

**NEWS RELEASE
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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09-18

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**March 17, 2009
For Immediate Release
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Northern Rocky Mountain Interagency Annual Report for 2008 Available

The gray wolf population in the Northern Rocky Mountains continues to thrive. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and its federal, state and tribal partners estimated at the end of 2008 there were 1,645 wolves in 217 packs in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. At least 95 of those packs contained at least 1 adult male, 1 adult female, and 2 pups on December 31, 2008, meeting the recovery goal description of a breeding pair.

The NRM wolf population is simply a 400 mile southern extension of a population of over 12,000 wolves in British Columbia and Alberta. There are essentially nearly contiguous wolf packs from Jackson, Wyoming and Boise, Idaho north through Canada and Alaska to the Arctic Ocean.

The Service's recovery goal for the NRM is a wolf population that never goes below 10 breeding pairs and 100 wolves each in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. As Service-designated agents, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks has managed wolves in Montana and Idaho Department of Fish and Game has managed Idaho's wolves since 2004. Those states have committed to manage the population safely above those minimum recovery targets by making sure it is above 15 breeding pairs and 150 wolves per state. Montana plans to manage for about 400 wolves and Idaho for over 500 wolves. Wyoming does

not have a Service-approved state plan, but Wyoming, including Yellowstone National Park, will support over 300 wolves under continued Service management.

The NRM wolf population has exceeded its minimum recovery targets every year since 2002. Resident wolf packs currently occupy most of the suitable habitat within 110,000 square miles of western Montana, central and northern Idaho and northwestern Wyoming, so there appears to be little unoccupied suitable habitat left for many additional wolf packs.

More evidence that the current wolf population has saturated its suitable habitat in the NRM is evident by the record level of livestock conflicts and wolf control in 2008. Last year was a record for livestock damage with at least 214 cattle, 355 sheep, 28 goats, 21 llamas, 10 horses and 14 dogs being confirmed killed by wolves. Studies indicate only a fraction of depredations are verified. Perhaps, in the worst case scenarios, only 1 in 8 of actual wolf-caused losses of livestock can be confirmed by agency investigators. In 2008, nearly \$500,000 was paid by private and state wolf compensation programs for wolf damage. In 2008 USDA Wildlife Services spent nearly \$1,000,000 dealing with problem wolves. In 2008, management agencies killed 264 wolves because of livestock depredation but the NRM wolf population still increased 8% from 2007 levels.

To view or download the 2008 annual report or get more information on northern Rocky Mountain gray wolves, visit www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/wolf/ or <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov>

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.