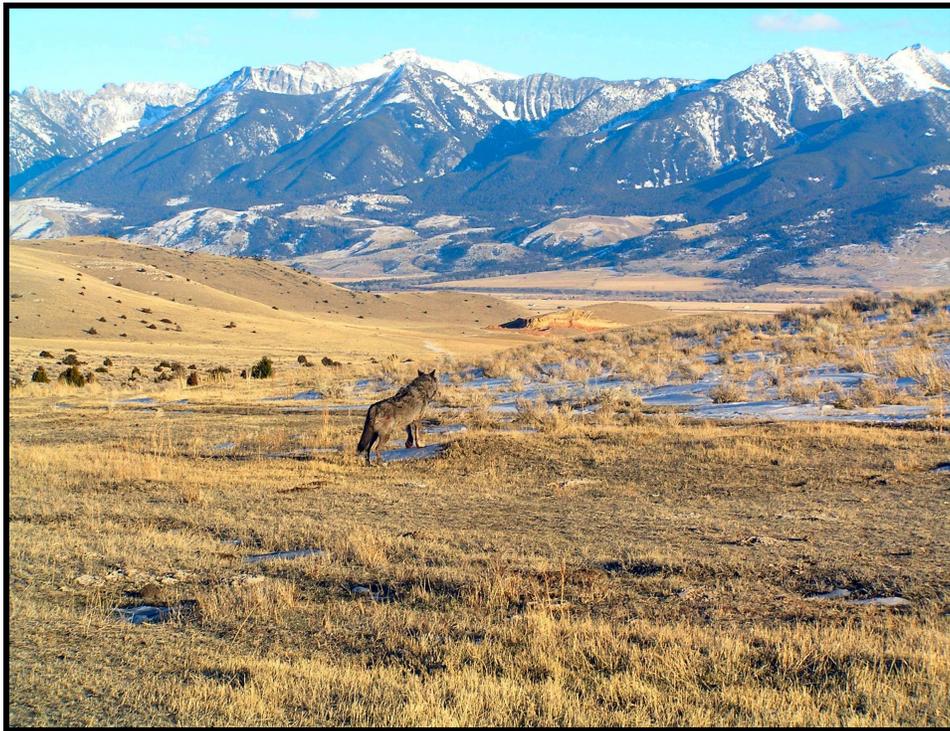


# Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery 2007 Interagency Annual Report

*A cooperative effort by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nez Perce Tribe, National Park Service, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Idaho Fish and Game, Blackfeet Nation, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and USDA Wildlife Services*



*photo by Val Asher*

*This cooperative annual report presents information on the status, distribution and management of the Northern Rocky Mountain wolf population from January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007.*

*It is also available at:*

**<http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov/annualreports.htm>**

This report may be copied and distributed as needed.

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***Note to Readers:***

Because of the transition to state-led management in Montana and Idaho, the 2007 Interagency Annual Report has a similar organization as the 2006 Interagency Report. It is comprised of separate sections, one each for the individual annual reports from the states of Montana and Idaho respectively, federal agencies for Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park combined, and the overall U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northern Rockies Recovery Program. This type of organization makes for some degree of overlap and duplication between sections. However, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requires Montana and Idaho to submit an annual report each year. By incorporating their state annual reports in this modified structure, the public can still access information about gray wolves in the northern Rockies in a single, comprehensive report.

You can either download the Interagency Report in its entirety and cite the Interagency Report as suggested on the cover. Alternatively, you may download the respective state report or section of the Interagency Report of particular interest and cite as suggested on the cover of that report. I hope you find this useful.

Thank you,

Ed Bangs  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northern Rockies Wolf Recovery Program Coordinator

