

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office
1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368
Boise, Idaho 83709
<http://idahoes.fws.gov>

News Release



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Contact: Jenny Valdivia, 503-231-6297, or Meggan Laxalt-Mackey 208-378-5796

PUBLIC HEARING SET FOR APRIL 20 IN BOISE ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO WOLF MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

A public hearing on a Federal proposal to change in the way gray wolves are managed in Idaho will be held Tuesday, April 20, 2004 in Boise.

The proposed change, also known as the 10(j) proposal (referring to the part of the Endangered Species Act that authorizes experimental populations), would allow State fish and game agencies in Idaho and Montana to manage wolves as completely as they are able, and would expand the circumstances under which lethal control of wolves is allowed by private citizens.

The hearing will be held in two sessions, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., and from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Grove Hotel, Evergreen Room, 245 South Capitol Blvd., Boise. Registration will begin one hour before each session. The proposed rule, which was published in the *Federal Register* on March 9, may be viewed online at http://pacific.fws.gov/news/2004/Final_FR_wolf.pdf The Service's most recent report on Northern Rocky wolf populations, including numbers for Idaho, is available at <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov/annualrpt03/>

Public comment on the proposed rule ends at the close of business on May 10, 2004.

Gray wolves, which were reintroduced in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming in 1995 and 1996, have exceeded recovery goals that were established for the species under the Act. In Idaho the Service estimates there are approximately 370-400 wolves in 37 documented groups or packs. Both Montana and Idaho have Service-approved wolf management plans, which are required in order for those States to assume most management authority over the species until it is delisted. The proposal does not apply to Wyoming because that state does not yet have an approved wolf management plan.

The proposed changes would affect the entire State of Idaho except the panhandle north of Interstate-90. It affects Montana south of the Missouri River, and a hearing will be held in Helena on April 19. The proposal does not affect wolf populations in the in the Great Lakes region or the Mexican wolf population in the southwestern United States

"Although we are unable at this time to continue with the process to delist the wolf population in the region because we do not have approved plans for all three states, we believe that it is appropriate to pursue as much local management for this recovered wolf population as possible," said Ralph Morgenweck, Regional Director of the Service's Mountain-Prairie Region.

Under the proposal, landowners could take additional steps to protect their livestock and pets from attacks by problem wolves, and the State could issue permits allowing landowners to control wolves that consistently pose a threat to domestic animals.

Among other things, the proposed regulations would provide that:

- Wolves near livestock could be harassed in a non-injurious manner at any time on private land or on public land by the livestock permittee. Wolves attacking livestock, livestock herding and guarding animals and dogs on private land could be taken without a permit if they are attacking or about to attack such animals. A permit would be required for such take on public lands.
- Wolves determined to be causing unacceptable impacts to wildlife populations, such as herds of deer and elk, could also be taken. This could be allowed when such populations are not meeting state management goals and are unlikely to rebound without agency intervention, and when such take would not affect wolf recovery.

In addition to testifying at the hearing, comments on the proposed rule may be sent to the following address: USFWS, Western Gray Wolf Recovery Coordinator, 100 North Park, Number 320, Helena, MT 59601, 406-449-5339 (fax) or westerngraywolf@fws.gov. If the e-mail address listed here is unavailable, comments should be mailed or faxed to the address above. The public hearing notice was published in the April 6, 2004 edition of the *Federal Register*.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 Fish and Wildlife Management offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.