

## **Idaho Wolf Management Update August 2011**

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Wolves were delisted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the 2009 delisting rule and wolf management responsibility was returned to the State of Idaho on May 5, 2011. Wolves are now managed as a big game animal by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission set wolf hunting and trapping seasons at their meeting in Salmon on July 28 and finalized regulations on August 24. Information on hunting and trapping seasons and regulations is available on our website at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/hunt/?getPage=266>. Hunting season brochures are also available at license vendors throughout the state.

Nez Perce Tribe wolf program staff shares wolf monitoring responsibilities in central and north-central Idaho through Memorandums of Agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the state of Idaho.

USDA APHIS Wildlife Services personnel continue to respond to suspected depredations on livestock or pets. Calls about depredations should be directed to Wildlife Services at 866-487-3297 or 208-378-5077.

Additional information is available on our website: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/wildlife/wolves/>

### **Harvest Seasons**

Wolf hunting seasons opened on August 30 throughout the state. Seasons are scheduled to close on December 31 in the Island Park and Beaverhead wolf management zones, unless harvest limits are met first, and on June 30, 2012 in the Lolo and Selway zones. Seasons in the other nine zones close on March 31, 2012, unless harvest limits are met first. Harvest limits have been established for five of the 13 wolf management zones – Salmon, Sawtooth, Southern Mountains, and Beaverhead in Island Park. In these zones, the season will close when either the harvest limit has been met, or the season closing date is reached, whichever comes first. Hunters may purchase two wolf tags per calendar year. See the wolf seasons brochure for more information.

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/docs/rules/wolfRules.pdf>.

Wolf trapping seasons were set for November 15 – March 31 in the Lolo, Selway, and Middle Fork wolf management zones and portions of the Panhandle and Dworshak-Elk City wolf management zones. Individuals interested in trapping wolves must first attend a wolf trapper education class before buying wolf trapping tags. Certified trappers may purchase up to three wolf trapping tags per calendar year. See details on our website: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/hunt/?getPage=266>

Wolf trapper education classes have been scheduled and enrollment is underway.

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/hunt/wolfTrapperClasses.pdf>

Hunters killed three wolves in August during the first two days of the season.

### **Monitoring**

The 2010 annual report on Wolf Conservation and Management in Idaho was prepared by the Nez Perce Tribe wolf program staff and is available through our website at:

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/docs/wolves/reportAnnual10.pdf>

The Nez Perce Tribe and Idaho Fish and Game have been working in the field throughout the state to confirm reproduction and breeding pair status (at least two pups produced and still alive) and capture and radio-collar additional wolves to aide in monitoring and completing year-end counts. Telemetry flights are conducted approximately monthly. Through August 31, Nez Perce Tribe and Idaho Fish

and Game had documented successful reproduction including of a minimum of 144 pups in 48 packs, including 36 packs which tentatively qualify for “breeding pair” status (at least two pups produced and surviving). One new wolf from an unmarked pack was captured and radio-collared in August.

### **Management and Control Actions**

Idaho Fish and Game continues efforts to reduce the wolf population in the Lolo Elk Management Zone (Game Management Units 10 and 12) under our predation management plan. Fish and Game authorized several licensed outfitters and their guides to kill wolves they encountered during their spring bear hunts in Units 10 and 12. Kill authorizations were extended through August 29, but no wolves were reported taken. Fish and Game also authorized conservation officers to take wolves encountered during performance of their regular duties in those units. One wolf was taken by a Fish and Game conservation officer during June.

In response to recurring sightings of wolves and depredation of pets and livestock in the town of Elk City, Fish and Game authorized the Idaho County Sheriff and two deputies, the U.S. Forest Service law enforcement officer, and local Fish and Game conservation officers to kill wolves encountered in Elk City township. One wolf was taken under this control authorization during June, four were killed during July, and two more were taken in August.

Defenders of Wildlife ended their program to compensate ranchers for livestock losses confirmed to have been caused by wolves last fall. The Idaho Governor’s Office of Species Conservation manages the state wolf compensation program.

During August, Idaho USDA Wildlife Services personnel confirmed that wolves killed 7 calves, 31 sheep and 1 guard dog. In response to these, and previous depredations, WS killed 11 wolves. From January 1 – August 31, 2011, USDA Wildlife Services personnel confirmed wolves killed or injured 57 cattle, 65 sheep, and 4 dogs. During the same period in 2010, Wildlife Services confirmed wolves killed or injured 56 cattle, 114 sheep and 0 dogs. During January 1 – August 31, 2009, Wildlife Services confirmed wolves killed or injured 61 cattle, 241 sheep, and 11 dogs. Confirmed wolf depredations and mortalities from 2003–2011 are reported in Table 2.

