



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Summary of the Wisconsin DNR Wolf Management Plan October 27, 1999

Goal

Maintain a healthy viable population of gray wolves in the state, contribute toward national wolf recovery, and address problems that may occur with wolf depredation on livestock or pets.

Numerical Targets and State Reclassification/Delisting/Relisting Criteria

- Minimum population management goal is 350 wolves (late winter counts) outside of Indian Reservations
- 250 wolves (outside reservations) for 1 year - State delists and wolves become "protected nongame species"
- 80 wolves for 3 years - State reclassified to threatened (done in October 1999)
- Decline to less than 250 wolves for 3 years - State relists as threatened
- Decline to less than 80 for 1 year - State relists/reclassifies as endangered

Monitoring

- In recent years, 30-40% of population has been radio-collared, with 50-60% of packs having at least one radio-collared wolf during winter
- Will continue current level of monitoring for at least five years after Federal delisting
- Five-years after Federal delisting and after State reclassified to threatened status, will decrease percentage of packs radio-collared; collaring emphasis then will shift to colonizing packs, core areas, Zone 2, and special research projects; greater emphasis will be placed on snow tracking and howling surveys for population estimates, including more volunteer surveys
- Health monitoring - while state listed, will continue striving to capture 10% of the population annually and will screen for diseases, parasites, and general condition (have live trapped and screened 12-17 wolves annually in recent years); scat will be collected to monitor for canine viruses and parasites; all dead wolves will be necropsied; after state delisted live trapping will continue, but the percentage of the population trapped annually will decline; periodic scat analysis will continue, as will necropsies, as necessary to monitor health trends; health monitoring should be part of capture protocol for all live-capture studies

Habitat Protection

"Cooperative habitat management" will be promoted with public land management agencies, industrial forests, and other private landowners, and will include:

- **access management** to maintain existing road densities in suitable habitat within Zones 1 and 2;

- **dispersal corridor protection** on private, tribal, and public land to promote continued wolf movement between MI and MN, as well as between WI packs; acquisition is encouraged
- **vegetation management** that provides younger forests and winter vegetative cover that favor wolf prey species (deer and beaver);
- **den/rendezvous site protection** in Zone 1, including year around prohibition of tree harvest within 330 feet and seasonal restrictions to reduce disturbance, including logging, within one-half mile; will serve as agency policy on public lands and encouraged on private land.
- will not designate additional areas as wilderness for the benefit of wolves.

Response to Depredation

The response to depredation will vary by zone and by state listing status; see zone descriptions under "Population Management" below. Depredation management will focus on prevention and mitigation rather than on wolf removal. USDA-Wildlife Services will investigate reports of wolf depredation, and USDA Wildlife Services and Wisconsin DNR will jointly determine the appropriate response. Technical assistance will be provided in situations of confirmed and probable wolf depredations, including abatement materials, assistance in developing depredation prevention plans, and cost-sharing for abatement practices. Compensation for lost animals will be provided by Wisconsin DNR. Depredating wolves will be translocated if feasible. Euthanasia may be used; it will not normally be employed on large blocks of public land in Zones 1 and 2, but will be the normal practice with depredating wolves in Zone 4.

Population Management

Four management zones are established to provide different wolf management practices. However, after the wolf is federally-delisted Tribes will determine wolf management practices on tribal lands.

Zone 1 - Northern Forest - 18,384 sq. mi. in northern Wisconsin, including 634 sq. mi. of Indian reservation; contains 90% of the state's primary wolf habitat, and can support 300-500 wolves. Depredation problems will be resolved by government trapping within ½ mile of the depredation site and translocation or euthanizing. Landowners will be reimbursed for their losses to wolf predation. Management actions to be encouraged on public land include protection of dens and rendezvous sites, access management, and management of forests to promote prey species. There will be no coyote hunting during the deer firearm season.

After Federal and State delisting (250 wolves) depredating wolves could be removed by landowners under DNR permit and landowners could kill wolves in the act of attacking pets or livestock. Above a statewide population of 350 wolves, government trappers may institute proactive trapping in areas with chronic wolf depredation problems.

Zone 2 - Central Forest Area - 4,521 sq. mi. in central WI; could support 20-40 wolves. Wolf numbers will be allowed to fluctuate with their prey base. Depredation problems will be resolved by government trapping within ½ mile of the depredation site and

translocation or euthanizing. Landowners will be reimbursed for their losses to wolf predation. Nuisance wolves could be euthanized by government officials. Management actions to be encouraged include protection of dens and rendezvous sites, access management, and management for younger forests to promote prey species. There will be no coyote closed area during deer firearm season.

