

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
MOUNTAIN-PRAIRIE REGION  
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LAKEWOOD, COLORADO 80228**

**NEW U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE REGULATION  
ALLOWS MAXIMUM MANAGEMENT OF GRAY WOLVES  
FOR THE STATES OF MONTANA AND IDAHO**

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service unveiled a new regulation today that expands the authority of States and Native American Tribes with Service-approved wolf management plans to manage gray wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains population.

The rule only applies to States and Tribes that have Service-approved wolf management plans. Only two States, Montana and Idaho, where there are about 550 wolves, presently fit that category. At this time, this regulation does not apply to the State of Wyoming because it does not have a Service-approved wolf management plan. The new rule takes effect in Montana and Idaho in 30 days.

“These changes provide a logical transition between management by the Federal government and management by the States and Tribes,” said Ralph Morgenweck, Regional Director of the Service’s Mountain-Prairie Region. “State and Tribal management under scientifically sound wolf management plans provides effective wolf conservation and will allow the States and Tribes to gain valuable management experience in anticipation of delisting.”

Wolf populations now exceed their numerical recovery goals under the Endangered Species Act in the northern Rocky Mountains of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. However, before delisting can be proposed, each of the three States must have a State management plan approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Montana and Idaho have approved wolf management plans and this rule ONLY applies in those States at this time.

"Unfortunately, at this time we are unable to continue with the process to delist this wolf population because we do not have approved plans for all three states. However, we believe that it is appropriate to pursue as much local management for this recovered wolf population as possible," Morgenweck said.

This rule recognizes the unique and special relationship between Federal and Tribal governments. This rule provides Tribes with all the same opportunities on reservation lands that it offers the States on lands under State wildlife management authority. Tribes with Service-approved wolf management plans can assume the lead for wolf management

on their reservation lands through the same process that is available to the States. This rule also treats Tribal members' lands on reservations as private property within the borders of States with approved wolf plans, increasing wolf management flexibility to protect the private property of tribal members. In addition, Tribal members who are legally grazing their livestock on public lands may protect them from wolf attack.

Interest over the proposed rule, known as a 10(j) rule under the Endangered Species Act, for wolf management in the Northern Rockies stimulated more than 23,000 comments after it was published in March 2004. The final rule announced today is a result of input and review of comments from the public, States, Federal agencies and Tribes.

Under the final 10j rule, landowners in States with a Service-approved wolf management plan are able to take additional steps to protect their livestock and dogs from attacks by wolves. States can lead wolf management, including the authority to issue written take authorizations to landowners or public land permittees to control wolves that consistently pose a threat to their livestock. On public lands, grazing permittees and guiding and outfitter permittees are allowed to take wolves attacking their livestock or domestic animals herding and guarding livestock without prior written authorization.

The changes only affect the experimental population areas established in Montana and Idaho when wolves were reintroduced in 1995 and 1996. The new regulation does not apply to wolf populations in the Great Lakes region or in the southwestern United States.

Among other things, the regulation provides that in Montana and Idaho:

- Wolves attacking livestock, livestock herding and guarding animals, and dogs on private land can be taken by landowners without prior written authorization.
- Wolves attacking livestock and livestock herding and guarding animals on public grazing allotments can be taken by grazing permittees, guides and outfitters, and on ceded lands by Tribal members, without written authorization.
- Wolves determined to be causing unacceptable impacts to wildlife populations, such as herds of deer and elk, can be taken by State or Tribal agencies. This is allowed only after the States or Tribes complete science-based documents that have undergone public and peer review and have been approved by the Service.
- States or Tribes with approved wolf management plans can establish Memorandums of Agreement with the Secretary of the Interior, or cooperative agreements with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to lead gray wolf conservation and management in the experimental areas within their States or reservations boundaries.

Gray wolves were reintroduced in the Northern Rockies as nonessential experimental populations under the Endangered Species Act in 1995 and 1996. This designation allowed Federal, State and Tribal agencies and private citizens more flexibility in managing these populations while allowing for rapid recovery of the wolf population.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.