

News Release



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ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT PROTECTIONS REINSTATED FOR NORTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAIN WOLF POPULATION

The U.S. Federal District Court in Missoula, Montana, issued an order on August 5, 2010, in *Defenders of Wildlife et al. v. Salazar, CV 09-77-M-DWM* and *Greater Yellowstone Coalition v. Salazar, CV 09-82-M-DWM*, which vacated the delisting of the Northern Rocky Mountain (NRM) Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of the gray wolf. In compliance with this order, wolves are again considered endangered throughout the NRM DPS except where they are classified as experimental populations (southern Montana, Idaho south of Interstate 90, and all of Wyoming).

The Service and the Department are evaluating the decision and considering our options as we move forward. We believe that state and tribal management is the most appropriate conservation tool to manage the recovered gray wolf population in this area. While the delisting has been vacated, reinstated rules provide the States with authority of many management decisions.

Within the experimental population areas of Montana and Idaho and on the Wind River Tribal Lands in Wyoming, States and Tribes with approved wolf management plans can again operate under the 2005/2008, experimental population rules and lead wolf management under these rules within the boundaries of their respective State or reservation through interagency cooperative agreements. In short, these rules allow maximum flexibility under the law. The Service, State, Tribe, or their agents may take wolves when circumstances warrant. In addition, anyone may legally shoot a wolf in the act of attacking any type of livestock on their private land or grazing allotment, and anyone may shoot a wolf chasing or attacking their dog or stock animals anywhere except National Parks. In certain circumstances these rules allow lethal removal of wolves where they are a major cause of the inability of ungulate populations or herds to meet established state or Tribal population or herd management goals. This State and Tribal management authority allows for great flexibility and timely response to local conditions. Additional take in the experimental population areas not specifically authorized by the 2005/2008 experimental population rules requires additional authorization.

Within Wyoming, the Service continues to be the lead management agency for wolves and the original 1994 experimental population rule still governs wolf management. The only exception is on Wind River Tribal lands, because those tribes have a Service-approved Tribal wolf management plan. While the 1994 rule addressed depredation issues to some extent, without a Service-approved wolf management plan, the state of Wyoming cannot take advantage of the greater management flexibility afforded by the 2005 and 2008 experimental rules. For example, a Wyoming landowner (outside of Wind River Tribal lands) may only legally take wolves if

wolves are physically biting or grasping their cattle, sheep, horses, or mules on their private land. Any taking of wolves on public land requires advance written authorization from the Service which can be obtained only after previous wolf attacks have been verified. Also, without a Service-approved wolf management plan, Wyoming Department of Game and Fish cannot address wolves causing significant negative impacts to wild ungulate populations, unless they receive Service approval to relocate those wolves elsewhere within Wyoming. For specific or more detailed information about either experimental population rule, please refer to the rule located at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/wolf/>

NRM wolves outside of the experimental population areas are listed as endangered. This includes a portion of northern Idaho and the northern half of Montana as well as formerly delisted portions of Oregon, Washington and Utah. While not impacted by this ruling, wolves that disperse into other neighboring States (i.e., North Dakota, South Dakota, & Colorado) also continue to be listed as endangered. Endangered wolves are subject to additional protections and can be legally taken when authorized by a section 10 permit or if exempted by an incidental take statement associated with a Section 7 consultation and biological opinion. Livestock owners are prohibited from taking wolves seen actively chasing, attacking, or killing their livestock; only authorized agents can take chronically depredating endangered wolves. Should any NRM wolf become a chronic depredator, we will work with the appropriate State game agency and USDA Wildlife Services to resolve the situation.

As always, we will continue to work closely with States, Tribes, conservation organizations, ranchers, and other landowners to manage wolf recovery and ensure that the wolves coexist with livestock, other wildlife populations, and people.

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