interactions (aggressive and nonaggressive) that have occurred in the past 60 years: 36 in Alaska, 41 in Canada and three in Minnesota. None was fatal, and 25 involved unprovoked aggression by healthy wolves, but only 13 of those involved injury to humans.

In the other 55 cases, 14 wolves acted in self-defense; 12 were known or suspected to have rabies; and 29 showed interest but no aggression.

Most of the unprovoked attacks by healthy wild wolves were by wolves that become habituated to humans or food-conditioned and aggressive.

Some cases of aggression in the report and in Idaho were related to the presence of a dog with the person. Wolves don't usually like other canids in their territory.



Wolf pups with an alpha female in the Salmon Region.

IDFG photo by Jason Husseman

killing in excess of what could be consumed in the immediate future—has been documented, such incidents



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# The Human Side of Predator Management

*Idaho Fish and Game is responsible for management of wildlife on behalf of the people of the state so doing our best to find out—as objectively as possible—what people think about their wildlife is part of the job. The following describes some of the most recent research on Idaho attitudes toward predator management.—editor*

## What makes wolf management really hard are people's values, attitudes, and emotions about wolves

Wolf management is not rocket science.

In some ways it's harder.

What makes wolf management difficult is the values, attitudes, and emotions people have about wolves. In a way, Fish and Game managers are mediators, seeking reasonable "agreements" between wildlife and people. They are challenged with finding solutions that protect wildlife and reflect people's values.

Building a rocket isn't easy, but at least rocket scientists are dealing with an exact number of non-living pieces and parts that they can see. Wolf managers, on the other hand, are dealing with packs of clever animals that can travel great distances, take down animals 10 times their own size, and be seen only by pawprints, kill sites, and poop piles.

The question is: how does Fish and Game reflect peoples' values when there are so many different feelings about wildlife? There is a growing field of research called "human dimensions of wildlife" that is improving managers' understanding of people's values, attitudes, and emotions about wildlife. Human dimensions studies are rooted in psychology, sociology, political science, and economics. And, when put together with biology and ecology, human dimensions can help Fish and Game make reasonable decisions about managing wildlife.

Fish and Game has used human dimensions research to develop a reasonable approach to managing wolves in Idaho that will be acceptable—maybe not ideal, but acceptable—to most Idahoans.

First, let's look at people's basic values towards wildlife. In human dimensions, values are considered the foundation of people's beliefs, attitudes, and ultimately their behaviors. Each of us holds our basic values from early childhood, we have few of

**Mutualists:** believe that people and wildlife should live together in harmony. About one in five adult Idahoans are mutualists. They tend to be women, live in medium-sized cities such as Idaho Falls, and were raised in small cities such as Twin Falls.

**Pluralists:** hold both Utilitarian and Mutualist views depending on the circumstance. For example, a woman might support her husband's hunting and gladly feed the healthy meat to her family, yet she can't stand the thought of killing an animal herself. Pluralists represent one-fourth of adult Idahoans, are equally men and women, tend to live in small cities such as Lewiston and have been raised in a town the size of Mountain Home.

**Distanced:** simply are little connected to or interested in wildlife at all. In Idaho, only one in 10 adults would be classified as distanced. They tend to be women, and tend to currently live and have been raised in a city the size of Idaho Falls.

Next, let's look at Idahoans' attitudes about controlling predators in order to make more game animals to hunt. Attitudes arise from values but, unlike values, a person's attitudes can change. A 2004 survey of 828 Idahoans showed that people feel differently depending on which predator is being controlled. In general, more people feel that reducing wolves and reducing bird predators such as magpies and gulls is acceptable compared to reducing bears and mountain lions, coyotes, and raccoons and foxes.

The researcher then used a statistical procedure called "cluster analysis" to group Idahoans based on their attitudes about reducing the numbers



How are wolves to be managed in a modern landscape when feelings are so divergent?

