

Meeting Date: November 14, 2021

Agenda Item No. 7

Agenda Item: Wolf Mortality Update (**Information only**)

Bureau Chief Approval: mw

Prepared by: Katie Oelrich, Wildlife Staff Biologist

Background:

Over the last decade, the Fish and Game Commission has expanded wolf seasons in a stepwise manner in response to increases in livestock depredations and predation on other big game species. Despite the Commission's systematic progression of wolf hunting and trapping seasons, the 2020 wolf population estimate was well above federal recovery criteria of 150 wolves and 15 breeding pair statewide. With current hunting and trapping seasons and agency control actions, wolf predation on livestock and other domestic animals remains persistent in some areas. Wolf predation also continues to have an impact on underperforming elk populations in some backcountry areas.

In spring 2021, the Idaho legislature passed Senate Bill 1211 (SB1211) which made changes to wolf management, including wolf hunting and trapping seasons and rules, control actions (contracted by the state with IDFG authorization), and control actions by private landowner (IDFG-permitted). In June 2021, the Commission implemented SB1211 through adoption of staff proposals amending the 2021-2022 wolf hunting and trapping seasons, effective July 1, 2021.

Staff will present a statewide update of wolf mortality in relation to 2021 legislative changes in regulatory mechanisms and the seasons and rules amendments adopted by the Idaho Fish and Game Commission, including:

- Wolf mortalities by mortality agent and method,
 - Mortalities as a result of expanded methods of take
- Number of hunting hours exemptions authorized
- Number of landowner kill permits authorized and number of wolves taken
- Wildlife Services update: numbers of wolves removed, wolves collared, and wolf-caused livestock depredations

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Idaho code and administrative rule changes as a result of SB1211:

- Idaho Code 36-201(3) authorizes a year-round trapping season on private property
- Idaho Code 36-201(2) authorizes additional methods of take for wolves that were previously prohibited by Idaho Code
- Idaho Code 36-408(1) does not limit the number of tags and individual can purchase
- Idaho Code 36-1107(c), which relates to controlling depredation of wolves on livestock and domestic animals, now specifically allows an animal owner to use a private contractor to control wolves, in addition to federal, state or local agency personnel.

Idaho Code 36-104(b)(2) continues to provide the Commission discretion to open/close hunting or trapping seasons and set harvest limits on public lands, open/close hunting seasons and set limits on private lands, and set harvest limits for trapping seasons on private lands.

Public Involvement Process:

N/A

Justification:

This information will aid Commissioners as they respond to requests, recommendations, or other input from the public regarding the status of wolf populations in Idaho.

Staff Recommendation:

None. This agenda item is for Commission information.

Action Requested:

N/A.