SUMMARY

As part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service), efforts to restore endangered populations of gray wolves (*Canis lupus*), an imperiled species, to the northern Rocky Mountains of the conterminous United States, 35 wolves were reintroduced into Idaho between 1995 and 1996. The Nez Perce Tribe (Tribe) has supported wolf recovery efforts, in part, because of the cultural and religious significance of this species. The Tribe, working through a cooperative agreement with the Service, has been charged with the responsibility of monitoring and documenting the status of the recovering wolf population in Idaho. Wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains have recovered more rapidly than anticipated and the Service is intending to initiate the delisting process as soon as 2004.

To date, wolf population estimation has relied on time intensive and expensive radio telemetry techniques. Although this approach worked well with initial small population sizes, these techniques are no longer appropriate or cost-effective given the current, much larger recovered population size and near statewide distribution.

The Tribe, Service, and State of Idaho are interested in a collaborative partnership effort to develop a less intensive and more cost effective approach for estimating wolf population numbers across the varied landscapes of Idaho. We are proposing to initiate a 3.5-year research effort to develop standardized protocols for estimating wolf population parameters appropriate for meeting post-delisting monitoring and management needs.

Standardized monitoring protocols will be important in satisfying the Service's 5-year post-delisting monitoring requirements and is crucial to insure sustainability of the population through effective post-delisting conservation and management of wolves. Results of this effort will also be useful to other states, particularly Montana and Wyoming, developing monitoring protocols for wolves across the northern Rocky Mountains.