

Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan – 2010 Plan Evaluation

Staff Summary

The Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (Plan) was adopted in its current form in December, 2005. It contains objectives and strategies that are designed to meet the requirements of both the Oregon Endangered Species Act and the Oregon Wildlife Policy. The initial Plan was the result of a large public involvement process which included Commission-sponsored workshops, multiple town hall meetings across the state, a 14-member advisory committee, and many written and verbal comments from the general public. Staff considers the 2005 Plan a highly negotiated document and a number of agreements are contained within its pages.

The Plan calls for review every five years, similar to other conservation plans, with the first review in 2010. Attachment 4 (draft Plan) and Attachment 5 (draft Rules) are the result of that review. It contains staff-recommended changes to improve wolf conservation and management in Oregon.

No resident wolves were known to occur in the state at the time of the 2005 adoption of the Plan. However, as predicted by experts when the initial Plan was being developed, wolves have now established in Oregon. Today ODFW is radio-monitoring two packs of wolves in northeast Oregon (the Imnaha and Wenaha packs). In 2009 the Imnaha pack became Oregon's first documented breeding pair of wolves. Also in 2009, Oregon experienced its first wolf depredations when a new pair of wolves was confirmed to have depredated livestock in the Keating Valley of Baker County. After unsuccessful efforts to stop the depredations, the Department authorized the lethal removal of both wolves in September 2009. In 2010, six additional depredations of cattle were confirmed and attributed to the Imnaha pack in the upper Wallowa Valley and efforts to solve this situation are continuing. One member of the Wenaha pack was recently radio-collared and this will help the Department determine if the pack is a breeding pair.

Per Commission guidance to staff in March, 2010, the attached draft Plan is not a re-write of the original Plan. It is instead an updated version which includes practical changes to improve implementation. Though many of the changes proposed are a direct result of input recently received from stakeholder groups, it strives to maintain the scope and intent of the original negotiations of the 2005 Wolf Advisory Committee. The attached draft Plan was updated using five primary sources:

- Updated information (i.e., numbers, data, dates, etc.) where available.
- Input received from stakeholder groups through July, 2010.
- Preliminary evaluation document given to the Commission in March, 2010.
- Staff summary of policy issues raised by stakeholders presented to Commission in August, 2010.
- Practical experience gained from implementing the Plan from 2005 to present. This includes input to the department from the general public on a near daily basis.

As a result of recent livestock depredations by wolves in Oregon, much of the input received from stakeholders during the review process was focused on issues associated with the management of wolf-livestock conflicts. The two depredation events (Keating and Upper Wallowa Valley) have provided opportunity to evaluate the plan's approach to this situation. Many of the proposed updates in the draft Plan may be considered general updates, while other updates are more substantive and are primarily related to the Policy Issues given to the Commission in August.

On September 2, 2010, staff presented the draft of the updated 2010 Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan to the Commission. Based on input received from the Commission and from public testimony, staff made five additional substantive changes to the draft plan and OAR. These changes are contained in the attached draft Plan (Attachment 3) and are summarized as follows:

1. Pg 55. Clarifies the circumstances in which wildlife carcasses may be considered an attractant to wolf-livestock conflicts and should be removed.
2. Pg 57 and OAR 635-110. Changed the recipient of harassment or lethal control permits to livestock producers on land they own or *lawfully occupy*.
3. Pg 59, and OAR 635-110-0010. Added text which clarifies what "**in the area**" means.
4. Pgs 62-63. Added **county officials** as a contact option for landowners in the event of a suspected depredation. Also, changed strategy to include county officials when providing training for proper handling of wolf depredation investigations.
5. OAR 635-110-0010. Removed "**ratites and psittacines**" from the definition of livestock.

Staff also solicited additional economic information from the Oregon Cattlemen's Association to be considered in the economic analysis section of the draft Plan.