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## NORTHERN ROCKIES SUMMARY

The gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) population in the Northern Rocky Mountains (NRM) of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming) continued to increase its distribution and abundance in 2007 (Figure 1, Tables 4a, 4b). Estimates of wolf numbers at the end of 2007 were 830 wolves in the Central Idaho Recovery Area (CID), 453 in the Greater Yellowstone Recovery Area (GYA), and 230 in the Northwest Montana Recovery Area (NWMT) for a total minimum estimate of 1,513 wolves (Figure 1, Table 4a). By state boundaries, there were an estimated 422 wolves in Montana, 732 wolves in Idaho, and 359 in Wyoming (Table 4b). Of 192 packs (groups of 2 or more wolves with defined territories on Dec 31), 107 were classified as “breeding pairs,” defined as an adult male and an adult female raising 2 or more pups until December 31 (Tables 4a, 4b). This made 2007 the eighth year in which 30 or more breeding pairs were documented and well distributed within the 3-state area. 2007 was the 4<sup>th</sup> year (and likely 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive year- assuming 2003 and 2004 were simply under-counted due to personnel transitions) that each recovery area contained over 10 breeding pair and 100 wolves. Biological recovery criteria have been met for removing NRM wolves from the Endangered Species list. By the end of 2007, no wolf packs were documented in states adjacent to Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. In 2007, one lone radio-collared wolf from Idaho was confirmed to have dispersed into northeastern Oregon.

Wolves in the NRM subsisted mainly on elk, white-tailed deer, mule deer, moose, and bison. Livestock depredations in 2007 included 183 cattle, 213 sheep, 13 dogs, 12 goats and 2 llamas that were confirmed as killed by wolves (Tables 5a, 5b). Approximately of 60 out of 192 NRM wolf packs (24%) were involved in confirmed livestock depredations. In response, 186 wolves were lethally removed within the 3-state area (about 11% of the 2007 wolf population). No wolves were relocated in 2007. In Montana, about 36% of its 73 packs were confirmed to have killed livestock and in response 73 wolves were killed. In Wyoming outside of Yellowstone National Park, about 52% of 25 wolf packs were involved in confirmed livestock depredations and 63 wolves were killed. In Idaho, 26% of its 83 wolf packs were involved in confirmed livestock depredations and 50 wolves were killed. The 3 populations increasingly merge and resemble and function as a single, large meta-population (Figure 1). Numerous research projects are underway, examining wolf population dynamics, predator-prey interactions and livestock depredation.

## NORTHERN ROCKIES BACKGROUND

Gray wolf populations were extirpated from the western U.S. by the 1930s. Subsequently, wolves from Canada occasionally dispersed south into Montana and Idaho but failed to survive long enough to reproduce. Eventually, public attitudes toward predators changed and wolves received legal protection with the passage of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1973. Wolves began to successfully recolonize northwest Montana in the early 1980s. By 1995, there were 6 wolf packs in northwest Montana. In 1995 and 1996, 66

wolves from southwestern Canada were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park (YNP) (31 wolves) and CID (35 wolves). In addition in 1996, 10 wolf pups whose pack was involved in chronic livestock depredation were relocated to Yellowstone National Park. They were released from their holding pen in spring 1997.

The NRM wolf population contains 3 core recovery areas: the NWMT (Figs. 1, 2) includes northern Montana and the northern Idaho panhandle; the GYA (Figs. 1, 3) includes Wyoming and adjacent parts of Idaho and Montana; the CID (Figs. 1, 4) includes central Idaho and adjacent parts of southwest Montana. Wolves in the 3 recovery areas are managed under different guidelines, depending upon their designated status under the ESA.

The wolf population in northwestern Montana and the Idaho panhandle that began from wolves that naturally dispersed from Canada in the early 1980's remain listed as endangered. The GYA and CID wolves are classified as nonessential experimental populations (as allowed by section 10(j) of ESA) and managed with more flexible options than an endangered or threatened population. In 2005 a new 10(j) experimental population regulation allowed even more management flexibility for wolves in the experimental population areas in states with approved wolf management plans (Montana and Idaho). That 2005 rule was liberalized again in early 2008. The states of Montana and Idaho have managed wolves in their states for the past several years, with federal funding and according to federal guidelines.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), responsible for administering the ESA for terrestrial and freshwater species and some marine mammals, determined that at a wolf metapopulation of least 30 or more breeding pairs composed of at least 300 wolves, with an equitable distribution among the 3 states for at least 3 successive years, constitutes a viable and recovered wolf population. Those criteria (including the temporal element) were met at the end of 2002 and at that time 663 wolves in 49 breeding pairs were present. USFWS has proposed delisting throughout the NRM except northwestern WY and a final decision on that rule should be published in late February 2008.