

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission  
Special Meeting  
December 8, 2010  
Boise, Idaho**

Present in the Director's Office: Director Groen, Deputy Director Moore; Deputy Director Unsworth; Kathleen Trever, Deputy Attorney General; Sharon Kiefer, Assistant Director; Mary Boyer, Executive Assistant; Jeff Gould, Chief, Wildlife; Mike Keckler, Chief, Communications; Jon Rachael, State Wildlife Manager; Niels Nokkentved, Information Specialist; Bonnie Butler and David Hensley, Governors Office.

Eric Barker, Lewiston Tribune; Laura Zuckerman, Reuters; and Curt Mack, Nez Perce Tribe participated at various regional office locations.

A special meeting of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission was held by telephone conference. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Wayne Wright with Commissioners McDermott, Trevey, Barowsky, Budge, Power and Wheeler participating.

**REPORT**

**Review of Issues Related to State Wolf Management Planning**

Chairman Wright noted the purpose of the call today is for the Commission to review issues related to state wolf management planning.

Director Groen referenced Commissioner Trevey's comments from the November meeting stating that it was time for the Commission to look at the interim direction on wolves and bring it up to date and referenced the 2002 and 2008 Idaho Wolf population plans. At the November meeting Commissioner Trevey made a motion that the Commission look at all new information and requested a December 8 conference call for the purpose of confirming the Commission intent to manage for a recovered wolf population using the establishing goals and recovery plan and restructuring our future being consistent with the 2002 Idaho Wolf Conservation Management Plan.

David Hensley, Deputy Chief of Staff and Counsel to Governor Otter, reported that last week Interior Secretary Salazar met with the governors from Wyoming, Montana and Idaho. Since that meeting the Governor Otter's office has had discussions with the Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior and the other two states about a possible path forward for congressional legislation to provide for delisting in the Rocky Mountain DPS. The staff is continuing dialogue. There will be opportunity as the new Congress comes into session. Idaho is committed to managing a sustainable population of wolves and needs the flexibility to manage the species on the ground, especially when there are conflicts.

Kathleen Trever, Deputy Attorney General, stated that the goal of the Commission has been to achieve full state management of wolves and to remain ready, willing and able to manage wolves so delisting can occur. The Commission goal has been to address the impacts of wolves using 10j and other legally available tools, consistent with the direction of the Governor.

Ms. Trever reviewed the current status of the delisting path:

- Idaho and Montana have state management plans approved by the USFWS
  - 2002 Idaho Wolf Conservation Management Plan approved by the legislature
  - 2003 Montana Final Grey Wolf Conservation Management Plan
- Approval of these two plans allows the states to take action under the 2008 10j rule
- Court rulings have not found fault with either Idaho or Montana plans
- Other legal issues create uncertainty from the delisting perspective
  - An appeal pending with the 9<sup>th</sup> circuit seeking to reinstate the 2009 delisting rule
  - A court challenge to the 2008 10j rule brought by Defenders of Wildlife and other groups

Ms. Trever stated that changes to management plans may have consequences in terms of pending legal matters.

Director Groen commented that the Department manages many species. There are 70 hunted species and there are 10 big game species. There are management plans for all of these species. The management plans set direction and are very adaptive. Director Groen has concerns that there is so much attention on the Department's 2008/2012 species management plan that it is incorrectly being construed as amending the 2002 state plan and advocating different benchmarks or even recovery levels. That is not the intention of the plans; they have to be adaptive. We have to make science-based adjustments. This plan was made under the umbrella of the 2002 plan.

Jon Rachael reported that the status of the elk herds in the Lolo Zone is of tremendous concern, and he does not see that turning around without active measures. There is a long and steady decline in the Sawtooth Elk Management Zone. In both of these zones the Department has identified that predation of wolves is the leading cause of mortality and the factor preventing the Department from being able to turn these herds around.

### **Background Information for the Commission Motion**

On October 18, 2010 Governor Otter ended Idaho's agreement with the Department of Interior to serve as designated agent for statewide wolf management. It is uncertain when the State of Idaho and the Department of Fish and Game will be allowed full management authority, including hunting. Continued expansion of the wolf population and conflict levels are beyond those forming the basis for the 2008 plan. Keeping the 2008 plan active during this period of uncertainty does not serve any useful purpose and only contributes to confusion on the subject of wolf management in Idaho.

**10-108** Commissioner Trevey moved and Commissioner McDermott seconded a motion that the Department: 1) Continue the pursuit of control actions under 10j for the protection of ungulate

herds while wolves remain listed under the Endangered Species Act; 2) Suspend immediately the 2008-2012 Idaho Wolf Population Management Plan; and 3) Postpone consideration, until delisting resumes, as to the specifics of day-to-day state wolf management and upon delisting of gray wolves in Idaho; the Commission will direct the Department to prepare an appropriate wolf species management plan, consistent with the 2002 Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan approved by the Idaho Legislature and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The motion carried in an unanimous vote.

### MISCELLANEOUS

#### Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.



Wayne Wright  
Chairman



Cal Groen  
Secretary