Photo courtesy USWFS

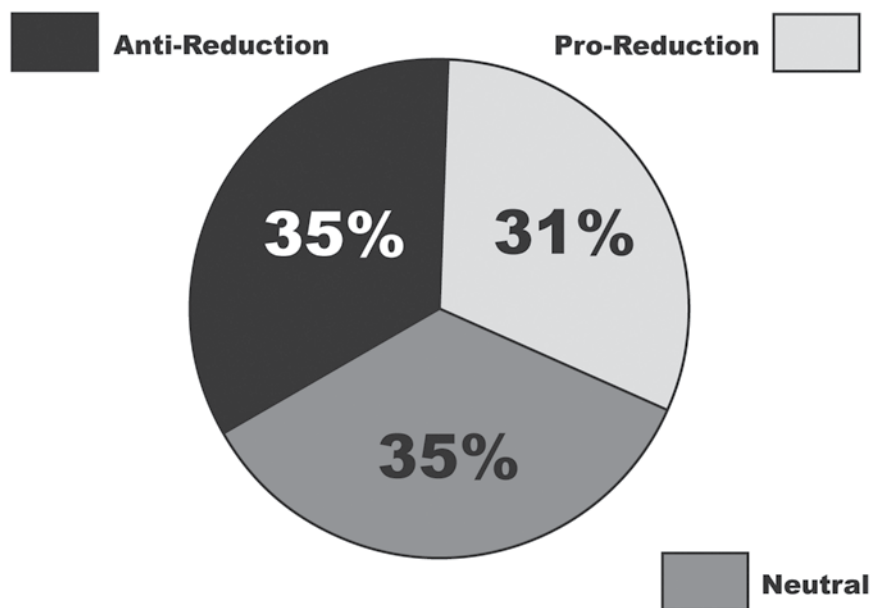
them, and they typically don't change much during our lifetimes. In a 2005 study of 20 western states (815 people in Idaho), Colorado State University researchers noted four basic values people hold toward wildlife:

**Utilitarians:** believe that wildlife should be used and managed for people's benefit. Half of Idaho adults fall into this group and they tend to be

men, have children at home, live in small cities such as Lewiston, and were raised in towns like Mountain Home.

### How does Fish and Game reflect peoples' values when there are so many different feelings about wildlife?

### Predator Reduction Attitude Groups



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He may appear little more than a German shepherd on outside feet but the gray wolf has raised emotions in Idaho and across the West like no other wild creature. IDFG photo

of predators in order to produce more game animals. The researcher described three different groups:

**The Pro-Reduction Group:** generally are supportive of reducing predator populations in order to increase game populations. They represent 31 percent of adult Idahoans, are more likely to be active hunters and/or anglers, and three quarters are male.

**The Anti-Reduction Group:** generally are opposed to reducing predator populations in order to increase game populations. They represent 34 percent of adult Idahoans, tend to live in urban areas, are more highly educated than the other two groups, and nearly two-thirds of them are female.

**The Neutral Group:** well, they're neutral. They represent 35 percent of adult Idahoans, and tend to be in

between the other two groups in demographic factors except that they do tend to have more children at home than the other two groups.

What is immediately obvious that the Idaho public is evenly divided into these three groups. What's more, the Pro-Reduction and the Anti-Reduction groups are completely opposite in their attitudes! Again, here lies the challenge before Fish and Game—to make decisions that are reasonable and acceptable to two large groups of people who feel so differently about predator control.

Most Idahoans support the *idea* of managing wolves, but their final opinion may depend on just how and to what extent wolves will be managed. A 2007 survey conducted by Fish and Game (1,444 people) looked at differences in attitudes among big game hunters, Idaho citizens who do not hunt (nonhunters), and livestock owners.

Most of the respondents thought destroying wolves that are threatening livestock and pets was acceptable. However, big game hunters and livestock growers tended to be more supportive of reducing wolf populations to produce more big game for hunting than were nonhunters. Almost half of the nonhunters in this survey thought controlling wolf populations for big game was unacceptable (15 percent was neutral, and 40 percent was supportive), and it appeared that nonhunters were comfortable with more wolves in Idaho than were big game hunters and livestock owners. Nonhunters also were more

***Some decisions will be less-than-ideal for many Idahoans, but they must be acceptable to most***

and one person can feel many emotions at the same time. For example, a woolgrower may admire the size and cunning of wolves and at the same time feel angry when they threaten his sheep. A backcountry hiker may be giddy with anticipation of seeing a wild wolf, and at the same time feel a bit frightened with uncertainty of when and where it will happen. An elk hunter may feel frustrated that elk aren't where they used to be, and at the same time have deep respect for how a pack of 100-pound wolves can take down a 750-pound elk. And, even the most avid of wolf supporters likely turns an eye when an elk finally succumbs to wolves, as if watching the tenacity to survive of both elk and wolf reminds him of his own vulnerabilities.

