

Oregon Wolf Program Update

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Russ Morgan, ODFW Wolf Coordinator
Roblyn Brown, ODFW Assistant Wolf Biologist
107 20th Street, La Grande, OR 97850 (541) 963-2138

Reports of Wolf Activity: Twenty wolf reports were received by ODFW during the reporting period. Eighteen were from the east wolf management zone and two were from the west zone. Wolf reports received were categorized as sighting reports (13), and track/scat reports (7).

Field Investigations/Monitoring: All or part of 17 days were expended in April investigating reports of wolf activity or monitoring known wolf activity. *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 expended all or part of 7 days field monitoring Imnaha wolves in the Chesnimnus and Imnaha Units during the period. Wolves (or fresh sign) were detected on five of those days. Data collected from OR-7/OR-9 (both GPS-collared wolves), and OR-2/OR-3 (VHF collars), and visual observations showed that the wolves continued to use the winter range areas in the north Zumwalt area and private land areas west of Little Sheep Creek. In addition, the Imnaha wolves showed more individual travel during the later half of the month. This is a similar pattern as last year and is likely related to the onset of denning by the alpha members of the pack.

Wenaha Pack: In a cooperative project with the Umatilla National Forest, Wallowa Whitman National Forest, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, USFS personnel spent seven days in the Wenaha Unit conducting 340 miles of snow tracking surveys. Fresh sign of the pack (tracks) was located on April 1st and April 19th. Six sets of tracks were observed on 4/1 and this number of wolves is consistent with previous information about this pack. Remote cameras were in continuous use in the Wenaha during April but no wolf photo's were captured. Additionally, a howl box (a device which makes periodic howling sounds and then records responses) was installed on 3/31 in the Wenaha Unit as a way to explore new options for monitoring wolves in remote areas. The box ran for a 6 day period in early April and no howl responses were recorded. On April 18, a landowner in the Eden Bench area reported finding what he believed to be a wolf kill (elk) site. ODFW personnel met with the landowner and installed a camera near the carcass. The camera captured photo's of at least two wolves coming to the carcass. The same landowner later reported observing five wolves of the Wenaha Pack in the same area.

Sumpter Unit: One day was spent following up on a photo of a large canid track which was taken by ODFW personnel at the Auburn elk feed-site (approximately two miles west of Phillips Reservoir). No additional evidence of wolf activity was found.

Minam Unit: Part of one day was spent conducting track surveys in the Minam Unit. No wolf sign was found.

Aerial Monitoring: No aerial flights were conducted in April. This is primarily because the GPS location data (Imnaha pack) can now be received by ODFW daily without the need to physically download data.

Livestock Depredation, Investigations, and Landowner Assistance:

Wolves were federally listed during the month and were under USFWS regulatory authority. One confirmed wolf depredation (Imnaha Pack) and one probable depredation were documented by the USFWS in April. ODFW did review the April 30 calf depredation in the Mitchell Canyon area and, based on evidence presented, corroborated the USFWS decision to confirm it as a wolf depredation.

Landowner Assistance: Efforts in Wallowa County (Imnaha pack) continued in April to help area ranchers with non-lethal and preventative efforts. The fladry project continued through April and USFWS reports that 11 miles of fladry were in use and maintained during the month of April. On April 20, 2011 a RAG device was installed on the Triple Creek Ranch after wolf activity was detected near livestock the previous night. This is the third wolf-scaring device that is currently in use in the area.

In an effort to address depredation concerns ODFW began texting wolf location (Imnaha pack only) information on April 16th to area ranchers. This has been received favorably and has been an important tool to help ranchers know when wolves are on private lands near their livestock. Texting was chosen because current cellular phone coverage in the area allows ranchers to receive timely information while in the field. During the month, ODFW sent 28 text messages to area ranchers. In addition, 101 contacts were made with individual ranchers throughout the month to give specific information when wolves were near livestock. In addition to texting and calling, ODFW shares weekly wolf location information (map) with livestock producers who have been affected by depredation events associated with the Imnaha pack. This is done so that producers understand where wolves have been in relation to their livestock.

New Range Rider: In response to increased wolf activity in the upper Wallowa Valley area by the Imnaha Pack during the month, ODFW and an area landowner initiated a cooperative range rider project. The rider began on April 20th and, using telemetry gear and ODFW daily location information, closely monitored areas where wolves are on private lands with livestock. On April 21, the range rider successfully hazed 5 wolves from livestock in the Kinney Lake area and ODFW was notified. From 4/20 through 4/30 the rider worked 8 days, primarily during night and early morning hours. Funding for the range rider is expected to run out in early June. Efforts are underway to coordinate with Defenders of Wildlife for continuing (and possibly increasing) the range rider funding through the summer grazing season.

Media and Presentations:

- On 4/5/11 Morgan gave a wolf management presentation to a Willamette Valley Agriculture Professionals Association.
- On 4/7/11 Brown gave a wolf presentation to an Enterprise elementary school.
- On 4/13/11 Morgan gave a wolf management update to ODFW biologists at the statewide biologist meeting.
- Six newspaper interviews were given relating to general wolf management questions.

Other Activities:

- Conducted a selection process for a summer wolf internship. Selected OSU student Megan Urton to assist the wolf program in northeast Oregon this summer.

Wolf Legislation: There are currently 5 bills related to wolf management under consideration by the Oregon Legislature. Interested people may view and track bills in the Oregon Legislature at http://www.leg.state.or.us/bills_laws/home.htm

A summary of the bills as follows:

- HB3560. A bill to establish a compensation program for wolf-caused loss or injury of livestock.
- HB3561. A bill to establish a wolf population objective of 4 breeding pairs statewide and prohibiting the Commission from listing wolves as long as there are 4 breeding pairs in the state.
- HB3562. A bill which would specifically allow take of a wolf in defense of a person's own life or the life of another person.
- HB 3563. A bill to allow a person to take a wolf without a permit if the wolf is within 500' of their residence or if a wolf is chasing, harassing, wounding, or biting livestock or pets.
- SB583. A bill to prohibit the Commission from listing gray wolves as threatened or endangered regardless of population status