

Oregon Wolf Program Update

September – October 2010

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Reports of Wolf Activity: 37 wolf reports were received by ODFW during the reporting period as follows; east wolf management zone (30) and west wolf management zone (7). [*Note: The boundary between the two zones is Hwy 97/20/395.*] Types of wolf reports are categorized as; sighting reports (26), track/scat reports (6), and howling reports (5).

Field Investigations/Monitoring: All or part of 33 personnel-days was expended in September and October investigating reports of wolf activity or monitoring known wolf activity. *Note: In these monthly updates, wolves are reported in Oregon by Wildlife Management Units. This is done to maintain consistency with other wildlife species whose populations are monitored by the same unit boundaries. The Oregon Wildlife Management Unit map can be viewed online at: http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/hunting/big_game/units/index.asp*

Imnaha Pack: ODFW located the radio-collared wolves (three functional collars) of the Imnaha pack on 13 days in September/October using ground-based telemetry. Most of the locations were in the Imnaha Unit as they have been for most of the summer, but for one week in late October they moved across the Imnaha River into the Pine Creek Unit. This is similar to movements documented in 2009 during the fall season. A short, unsuccessful attempt was made in October to capture wolves from this pack for the purpose of installing a functional GPS radio collar on another member of the pack (the GPS unit on the alpha male of the pack is no longer functioning). The GPS collar allows for more precise location information and was helpful in addressing depredation issues with this pack last spring. The short trapping attempt was made to capitalize on the good weather period between elk hunting seasons, but after four consecutive trap-nights the traps were pulled to avoid possible conflicts with incoming elk hunters.

Wenaha Pack: ODFW located the Wenaha Pack via the newly collared wolf (OR-6) on five days in September. On Sept. 30, the collared wolf was found dead by ODFW personnel. As wolves are listed as endangered under the federal ESA, an investigation is currently being conducted by the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement. The collaring of OR-6 was the result of a substantial effort which began in 2007 and more time/effort was expended by ODFW to collar this single animal than all of the other Oregon-collared wolves. The loss of this collared wolf means that ODFW cannot readily locate the pack as before. Since the death of OR-6, ODFW has spent two days attempting to locate the Wenaha pack, without success. Based on reports given to ODFW by area forest users, we believe the pack is still present. At this time the best estimate for this pack is three adults and a minimum of three pups. **Note: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is offering a \$2,500 reward for information regarding the death of the federally protected male gray wolf found on September 30.**

In addition to the effort expended on the two known wolf packs in NE Oregon, ODFW conducted field surveys for wolves in the following units:

Catherine Creek Unit (north half). One day spent surveying new area for wolf sign. A relatively large canid track was documented, but the condition and size of the track did not allow positive identification. ODFW will conduct additional field surveys of the area to determine any wolf activity.

Mt. Emily Unit. Three days were expended in the Mt. Emily Unit in the area of recent wolf reports (north Mt. Emily Unit) and no wolf sign was found.

Sled Springs Unit. One day was spent following up on a report of a wolf observed on a dead elk calf. ODFW found cougar tracks, coyote tracks, and dog tracks in the area. No wolf sign was found.

Starkey Unit. One day was expended investigating a new wolf report in the Starkey Unit. No wolf sign was found.

Wenaha Unit. ODFW investigated a wolf sighting report on private land in the south portion of the Wenaha Unit. A remote camera was installed and the area has been continuously monitored since 9/24. No sign of wolf activity has been detected.

Aerial Monitoring: Four aerial flights were conducted by ODFW during the period. Both were for monitoring the locations of the three Imnaha Pack radio collars.

Livestock Depredation, Concerns, and Activities: Since federal re-listing in the eastern third of Oregon, the gray wolf is again federally endangered throughout the state and the USFWS has full regulatory authority over wolf-livestock depredations and any actions taken on wolves as a result of depredation. During September, ODFW assisted the USFWS with two livestock depredation investigations in Wallowa County (Imnaha Pack). Based on the particular situations and additional time spent in the two areas, no actions were taken by the USFWS.

