



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Summary of Michigan DNR Wolf Management Plan December 1997

Numerical Targets

- The plan calls for a "minimum sustainable population" of 200 wolves in the Upper Peninsula.
- Habitat, prey, and land-use analysis showed that the Upper Peninsula can support at least 800 wolves.
- No upper population limit is specified, but an upper limit referred to as the *cultural carrying capacity* will be determined by public reaction.
- The plan acknowledges that in the future "some degree of wolf population stabilization and control" may be needed and that "some wolves will likely need to be killed under controlled conditions."

State Reclassification/Delisting/Relisting Criteria

- Reclassify to state-threatened after there are at least 100 wolves in Wisconsin and Michigan for five consecutive years.
- State-delist after there are 200 wolves in Michigan for five consecutive years.

Monitoring

- Will be a high priority for 5 years post-Federal delisting and until the population reaches 200.
- Periodic surveys will be done after 200 wolves achieved, but frequency and methods are not specified.
- Monitoring will estimate numbers, range, territory locations, locate den and rendezvous sites, identify dispersal corridors and dispersal rates and directions, estimate productivity and mortality, and determine any special management needs. Methods will include radio telemetry (goal is at least one collared wolf per pack), winter tracking, and wolf observation reports by DNR personnel.

Habitat Protection

- **Den/rendezvous sites** (occupied within the last two years) will be protected by two-rings of protective zones, whether on private or public land.
 - The inner ring, 100 meters in radius, will be a zone of no land use activity at any time. No new roads or trails should be constructed and existing forest roads and trails should be obliterated. Recreational use of the area will not be discouraged.
 - In the second zone, out to ½ mile from the home site, most land use activities will be allowed during the August through February period. Clear-cutting is allowed, as long as travel corridors from the home site to adjacent standing timber are maintained. No new permanent roads or trails should be constructed and temporary roads (e.g., for timber harvest) should be closed or obliterated after their need has passed.
- If current **road densities** are at or below 1 mile per square mile, they should be kept at that level. [Presumably this applies only to areas of the Upper Peninsula that are currently suitable wolf habitat.] The plan also implies that areas with higher densities should have some roads closed to achieve this lowered density but note the discussion on page 26 indicating reduction of road densities may not be important "if people are...tolerant".

[Road closure specifically for wolves was an issue during scoping for the state wolf plan. At public meetings, state officials emphasized there would be no road closure or wide spread access restriction just for wolves.] Temporary roads should be closed when their purpose has been achieved. The plan notes recent evidence that wolves may be able to recolonize areas of higher road and human density than previously believed provided "people are generally tolerant of wolves". Reduction of existing road densities may not be as important as avoiding an increase in road density.

- **Linkage zones**, or regional habitat corridors, should be identified and preserved to connect wolf populations in MN, WI, MI, and Ontario. All natural resource agencies and potentially affected landowners should be involved in their identification and protection. "Sanctuaries" or large areas of wilderness do not need to be set aside for wolves. Existing deer habitat improvement and maintenance programs by the DNR and national forests will be adequate to maintain a sufficient deer population to support a viable wolf population. No additional deer habitat management, or habitat management to increase the population of any other prey species, is considered necessary specifically to benefit wolves.

Depredation Control

- If depredation is verified, wolves will be trapped, radio-collared, and translocated to unoccupied areas while federally listed as endangered. "Limited lethal control may be done" when federally reclassified to threatened or delisted. No other details given. Cooperative efforts to reduce depredation problems, involving the DNR and livestock producers, are encouraged.

- Michigan DNR does not pay compensation for wildlife-caused losses of any kind but will work to develop a private funding source for wolf depredation compensation. [The plan does not mention that the Michigan Department of Agriculture currently administers a limited wolf depredation compensation program.]

Population Management

Population management, except for depredation control, is not addressed beyond statements that the wolf population may need to be controlled by lethal means at some future time when the cultural carrying capacity is reached or approached.

Law Enforcement

Michigan DNR will have the primary responsibility for law enforcement actions but these must be carried out in close cooperation with Federal, Tribal, and local law enforcement authorities. The closing of the coyote hunting season on the Upper Peninsula during the first half of November (deer gun season) should be continued. Other appropriate regulations should be developed, as necessary, to achieve wolf management goals.

Research

Identified research needs include wolf monitoring (population, range, health, etc.), human attitudes, modeling to simulate population growth and habitat interactions. Other research needs are expected to develop.

Information and Education

A coordinated long-range I&E plan should be developed, involving Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies, Timber Wolf Information Network, Timber Wolf Alliance, International Wolf Center, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, and others. Education materials and programs intended for various target audiences will be developed. A "code of conduct" for all individuals/organizations interested in observing wolves is recommended for development.

This summary was developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3, Division of Endangered Species, Ft. Snelling, MN, with the assistance of the East Lansing, MI, Ecological Services Field Office.