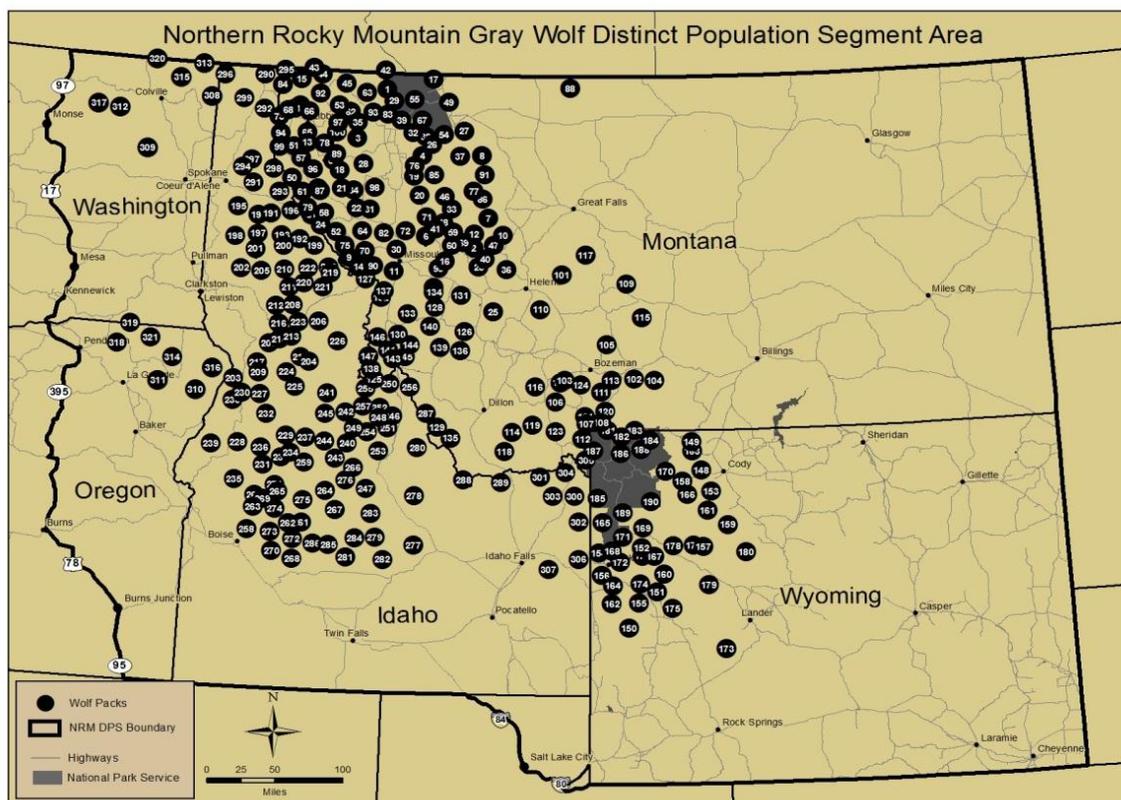


Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Program 2012 Interagency Annual Report

A cooperative effort by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Nez Perce Tribe, National Park Service, Blackfeet Nation, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Wind River Tribes, Confederated Colville Tribes, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Utah Department of Natural Resources, and USDA Wildlife Services.



This annual report presents information on the status, distribution, and management of the Northern Rocky Mountain wolf population from January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012.

Suggested Citation: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Nez Perce Tribe, National Park Service, Blackfeet Nation, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Wind River Tribes, Confederated Colville Tribes, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Utah Department of Natural Resources, and USDA Wildlife Services. 2013. Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Program 2012 Interagency Annual Report. M.D. Jimenez and S.A. Becker, eds. USFWS, Ecological Services, 585 Shepard Way, Helena, Montana, 59601.

Note to Readers:

This year the entire Northern Rocky Mountain Distinct Population Segment was delisted (Montana, Idaho, eastern Washington, eastern Oregon, and north central Utah delisted in 2011 and Wyoming delisted in 2012) and each state is required by post-delisting rules to submit an annual report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The 2012 Interagency Annual Report is comprised of separate sections from Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Oregon, Washington, and the overall U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northern Rockies Wolf Recovery Program. This report can be viewed at <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov/annualreports.htm> and may be copied and distributed. You can download the Interagency Report in its entirety and cite the Interagency Report as suggested on the cover. Alternatively, you may download a state report or section of the Interagency Report and cite it individually.