Wolf-Livestock Demonstration Projects:

Mahogany Cow Camp Wolf Fencing Project: An afternoon was spent evaluating the small fenced area that was constructed to keep wolves away from cow dogs while in cow camp. The project was completed in July and is a cooperative project between ODFW and one of the USFS grazing permittees. The camp is situated in a high wolf use area (Imnaha pack) and, as wolves are very territorial, the purpose of the fence is to help protect working cow dogs while unattended at camp. The 7-foot tall fence was well-constructed and has electrified fladry surrounding it. Discussion with one of the ranch employees revealed that wolves were detected in the area on several occasions, but no problems between wolves and dogs were encountered. ODFW will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of these types of barriers and explore design improvements.

Livestock Carcass Cleanup Projects: In October, ODFW entered into cooperative agreements with two livestock producers in the upper Wallowa Valley. The agreements are to fund the removal of four livestock carcass disposal sites which are near winter calving areas. (Livestock carcass piles near calving areas can attract wolves and removing them may help reduce wolf use of the private land area during the upcoming winter.) The funding provided through these agreements is intended to offset the costs of the removal process. ODFW worked cooperatively with Oregon Cattlemen's Association to determine the funding rate for removal of carcass disposal sites. Rates are based on the cost of labor, equipment, and time required to complete each project.

Project 1. Removal of two large piles and one small pile. Agreement cost -- \$2,350

Project 2. Removal of one medium pile. Agreement cost --\$600

On September 23, ODFW and Oregon Cattlemen's Association personnel removed two small carcass piles (classified as one "medium" pile) at the request of an area landowner. The carcasses were near winter calving areas and the remains were disposed of at the Wallowa County landfill.

Range Rider: The range rider continued to work the area of the Imnaha pack during the period. ODFW funding of the range rider ended in August. Funding during September/October was provided by Defenders of Wildlife.

Media and Presentations:

- Two media interviews were given by Morgan this reporting period. One newspaper and one magazine.
- A round table discussion with a group of Whitman College students was attended by Brown on September 3. Wolf management issues and challenges in Oregon were discussed. The event was sponsored by Wallowa Resources of Enterprise.
- A wolf presentation was given by Brown to a group of OSU graduate students on September 13.
- One day was spent assisting High Desert Museum personnel with material for wolf presentations.
- On Nov. 18 at 8:30 p.m., OPB's Oregon Field Guide will air "Living with Wolves," a half-hour special. (Morgan interviewed for this show.)

2010 Update of Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan

The updated Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (Plan) and its associated technical rules were adopted by the Commission on October 1, 2010. To complete the update, the Department met with 14 stakeholder groups to solicit comments. These stakeholder groups included representatives from tribes, conservation groups, livestock producers, landowners, and state and federal agencies. The meetings took place statewide from June 1 to July 15, 2010. Department staff presented the ODFW Commission a preliminary draft of the updated plan at the September 2, 2010 Commission meeting. At that time the Department had received approximately 22,600 comments from the public. The September draft Plan had 11 substantive changes, primarily as a result of stakeholder input. Most of the changes were related to the management of wolf-livestock conflicts and the lessons learned from the recent Oregon wolf depredations. As a result of public testimony and Commission discussion in September, five additional changes were made to the draft. The updated Plan is available on the ODFW wolf web page at <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/Wolves/index.asp>. The Department appreciates all those who provided input to the Plan and assisted with the update process.

Agency Coordination/Miscellaneous:

- Wrote and submitted an interim report for the USFWS.
- Met with USFWS to discuss Oregon wolf management in wake of federal re-listing.
- Met with USFWS to discuss the update of the 2007 Coordination Strategy.

New Assistant Wolf Biologist: On August 26, 2010 ODFW welcomed new Assistant Wolf Biologist Roblyn Brown to the wolf program. The position will primarily focus on increased field survey and monitoring efforts, assistance with depredation issues, and providing public information regarding wolves. She is located in the Northeast Region Office (same address and numbers as above) in La Grande.