

Idaho Wolf Management Progress Report

August 2009

Wolf Hunting Seasons

Hunting seasons opened in the Lolo and Sawtooth wolf management zones on September 1 and will remain open through March 31 or until individual zone harvest limits have been reached or the statewide harvest limit of 220 wolves has been reached. Seasons will open in the Selway and Middle Fork wolf management zones on September 15 and run through December 31. Seasons in the remaining eight wolf management zones are scheduled to run October 1 through December 31.

Wolf hunting seasons close immediately in individual wolf management zones if the harvest limit for that zone is reached. Seasons close immediately statewide if the statewide harvest limit of 220 wolves is met.

Hunters are required to call 877-872-3190 within 24 hours of killing a wolf. They must have the skull and hide checked in by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game within five days of kill.

Idaho wolf hunting seasons and rules are available on our website:

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/hunt/wolf/wolfrules.pdf>

Hunters are required to confirm whether the season remains open in the zone they are hunting by calling 877-872-3190 or by checking status on-line:

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/hunt/wolf/quota.cfm>

Harvest update

From September 1 through September 9, four wolves were reported harvested by hunters. Three were killed on September 1, two in the Lolo wolf management zone and one in the Sawtooth wolf management zone. A fourth wolf was reported killed September 6 in the Sawtooth Zone, but a report from a witness and subsequent investigation by Fish and Game officers revealed the wolf was actually taken in a unit outside the Sawtooth wolf management zone. The wolf was seized and the individual was issued a citation for illegal take of a wolf during a closed season. Take of this wolf has been subtracted from the harvest limit set for the McCall-Weiser wolf management zone which opens on October 1.

Monitoring

Our 2008 annual report on Wolf Conservation and Management in Idaho is available on our website at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/manage/>. The minimum year-end population estimates for 2008 for Idaho are 846 wolves, 88 packs, with 39 documented breeding pairs.

During August Idaho Fish and Game, the Nez Perce Tribe, and USDA Wildlife Services personnel captured seven wolves. Five wolves were radio-collared, one previously-marked wolf was captured and its radio collar was replaced, and one pup was captured, marked with ear tags, and released.

By the end of August, reproduction had been confirmed in 52 packs (minimum of 162 pups confirmed so far); of those, 43 packs met breeding pair criteria of at least two pups. Pup counts are incomplete in several packs that were determined to be reproductive, so their breeding pair status may still be confirmed with additional effort.

Management and Control Actions

During August, Wildlife Services confirmed that wolves killed three cows, seven calves, 96 sheep, and three guard dogs; and injured three calves, five sheep and one guard dog. Wildlife Services also determined wolves probably killed four calves and 70 sheep.

In response to those and previous depredations, Wildlife Services killed 25 wolves and radio-collared and released one wolf. Wildlife Services also captured and released two wolves that were already wearing radio collars.

Also during August, Wildlife Services confirmed that black bears killed five sheep, and that another 12 sheep were probably killed by black bears. One calf was probably killed by a grizzly bear. Wildlife Services confirmed one goat was killed by a mountain lion.

Table 1. Confirmed wolf depredations and wolf mortality in Idaho from 2003 to August 31, 2009.

YEAR	Depredations ¹				Wolf Mortality			
	Cattle	Sheep	Dogs	Total	WS ²	10j / 36-1107 ³	Other	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
Jan 1 – Aug 31, 2009	61	241	11	313	56	5	33	94

¹ Includes confirmed wolf depredations resulting in death or injury.

² Authorized take by USDA Wildlife Services.

³ Authorized take under 10j, or legal take after delisting under Idaho Code 36-1107 for protection of stock and dogs under state law.

Research

Idaho Fish and Game wildlife research staff continues to monitor wolves and elk survival in the Lowman and North Fork Clearwater study areas. Trapping efforts were conducted in both study areas to replace nonfunctioning radio collars and mark new wolves. Trapping will continue into September.

University of Montana crews recently finished the summer field season by wrapping up in the Panhandle region. Crews had a very successful summer and collected more than 1,200 DNA samples from wolves in three study areas. Simultaneously, crews tested both howl boxes and rub

pads throughout the three study areas in Idaho. Results from the 2008 hunter survey are nearly complete, and it appears that, as in 2006 and 2007, hunter reports of the numbers of wolves in the study areas largely track the known density of wolves in those areas. DNA and data analyses are forthcoming.

To learn more about this project that is developing alternative methods to radio telemetry for monitoring wolf populations go to:

<http://www.umt.edu/mcwru/PERSONNELPROFILES08/PPDaveAusband2008.htm>

Information and Education

Further information and updates can be viewed at:

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>

A reminder: wolves are fully protected under state law. For more detailed information on the laws and policies protecting wolves in Idaho, and what people are allowed to do to protect livestock and pets, please visit the Fish and Game website or call the local Fish and Game office.

Please help us manage wolves by reporting wolf sightings on our Fish and Game wolf observation form found at: http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/apps/wolf_report/

Delisting: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Status (WY, MT, ID):

The Final Rule to Establish a Gray Wolf – Northern Rocky Mountain Distinct Population Segment and Remove it from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Species became effective May 4, 2009. The rule delisted wolves in Montana, Idaho, the eastern one-third of Washington and Oregon, and a small part of north central Utah. Wolves in Wyoming remain under the regulatory mechanisms of the Endangered Species Act. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to manage wolves in all of Wyoming under the provisions of the 1994 nonessential experimental population rules.

In Idaho wolves are being managed as a big game animal. They are protected by state laws already approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Idaho legislature, and Idaho Fish and Game Commission. The Fish and Game Commission approved 2009 wolf hunting season dates in March and on August 17 set a statewide harvest limit of 220 wolves. The Nez Perce Tribe may take up to 35 additional wolves within the Tribal Treaty Area.

Delisting Litigation Status

On June 2, a lawsuit was filed in federal District Court in Missoula by a coalition of 13 environmental and animals rights groups. Another separate lawsuit challenging the Fish and Wildlife Service's delisting criteria was filed shortly after by the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. Those two cases were consolidated in the U.S. District Court in Missoula under Judge Donald Molloy. Their complaints allege the northern Rocky Mountain wolf population is not recovered and that the delisting violates the Endangered Species Act for many legal reasons, including that delisting cannot occur without an adequate Wyoming regulatory framework in place. On August 20, a request for preliminary injunction was filed by the coalition of 13 environmental and animal rights groups, requesting that wolves in Montana and Idaho be placed back on the

Endangered Species list while the court decides the case within the next year. A preliminary injunction hearing at the federal courthouse in Missoula was heard on August 31. Judge Molloy denied the plaintiffs' motion for preliminary injunction on September 8 on grounds that the plaintiffs failed to show a likelihood of irreparable harm to the wolf population.

You may review information, past wolf updates, and publications on our wolf webpage at:
<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>