Abstract: Gray wolf populations were extirpated from the western United States by the 1930s. Public attitudes towards predators changed and wolves received legal protection with the passage of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1973. Subsequently, wolves from Canada occasionally dispersed south and successfully began recolonizing northwest Montana (MT) in 1986. In 1995 and 1996, 66 wolves from southwestern Canada were reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park (YNP) ($n=31$) and central Idaho (ID) ($n=35$). Recovery goals of an equitably distributed wolf population containing at least 300 wolves and 30 breeding pairs in 3 recovery areas within MT, ID, and Wyoming (WY) for at least 3 consecutive years were reached in 2002. By 2012, the entire Northern Rocky Mountain Distinct Population Segment (NRM DPS) was delisted and wolves were managed under State authority in MT, ID, WY, eastern one-third of Washington (WA) and Oregon (OR), and a small part of north central Utah (UT). Based on minimum population counts, the 2012 NRM DPS wolf population contained $\geq 1,674$ wolves in ≥ 321 packs with ≥ 103 breeding pairs (MT ≥ 625 wolves in ≥ 147 packs with ≥ 37 breeding pairs; ID ≥ 683 in ≥ 117 packs with ≥ 35 breeding pairs; WY ≥ 277 wolves in ≥ 43 packs with ≥ 21 breeding pairs; WA ≥ 43 wolves in ≥ 7 packs with ≥ 4 breeding pairs; and OR ≥ 46 wolves in ≥ 7 packs with ≥ 6 breeding pairs). No packs were documented in Utah (UT). Lethal control, legal harvest, and other causes of mortality reduced the 2012 wolf population by $\sim 7\%$ from 2011 levels. Confirmed livestock losses included 194 cattle and 470 sheep. Private and state agencies paid \$564,558.00 in compensation for wolf-damage to livestock in 2012. Federal, state and Tribal agencies spent approximately \$3,345,618.00 of federal funding for wolf management and research.

IN MEMORIAM

To the memory of Tom Meier, 10/7/1950 – 8/12/2012, whose kindness, humor, and knowledge helped set the example for the rest of us.



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NORTHERN ROCKIES WOLF SUMMARY 2012

Wolf Population: In 2012, the NRM DPS minimum wolf population estimate decreased by ~7% from 2011 population estimates. We documented $\geq 1,674$ wolves in ≥ 321 confirmed packs (groups of ≥ 2 wolves with territories inside the NRM DPS that persisted until December 31, 2012). At least 103 packs met the definition of a breeding pair (packs containing ≥ 1 adult male, ≥ 1 adult female, and two or more pups on December 31, 2012). MT recorded ≥ 625 wolves in ≥ 147 packs (including ≥ 37 breeding pairs; ID recorded ≥ 683 wolves in ≥ 117 packs (including ≥ 35 breeding pairs); WY recorded ≥ 277 wolves in ≥ 43 packs (including ≥ 21 breeding pairs); WA recorded ≥ 43 wolves in ≥ 7 packs (including ≥ 4 breeding pairs), and OR recorded ≥ 46 wolves in ≥ 7 packs (including ≥ 6 breeding pairs). No packs were documented in UT. The minimum recovery goal of an equitably distributed wolf population containing at least 300 wolves and 30 breeding pairs in MT, ID, and WY for at least 3 consecutive years (managed to maintain over 150 wolves and 15 breeding pairs in each state) has been exceeded in the NRM DPS since 2002.

Wolf Depredations: Although confirmed depredations result in a comparatively small proportion of all livestock losses in the NRM DPS, wolf damage can be significant to some livestock producers in areas where wolves are present. Total confirmed depredations by wolves in 2012 included 194 cattle, 470 sheep, 6 dogs, 3 horses, and 1 llama. From 2007 through 2011, an average of 191 cattle depredations occurred each year (ranged=180-214). An average of 339 sheep depredations occurred each year (ranged=162-721). Ninety-nine of 352 (~28%) known NRM DPS wolf packs that existed at some point in 2012 were involved in at least 1 confirmed cattle or sheep depredation. Of these packs, 68 packs were involved in at least 1 cattle depredation and 31 packs were involved in at least 1 sheep depredation.

Control of Problem Wolves: For strictly comparative purposes, we estimated the absolute minimum number of wolves alive in 2012 by combining the 2012 NRM DPS minimum population estimate of 1,674 wolves with all known mortalities from all causes ($n=895$). This sums to an absolute minimum NRM DPS estimate of 2,569 wolves known to be alive at some point in 2012 (MT=949, ID=1,108, WY=413, WA=52, and OR=47). The absolute minimum estimate was only used to compare relative rates of the various causes of mortality to NRM wolves. In 2012, 231 wolves were killed in livestock control actions in the NRM DPS (MT=108, ID=73, WY=43, WA=7, and OR=0). Control removed ~9% of the absolute minimum NRM DPS estimated wolf population in 2012. By state, within the NRM DPS, control removed ~11% of the absolute minimum MT estimated wolf population, 7% in ID, 10% in WY, and 13% in WA. No wolves were removed in control actions in OR.

