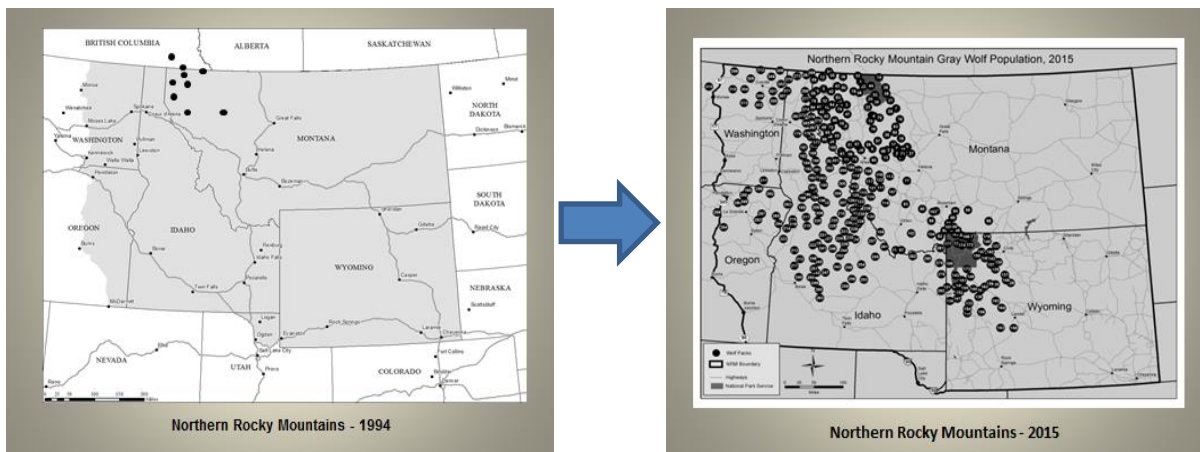


# Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Program 2015 Interagency Annual Report

*A cooperative effort by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Nez Perce Tribe, National Park Service, Blackfeet Nation, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Wind River Tribes, Confederated Colville Tribes, Spokane Tribe of Indians, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Utah Department of Natural Resources, and USDA Wildlife Services.*



*The Northern Rocky Mountain wolf population grew from 7 packs (approximately 60 wolves) in northwest Montana in 1994 (prior to the reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho) to at least 282 packs (1,704 wolves) in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming in 2015. The wolf population continued to expand in Oregon and Washington, and wolves have begun to recolonize northern California.*

*This annual report presents information on the status, distribution, and management of the Northern Rocky Mountain wolf population from January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015.*

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## ***Note to Readers:***

Gray wolves are no longer federally listed as an endangered species and are managed under state authority in Idaho, Montana, eastern Oregon, eastern Washington, and north central Utah. Each state is required by post-delisting rules to submit an annual report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Wolves remained federally listed in Wyoming in 2015 as nonessential experimental and were managed by the USFWS. The 2015 Interagency Annual Report is comprised of separate sections from Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Northern Rockies Wolf Recovery Program. This report can be viewed at <http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov/annualreports.htm> and may be copied and distributed. You can download the Interagency Report in its entirety and cite the Interagency Report as suggested on the cover. Alternatively, you may download a state report or section of the Interagency Report and cite it individually.

**Abstract:** Gray wolves (*Canis lupus*) were extirpated from the western United States by the 1930s. Public attitudes towards predators changed and wolves received legal protection with the passage of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1973. Subsequently, wolves from Canada occasionally dispersed south and successfully began recolonizing northwest Montana (MT) in 1986. In 1995 and 1996, 66 wolves from southwestern Canada were reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park (YNP;  $n=31$ ) and central Idaho (ID;  $n=35$ ). Recovery goals of an equitably distributed wolf population containing at least 300 wolves and 30 breeding pairs in 3 recovery areas within MT, ID, and Wyoming (WY) for at least 3 consecutive years were reached in 2002. By 2011, wolves were delisted and managed under state authority in MT and ID. Wolves were delisted in WY in 2012, but a federal court relisted WY wolves and returned them to federal authority in September 2014. In 2015, the Northern Rocky Mountain (NRM) wolf population (MT, ID, and WY only) was  $\geq 1,704$  wolves in  $\geq 282$  packs (including  $\geq 95$  breeding pairs). Based on minimum counts, MT estimated 536 wolves in 126 packs with 32 breeding pairs; ID had 786 wolves in 108 packs with 33 breeding pairs; and WY had 382 wolves in 48 packs with 30 breeding pairs. The wolf population continued to expand west from the original NRM DPS boundary in eastern Oregon (OR) and Washington (WA) into the ESA listed portion of those states. The entire wolf population (including all of OR and WA) was  $\geq 1,904$  wolves. OR had 110 wolves in 16 packs with 11 breeding pairs and WA had 90 wolves in 18 packs with 8 breeding pairs. No packs were documented in Utah (UT). We recorded the mortalities of 717 wolves in MT, ID, and WY in 2015. When all forms of human-caused mortality were combined (control, harvest, and other human-caused mortality) 684 wolves were killed in MT, ID, and WY due to human-causes (~28% of the minimum NRM estimated wolf population) including 270 wolves in MT (~33% of the minimum MT estimated population), 352 wolves in ID (~31% of the minimum ID estimated population), and 62 wolves in WY (~13% of the minimum WY estimated population). Total confirmed depredations by wolves in MT, ID, and WY in 2015 included 148 cattle, 208 sheep, 3 dogs, and 3 horses. Wolves killed 10 cattle, 10 sheep, and 1 dog in OR and WA. Private and state agencies paid \$503,990.00 in compensation for wolf-damage to livestock in 2015. Federal, State and Tribal agencies spent approximately \$6,432,325.00 for wolf management, outreach, monitoring, and research.

