



Oregon Wolf Program August-September, 2009 Update



Russ Morgan, ODFW Wolf Coordinator
107 20th Street, LaGrande, OR 9850 (541) 963-2138

Reports of Wolf Activity: Seven wolf reports were received in August by ODFW in July as follows; east wolf management zone (6) and west wolf management zone (1). [Note: *wolf reports are classified into two wolf management zones. These zones are defined on page 17 of the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan*]. Types of wolf reports in August are categorized as follows; sighting reports (5), track reports (1), and howling reports (1). In September, twenty-seven reports were received; east zone (16) and west zone (11) and were categorized as follows; sightings (22), and howling (5). Many of the reports over the two months were confirmed to NOT be wolves, but these reports are still considered important. Hunters continue to be an important source of wolf reports and the increase in September is due to the increased number of archery hunters afield. Five of the east zone reports were from areas of known wolf activity (i.e., the Imnaha and Keating Units). It is notable that four multiple-wolf reports (more than one wolf observed at the same time) were received from the Starkey Unit during the period, and one multiple-wolf report was from the Desolation Unit. Areas with multiple-wolf reports will be prioritized for follow-up investigations.

Field Investigations/Monitoring:

Note: In these monthly updates wolves are reported in Oregon by Wildlife Management Units. This is done to maintain consistency with other wildlife species whose populations are monitored by the same unit boundaries. The Oregon Wildlife Management Unit map can be viewed online at: http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/hunting/big_game/units/index.asp

Wenaha Unit: Tracking and howling surveys were conducted over four days in August. A single set of tracks was found on August 11 and they were estimated to be three to four days old. They were approximately 8 miles from where last year's pups were documented. However, extensive tracking efforts in the area yielded no additional fresh sign. Two nights were spent howling 56 miles of routes in the larger area with no wolf responses. Four track stations were established and checked over a six day period with no tracks recorded.

Starkey Unit: Two days were spent investigating wolf reports in the Starkey Unit in September. No wolf sign was found, though track conditions were less than ideal. Additional efforts will be made in the West Starkey and East Ukiah Units this fall in response to several public wolf reports.

B300/Imnaha Unit: The recently re-collared female wolf (B300) continues to reside in the Imnaha Unit. She was located on 12 days during the two month period. On August 20, a visual observation was made of the alpha male (a large, black wolf) and two pups (there may have been more pups, but only two were observed). Additional attempts will be made to accurately count pups.

Desolation Unit: One day was spent investigating a wolf report west of Granite. Though no wolf sign was found, more efforts will be made this fall and winter to thoroughly search the area.

Livestock Damage Reports/Concerns:

Keating Valley wolf depredation. On August 28th ODFW received a call that another depredation had occurred at the Jacobs ranch in the Keating Valley (Baker County). USDA APHIS Wildlife Services and ODFW confirmed that 3 sheep (lambs) and one pet goat had been killed and evidence at the site confirmed that the two wolves (OR-1 and female partner) had again depredated in a nearly identical fashion as last April. A fourth lamb died the next day. On August 29th, after careful review of



the situation, and per direction set forth in the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, ODFW authorized USDA APHIS Wildlife Services to lethally remove the two depredating wolves. Both depredating wolves were killed on September 5th.

After the first incident in April, ODFW and the landowners involved tried a series of non-lethal measures to dissuade the wolves from killing more livestock. Those measures included radio-collaring one of the wolves so they could be monitored, installing fladry (flagged fencing that can be a wolf deterrent), using a radio-activated-guard box that makes noise when a radio collar approaches, double-penning livestock, keeping livestock near homes at night, burying carcass piles, guard dogs and hazing the wolves out of the Keating Valley.

Under Oregon's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, while wolves are listed as state-endangered, the first response to wolf-livestock conflict is to use non-lethal measures to deter the wolves. However, in situations where chronic losses are occurring, lethal control actions may be employed regardless of the population status. It's unfortunate that we got to this step but these wolves continued to kill livestock despite our many efforts to keep them out of trouble. ODFW is committed to not allowing chronic losses to continue.

Aerial Monitoring: Eight aerial flights were conducted by ODFW during August and September. Six flights were for monitoring the collared wolf (OR-1) in the Keating Unit, and two were for telemetry locations of B300.

Miscellaneous:

- Worked with Salem Headquarters personnel to improve the ODFW wolf website and online reporting system.
- Began developing an incidental take permit (ITP) for USDA Wildlife Services in Oregon. This permit provides protection for Wildlife Services under the Oregon Endangered Species Act in the event a gray wolf is incidentally taken by a Wildlife services employee while conducting official wildlife damage management activities. The incidental take process is similar to federal guidance that Wildlife Services currently operates under, and allows ODFW to work directly with Wildlife services to develop measures to minimize potential take of wolves.
- Worked with I&E staff to develop an information flyer that discusses proactive methods to reduce wolf-livestock conflicts. The document is scheduled to be produced in October.
- Worked with I&E staff to respond to media requests about wolves from the Oregonian, Associated Press, Baker City News Herald, and other outlets.
- Worked with I&E staff to respond to questions from the public regarding wolves.

Federal Delisting Update: On May 4, 2009, wolves in the eastern portion of Oregon (east of highways 395, 78 and 95) were "de-listed," or removed from protection under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). **Wolves in all of Oregon remain protected by Oregon's ESA**, and wolves west of the delisting boundary remain protected by both the federal and state ESA. More information on wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains can be viewed at the following web address: <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/wolf/>