



## Wolf Management in Utah

*Despite congressional delisting, wolves still endangered in most of Utah*

For years, northern Rocky Mountain gray wolves have been on and off the Endangered Species List. In April 2011, the U.S. Congress intervened and permanently delisted wolves, officially removing them from the Endangered Species List in parts of many western states, including a small portion of northern Utah.

**The delisted zone (highlighted on the map below) is the *only* area where the State of Utah has authority to manage, capture or kill wolves. In the rest of the state, wolves are still considered an endangered species and fall under federal control. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) is now investigating the possible presence of wolves or wolf-dog hybrids in an area of north-central Utah, outside the delisted zone.**



*In 2009, population estimates indicated that at least 1,700 wolves live in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. Photo courtesy of Scott Flaherty.*



*Wolves have only been delisted in the highlighted area (north of I-80 and east of I-84).*

### What will happen if a wolf enters the delisted area?

In 2010, the Utah Legislature directed the Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) to prevent any packs of wolves from establishing within the delisted portion of Utah (S.B. 36, *Wolf Management Act*). The law also directs the DWR to request that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) immediately remove any wolves discovered in areas of Utah where they are still listed under the Endangered Species Act.

When wolves are delisted statewide, the Utah Wolf Management Plan will be fully implemented. For now, Utah only has authority to manage wolves in the delisted area (see map). To comply with S.B. 36, the DWR will prevent wolves from becoming established in this portion of the state.

## **Does Utah have a long-term plan for dealing with wolves?**

In 2003, long before wolves were delisted, the Utah Legislature directed the DWR to prepare a wolf management plan. The DWR convened a diverse team with members from many interest groups. Everyone collaborated to draft an effective plan.

As the group worked on the plan, they anticipated that wolves would be delisted statewide. The DWR would then have the authority to manage and control wolves anywhere in the state. The final draft of the plan reflected this expectation.

In 2005, after an exhaustive public process, the Utah Wildlife Board approved the management plan. Shortly thereafter, the DWR submitted the plan to the USFWS for review and comment. Then, in 2007, the DWR formally resubmitted the plan to the USFWS for approval. To date, the USFWS has failed to approve or otherwise comment on the plan, despite several formal requests to do so. You can review the Utah Wolf Management Plan in its entirety at [wildlife.utah.gov/wolf](http://wildlife.utah.gov/wolf).

## **Is the DWR working to get wolves delisted across Utah?**

Yes. The DWR will continue urging the USFWS to delist wolves statewide. DWR leadership, the governor's office and Utah's congressional delegation have repeatedly requested that the federal government transfer all wolf management to the state.

After that occurs, the DWR can implement the Utah Wolf Management Plan and manage wolves responsibly, anywhere they occur in the state. The DWR recognizes that unmanaged wolf populations may pose a serious threat to Utah's wildlife and livestock. In nearby states — including Idaho, Montana and Wyoming — wildlife officials attribute some declines in their elk herds to the unchecked growth of wolf packs. The DWR wants to prevent a similar situation from occurring in Utah.

The DWR has a plan and personnel that can effectively manage wolves statewide. Right now, however, any wolves that move out of the small delisted area are considered endangered and subject to exclusive federal jurisdiction. While endangered, those animals cannot be managed by the DWR, regardless of their impact on livestock or wildlife.

## **What about Mexican wolves?**

The Mexican wolf is a unique subspecies that occurred in Mexico and parts of the southwestern United States. Biologists have determined that the core population of Mexican wolves did not range farther north than central Arizona and New Mexico. The DWR has a representative on the Mexican Wolf Recovery Team and is working hard, as a part of this team, to make sure that any efforts to recover this subspecies take place within its historic range and not in Utah.

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