

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** **(October 2010)**

Gray wolves are listed as “endangered” under the Oregon Endangered Species Act (ESA). The law requires the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to conserve the species in the state. Anticipating the re-establishment of wolves in Oregon from the growing Idaho population, the Commission directed the development of a Wolf Conservation and Management Plan to meet the requirements of both the Oregon ESA and the Oregon Wildlife Policy.

When this Plan was adopted in December 2005, the federal government managed gray wolves in Oregon as an “endangered” species under the federal Endangered Species Act. The federal laws establish the current minimum level of wolf protection. In 2009, wolves were federally delisted in a portion of eastern Oregon and on August 5, 2010, a federal court decision had the effect of relisting. At the time of adoption of this updated Plan, all wolves in Oregon are federally listed as endangered and federal laws establish the current minimum level of wolf protection. Wolves remain listed as a state endangered species at the time of this 2010 update. So long as the wolf remains federally listed in Oregon as endangered, federal law may preempt provisions of this Plan (and associated administrative rules) that authorize harassment or take of wolves.

The Wolf Conservation and Management Plan focuses on methods and procedures to protect wolves in the early stages of implementation so that the species can be delisted and a self-sustaining population persists. The Plan was built to meet the five delisting criteria identified in state statutes and administrative rules:

- The species is not now (and is not likely in the foreseeable future to be) in danger of extinction in any significant portion of its range in Oregon or in danger of becoming endangered; and
- The species’ natural reproductive potential is not in danger of failure due to limited population numbers, disease, predation, or other natural or human-related factors affecting its continued existence; and
- Most populations are not undergoing imminent or active deterioration of range or primary habitat; and
- Over-utilization of the species or its habitat for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes is not occurring or likely to occur; and
- Existing state or federal programs or regulations are adequate to protect the species and its habitat.

This Plan and the appendices describe measures the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will take to conserve and manage the species. This includes actions that could be taken to protect livestock from wolf depredation and address human safety concerns. The following summarizes the primary components of the Plan:

- Wolves that naturally disperse into Oregon will be conserved and managed under the Plan. Wolves will not be captured outside of Oregon and released in the state.

- Wolves may be considered for statewide delisting once the population reaches four breeding pairs for three consecutive years in eastern Oregon.<sup>1</sup> Four breeding pairs are considered the minimum conservation population objective, also described as Phase 1. The Plan calls for managing wolves in western Oregon as if the species remains listed until the western Oregon wolf population reaches four breeding pairs. This means, for example, that a landowner would be required to obtain a permit to address depredation problems using injurious harassment.
- While the wolf remains listed as a state endangered species the following will be allowed:
  - Wolves may be harassed (e.g. shouting, firing a shot in the air) to distract a wolf from a livestock operation or area of human activity.
  - Harassment that causes injury to a wolf (e.g., rubber bullets or bean bag projectiles) may be employed to prevent depredation, but only with a permit.
  - Wolves may be relocated to resolve an immediate localized problem from an area of human activity (e.g., wolf inadvertently caught in a trap) to suitable habitat. Relocation will be done by ODFW or Wildlife Services personnel but will not occur with wolves known or suspected to have depredated livestock or pets.
  - Livestock producers who witness a wolf ‘in the act’ of attacking livestock on public or private land must have a permit before taking any action that would cause harm to the wolf.
  - Once federally delisted, wolves involved in chronic depredation may be killed by ODFW or Wildlife Services personnel. However, non lethal methods will be emphasized and employed first in appropriate circumstances.
- Once the wolf is delisted, more options are available to address wolf-livestock conflict. While there are five to seven breeding pairs, livestock producers may kill a wolf involved in chronic depredation with a permit. Five to seven breeding pairs is considered Phase 2.
- Seven breeding pairs for three consecutive years in eastern or western Oregon is considered the management objective, or Phase 3. Under Phase 3 a limited controlled hunt could be allowed to decrease chronic depredation or reduce pressure on wild ungulate populations.
- The Plan provides wildlife managers with adaptive management strategies to address wolf predation problems on wild ungulates if confirmed wolf predation leads to declines in localized herds.
- In the unlikely event that a person is attacked by a wolf, the Plan describes the circumstances under which Oregon’s criminal code and federal ESA would allow harassing, harming or killing of wolves where necessary to avoid imminent, grave injury. Such an incident must be reported to law enforcement officials.
- A strong information and education program is proposed to ensure anyone with an interest in wolves is able to learn more about the species and stay informed about wildlife management activities.
- Several research projects are identified as necessary for future success of long-term wolf conservation and management. Monitoring and radio-collaring wolves are listed as critical components of the Plan both for conservation and communication with Oregonians.
- An economic analysis provides updated estimates of costs and benefits associated with wolves in Oregon and wolf conservation and management.
- Finally, the Plan requires annual reporting to the Commission on program implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> The boundary between east and west wolf management zones is defined by U.S. Highway 97 from the Columbia River to the junction of U.S. Highway 20, southeast on U.S. Highway 20 to the junction with U.S. Highway 395, and south on U.S. Highway 395 to the California border.