No values, attitudes, or emotions about wolves are right or wrong—they are just different. The challenge for Fish and Game managers isn't to decide which are right or wrong or to agree with some and disagree with others.

Fish and Game's challenge is to find that intersection of biology, ecology, and human dimensions; to mediate agreements between wildlife and people; and to respect emotions and make cognitive choices about how to manage Idaho's wildlife. Fish and Game managers are confident that the *Idaho Wolf Population Management Plan* will guide decisions that protect wildlife and reflect Idahoans' values. Some decisions will be less-than-ideal for many Idahoans, but they must be acceptable to most.

***Idaho Wolf Population Management Plan will guide decisions that protect wildlife and reflect Idahoans'***

likely than big game hunters and livestock owners to travel to see wolves and one in five indicated he or she would hire a guide to do so.

Finally, it is helpful to make the distinction between cognition, or knowledge and reasoning, and emotion. Emotions about wolves are complex,

**Idaho Wolves: At a Glance**

**Numbers:** At the end of 2008

- At least 846 wolves, 88 packs of which 39 are considered breeding packs. About 1,500 are found in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.
- 130 wolves in 56 packs have radio collars in early 2009.

**Distribution:**

- Wolves are found from the Canadian border to near Interstate 84 in southern Idaho, with most in the national forests of the central part of the state.
- Most of this year's population growth has been in the Panhandle; the population south of Interstate 90 has increased only slightly.

**Current Status:**

- North of Interstate 90 wolves are protected as endangered under the Endangered Species Act.
- South of Interstate 90 wolves are protected as an experimental, non-essential population under the Endangered Species Act.

**After Delisting:**

- When wolves are delisted, Idaho Fish and Game would be the lead agency in wolf management.
- Idaho would continue to monitor wolves and make annual reports to U.S. Fish and Wildlife for at least the following five years.
- Any wolf hunting seasons would be set by the Idaho Fish and Game Commission under guidelines set out in the 2008 Wolf Population Management Plan.

**What's Next:**

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published the delisting rule in the Federal Register in early April.
- The rule takes effect 30 days after that.

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# Wolf Reintroduction and Recovery Timeline

**April 2, 2009** – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service rule delisting gray wolves in the Northern Rockies and Western Great Lakes published in the Federal Register. Rule would take effect May 4.

**March 6, 2009** - Interior Secretary announced intent to send the delisting rule to the Federal Register for publication. The rule would include wolves in Idaho and Montana, but not Wyoming.

**January 20, 2009** - Proposed delisting rule suspended pending review by the new Obama administration.

**January 14, 2009** - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the pending publication of a delisting rule for gray wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains and Western Great Lakes. Does not include Wyoming, where wolves will remain on the endangered species list.

**October 24, 2008** - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reopened the public comment on its proposal to delist the gray wolf in the northern Rocky Mountains.

**October 14, 2008** - U.S. District Court Judge granted the United States' motion to withdraw the delisting rule, and dismissed the lawsuit that challenged the delisting.

**July 18, 2008** - Federal court preliminary injunction returns wolves in Idaho to endangered species protection; puts hunting seasons on hold.

**May 22, 2008** - Idaho Fish and Game Commission adopts proposed wolf hunting seasons and rules for fall 2008.

**April 28, 2008** – Twelve conservation and animal rights groups file a lawsuit in federal court challenging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's decision to remove the gray wolf in Idaho and the Northern Rocky Mountains from the endangered species list, and request a preliminary injunction staying the delisting until the lawsuit is settled.

**March 28, 2008** - Delisting rule becomes final and Idaho assumes full responsibility for wolves, which will be managed as a big game animal.

**March 6, 2008** - Idaho Fish and Game Commission adopts Idaho Wolf Population Management Plan.

**March 2008** - Idaho Legislature amends state code to allow livestock and domestic animal owners to kill a wolf that is molesting or attacking their animals.

**February 21, 2008** - The Fish and Wildlife Service filed rule that would remove gray wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains from the federal endangered species list.

**January 28, 2008** – Notice of amended 10(j) rule published in the Federal Register that would allow wolves to be killed if attacking livestock, riding and packing stock or dogs, and provides for killing wolves affecting ungulate populations.

**February 8, 2007** - Notice of delisting process published in Federal Register.

**January 29, 2007** - Fish and Wildlife Service announced start of process to remove gray wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains from the endangered species list.

