

# Oregon Wolf Program Update

## December 2011

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### Reports of Wolf Activity:

ODFW received 43 wolf reports during December. Of those, 20 wolf reports were from the western wolf management zone (14 sighting reports, 5 tracks and scat reports, 1 report of howling), and 23 from the east zone (14 sighting reports, 8 track reports, 1 report of wolf howls). Western/Eastern wolf management zones are divided by Hwys 97/20/395.

### Field Investigations/Monitoring/Capture:

Imnaha Pack: ODFW continues to intensely monitor the Imnaha pack with GPS radio-collar locations of OR4, the alpha male. The GPS radio-collar downloaded 241 GPS location data points in December. In December, the pack was on private lands for 68 (28%) of the locations and on public lands for 173 (72%) of the locations. All December locations were in Wallowa County. ODFW counted the pack as consisting of five wolves in December, which includes a single pup from 2011. Thus the Imnaha pack will not be considered a breeding pair for the year. The pack expanded its home range to the east (into the Snake River Unit) in December and now covers approximately 1,047 square miles.

OR7: The dispersal movement of this wolf slowed in December and OR7 spent several weeks in Klamath County. Location data showed repeated use of an approximately 100 square mile area between Klamath and Crater Lakes. However, late in the month the wolf began a southward dispersal movement and on December 28<sup>th</sup> crossed into California. This wolf is federally listed as endangered and ODFW will assist the USFWS and California Department of Fish and Game by providing regular location updates to these agencies. ODFW will not provide location information for wolves outside of Oregon except to state and federal fish and wildlife agencies.

OR3: Despite two separate efforts to locate this wolf's signal from aircraft, OR3 has not been located since Sept. 30.

Wenaha Pack: Reproduction was confirmed in the Wenaha pack in December. A single pup (born last April) was identified by use of a remote camera. By definition a *breeding pair* requires at least two pups to be present in December. However, it is possible that additional pups from 2011 will be found over the winter and in that event, the pack status will be changed to a breeding pair. Additional monitoring of the Wenaha pack will occur in January.

Walla Walla Pack: ODFW biologists located the Walla Walla pack with telemetry in December and observed the pack to consist of seven wolves at that time. The two recently collared pups were located with the pack several times during the month. This confirms the pack to be a successful breeding pair in December.

Mt Emily Unit: No new wolf sign was found in this unit during December.

Snake River Pack: A single flight survey was conducted in the Snake River and no wolves were observed.

Sled Springs Unit: Individual wolf tracks were observed by ODFW biologists on two separate days in the eastern portion of the Unit.

Catherine Creek: Field surveys for wolves were conducted over three days during December and no sign was found.

### **Livestock Depredation, Investigations, and Livestock Producer Assistance:**

ODFW conducted three wolf depredation investigations during the month in Wallowa County. Two investigations at the same ranch resulted in ODFW confirmation of wolf depredation by the Imnaha pack. One investigation resulted in a possible/unknown determination. A summary of each investigation can be viewed at the following link [http://www.dfw.state.or.us/Wolves/livestock\\_loss\\_investigations.asp](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/Wolves/livestock_loss_investigations.asp).

### **Non-Lethal/Preventative Actions:**

ODFW continued to send text messages to Wallowa County livestock producers with livestock in the area of the Imnaha pack. During the month, a total of 697 text messages were sent. Texts were sent twice daily on every day of the month. Many personal phone calls were also made to specific producers in areas without cell phone service.

### **Litigation:**

On Nov. 15, the Oregon Court of Appeals extended the stay prohibiting ODFW from killing two wolves from the Imnaha pack under the chronic depredation rule. ODFW's planned lethal removal of the alpha male and an uncollared wolf from the pack is on hold pending the Court of Appeal's decision on the case.

### **Genetic Sampling Results:**

On January 3 2012, the department received information from 2011 genetic samples submitted to the University of Idaho Laboratory for Conservation and Ecological Genetics for analysis. The preliminary results are as follows.

Ten scat samples were collected from the newly discovered Snake River pack in October. Upon analysis, three individuals (all males) were identified. Two individuals are full siblings and are not related to any other Oregon wolves sampled so far. The third individual is unrelated to the siblings and has a half-sibling relationship to the three members of the Wenaha pack that have been analyzed (which means it is possible these individuals share one parent).

In July, a scat sample was collected in the western part of the Mt Emily unit as part of an ongoing department cougar research project. The scat was identified as a female wolf and is unrelated to any Oregon wolves sampled to date.

Tissue samples were collected from the two Walla Walla pack pups (OR10 and OR11) collared in October. The two pups are full siblings (as expected) and are not related to any other Oregon wolves sampled so far. This is conclusive information that the Walla Walla and Wenaha packs are separate.