

Questions and Answers about the Memorandum of Agreement for Gray Wolf Management in Idaho

Why is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service transferring much of the responsibility for wolf management in Idaho to state officials?

Gray wolf populations in Idaho have exceeded their recovery goals in Idaho, and transition to state management is a priority of the Department of the Interior, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Idaho. Transferring much of management responsibility at this time will help facilitate an orderly transition from federal management to state management and will further enhance the conservation of the gray wolf by allowing the state to gain valuable management experience in anticipation of delisting.

Does this affect all wolves in Idaho?

No. The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Secretary of the Interior, through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the State of Idaho applies only to the area of Idaho south of Interstate 90 where gray wolves were reintroduced in 1995 as an experimental, non-essential population. Wolves outside that area – north of Interstate 90 – continue to be listed as endangered. A separate recovery request is being considered to allow Idaho officials to manage wolves in that area.

What does this mean for gray wolf management in Idaho?

This means that the Idaho Department of Fish and Game will assume the lead for managing wolves in the experimental area of the state and will begin to implement its federally approved Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan of 2002. Among the responsibilities the state will assume are:

- Deciding and implementing control actions for problem wolves consistent with the goals and policies outlined in the Management Plan;
- Relocating wolves to avoid human conflicts;
- Taking wolves for scientific purposes, such as research;
- Many other wolf management field functions relating to the experimental, non-essential population of gray wolves such as trapping, collaring, and taking blood and hair samples.

Does this affect Idaho landowners and public land permittees within the experimental area?

The MOA does not change new 10j experimental population regulations issued by the Service in January 2005. Idaho landowners in the 10j area may take additional steps to protect their livestock and dogs from attacks by wolves. On public lands, under specified conditions, the 10j regulations allow grazing permittees, and guiding and outfitter permittees, to take wolves attacking their livestock or their guarding animals without prior written authorization.

Will the Service continue to play a role in wolf recovery?

Yes. The MOA calls for the Service to:

1. Conduct all ESA section 7 consultations in the State of Idaho until the parties conclude an amendment to this agreement or another agreement to allow the State to conduct such consultations pertaining to gray wolves.

2. Issue written authorization for taking wolves by private citizens on tribal reservations.
3. Loan existing Service-owned field equipment to assist the State in carrying out wolf management and the duties and responsibilities identified in this Agreement.
4. Provide annual funding to the State to assist the State to carry out wolf management and the duties and responsibilities identified in this Agreement.
5. Lead federal law enforcement efforts involving the Endangered Species Act and other federal laws regarding wolves in Idaho while cooperating and coordinating with IDFG and other agencies as appropriate.
6. Expedite obtaining the appropriate and necessary permits such as ESA section 6 and 10(a)(1)(A) so that the Idaho Department of Fish and Game can carryout wolf management throughout Idaho.

How much funding will the Service provide?

The pending MOA specifies that funding to implement the agreement shall be provided through the annual appropriations process to the extent feasible, and memorialized in a cooperative agreement between the State and the Service. For FY 2006, Congress appropriated \$726,525 for the State of Idaho.

Does the MOA have a time limit?

Yes. The MOA is effective through March 2010, until amended or until wolves are delisted.

How have wolves in Idaho fared since their reintroduction in 1995?

In 1995, 15 gray wolves from Alberta, Canada, were reintroduced, followed in 1996 by 20 gray wolves from British Columbia. Since then, the population has grown entirely through natural reproduction. The last official count was 422 wolves in 2004, including 27 breeding pairs, which is three times the recovery goal established for wolves in Idaho.

Where can I get more information about wolves in Idaho?

More information is available at <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov> or <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>