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## NORTHERN ROCKIES WOLF SUMMARY 2015

Wolf Population: In 2015, the wolf population in MT, ID, and WY (hereafter referred to as NRM states) was  $\geq 1,704$  wolves in  $\geq 282$  packs, including  $\geq 95$  breeding pairs (packs containing  $\geq 1$  adult male,  $\geq 1$  adult female, and two or more pups on December 31, 2015) (Table 1). The minimum recovery goal of an equitably distributed wolf population containing at least 300 wolves and 30 breeding pairs in the NRM states for at least 3 consecutive years (managed to maintain over 150 wolves and 15 breeding pairs in each state) has been exceeded since 2002. The NRM wolf population continued to expand west from the original NRM DPS boundary in eastern OR and WA into the ESA listed portions of those states. The entire wolf population (including all of OR and WA) included a minimum of  $\geq 1,904$  wolves in 316 packs (including  $\geq 114$  breeding pairs).

Table 1. NRM states, OR, and WA estimated wolf populations in 2015.

Area	# Wolves	# Packs	# Breeding Pairs
ID	786	108	33
MT	536	126	32
WY	382	48	30
NRM states	1,704	282	95

Area	# Wolves	# Packs	# Breeding Pairs
OR	110	16	11
WA	90	18	8
OR and WA	200	34	19

Area	# Wolves	# Packs	# Breeding Pairs
NRM States	1,704	282	95
OR and WA	200	34	19
<b>Total Wolf Population</b>	<b>1,904</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>114</b>

Wolf Mortality: For strictly comparative purposes, we estimated the minimum number of wolves thought to be alive in the NRM states by combining the 2015 minimum population estimate of 1,704 wolves (based on state estimates) with all known mortalities from all causes ( $n=717$ ). This sum represented a minimum estimate of 2,421 wolves thought to have been alive at some point in the NRM states during 2015 (MT=812, ID=1,143, and WY=466). The minimum estimate was only used to compare relative rates of the various causes of mortality to wolves in the NRM states.

We recorded the mortalities of 717 wolves in the NRM states (~30% of the minimum NRM population) in 2015 from causes including natural, misc. human-caused, unknown, harvest, and control. When only human-caused mortality (control, harvest, and other human-caused mortality) was included, 684 wolves (~28% of the minimum NRM estimated wolf population) died due to human-causes (Table 2).



Table 2. Causes of mortality in the NRM states, OR, and WA in 2015. The numbers in parentheses represent the percentage of the minimum estimated wolf population removed by human-caused mortality and total mortality.

Area	Natural	Misc. Human	Unknown	Harvest	Control	Total Human-Caused	Total
MT	3	26	3	205	39	270 (33%)	276 (34%)
ID	2	21	3	256	75	352 (31%)	357 (31%)
WY	11	8	11	0	54	62 (13%)	84 (18%)
NRM States	16	55	17	461	168	684 (28%)	717 (30%)

Area	Natural	Misc. Human	Unknown	Harvest	Control	Total Human-Caused	Total
OR	1	4	2	0	0	4	7
WA	0	3	1	3	0	6	7
OR and WA	1	7	3	3	0	10	14

Wolf Depredations: Although confirmed depredations result in a comparatively small proportion of all livestock losses, wolf damage can be significant to some livestock producers. Total confirmed depredations in 2015 by wolves in the NRM states included 148 cattle, 208 sheep, 3 dogs, and 3 horses. Wolves killed 10 cattle, 10 sheep, and 1 dog in WA and OR (Table 3). Sixty-one of 358 known wolf packs (17%) that existed at some point in 2015 were involved in at least 1 confirmed livestock depredation in the NRM states, OR, and WA.

Table 3. Confirmed livestock depredations in the NRM states, OR, and WA in 2015.