For comparison, from January 1 – August 31, 2011, Wildlife Services confirmed mountain lions have killed 1 cow, 2 calves, 18 sheep, 1 goat, and 2 chickens, and confirmed bears killed 4 sheep, 1 goat, and 3 chickens. In addition, Wildlife Services investigated a pile-up of 140 sheep in July that they determined to be a probable bear depredation.

### **Research**

Idaho Fish and Game wildlife research biologists continue to monitor wolves, elk, and moose in the North Fork Clearwater study area and wolves and elk in the Lowman study area. Fish and Game research efforts have documented that wolf predation is the leading cause of mortality of cow and calf elk in some elk management zones. Calf recruitment is insufficient to offset adult cow mortality, causing these elk populations to continue to decline.

The Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at The University of Montana is continuing its test of “biofencing.” A biofence uses human-distributed wolf scats and urine to attempt to manipulate wolf pack movements. A pilot test on three wolf packs in 2010 suggested biofencing may be effective. A crew is working in the Sawtooth Zone and will finish work in late August. As time permits, this crew is also field-testing howl boxes – automated devices that broadcast and record wolf howls – which may be useful for wolf population monitoring. In mid-June, the 2010 big game hunter survey was mailed to about 12,000 randomly-selected deer and elk hunters across Idaho to query them about wolf observations during the 2010 hunting season. The resulting data (as well as other survey techniques) are being used to populate a patch occupancy model and estimate wolf population size. For more information on the Wildlife Research Unit research please visit:

<http://www.umt.edu/mcwru/personnel/ausband/default.aspx>

## Information and Education

Additional information and updates can be viewed at:  
<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>

**Table 1. Total known wolf mortality by cause, Jan. 1, 2011 – Aug. 31, 2011.**

| Wolf Mgt Zone        | WS Control | IDFG Control Action | Harvest  | Illegal  | Legal (protection of livestock or pets) | Other    | Unk      | Total     |
|----------------------|------------|---------------------|----------|----------|---|----------|----------|-----------|
| Dworshak-Elk City    | 1          | 7                   |          |          |   | 1        | 1        | 10        |
| Lolo                 |            | 6                   |          |          |   |          |          | 6         |
| McCall-Weiser        | 5          |                     | 2        |          | 4                                       | 1        | 1        | 13        |
| Middle Fork          |            |                     |          |          |   |          |          | 0         |
| Palouse-Hells Canyon |            |                     |          |          |   |          | 1        | 1         |
| Panhandle            |            |                     |          |          |   | 1        |          | 1         |
| Salmon               | 3          |                     |          | 1        | 2                                       |          | 4        | 10        |
| Sawtooth             | 11         |                     |          | 1        | 3                                       | 2        | 1        | 18        |
| Selway               |            |                     |          |          |   |          |          | 0         |
| Southern Idaho       |            |                     |          |          | 1                                       |          |          | 1         |
| Southern Mountains   | 6          |                     |          |          | 2                                       |          |          | 8         |
| Island Park          | 2          |                     | 1        |          |   | 1        |          | 4         |
| Unknown              |            |                     |          | 2        |   | 1        |          | 3         |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>28</b>  | <b>13</b>           | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>12</b>                               | <b>7</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>75</b> |

**Table 2. Confirmed wolf depredations and mortalities in Idaho, 2003 to August 31, 2011.**

| YEAR              | Depredations <sup>1</sup> |       |      |       | Wolf Mortality  |                                  |                            |                    |                |       |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-------|------|-------|-----------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------|
|                   | Cattle                    | Sheep | Dogs | Total | WS <sup>2</sup> | IDFG Control Action <sup>3</sup> | 10j / 36-1107 <sup>4</sup> | Other <sup>5</sup> | Hunter Harvest | 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   |
| 2009              | 76                        | 295   | 14   | 385   | 87              |                                  | 6                          | 45                 | 135            | 273   |
| 2010              | 75                        | 148   | 0    | 223   | 67              |                                  | 13                         | 18                 | 46             | 144   |
| 2011 (1/1 – 8/31) | 57                        | 65    | 4    | 126   | 28              | 13                               | 12                         | 19                 | 3              | 75    |

<sup>1</sup> Includes only confirmed wolf depredations of cattle, sheep, and dogs that resulted in death or injury.

<sup>2</sup> Wolves taken by USDA Wildlife Services in response to depredation on livestock.

<sup>3</sup> Wolves taken as authorized by IDFG to address unacceptable predation on ungulates.

<sup>3</sup> Authorized take under 10j, or legal take under state law for protection of stock and dogs (Idaho Code 36-1107) while wolves were delisted, or authorized by kill permit while wolves were delisted..

<sup>4</sup> Other includes of mortalities of unknown cause, documented natural mortality, collisions with automobiles, and illegal take.