

Oregon Wolf Program Update

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Reports of Wolf Activity: Ten wolf reports were received by ODFW during the reporting period, all from the east wolf management zone. Wolf reports received were categorized as sighting reports (9), and track/scat reports (1).

Field Investigations/Monitoring: All or part of 26 days were expended in February 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 12 days field monitoring Imnaha wolves or working with Imnaha pack landowners during the period. Wolves (or fresh sign) were detected on two of those days. During March, data collected from OR-7/OR-9 (both GPS-collared wolves), and OR-2/OR-3 (VHF collars), and visual observations showed that the pack was together most of the month. They spent a significant portion of their time using the north Zumwalt area, and even showed use further north onto the Forest Service lands than previously recorded. Of the 397 GPS locations (both GPS collars) that were recorded during the month 71.8% were in the north Zumwalt area (Lightning Creek and northward), 5.5% were in the Three Lakes Area (between Lightning Creek and Little Sheep Creek), and 22.7% were east of Little Sheep Creek.

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 7 days in the Wenaha Unit conducting 389 miles of snow tracking surveys. Fresh sign of the pack – a single track set, was located on March 31. Remote cameras are in continuous use in the Wenaha and on 3/26 photos of 6 wolves were taken. 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.

Walla Walla Unit: ODFW and USFS personnel conducted field investigations in the Walla Walla Unit over three days in March. One day was follow-up on a report of wolf tracks near Eagle Creek (Umatilla Indian Res.). Tracks of two wolves were confirmed by ODFW. We believe these are likely the same wolves as have been documented in the area earlier this winter.

Sled Springs Unit: Twenty miles of snow track survey was conducted in the Sled Springs Unit on one day during the period. No tracks were found.

Mount Emily Unit: One day of field investigation was conducted by USFS personnel. No wolf sign was found.

Keating Unit: Field surveys were conducted by ODFW and USFS personnel on two days in the Keating Unit. One day was in response to a wolf sighting report from an area landowner, and one day was conducting a 22-mile snow track survey in the same area. No wolves or sign was found.

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

Genetic Testing Results from Captured Oregon Wolves: ODFW received results from 9 genetic samples submitted for testing. These samples were from the 9 wolves captured or killed between May 2009 and August 2010. Results are summarized as follows:

- All nine animals tested are pure gray wolf (*Canis lupus*).
- As expected, most (8 of 9 samples) are a product of the reintroduced central Idaho population. One wolf (a 2009

- Keating wolf) had a mixture of central Idaho and Greater Yellowstone genetics.
- The two Keating wolves were unrelated to each other.
- Wolves from the three Oregon packs (Keating, Imnaha, and Wenaha) are all genetically unrelated.
- The three Wenaha wolves (OR-6 and two uncollared pups captured in 2010) are related at the level of full siblings. This confirms that the pack (with same two parents) produced at least 1 pup that survived from 2009.
- The Imnaha OR-3 male and OR-5 female captured in 2010 are related as siblings, both being the pups of OR2 and OR4.

Livestock Depredation, Investigations, and Landowner Assistance: No wolf depredation was documented in March.

ODFW and USDA-WS visited a citizen near Cove who thought that wolves may have been indirectly related to the death of her horse. Two visits were made to her property and no evidence of wolf activity was found. The landowner will continue to look for wolf sign in the area and will inform ODFW if any is found. ODFW will supply a remote camera for continuous monitoring of the area.

Landowner Assistance: Efforts in Wallowa County (Imnaha pack) continued in March to help area ranchers with non-lethal and preventative efforts. A cooperative project between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wallowa Resources, area ranchers, and ODFW resulted in an estimated 9-10 miles of fladry installed and maintained on 9 properties. 1 ½ miles of new electrified fladry was purchased by ODFW to help complete the project. The radio activated guard (RAG) device on the Patton Ranch was updated and maintained. In addition, a new RAG device was placed near a private calf pasture in the Grouse Creek area to deter the wolves from using that area. ODFW assisted area ranchers with radio receivers by adding the newly collared wolves into their units so that they may be detected if near ranch areas. The new GPS collared wolves have provided daily information on wolf locations and ODFW made 55 contacts regarding wolf locations with area ranchers over the month.

Bone pile removal: We examined preliminary data related to bonepile removal projects (conducted in 2010) by comparing the number of March 2010 with March 2011 locations (Imnaha pack) of GPS-collared wolves at or near identified bone piles. In 2010, data from the single GPS-collared wolf OR-4 (4 locations/day) showed repeated and regular use of 4 distinct bone pile sites in March – 25 GPS data points were located at or near the bone piles. It was that information which prompted ODFW and concerned landowners to work cooperatively to reduce identified wolf attractants on their property by implementing bone pile removal projects. In March, 2011 data from the two GPS-collared wolves (OR-7 and OR-9 – 12 locations/day) shows only two data points (a single visit) at or near those same sites. It is important to acknowledge that this is only a single month of data with a small data set. In addition, other preventative measures (fladry, RAG boxes, and increased monitoring by ranchers) were in place in the general area during the month and may have influenced how wolves used the area. However, a 92% reduction of use of those particular sites does provide some encouraging information regarding the potential value of reducing attractants. Though the pack has continued to travel regularly between forested areas to the east and the open grasslands to the north, there has been less use of the upper valley ranches in March 2011 than March of the previous year.

Media and Presentations:

- On 3/2/11 Morgan gave a wolf management presentation to a Willamette University environmental law class.
- On 3/15/11 Morgan gave a wolf presentation to the Redmond Chapter, Oregon Hunters Association.
- ODFW issued news releases regarding the February capture and necropsy results of the recent wolf mortality.
- Three newspaper interviews and one radio interview were given – most were related to the death of one of the Imnaha pack wolves.

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