



## IMPLEMENTATION OF OREGON'S WOLF CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN: 2006 BRIEFING

### **Summary**

The Commission adopted the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan in December 2005. Wolves have not been confirmed in Oregon yet, but evidence collected to date suggests that wolves have likely entered from Idaho and are present at low numbers in NE Oregon. During the initial stages of implementing the Wolf Plan, the department has focused on five general areas of activity:

- Training of personnel:
- Wolf equipment and damage preparedness:
- Investigations of wolf reports and sightings:
- Communication and education activities:
- Development of wolf legislation for 2007 session.

### **Training of Personnel**

Department personnel attended out-of-state wolf training in Montana and Idaho for the purpose of becoming familiar with wolf management solutions and effective capture of wolves.

The department is coordinating with Montana FWP in developing materials to aid field personnel in identifying wolf signs while in the field.

### **Wolf Equipment and Damage Preparedness**

The department has made considerable progress with updating equipment to effectively manage wolves in Oregon. Specifically, we have purchased rubber-padded leg hold wolf traps and trapping supplies, darting equipment and immobilization drugs and have coordinated with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for available radio collars. At present, the department has the tools necessary to perform safe and effective capture and immobilization of wolves that enter Oregon.

The department submitted an application to the USFWS for the issuance of a Federal Recovery Permit [(10(a)(1)(A) permit] which would authorize the department to lethally remove wolves involved in cases of chronic depredation of livestock while the wolf is still federally listed as endangered. The Service is currently considering the application. Without the permit, the only agency that can perform lethal removal in Oregon is the USFWS.

Efforts to attain supplies and prepare for possible livestock damage by wolves are continuing and expected to be completed by March 2007.

## **Investigations of Wolf Reports and Sightings**

Department personnel investigated 42 wolf reports in 2006. These reports were primarily from the public and normally involved follow-up contact with the reporting party and when appropriate, survey of the area for additional signs of wolf presence. Wolf surveys include ground reconnaissance, scent stations, remotely triggered cameras and howling in suspected wolf locations.

To date, field investigations have not confirmed wild wolves in Oregon. However, based on evidence collected and the number of incoming reports it appears likely that wolves are present in low numbers in NE Oregon. Specifically, five large areas have shown significant signs of wolf activity as follows:

- Chesnimnus/Zumwalt area: An amateur video of what appears to be a black wolf was taken in this area. Subsequent reports indicate that the animal remained in the area into September. No reports have been made since that time and the fate of this animal is unknown.
- South Baker County: Several reports and follow-up investigations. No additional wolf evidence has been collected beyond the original reports.
- Eagle Cap Wilderness/Minam River: The only report which involved pups (two adults and two pups originally reported). Multiple site visits were made and limited evidence of wolf activity was collected – scat and a long distance sighting of a wolf-like animal. No evidence of pups was found.
- Tryon Creek/Hells Canyon: An extremely remote part of Oregon, multiple reports have originated from this area. The proximity to known Idaho wolf packs makes this area more likely to be occupied by wolves.
- East Wenaha/West Sled Springs: Sighting reports from hunters combined with excellent tracks in snow. This is the most recently collected evidence of possible wolf activity.

Work will continue through the winter to investigate wolf reports. If confirmed, the department in cooperation with the USFWS will begin capture operations to radio collar individual wolves.

## **Communications and Education**

### **FOR LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS**

Goal: Inform livestock producers of authorized steps that can be taken when responding to depredating wolves.

- Submitted information for inclusion in Oregon Sheep Growers Association and Oregon Cattlemen's Association publications. (December 2006)
- Created one-page flyer with information that will be distributed to livestock producers, sheep growers and others upon request.
- Posted information on the department's web site  
[http://www.dfw.state.or.us/Wolves/livestock\\_owners.asp](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/Wolves/livestock_owners.asp)
- Conducted personal contacts with key landowners and organizations regarding the current status of wolves in NE Oregon.

### **FOR HUNTERS**

Goal: Educate hunters to identify differences between wolves and coyotes, report wolf sightings and reduce conflict between wolves and dogs.

- Due to several recent credible sightings, a news release was sent out notifying bowhunters to be on the lookout for wolves. (August 2006)
- Included information about wolves on page 20 of *2007 Big Game* regulations
- *Oregon Hunter* magazine printed information regarding wolf/coyote identification, wolf reporting procedures and wolf/domestic dog interactions. (Nov.-Dec. 2006 issue.)
- Posted the same information to the department's web site.  
<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/Wolves/hunters.asp>
- Worked with federal land agencies to post signs in key areas of suspected wolf activity for two purposes: 1) inform hunters about the potential of observing a wolf, and 2) provide updated agency contact information in event of a wolf sighting.

#### OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

- Continually updating the department's web site <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/wolves/>
- Issued news release announcing federal government review of Oregon's Wolf Plan. (August 2006)
- Created phone tree to simplify notification of key stakeholders when a wolf sighting is confirmed.
- Conducted multiple interviews with newspaper reporters regarding recent wolf sightings and status. In addition, two television interviews were given regarding wolf status and associated issues in Oregon.

#### **Wolf Legislation**

The department convened a 13 member stakeholder group to revisit wolf legislation that did not pass during the last legislative session. Stakeholders met twice but were unable to reach agreement on proposed bill language. The department submitted draft legislation to Legislative Council and has recently finalized a bill to be submitted during the 2007 session. The bill language is similar to HB3478-5 language which had broad support last session. We continue to work with key stakeholders to reach agreement on this legislation and remain hopeful that we can achieve consensus. The bill has four main components:

- Changes the status of the gray wolf to a game mammal with special management provisions.
- Authorizes the department to issue incidental take permits for the incidental take of wolves while trapping for other species involved in livestock damage. [*Requires federal delisting to be effective*]
- Allows lethal take of wolves by landowners without a permit if a wolf is caught in the act of attacking livestock. [*Requires federal delisting to be effective*]
- Creates a state-sponsored livestock compensation program and proactive trust fund to compensate for wolf related livestock losses and assist with implementing preventative measures.