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Contact Ron Aasheim, (406) 444-4038; or visit FWP's website at fwp.mt.gov

FWP Fact Sheet

Congress Delists Montana Wolf Population

Congressional budget action delivers state wolf management

Within 60 days of the enactment of a new federal law, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior will once again reissue the wolf delisting rule first published in April 2009. Unlike delisting rules issued in the past, this Congressional action also excludes the rule from judicial review.

The reissued rule:

- is effective upon publication in the Federal Register.
- delists all wolves in Montana, Idaho—and in portions of Washington, Oregon and Utah
- does not delist wolves in Wyoming.
- authorizes Montana to manage wolves under the state's federally approved Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan.

Wolves are recovered in the Northern Rocky Mountains

- The Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolf population first met the biological recovery goals in 2002. The Northern Rockies "metapopulation" is comprised of wolf populations in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming.
- At least 1,650 wolves live in the region, where wolves can travel about freely to join existing packs or form new packs. This, combined with wolf populations in Canada and Alaska, assures genetic diversity.
- At least 566 wolves inhabited Montana at the end of 2010 in about 108 packs, 35 of which were breeding pairs.
- To avoid relisting, Montana will comply with federal regulations to manage wolves in a manner that will guarantee that the state maintains at least a minimum of 150 wolves and 15 breeding pairs.
- The Montana wolf population increased by about 8 percent in 2010.

Wolf delisting and Montana

- Delisting allows Montana to manage wolves in a manner similar to how bears, mountain lions and other wildlife species are managed, guided by state management plans and laws.
- FWP and the respective Indian Tribes will have full legal authority for wolf conservation and management in Montana when delisting takes effect.
- Upon delisting, the line separating Montana into the northern Endangered Area and the southern Experimental Area no longer exists.
- The wolf will be reclassified under Montana law as a “species in need of management” statewide.
- Montana laws allow wolves to be legally killed only:
 - during an official hunting season authorized by the FWP Commission.
 - if the wolf is seen killing or threatening to kill dogs or livestock.
 - to protect human life.
 - as authorized by FWP to resolve wolf-livestock conflicts.

2011 wolf hunting season

- The FWP Commission will consider establishing a wolf-hunting season and harvest quotas for a 2011 season.
- Officials expect the season will be similar to the framework proposed for 2010.
- Montana's approach to wolf management will be a rigorous, science-based effort to manage the total number of wolves that can be taken by hunters while maintaining a balance among all wildlife, their habitats and the people who live in Montana.
- That balance will include managing for a recovered wolf population while addressing livestock depredation and impacts to other wildlife.
- Quotas would be tracked by requiring successful hunters to call 1-877-FWP-WILD to report their harvest within 12 hours. When a management unit quota is filled, the season would close upon 24-hour notice.
- The wolf population would be carefully monitored before, during, and after the hunting season to assess how it responds.
- Wolf season dates would likely correspond to Montana's early back country and general big game rifle seasons.
- FWP may ask the commission to consider a wolf archery season to run the same time as Montana's deer, elk, lion, and black bear archery seasons.
- Wolf hunting license fees are set at \$19 for residents and \$350 for nonresidents.

2010 wolf hunting season proposal

- The 2010 wolf hunt, which was blocked by a federal court order, proposed a total harvest quota of 186 wolves to reduce the wolf population by 13 percent, in conjunction with anticipated reductions due to livestock depredation and mortalities from other events, like accidents and natural causes.
- The 2010 wolf season framework included:
 - 14 wolf management units designed to ensure a widely distributed harvest and yet still target areas where impacts on prey, like elk and deer, were of concern and where recurring livestock depredations were anticipated.
 - subquotas in three areas to limit harvest during early season backcountry hunts, including the area directly north of Yellowstone National Park.

2009 wolf hunting season

- During Montana's first regulated wolf hunt in 2009:
 - a harvest quota of 75 wolves was established across three WMUs.
 - hunters harvested 72 wolves between Sept. 15 and Nov. 16.
 - as hunters approached the overall harvest quota of 75 wolves, FWP closed the hunt about two weeks before the season was scheduled to end to ensure the quota would not be exceeded.

Wolf monitoring

- Throughout the year, FWP works to determine the status of known packs, verifies new wolf activity, determines if a pack produced pups, and how many survived to the end of the year.
- FWP is required to report the minimum total number of wolves, the number of packs of two or more wolves and the number of breeding pairs to the USFWS for five years after delisting.
- FWP monitors wolves for routine health and disease. FWP also collects tissue samples and uses radio telemetry information to monitor genetic diversity and wolf dispersal.

Cost & funding

- Federal funding is secure through September 2011
- Montana will continue efforts to secure federal funding and combine it with revenue from the sale of wolf hunting licenses, private sources, and other in-kind contributions.

Wolves, livestock & pets upon delisting

- Montana livestock producers can non-injuriouly haze or harass a wolf if it is too close to livestock or domestic animals on public or private land. The incident should be reported to FWP in 72 hours.
- Similar to lions and black bears, a wolf seen actively biting, wounding, chasing, harassing, or attacking livestock can be killed on public or private land, as allowed by Montana's defense of property statute. The incident must be reported to FWP in 72 hours.
- USDA Wildlife Services investigates reports of injured or dead livestock to see if they are wolf-related and carries out both nonlethal and lethal control of wolves at FWP's direction.

Federal oversight for five years

- Montana must monitor the wolf population and annually submit population status reports to USFWS for five years.
- USFWS will monitor how each state carries out its management plan, regulations, and state laws.
- USFWS will also examine any change in state plans or laws to determine whether they would jeopardize the population and could relist the gray wolf if it finds the changes are significant and could jeopardize Montana's population or the tri-state regional population.

Wolves can be relisted

- Three scenarios would cause the USFWS to initiate a status review to determine if relisting was warranted:
 - 1) if at any time the wolf population falls below wolf population recovery levels of 100 wolves and 10 breeding pairs in either Montana, Idaho, or Wyoming.
 - 2) if the wolf population in either Montana, Idaho, or Wyoming falls below 150 wolves or 15 breeding pairs in any of the states for three consecutive years.
 - 3) if a change in state law or management objectives would significantly increase the threat to the wolf population.

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