Area	Cattle	Sheep	Dog	Horses
Idaho	35	125	3	1
Montana	41	21	0	2
Wyoming	72	62	0	0
NRM States	148	208	3	3

Area	Cattle	Sheep	Dog	Horses
OR	3	10	1	0
WA	7	0	0	0
OR and WA	10	10	1	0

Area	Cattle	Sheep	Dog	Horses
NRM States	148	208	4	3
OR and WA	10	10	1	0
<b>Total Depredations</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>

State and Private Compensation: States spent \$503,990.00 to compensate livestock producers for dead, injured, and missing livestock (Table 4).

Table 4. State and Private compensation spent for wolf damage in the NRM in 2015.

Idaho	46,440.00*
Montana	68,290.00
Wyoming	330,667.00
Oregon	51,393.00
Washington	7,200.00*
<b>Total compensation</b>	<b>503,990.00</b>

\*additional claims are pending.

Federal Wolf-Livestock Demonstration Funds (Tester Funds): In 2015, the Service made funding opportunities available to states and Tribes that routinely deal with livestock depredation from wolves. The purpose of the Wolf-Livestock Demonstration Project Grant Program was to prevent depredation of livestock and compensate livestock producers for their losses in the Western Great Lakes (Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin), Northern Rocky Mountains (Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Oregon, and Washington), and the Southwest (Arizona and New Mexico). States and Tribes competed for prevention and compensation grants. Qualifying projects included a 50 percent non-federal cost share (Table 5).

Table 5. Wolf-livestock Demonstration Funds awarded to individual NRM states in 2015.

State	Prevention	Compensation	Total state funding
Idaho	-0-	100,000.00	100,00.00
Montana	100,000.00	45,000.00	145,000.00
Wyoming	-0-	-0-	-0-
Oregon	66,000.00	6,310.00	72,310.00
Washington	100,000.00	83,690.00	183,690.00
<b>Total Tester Funding</b>	<b>266,000.00</b>	<b>235,000.00</b>	<b>501,000.00</b>

Funding For Wolf Management: State, Federal, and Tribal agencies spent \$6,432,325.00 on wolf monitoring, management, control, outreach, and research in 2015 (Table 6).

Table 6. Money spent on wolves in 2015 by State, Federal, and Tribal agencies.

<b>USFWS Region 1</b>	<b>Federal Funds</b>	<b>PR Funds</b>	<b>Other Funding</b>	<b>Total Spent</b>
USFWS	144,877.00			144,877.00
USDA Wildlife Services				
Idaho W.S.	-0-	-0-	427,154.00	427,154.00
Oregon W.S.	36,941.00	-0-	10,244.00	47,185.00
Washington W.S.	77,000.00	-0-	113,000.00	190,000.00
Idaho (IDFG)	30,640.00	1,023,717.00	580,174.00	1,634,531.00
Oregon (ODFW)	225,742.00	-0-	92,580.00	318,322.00
Washington (WDFW)	55,605.00	-0-	1,014,195.00	1,069,800.00
Colville Tribe	44,517.00	-0-	12,670.00	57,187.00
Subtotal Region 1	615,322.00	1,023,717.00	2,250,017.00	3,889,056.00

<b>USFWS Region 6</b>				
USFWS	464,494.00	-0-	-0-	464,494.00
USDA Wildlife Services				
Montana W.S.	111,243.00	-0-	135,000.00	246,243.00
Wyoming W.S.	133,995.00	-0-	-0-	133,995.00
Montana (MFWP)	372,778.00	216,000.00	529,059.00	1,117,837.00
Wyoming (WGFD)	No reporting			No reporting
Yellowstone National Park	250,000.00	-0-	150,000.00	400,000.00
Grand Teton National Park	60,000.00	-0-	100,000.00	160,000.00
Wind River Tribes				
Shoshone and Arapaho F&G	4,700.00	-0-	-0-	4,700.00
Lander USFWS	14,000.00	-0-	2,000.00	16,000.00
Subtotal Region 6	1,411,210.00	216,000.00	916,059.00	2,543,269.00
<b>Total money spent in Regions 1 and 6</b>	<b>2,026,532.00</b>	<b>1,239,717.00</b>	<b>3,166,076.00</b>	<b>6,432,325.00</b>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Hundreds of people have assisted with wolf recovery efforts over the years and we are indebted to them all. It would be impossible to individually recognize everybody in this report. Please refer to individual state reports to better understand how many people have contributed to wolf recovery in the NRM.

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The efforts of many individuals who have contacted us to report wolf sightings are greatly appreciated. The numerous ranchers and other private landowners whose property is occasionally used by wolves, sometimes at great cost to the owner, and hunters who increasingly share the harvestable surplus of big game populations with wolves deserve our respect, service, and understanding.