Public Harvest of Wolves: Legal harvest removed 175 wolves in MT (~18% of the absolute minimum MT estimated wolf population), 329 wolves in ID (~30% of the absolute minimum ID estimated population), and 66 wolves in WY (~6% of the absolute minimum WY estimated population). No wolves were harvested in WA and OR. Harvest removed ~22% of the absolute minimum NRM DPS estimated wolf population.

Human-Caused Mortality: When all forms of human-caused mortality were combined (control, harvest, and other human-caused mortality) a total of 314 wolves were removed in MT (~33% of

the absolute minimum MT estimated population), 418 wolves in ID (~38% of the absolute minimum ID estimated population), 120 wolves in WY (~29% of the absolute minimum WY estimated population), 8 wolves in WA (~15% of the absolute minimum WA estimated population), and 1 wolf in OR (~2% of the absolute minimum OR estimated population). Overall, ~34% of the absolute minimum NRM DPS estimated wolf population was removed due to human-causes.

Wolf Population Recovery: By every biological measure the NRM DPS wolf population is fully recovered. Resident packs have saturated suitable habitat in the core recovery areas and the population has exceeded recovery goals for 11 consecutive years. Dispersing wolves routinely travel between NRM and Canada and successfully breed, demonstrating that the 3 subpopulations function as a single large NRM meta-population. Consequently, genetic diversity in the NRM remains very high.

Data collected in 2012 describing wolf distribution, numbers, packs, breeding pairs, livestock depredations, compensation, wolf control, impacts on ungulates, and regulated public hunting suggest that the NRM wolf population has declined ~7% from 2011 levels and the wolf population may be stabilizing at some yet undetermined lower equilibrium based on natural carrying capacity in suitable habitat and human social tolerance.

Post Delisting Monitoring: As the NRM DPS wolf population has grown larger, our minimum population estimates have become less precise. After reviewing field methods used by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Idaho Fish and Game, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Wyoming Dept. of Game and Fish to monitor the wolf population in their respective states, the Service is confident that wolves in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming far exceeded recovery goals at the end of 2012, and monitoring methods adequately documented this.

Litigation: On November 13, 2012, Defenders of Wildlife, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, and the Center for Biological Diversity filed suit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia challenging the Service's 2012 Wyoming delisting rule (77 FR 55530). On December 7, 2012, the Humane Society of the United States and Fund for Animals also filed suit in the District of Columbia. These two cases were consolidated by the Court. *See Defenders of Wildlife v. Salazar*, 12-cv-1833-ABJ (D.D.C.). The United States, with the support of the State of Wyoming, moved to transfer the Defenders of Wildlife case to the U.S. District Court for the District of Wyoming. As of the date of submitting this annual report, the District of Columbia court has not decided the motion to transfer venue. Separately, on November 27, 2012, WildEarth Guardians and seven other environmental organizations filed suit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado challenging the Service's Wyoming delisting rule (77 FR 55530). The case was subsequently transferred to the District of Wyoming and is pending before the Honorable Alan B. Johnson. *See WildEarth Guardians v. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*, 13-cv-007-ABJ (D. Wyo.).

Wolf Funding: In 2012, \$3,345,618.00 of federal funding was spent by state, federal, and Tribal agencies on wolf monitoring, management, control, and research. State and private compensation programs spent \$564,558.00 to compensate livestock producers for dead, injured, or missing livestock.

**FEDERAL MONEY SPENT ON WOLVES BY STATE, FEDERAL,
AND TRIBAL AGENCIES IN 2012**

USFWS Region 1	
USFWS	57,473.00
USDA Wildlife Services	
Idaho W.S.	397,000.00
Oregon W.S.	26,502.00
Washington W.S.	5,397.00
Idaho (IDFG)	532,686.00
Nez Perce Tribe	217,500.00
Oregon (ODFW)	218,746.00
Washington (WDFW)	212,814.00
Colville Tribe	75,000.00
Subtotal Region 1	1,743,118.00

USFWS Region 6	
USFWS	178,648.00
USDA Wildlife Services	
Montana W.S.	216,232.00
Wyoming W.S.	207,024.00
Montana (MFWP)	685,402.00
Wyoming (WGFD)	52,694.00
Yellowstone National Park	202,500.00
Grand Teton National Park	60,000.00
Subtotal Region 6	1,602,500.00
Total federal money funded	3,345,618.00

