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Western Watersheds Project**

**NORTHERN ROCKIES GRAY WOLF DELISTING FACT SHEET
State Management Will Drive Wolf Numbers Down to the Bare Minimum**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has stated that a minimum population of merely 300 wolves—80 percent fewer than currently occupy the northern Rockies—is all that is necessary to keep wolves off the endangered species list. Nonetheless, Service officials assert that state management of northern Rocky Mountain gray wolves will likely result in a population of 900-1,250 wolves, rather than the 300 wolves that the final delisting rule allows. The Service has not cited any commitments by the states to maintain the population above the federally established minimum. In fact, as demonstrated below, Montana, Idaho and Wyoming have not committed to maintain the wolf population above the Service’s minimum number. Inadequate state protections coupled with enduring hostility toward wolves in this region may well cause 80 percent of the region’s approximately 1,500 wolves to be killed under state management.

Wyoming:

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that Wyoming, Idaho and Montana should each maintain 15 breeding pairs and 150 wolves to ensure that the states’ populations do not drop below 10 breeding pairs and 100 wolves. Wyoming’s management plan does not commit to maintaining 15 breeding pairs and 150 wolves, or even 10 breeding pairs and 100 wolves. Wyoming state law requires the Wyoming Fish and Game Commission to limit the killing of gray wolves “only as necessary to reasonably ensure at least seven (7) breeding pairs of gray wolves are located in [Wyoming] and primarily outside of [the national parks and parkway].” Wyo. Stat. § 23-1-304(a).
- Wyoming state law contains no commitment, nor even a statement of intent, to manage for more than 7 breeding pairs (which could be as few as 28 wolves) outside of the national parks. Quite the opposite, Wyoming law does not permit state wildlife managers to manage for more than 7 breeding pairs.
- Moreover, “[i]n areas of Wyoming where the wolf is classified as a predatory animal”—the vast majority of the state—“take will not be regulated.” Wyoming Plan (2007) at 15. This means anyone with or without a hunting license can shoot a wolf, or wolves, any time of year when encountered in this region.
- Wyoming officials have stated publicly that they intend to eliminate all but the minimum number of wolves the Fish and Wildlife Service has stated is necessary to prevent re-listing the gray wolf as threatened or endangered. See The Associated Press, *Wolf managers target low number* (June 11, 2007) (“Wyoming aims to eventually reduce the number of wolves in the state to near the minimum the federal government will allow once the animal is removed from special protection status, a state Game and Fish Department official said.”); Whitney Royster, *Feds plan another*

wolf concession, Casper Star-Tribune (March 31, 2007) (“Wyoming, now with an estimated 26 packs, has said it wants to manage for the minimum number of wolves.”)

Idaho:

- The final delisting rule states that Idaho is currently home to 788 wolves. According to Idaho’s Wolf Population Management Plan (Oct. 2007), which sets forth specific population targets for Idaho wolf packs, the “minimum number of wolves objective” statewide is 104. See Idaho Fish and Game Department, Draft Idaho Wolf Population Management Plan 2008-2012, at 31 (October 2007). Nothing in the Idaho plan or state law commits Idaho to maintaining numbers above this “minimum number.”
- On January 11, 2007, Idaho’s governor Butch Otter announced his support for a “gray wolf kill,” in which all but 100 of Idaho’s wolves would be eradicated after delisting. At the rally with about 300 hunters, Otter said, “I’m prepared to bid for that first ticket to shoot a wolf myself.” See Associated Press, *Idaho governor calls for gray wolf kill* (Jan. 12, 2007) <http://www.enn.com/today.html?id=12019>; Brad Knickerbocker, *Gray wolves may lose US protected status*, The Christian Science Monitor (Feb. 1, 2007).
- Idaho’s wolf management plan makes clear that the state’s official position is that wolves should be managed according to House Joint Memorial No. 5, which resolved that “wolves be removed [from Idaho] by whatever means necessary.” See House Joint Memorial No. 5 (2001), at <http://www3.state.id.us/oasis/2001/HJM005.html>; Idaho Plan at 4.

Montana:

- Montana has not made enforceable commitments to maintain wolves above the minimum number established by FWS.
- Gray wolves in Montana are classified “as a species in need of management.” Mont. Code Ann. § 87-5-131. As applied to wolves, “species in need of management” is not defined by Montana law, although “management” is broadly defined to include “the entire range of activities,” including “control,” “periodic protection of species or populations,” and “regulated taking.” See Mont. Code Ann. § 87-5-102(5). This broad definition of “management” would allow virtually any management regime. This discretion is illustrated by the State’s treatment of the only other species currently designated as a “species in need of management”—bison—which is met with persistent efforts to reduce its presence in Montana. See Mont. Code Ann. § 87-1-216 (authorizing public hunting and bison management to reduce any threats to “persons or property”).
- Despite a smaller wolf population than both Wyoming and Idaho, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has ordered more wolves killed by federal Wildlife Services than either Wyoming or Idaho. See <http://fwp.mt.gov/content/getItem.aspx?id=26915>. Montana ordered an average of 38 wolves per year killed in 2002-2006, compared with 28 in Wyoming, and 22 in Idaho. Id. Montana ordered 53 wolves killed in 2006 in response to just 38 confirmed wolf predations on livestock. Id. 2007 numbers are not yet available.

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