

Meeting Date: January 26, 2023

Agenda Item No. 10.b.

Agenda Item: Draft Wolf Management Plan

Bureau Chief Approval: JR

Prepared by: Katie Oelrich, Wildlife Staff Biologist, for Jon Rachael, Wildlife Bureau Chief

Background:

Consistent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s 2009 delisting decision, the Department is committed to maintaining a viable, self-sustaining wolf population that is well-distributed in suitable habitat. The Department is also committed to managing the population at a level that minimizes conflicts with both livestock and ungulate populations, while remaining connected with wolf populations in Montana, Wyoming, Oregon, Washington, and Canada. Over the last decade, the Fish and Game Commission has expanded wolf harvest seasons incrementally in response to continued depredations on livestock and impacts to big game species. The Department continues to focus wolf management actions to deliberately address resolution of wolf conflicts with livestock and negative impacts on big game populations, while ensuring a self-sustaining wolf population.

Department staff have assessed available wolf data and literature and have developed a draft management plan (draft Plan) that is intended to set direction and guide the management activities through 2028. Management direction in the draft Plan is based on biological data, a need to resolve wolf depredations on livestock and negative impacts on big game populations, previous policy direction from the Commission, and direction in the 2002 *Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan*. This draft Plan provides needed updates and incorporates knowledge gained from nearly 3 decades of wolf monitoring and management about how wolves use Idaho’s landscape, interact with native ungulates and livestock, and react to different levels and types of harvest.

Staff will provide an overview of the draft Plan at the meeting.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission administers state wildlife policy through the Department (Idaho Code 36-104). Wolves are classified and managed as big game animals (IDAPA 13.01.06.100). Species management plans are the guiding documents to manage wildlife and are a direct reflection of the Department Strategic Plan. The *Idaho Gray Wolf Management Plan 2023 - 2028* will function as the action plan for wolves over the next 6 years.

Public Involvement Process:

The Commission and Department receive comments from the public related to wolves and wolf management year-round, via email and phone calls, including at open houses, public meetings, and hearings, and online. The Department also receives comments and solicits input from the public on season-setting proposals.

With Commission concurrence, the *Draft Idaho Gray Wolf Management Plan 2023 – 2028* will be posted on the Department website for 30 days to provide opportunity for public review and comment. Comments from the public and partner agencies will be considered to make improvements in preparation of a final plan that will be presented to the Commission for adoption at a future meeting. Staff will summarize and review public input on the draft Plan with the Commission at that time.

Justification:

The Commission sets policy and provides direction, considers input from the public, and has the authority to adopt, amend, or reject Department-recommended plans.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff seeks Commission concurrence to release the *Draft Idaho Gray Wolf Management Plan 2023 – 2028* for public review and input.

Action Requested:

N/A.