



# Frequently Asked Questions: Defenders & Wolf Recovery

*No other organization in the United States has a longer history, contributed as many resources or obtained as much success in protecting wolves as Defenders of Wildlife. The questions and answers below describe our unique approach to wildlife conservation and explain why we continue the fight to protect wolves in the Northern Rockies.*

## How did Defenders get involved with protecting wolves?

Defenders of Wildlife has been committed to protecting imperiled wildlife across the country since its founding in 1947. We have been a leader in wolf conservation since these majestic animals were first listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1973. In 1987, when the first wolf pack to recolonize Montana ran into trouble with livestock, Defenders initiated a unique, innovative program to compensate ranchers for their documented livestock losses at 100% of market value. Defenders was the first wildlife organization to advocate for the return of the wolf to Yellowstone National Park and elsewhere in the Northern Rockies, and our staff was there in 1995 and 1996 directly assisting in the effort to reintroduce wolves to Yellowstone and central Idaho. In 1999, we created The Defenders of Wildlife Proactive Carnivore Conservation Fund that assists ranchers and biologists in implementing nonlethal methods to reduce wolf and livestock conflicts including range riders, livestock guarding dogs, fencing, lighting, and more. Today, we continue to champion wolf conservation by expanding our program coverage to Oregon and Washington as wolves return to these states.



© JOHN & KAREN HOLLINGSWORTH/USFWS

## What is the ultimate goal for wolf recovery in the region?

Defenders is committed to finding a path forward to sustainable wolf recovery in the west. We recognize that keeping wolves on the endangered species list indefinitely is not a successful recovery strategy. That's why we need to find consensus on a responsible and reasonable federal wolf delisting plan that will ensure the long-term viability of wolf populations across the entire region. To achieve that:

- First, we must *get the science right* on what constitutes a sustainable population for the region. Researchers across the country and around the world are learning important lessons about wolf recovery, wildlife conservation, ecology and climate change that should inform our wolf population and management goals.
- Given the depth of the social controversy over wolf restoration, we bring together all the relevant stakeholders to address conflict issues and propose solutions for ensuring sound management decisions. Advocates from either side of the wolf debate should not be allowed to dominate decision-making. Only a truly collaborative process will ensure that the needs of hunters, ranchers, conservationists and the many different wildlife species that we all seek to protect are addressed.

# FAQ: Defenders & Wolf Recover

## How many wolves constitute a sustainable population?

While there is no magic number that can ensure a sustainable wolf population over the long-run, it's clear that the targets set in the initial recovery plans more than 20 years ago no longer reflect the most up-to-date science. We firmly believe that states can adequately manage wolf recovery to accommodate a healthy and sustainable population of wolves when guided by the best available science. After incorporating the latest research, we feel confident that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service can set reasonable targets that ensure a healthy wolf population, preserve ample numbers of game species for hunting, and minimize conflicts with livestock.

## What is Defenders doing to build consensus and bring stakeholders together?

Regardless of the outcome of our pending court case, we will continue our work with livestock producers and wildlife managers in the region to develop and implement proactive measures to avoid wolf conflict.

- For example, Summer 2010 marks our third season working on our biggest proactive project to-date. Once again, we're sending technicians out to the Big Wood River Valley near Sawtooth National Recreation Area outside Ketchum, Idaho to deter wolves from preying on sheep during the night.
- We're also helping to pay for range riders on select ranches in Montana and Oregon to monitor wolves and keep a watchful eye on cattle.

### Compensation Paid for Livestock Losses 1987 through 2009\*

Total payments – \$1,231,997  
Total payments compensated – 875  
Total number of incidents:

- Cattle – 1,272
- Sheep – 2350
- Other – 104

\*As of 7/1/09

- Since 1987, Defenders has made nearly 900 payments worth more than \$1.2 million for verified livestock losses in six states, including \$100,000 to the state of Montana to initiate its own compensation program.
- We work with partner organizations in the region to increase awareness and promote tolerance of wolves. This includes developing the Western Wolf Coalition, sponsoring numerous public meetings and outreach events, creating ecotourism activities to track wolves in the wild, and providing regional media stories concerning wolves in the region. And in 2009 we

again hosted a carnivores conference to share research and discuss conservation strategies with leading biologists and wildlife managers.

## What is Defenders' stance on hunting?

Defenders is a wildlife conservation organization; we are *not* an anti-hunting or animal rights group. We support sustainable wildlife management practices that foster co-existence with wolves. Hunting can be an effective management tool, but it needs to be guided by sound wildlife management science. Moreover, we recognize that fair chase hunting is an honored tradition in the west. Hunters are often some of the most adamant conservationists when it comes to protecting game species, and many are willing to extend that respect to all wildlife, even predators.

## FAQ: Defenders & Wolf Recovery

### **Why resort to litigation?**

Defenders is committed to upholding the Endangered Species Act, which has been a critical tool in protecting imperiled wildlife. However, we believe that legal action should be used as a last resort when possible. We have tried in the past, and will continue to try in the future, to call for a regional wolf recovery and delisting plan that provides for a sustainable wolf population based on the current wildlife science. We have also requested that the US Fish and Wildlife Service bring all relevant stakeholders together to review the best available science and come to consensus on resolving wolf management conflicts. This sort of collaborative effort is essential to move forward on delisting wolves and managing them under state authority. Unfortunately, the legal system often becomes the ultimate arbiter of difficult issues where reasonable agreement is no longer tenable or has not been pursued.

### **What happens after the court makes its decision?**

No matter what happens in court, Defenders will continue to work throughout the region to minimize conflicts between wolves and livestock and to increase tolerance for wolves within the ranching and hunting communities. We will continue to propose building a regional wolf delisting plan on the best available wildlife population science and to work with stakeholders to develop and implement meaningful resolution to wolf management conflicts on the ground.