**COMPENSATION PAID FOR DEAD, INJURED, OR MISSING
LIVESTOCK (INCLUDING ALL FUNDING SOURCES)**

Idaho	199,247.00
Montana	102,714.00
Wyoming	195,263.00
Oregon	65,739.00
Washington	1,595.00
Total compensation	\$564,558.00

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Hundreds of people have assisted with wolf recovery efforts over the years and we are indebted to them all. It would be impossible to individually recognize them all in this report. Please refer to individual state reports to better understand how many people have contributed to wolf recovery in the NRM.

Major contributions to wolf recovery efforts were provided by Seth Willey and Mike Thabault (USFWS, Denver, CO); Jim Williams (MFWP, Kalispell, MT), Mark Wilson, Brent Esmoil, Shawn Sartorius, Michele Franich, Edith Diaz-Hansen, and Cindy Thurston (USFWS/ES, Helena MT), Jeff Green (WS, Denver CO), Todd Grimm (WS, ID), Rod Krischke (WS, WY), John Sterber (WS, MT), and Dave Renwald (Bureau of Indian Affairs). Numerous agencies have contributed to the recovery program and we thank the USFS, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Shoshone National Forest, Kootenai National Forest, Flathead National Forest, Lewis and Clark National Forest, GNP, YNP, GTNP, National Elk Refuge, Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribes, the Blackfoot Tribe, WGFD, MFWP, and IDFG. We thank Kevin Bunnell (UT DOW) and Mike Linnell (UT WS) for their assistance. Laboratory work was performed by the MFWP laboratory in Bozeman, MT, the USFWS Forensics Laboratory in Ashland, OR, and Matson's Laboratory in Milltown, MT. Veterinarians providing services and advice to wolf recovery programs included Drs. Terry Kreeger, Clarence Binnering, Charlene Esch, Jennifer Ramsey, Tom Roffe, and Mark Drew. We thank our legal advisors Tyson Powell and Dana Jacobson (DOI) and Michael Eitel, Bridget McNeil, Kristen Gustafson, Sato Ayako, Eric Peterson, and David Gayer (DOJ) for their hard work and advice.

We thank our pilots Dave Hoerner of Red Eagle Aviation, Lowell Hanson of Piedmont Air Services, Joe Rahn and Greg Thielman of MFWP; Joe Rimensberger of Osprey Aviation, Tim Graff and Eric Waldorf of WS, Bob Hawkins and Dave Stinson of Sky Aviation, Jim Pope, Wes Livingston, and crew of Leading Edge Aviation, Roger Stradley of Gallatin Flying Service, Pat and Mike Dorris, Rod Nielson and Jon Ugland of McCall Aviation, Mike Dorris of Sawtooth Flying Service; Doug Gadwa, Brandon Startin, and Joe Myers of Inter-State Aviation, John Romero of Owyhee Aviation, Leroy Brown and Jack Fulton of ID Helicopters, Dave Parker of Northern Air, and John Blakely in Idaho. Their safety, skill and cooperation greatly contributed to wolf recovery efforts.

Many private organizations have lent their support to the program including DOW, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Wolf Education and Research Center, DeVlieg Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Snowdon Wildlife Sanctuary, Twin Spruce Foundation, CA Wolf Center, Yellowstone Park Foundation, and Plum Creek Timber Company. The efforts of many individuals who have contacted us to report wolf sightings are greatly appreciated. The numerous ranchers and other private landowners whose property is occasionally used by wolves, sometimes at great cost to the owner, and hunters who increasingly share the harvestable surplus of big game populations with wolves deserve our respect, service, and understanding.

Portions of this report were authored by Mike Jimenez and Hilary Cooley (USFWS), Scott Becker (WDFW), Ed Bangs (USFWS retired), Jon Rachael, Jason Husseman, Jennifer Struthers,

and Brent Thomas (IDFG), Curt Mack and Jim Holyan (NPT), Doug Smith, Erin Stahler, and Dan Stahler (NPS), George Pauley, Liz Bradley, Kent Laudon, Mike Ross, Nathan Lance, Abigail Nelson, Ty Smucker (MFWP), Ken Mills, Bob Trebelcock, Mark Bruscano (WGFD), Donny Martorello (WDFW), Eric Krausz (CCT), and Russ Morgan and Roblyn Brown (ODFW). Special thanks to Jim Renne (USFWS) for producing our website.

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