**January 5, 2006** - Memorandum of Agreement between Idaho and the U.S. Department of Interior signed, transferring authority for day-to-day wolf management to the state.

**May 2005** - Memorandum of Agreement between Idaho and the Nez Perce Tribe gives the tribe a significant role in wolf conservation.

**February 7, 2005** - Revised 10(j) rules take effect, easing wolf management rules, and giving states a role in wolf management under agreements to be negotiated with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

**January 6, 2005** - The Fish and Wildlife Service publishes the final revised 10(j) rules in the Federal Register.

**March 9, 2004** - The Fish and Wildlife Service published in the Federal Register its proposal to revise wolf management rules under section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act, which would allow more flexibility in managing wolves and would allow states with accepted wolf management plans to take over much of the wolf management.

**February 2004** - Wyoming decides to sue the Fish and Wildlife Service to accept their plan. Fish and Wildlife delays delisting until Wyoming plan is accepted.

**January 2004** - The Fish and Wildlife Service deems Montana and Idaho plans are adequate, but the Wyoming plan is inadequate for delisting.

**July 11, 2003** - The Idaho Fish and Game Commission adopted a wolf policy.

**April 2003** - Legislature changed state law to allow Fish and Game to carry out the Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan and work with the Office of Species Conservation prior to delisting in wolf management.

**March 2002** - Idaho Legislature accepts the Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan 2002; identifies Fish and Game as the primary entity responsible for wolf management following de-listing; identifies the Nez Perce Tribe as having a significant role in wolf management following delisting.

**September 2001** - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service documents 30 pairs of wolves in the three-state area of Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, triggering the three-year countdown to delisting.

**2000** - Idaho Legislature creates the office of the governor's "Office of Species Conservation" to coordinate all state-related activities involving federally listed threatened and endangered species.

**December 1998** - The estimated population in Idaho was 115 wolves. This was the first year that one component of recovery – 10 breeding pairs – was attained.

**1996** - Governor Phil Batt recommends the state become more involved in the wolf recovery process.

**1996** - First pups produced in Idaho; three known packs identified.

**January 1996** - 20 wolves released into central Idaho. Limited involvement by Fish and Game in accordance with Idaho statute.

**1995** - Idaho Legislature rejected a Wolf Recovery and Management Plan produced by the Legislative Wolf Oversight Committee, preventing Fish and Game from assuming the lead role in wolf recovery in Idaho. Nez Perce Tribe leads recovery effort.

**January 1995** - 15 wolves released into central Idaho. Fish and Game participates in reintroductions and assumes lead management role if state plan is approved.

**Fall 1994** - Final experimental population rules issued and published in the Federal Register.

- Litigation filed by Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, Farm Bureau, and others regarding the release of wolves and the use of the experimental population designation.

**August 16, 1994** - Proposed experimental population rules for Yellowstone and central Idaho published in the Federal Register. The rules allow:

- States and tribes to take lead in wolf management if they develop management plans; management activities would be funded by the Fish and Wildlife Service until wolves are removed from the endangered species list.
- Experimental population areas would be established for the central Idaho and Yellowstone areas.
- 15 wolves to be reintroduced in central Idaho and 15 in Yellowstone National Park for three to five years or until at least two packs establish and reproduce successfully in two consecutive years.
- Wolves are expected to reach the recovery level of at least 10 breeding pairs that breed successfully for three consecutive years by 2002.

**August 10, 1994** - Record of Decision was published in Federal Register.

**May 4, 1994** – The Environmental Impact Statement completed on the proposal to reintroduce wolves as a "non-essential experimental population."

**April 1994** - The state Legislature amended Idaho Code to allow Fish and Game to work with the Wolf Oversight Committee to develop an Idaho Wolf Management Plan.

**1992** - Idaho Legislature established a Wolf Oversight Committee and allowed Fish and Game to work with the Fish and Wildlife Service on the environmental impact statement on the plan to reintroduce wolves into central Idaho and Yellowstone National Park.

**November 1990** - Congress established a national Wolf Management Committee to develop a gray wolf reintroduction and management plan for Yellowstone National Park and Central Idaho.

**1988** - State Legislature restricted the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's involvement in wolf recovery activities unless expressly authorized by state statute.

**1974** – Gray wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains, the northern Great Lakes, the Southwest, and in Texas were listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act.