

## **Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan Staff Summary**

### **Background and History**

On February 11, 2005, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted the first Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (hereafter “the Plan”) and associated technical rules. The Plan was the result of the largest public involvement process ever undertaken by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) at that time. The 2-year planning process included the following:

- Four Commission-sponsored workshops. Twenty-nine people were invited to each of these, representing a variety of public and private interests.
- Fifteen town-hall meetings held in cities across Oregon. Approximately 2,000 people attended the meetings.
- A 14-member advisory committee was established with representatives from various perspectives of the wolf issue. The group met thirteen times while drafting the plan.
- Approximately 6,000 written and verbal comments were received from the public.
- As a result of the extensive public review, the Commission made over 200 changes to the draft before adopting the Plan.

At the time of adoption of the current Plan the Commission directed Department staff to pursue three statutory changes in Oregon law to enhance the implementation of the Plan; 1) changing the legal status of the gray wolf from protected non-game wildlife to a “special status mammal” under the “game mammal” definition in ORS 496.004; 2) amending the wildlife damage statute (ORS 498.012) to remove the requirement for a permit to lethally take a gray wolf caught in the act of attacking livestock; and 3) creating a state-funded program to pay compensation for wolf-caused losses of livestock and to pay for proactive methods to prevent wolf depredation.

These legislative proposals were included in HB 3478 during the 2005 Oregon Legislative Assembly and HB 2295 during the 2007 session. Both bills failed in committee. The Commission revised the Plan to be consistent with current statutes and moved the proposed legislation to an Appendix (Appendix P) in the Plan.

The current plan was adopted in December, 2005.

### **Oregon Wolf Status, Summary**

Wolf activity in Oregon has increased during the evaluation period as evidenced by both the increasing number of public wolf reports and confirmed wolves. The table below shows the public wolf reports received by the Department each year.

Public wolf reports received by the Department

2006	42
2007	122
2008	209
2009	205

To date, evidence of wolf activity has been found in all NE Oregon counties. The following are some wolf milestones which have occurred during the five-year evaluation period:

- In July, 2008, in north Union/west Wallowa County (Wenaha Unit), ODFW detected a pack of wolves, including pups. Though the number of adults and pups was undetermined, the detection represented the first documentation of breeding wolves in Oregon in modern history. The current number of wolves in this pack is unknown. Efforts continue to radio-collar individual wolves from this pack.
- In January 2008 a radio-collared female wolf from Idaho (B300) was detected in Wallowa County. In July, 2009 she was recaptured by ODFW (Imnaha Unit) and fitted with a new radio collar. At the time of capture it was confirmed that she had recently had pups. On November 12, 2009 ODFW confirmed that B300's pack consists of 10 wolves in the Imnaha Unit.
- Multiple reports of wolves in the central and southern Oregon Cascade Mountains have been investigated, primarily by USFWS personnel. Sightings, photographs, and tracks indicate the likelihood that wolves inhabit this area. It is unknown if these are resident wolves or dispersers. No breeding activity has been documented in this area. However, evidence of multiple-wolf activity is increasing.
- In April 2009 a pair of wolves was confirmed to have depredated livestock in the Keating Valley of Baker County. This marks the first confirmed wolf depredation of livestock in modern Oregon history. One of the two wolves was caught and radio-collared, and after significant agency efforts to stop the depredation through non-lethal means, the Department authorized the lethal removal of both wolves in September 2009.

### **Plan Evaluation and Reporting Requirement**

The Plan calls for Commission evaluation every five years, similar to other conservation plans, with the first review in 2010. This schedule also meets the requirement by ORS 496.176(8) for reviewing the status of listed gray wolves under Oregon ESA. The plan acknowledges that any formal evaluation of the plan could result in a decision by the Commission to enter into rulemaking and amend the plan. Furthermore, the plan states that an "evaluation would include measuring how well each portion of the plan has been implemented".

Strategies that track progress toward meeting the plan's objectives were incorporated into the Plan. These measures help identify the need for adaptive management. The Plan contains 18 stated objectives with a total of 68 strategies to meet the objectives. Attachment 3 covers all chapters of the Plan and specifically addresses those areas with stated objectives and strategies for implementation.