

## INTRODUCTION

Following an absence of nearly 60 years, a lone gray wolf entered Oregon in 1999. Wolf B-45, a radio-collared female from the Idaho experimental population, was one of three wolves documented in the state during the period January 1999 - October 2000. Wolf B-45, arguably Oregon's most famous wolf, eventually was captured by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in March 1999 near the Middle Fork of the John Day River and returned to Idaho. The other two wolves were found dead in Oregon. In May 2000 a radio-collared male wolf from Idaho was struck by a vehicle on Interstate 84 south of Baker City, and in October 2000 an uncollared male wolf was found shot between Ukiah and Pendleton. Through genetic analysis the uncollared wolf was determined to originate from the Idaho experimental population.

The arrival of wolves sparked intense interest throughout the state as Oregonians debated the possibility of wolves dispersing into Oregon from Idaho and establishing a permanent population. Views ranged from concern about the effects of wolves on livestock and native ungulates to support for the return of a native species. The Oregon Cattlemen's Association (OCA) in 2002 petitioned the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (hereafter Commission) to have the wolf delisted. The same year, conservation groups filed a petition that the Fish and Wildlife Commission to adopt certain specific conservation measures for the wolf. Both the petitions were rejected by the Commission, OCA's because it lacked certain scientific information required by law and the other because state law does not require the requested conservation measures for species listed before 1995.

The dispersal of wolves is expected as a result of the re-establishment of wolf populations in the states of Montana, Wyoming and Idaho through the federal wolf recovery program. As wolves in these states continue to increase in numbers and expand their range, wolf biologists predict they will disperse into Oregon from Idaho and establish breeding populations. Since the 2005 adoption of this Plan, wolves have dispersed from Idaho and in 2010, a minimum of 14 adult wolves are known to reside in Oregon. In addition, ODFW receives frequent reports of wolves in the Cascade Mountains and Blue Mountains. However, none of these reports have been verified. Historically, wolves occurred throughout most of the state.

Upon learning of the wolf's arrival in the state, the Commission initiated a public involvement process in 2002 to become informed about wolves and prepare for the arrival of this controversial species. At the conclusion of the review process in 2003, the Commission agreed that development of a state Wolf Conservation and Management Plan was necessary to address the arrival of wolves, to provide livestock owners with tools to deal with expected depredation, and to fulfill the conservation mandate imposed by the Oregon Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Commission appointed 14 members to a Wolf Advisory Committee (hereafter Committee) and tasked them with developing a recommended Plan. The Committee began working in November 2003 and completed an initial draft for review by the Commission in October 2004. Through a public rulemaking process that extended from November 1, 2004, through February 11, 2005, the Commission considered a "rulemaking package" that consisted of the draft Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan and associated technical rules. On February 11, the Commission adopted a Plan and associated

rules<sup>2</sup>. At that time, the Commission recommended the 2005 Oregon Legislative Assembly make changes in Oregon law to fully implement the Plan. The Legislature took no action. The Commission continued to call for adoption of the three proposed legislative recommendations included in the February 2005 version of the Plan. Because the proposals were not adopted into law, the Commission moved all references to recommendations to the Legislative Assembly to Appendix P and adopted this Plan. ODFW tried again during the 2007 Legislative Session to adopt into law the recommendations in Appendix P, but the bill failed to move out of legislative committee. The 2009 Oregon Legislature did however, reclassify wolves as a special status game mammal and the Plan is updated to reflect this change.

The goal of the Wolf Conservation and Management Plan is to:

**ensure the conservation of gray wolves as required by Oregon law while protecting the social and economic interests of all Oregonians.**

To meet this goal, the Plan includes such tasks as identifying and managing toward population objectives, engaging in public outreach and education, developing a response strategy for damage, and conducting ongoing monitoring and research.

In developing their recommended Plan, the Committee sought a product that is achievable, realistic, fair, flexible, cost-effective, defensible, sustainable and fundable, and which also engages the public and provides incentives for achieving wolf conservation goals. The Plan applies to all lands in Oregon with respect to the take provisions, except potentially those lands of Indian Nations which are identified as reservation lands and are managed under sovereign tribal authority. The Plan does not intend to require private landowners to take action to protect the species or to impose additional requirements or restrictions on the use of private land.

This Plan was initially developed prior to wolves becoming established in Oregon and as such, answers to many important questions were unknown. Developers of the original Plan did not know unequivocally what habitat wolves would inhabit, how they would behave or what impacts they would have upon arrival in Oregon. Wolves have now become permanent residents of Oregon. Significant changes to the landscape since the extirpation of wolves make it difficult to use historical information to predict which areas are most suitable for them to inhabit today. Furthermore, information regarding wolf habitat and prey in other states has limited applicability to Oregon due to each state's own unique landscape. For example, Wilderness Areas are relatively small when compared with Idaho and open road densities on public lands are considered high. Livestock grazing is common across Oregon on public and private lands. The developers of this Plan did adapt information from states such as Idaho and Montana and used that information as a general guide.

Successful management of wolves will require that the parties responsible for implementing this Plan are able to effectively and efficiently apply adaptive management principles. There are several aspects to the Plan that the developers believe will be critical to its success.

---

<sup>2</sup> As with its other fish and wildlife management plans, the Commission adopted this Wolf Conservation and Management Plan into Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) by reference. (See OAR 635-110-0000). It also adopted certain associated technical rules that implement (in enforceable terms) the portion of the Plan which regulates harassment and take of wolves. (See OAR 635-110-0000 through 635-110-0030 and 635-043-0096.) In the event of conflict between this plan and the associated technical rules, the technical rules govern.

- 1) Wolves need to be managed in concert with other species and resource plans. The way wolves are managed will affect and be affected by other species, particularly other top carnivores and primary prey. Each of these species (e.g., cougar, elk, deer and bear) has its own management Plan. However, because they are so interconnected, none of these species can be managed in isolation.
- 2) An active information and education program must offer guidance and information about rules and regulations related to the Plan.
- 3) Sufficient funds must be available to implement the conservation and management plan.

Individuals representing many interests were involved in crafting this Plan by sharing their needs and balancing their interests with the interests of others. Therefore, this Plan will serve the broad interests of Oregonians only if implemented in its entirety.

Since human tolerance has been and remains the primary limiting factor for wolf survival, building tolerance for this species will require acceptance of the Plan's approach to addressing wolf conservation and human conflicts. Non-lethal and lethal control activities actually may promote the long-term survival of the wolf by enhancing tolerance, and providing redress to citizens legitimately impacted by the wolf is essential. This also may mean recognizing the wolf as a native species with legal, social and biological value in Oregon, and taking actions to minimize conflict to achieve conservation goals. Effective enforcement of illegal actions taken to harm the wolf also is a key part of ensuring conservation.