

# Oregon Wolf Program Update

## November, 2010

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**Reports of Wolf Activity:** Twenty seven wolf reports were received by ODFW during the reporting period as follows; east wolf management zone (24) and west wolf management zone (3). [Note: *the boundary between the two zones is Hwy 97/20/395*] Types of wolf reports are categorized as; sighting reports (19), track/scat reports (6), and howling reports (2).

**Field Investigations/Monitoring:** All or part of 18 personnel-days was expended in November investigating reports of wolf activity or monitoring known wolf activity. *Note: In these monthly updates wolves are reported in Oregon by Wildlife Management Unit. 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/bunting/big\\_game/units/index.asp](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/bunting/big_game/units/index.asp)*

**Imnaha Pack:** ODFW located the radio-collared wolves (three functional collars) of the Imnaha pack on 5 days in November using ground-based telemetry (3 days) and aerial telemetry (2 days). The pack is beginning to use the same wintering areas (as last year) east of Little Sheep Creek. All three remaining collars are functional. On 11/29/10 during an aerial flight the pack was visually observed and 14 wolves were counted. Though observation conditions were not ideal, a minimum of two pups were confirmed. ODFW will attempt to conduct a more thorough count of pup recruitment of this pack in December.

**Wenaha Pack:** Wenaha wolves were detected on two days (tracks) during November. They continue to use the higher elevation forested area between the Wenaha and Grande Ronde Rivers. The two remote cameras that were installed in September as a result of a private land wolf report (lower elevation) are still in place and no wolves have been detected. At this time the best estimate for this pack is three adults and a minimum of three pups. **Note: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is offering a \$2,500 reward for information regarding the death of the federally protected male gray wolf found on September 30. In addition, a \$7,500 reward is being offered by wildlife conservation groups.**

In addition to the effort expended on the two known wolf packs in NE Oregon, ODFW conducted field surveys for wolves in the following units:

**Catherine Creek Unit (south half)/Keating Unit (North half).** One day spent in the south Catherine Creek Unit surveying new area for wolf sign, none was found. However, ODFW did receive a wolf track report in the upper Catherine Creek drainage, including a photograph which appears to be a wolf track. In addition, USDA Wildlife Services personnel documented a single wolf track in the north Keating Unit on two days during the last half of November. This is the first wolf sign to be documented in this area since the removal of the two Keating wolves in September 2009. ODFW will attempt to determine the number and distribution of wolves in this area over the winter.

**Beulah Unit.** Two days were expended surveying for new wolves in the northwest portion of the Beulah Unit in response to a wolf report received from that area. Snow tracking and night howling methods were used and no wolf detections were made. Even so, this is an area where ODFW has received periodic reports of wolf activity and ODFW will conduct additional monitoring of this area over the winter.

**Desolation Unit.** One day was expended surveying for wolf activity in the Desolation Unit and no wolf sign was found. The area searched was the Olive Lake/Granite area in response to periodic wolf reports.

**Starkey Unit.** Three days were expended surveying for wolf activity in the Starkey Unit. One day in the extreme SW portion of the unit where a single set of large canid tracks were discovered. The age of the tracks in melted snow prevented positive

identification. A remote camera was installed near the tracks on 11/4 and we have not yet returned to the site to check for photos. Two days were spent in the unit investigating reports of wolf activity in the Shaw Mtn. area. ODFW has received several reports of wolf sightings in this area over the fall hunting seasons. During the last week of November two sets of wolf tracks (traveling together) were found by ODFW near Shaw Mtn. thus confirming wolf activity in the area. ODFW has prioritized this area for further monitoring to determine the number of wolves and if they remain resident in the area.

**Aerial Monitoring:** Two aerial flights were conducted by ODFW during the period. Both were for monitoring the locations of the three Imnaha Pack radio collars.

**Livestock Depredation, Concerns, and Activities:** Since federal re-listing in the eastern third of Oregon, the gray wolf is again federally endangered throughout the state. The USFWS has the lead role, with assistance from ODFW and Wildlife Services, in investigating possible wolf-caused livestock depredations. Any control action on wolves that are confirmed to be involved in livestock depredations, must be approved by USFWS before initiation. During November, Wildlife Services investigated the death of two calves (bovine) at a single location in the Catherine Creek area. It was reported to ODFW that evidence of pneumonia was present but there were concerns of a possible stressful event (i.e., depredation) which may have led to the pneumonia. No wolf sign was found in the area and the calves were classified as possible/unknown. On 11/30 ODFW and Wildlife Services cooperatively investigated a dead calf (bovine) near Catherine Creek State Park. The calf had been dead for an estimated 13 days (based on information by the owner of the calf) and the owner asked if we could give an opinion as to why it might have died. The carcass was partially consumed but remaining portions were fairly well preserved (partially frozen). A necropsy of the remains revealed no bite marks and no predator tracks were noted around the carcass -- however, snow conditions would have likely covered any tracks. The cause of death of this calf was unknown.

#### **Wolf-Livestock Demonstration Projects:**

Livestock Carcass Cleanup Projects: In October, ODFW entered into cooperative agreements with two livestock producers in the upper Willamette Valley. The agreements were to fund the removal of four livestock carcass disposal sites which are near winter calving areas. One carcass removal project (two large piles, and one small pile) was completed during November and payment documents were completed and sent. The second project is still pending.

#### **Media and Presentations:**

- One media interview was given by Morgan this reporting period – newspaper.
- ODFW (Morgan and Brown) discussed wolf management issues with the Enterprise High School science class.

#### **Agency Coordination/Miscellaneous:**

- ODFW had meetings with both USFWS and USDA Wildlife Services to discuss recent findings of wolf activity.
- Continued to work with the USFWS on the update of the 2007 Coordination Strategy.
- Met with the Union County Sheriff to discuss the updated wolf plan and wolf management issues in NE Oregon.