

III. WOLVES AS SPECIAL STATUS GAME MAMMALS

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MAMMALS

In 2009, the Oregon Legislature changed the status of wolves from protected non-game wildlife to a special status game mammal under ORS 496.004 (9). This change was called for in the 2005 Plan and allows ODFW to use existing, stable state and federal funding sources and existing field staff to include wolf management as part of their daily duties. These funding sources include both federal Wildlife Restoration grants (also known as Pittman-Robertson) and fees from the sale of hunting licenses.

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The special status mammal classification recognizes the wolf's distinct history of extirpation and conflict with certain significant human activities as well as its distinct place in human social attitudes based on experiences and myths that span centuries. This classification is based on Oregon's management successes with respect to other large carnivores (e.g., black bear, cougar) but also recognizes the factors that make the wolf somewhat distinct from other large carnivores. The classification provides the most options for long term management by retaining, in addition to protective measures, tools such as responsive hunting and trapping when required for management purposes, although these management tools would not be applied in the same manner as under a traditional game mammal or furbearer classification.

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ORS 496.004(9) directs the Commission to define the substantive standards governing this special status game mammal classification. In addition to the framework of this Plan and the provisions within, the standards specific to this classification include, but are not limited to, those below.

1. While in Phase I and II, wolves are protected consistent with the direction outlined in the Plan

2. In Phase III, take by special permit agent authorization through hunting and trapping may be used in in two circumstances as a management response tool to assist ODFW wildlife conservation and management efforts,

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- a. Chronic livestock depredation in a localized area
 - i. The take will only address a chronic depredation situation in a specific or local area, and
 - ii. The take will not impair population viability or reduce overall population health factors within the region.
- b. Wild ungulate populations not meeting established management objectives or herd management goals,

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i. DFW has determined that wolves are a major cause of the population not meeting established ungulate objectives or herd management goals (e.g., movements, use of key feeding areas, survival rates, nutrition, or other biological factors) and that the special permit agent action is expected to improve the situation.

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The take will not impair population viability or reduce overall wolf population health factors (i.e., factors related to survival rates, reproduction, dispersal success, territory establishment, immigration and emigration, etc.) within the region.

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3. In addressing appropriate management response to wild ungulate impacts per the above criteria, ODFW will consider the following factors: 1) data or other information indicating that wolves are a major cause of wolves not meeting objectives, and 2) ability to address the situation through non-lethal means, and 3) the level and duration of wolf removal necessary

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ODFW has determined that wolves are a significant factor in the population not meeting established ungulate objectives and that the controlled take action is expected to improve the situation.¶

- to remedy the situation, and 4) ability to measure ungulate response to management actions, and 5) identification of other identified major causes of an ungulate population not meeting objectives and attempts made to address them (i.e., balanced management).
4. Take per the above criteria would be by ODFW special permit agent authorization only, and targeted at wolves in a specific area or situation experiencing the above-mentioned conditions that warrant a management response. Special permit agent take does not include the use of controlled hunts (e.g., planned hunts or seasons with specified tag numbers) as used for other game species. Future controlled hunts of this type, if warranted, would require Commission approval through the planning and hunt development public process.
 5. General season hunts are not permitted.
 6. In the circumstances where take by special permit agent is authorized, trapping may be used for both lethal and non-lethal management control. Before receiving a permit authorization from ODFW, trappers and hunters must be pre-certified by ODFW. This ensures that both equipment and methods are best suited to the desired management outcome.
 7. In an effort to inform future actions and wolf planning related to this section, ODFW will monitor the results and evaluate the impacts of any wolf removal under this section.

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A. Hunter/Trapper Certification

The use of pre-certified hunters and trappers (per this classification) to assist with ODFW management response actions is not intended to be used as a population regulation mechanism on a large-area scale, nor is it intended to replace good faith efforts by managers to seek reasonable and practical non-lethal solutions per other sections of this Plan. Instead, they are designed as targeted management response mechanisms should the condition arise where a healthy wolf population is coupled with high levels of conflict with livestock and/or wild ungulate populations at a local scale.

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Prior to any issuance of special permit agent authorization under the provisions of this Plan, hunters and trappers must first be certified by ODFW. The process of defining certification requirements and conditions under the special permit agent authorization could model some components of the ODFW black bear and cougar agent process. Adoption of administrative rule through a public process would specify the selection and appointment of these agents and requirements for completion of information and training sessions conducted by ODFW.

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For hunters, this wolf-specific certification will be in addition to current hunter education requirements and will be designed to increase knowledge of wolves and wolf management, skills for effective and ethical take of wolves, and the importance of ethics in potentially sensitive take situations. The certification could follow a similar model set by the Oregon Master Hunter program which was used to develop a pool of ethical and knowledgeable hunters for use in select wildlife damage control situations. Master Hunter certification requires a four-part program, including online coursework, a classroom session, proficiency testing, and volunteer work to benefit wildlife. A fee to cover material and administrative costs is also applied.

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Trappers will also receive wolf-specific certification from ODFW prior to any authorization to trap wolves under this section. This certification is in addition to the current trapper education requirements for all Oregon trappers. Trappers who wish to assist ODFW with wolf management efforts under the provisions of this Plan will attend a certification course. That course will be designed to increase knowledge of wolves and wolf management, skills and tools for effective and ethical take of wolves, techniques to avoid trapping non-target species, and the importance of ethics in potentially sensitive take situations. A fee to cover material and administrative costs may be applied.

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Wolf trapping ethics, regulations, equipment, and proper techniques to avoid trapping non-target species¶
Background and history of Oregon wolves and wolf management¶
Wolf management and the role of trapping under this Plan ¶
Procedures and care of any wolf taken¶
Reporting requirements and procedures¶

In addition to wolf-specific certification prerequisites above, any persons receiving an authorization from ODFW to conduct lethal removal of wolves (hunt or trap) will be required to attend a situation-specific orientation by ODFW prior to any take activity. This orientation will include the following:

- Background and history of the current situation leading to the use of lethal removal
- Specific area and dates of authorized take
- Information of specific wolf/wolves to be removed
- Private land and access considerations
- Procedures for care and handling any wolf taken
- Situation-specific restrictions or considerations
- Reporting requirements and procedures

B. Other Considerations

Other provisions related to the special status game mammal classification are:

- Maximum enforcement of applicable statutes imposing penalties for harming or killing a wolf illegally has been sought by the State, and in 2016 the Oregon Legislature amended ORS 496.705 to increase the penalty for unlawful taking of gray wolves. The Oregon State Police administers a TIP (Turn in Poachers) reward program through the Oregon Hunters Association specifically for citizens who turn in or provide information leading to the arrest/conviction of someone who has illegally killed a wolf or other wildlife. Other non-governmental or wolf advocacy entities may also offer similar rewards.
- Where consistent with the above, Oregon's wildlife laws, wildlife damage statutes, and other related statutes would otherwise remain applicable to this classification.
- Nothing in this classification would otherwise change legal options available to livestock producers and other citizens under this Plan or other current law aimed at addressing wildlife damage, livestock protection, and protection of human life.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Special permit agent: ODFW certified members of the public or tribes engaged in management actions to kill a wolf by special permit (on public or private lands) to address chronic wolf-livestock conflicts, ungulate population objectives, winter range or feeding area objectives, or for wolf population management.

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Figure from December 2017 Commission Meeting Staff Presentation