After state delisting (250 wolves) depredating wolves could be removed by landowners under DNR permit, and landowners could kill wolves in the act of attacking pets or livestock. Above a statewide population of 350 wolves, government trappers may institute proactive trapping in areas with ongoing wolf depredation problems.

Zone 3 - Wolf Buffer Area - 18,000 sq. mi. of mixed forest/farming area in central and western Wisconsin; contains patches of dispersal habitat, especially between Zones 1 and 2, but very limited potential for long-term wolf pack occupancy. A maximum of 20 wolves is expected in this area. Dispersing wolves need some protection to promote genetic interchange, so they will not be controlled unless they cause problems. Problem wolves would be trapped by government agents within 5 miles of a depredation site.

After Federal and State delisting, control of nuisance or problem wolves can also be by landowners under DNR permit, and landowners could kill wolves in the act of attacking pets or livestock. Pro-active trapping could also occur by USDA Wildlife Services to reduce chronic depredation problems once the statewide population exceeds 350 wolves.

Zone 4 - 16,000 sq. mi. in southern and eastern Wisconsin with almost no potential for wolf colonization. Any wolf or wolf-like animal "that lacks fear of people and readily approaches pets, livestock, or people should be captured or controlled" by Federal and state trappers, as well as local law enforcement and animal control officers.

After Federal and State-delisted, landowners can kill wolves in the act of attacking pets or livestock, as well as receive DNR permits to control wolves on their land. Pro-active trapping could also occur by USDA Wildlife Services to reduce chronic depredation problems once the statewide population exceeds 250 (not 350) wolves.

Public harvest of gray wolves is not included in this plan. The plan briefly discusses (Appendix D) the possibility of a public harvest after the statewide (outside Indian reservations) wolf population reaches 350, but it takes no steps to begin establishing a public harvest. Public attitudes toward a wolf population in excess of 350 would have to be fully evaluated, as would the impacts from other mortalities, before a public harvest could be initiated. A public harvest must be preceded by a citizen review process, including public hearings, as well as Natural Resources Board and Legislative approvals.

Law Enforcement

"Strict legal protection has been a key in the improved status of wolves in Wisconsin...."

- Will establish a value for an illegally-killed state-threatened species (\$875, same as currently for endangered species), which will be added to state fine (for unintentional violations for both

threatened and endangered species: \$500-2000, 1 year loss of hunting privileges; intentional violations: \$2000-5000 and/or up to 9 months in prison, loss of hunting privileges for 3 yrs.).

- Coyote closure during gun-deer season will cover all Zone 1 (a reduction from the current 44% to 33% of the state).
- Recommendations for after state-delisting: list as "protected wild animal"; maintain coyote-closure zone during deer-gun season in Zone 1; unlawful hunting penalties should be like those for moose, deer, elk, bear (*i.e.*, forfeiture of \$1000-2000 and loss of hunting privileges for 3-5 years); value at \$262 (like moose, elk, fisher, prairie chicken, sandhill crane); make it illegal to possess a wolf or wolf-dog hybrid without DNR permit; wolf dens should receive protection from disturbance under Wisconsin Administrative Code (NR 10.13).

Research to be Pursued

Reliable but more economical census techniques; public attitudes surveys; identification of wolf travel corridors and management practices for them; predictive model of den/rendezvous site locations; health monitoring and causes of low pup survival; depredation minimization techniques; impacts on other wildlife species, limiting factors in northeastern Wisconsin; further modeling on population prediction and viability. Special long-term research on the central Wisconsin wolf population is also needed to look at wolf ecology, population growth, and depredation concerns.

Information and Education

Includes continued development of materials for the public; working with other organizations (Timber Wolf Alliance, Timber Wolf Information Network, International Wolf Center, and others) and agencies; training for state, federal, and tribal personnel; and providing wolf presentations.

Miscellaneous

Wolves will be managed independently by Tribes on tribal lands. Cooperative management will occur on lands ceded from the various Chippewa bands in northern Wisconsin.

A stakeholders group will be established, and will meet at least annually with the DNR's Wolf Advisory Committee to assess the wolf population, management zones, depredation control, and problems and needs for new policies or procedures. The Wolf Advisory Committee will prepare a written report annually. At five-year intervals, a thorough review will be made of the wolf management program.

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 Green Bay, WI, Ecological Services Field Office.