



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Pacific Regional Office

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Gray Wolves in Idaho: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Answers to Idaho Department of Fish and Game Questions

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- *What is the history of wolf reintroduction in Idaho?*

A detailed chronology of the reintroduction and events leading up to gray wolf reintroduction in Idaho is located on the Idaho Department of Fish and Game website:

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

- *Is there any possibility of having a wolf hunting season under the current listing status in Idaho?*

It is unlikely, now that the U.S. District Court has ruled that the gray wolf must be returned to the List of Threatened and Endangered Species. During the past six months, while the court deliberated, FWS has worked diligently with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks to explore a variety of options for permitting a hunting season for wolves in Idaho and Montana (in the event the court ruled invalidated the delisting, which it did). FWS, however does not believe we would prevail against the inevitable legal challenge. This is a difficult and frustrating message to convey, and it is a decision FWS does not take lightly. However, we cannot promote decisions we know are legally indefensible, as this would only increase our collective frustrations over the long term, rather than relieve them.

- *After the FWS receives our proposal to control wolves that are impacting ungulates, how long will it take the FWS to respond?*

Upon receipt of all necessary documentation associated with a control proposal, including peer review and a record of public review and comment as required in the 10(j) rule, we anticipate being able to respond within 60 days.

- *Can Idaho get broader approval from FWS for wolf management in response to ungulate population declines under section 10(j) of the ESA as it has for livestock depredation response?*

The NRM wolf 10(j) rule was revised in 2008 to give states more latitude in managing wolves that were affecting ungulate herds within the experimental population area. Accordingly, the State may request broader approval for ungulate management. FWS must then make a determination that the requested action would continue to provide for the conservation of the wolf. Changes to the 10(j) regulations would also require rulemaking, including public notice and comment.

Note: the 2008 10(j) rule is currently being litigated, and the outcome of that litigation may define sideboards within which we can amend the 10(j) rule. At this time the 2008 revised 10(j) rule remains in full effect.

- *Why should the State of Idaho remain the FWS's designated agent?*

This is Idaho's question to answer. From FWS perspective, there are advantages for a state to be fully engaged in species management, including the direct contribution of state expertise and issues in management decisions. In addition:

- Continued demonstration of successful State management of wolves is critical to the legal argument for delisting wolves in Idaho. If IDFG is stripped of its ability to manage wolves under the approved State management plan, the likelihood of delisting wolves in Idaho may be substantially diminished.
- FWS will not manage wolves to achieve ungulate population objectives. Ungulate population management is the purview of the State, and as such, the State may address that priority by maintaining status as a designated agent.
- The State is currently better positioned than the Service to address on-the-ground depredation control issues. Lack of State management would mean increased presence of contract or Federal biologists in Idaho to handle on-the-ground management.

- *What is the FWS's strategy to delist wolves and what is your timeline?*

Any path forward to down-listing or delisting the NRM wolf will require rulemaking, including public notice and comment. A proposed and final rule, including adequate time for public comment, at minimum would take 18 months, and more likely 24 months to complete.

- *What should Idaho tell hunters about future wolf population levels and their impact on Idaho elk?*

FWS supports the wolf population goals in Idaho's State wolf management plan. FWS also supports lethal removal of wolves in the experimental population area when scientific evidence indicates that wolves are having an unacceptable impact on wild ungulate populations. FWS delisted wolves in Idaho based on recognition that wolves are biologically recovered in the State and a sound State management plan is in place, and FWS has recognized Idaho's management of a fair-chase hunt conducted last year. Without condition, FWS shares the goal of a viable delisted wolf population under State management.

- *Is FWS considering revising its Distinct Population Segment (DPS) policy to allow delisting along State lines?*

The FWS is not pursuing that option at this time.

- *Will FWS appeal Judge Molloy's decision?*

The Department of the Interior and Department of Justice have not determined whether or not to appeal Judge Molloy's decision.