

4.0 CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

Because of the wolf's status in Wyoming as an experimental nonessential species under 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act, conservation measures are not inherent in the recovery plan. Nor are there any in the 2003 (unapproved by USFWS) Wyoming State Management Plan for wolves (WGF 2003). Wolves are very adaptable and have done very well in Wyoming since their release in 1995-1996. Two main factors affecting the continued existence of wolves in an area are the maintenance of a good ungulate prey base and the containment of roads and human activity. Habitat improvement projects for elk and other big game foraging areas are already part of the RMPs and one of the main activities carried out by the individual FOs. The other significant factor is to reduce human-caused mortality. Road density (highly correlated with human causes of death), public outreach and education, and cattle-ranching practices as they relate to wolf depredations, are overarching elements in the maintenance of successful wolf populations.

The maintenance of a good data base on the location of wolf packs is the first step in protection of the animals. It is important to develop and maintain contact with appropriate staff with the USFWS and WGF in order to stay informed of wolf packs in the FO and/or on BLM land. Following delisting and as wolf populations expand, it may be necessary to develop monitoring protocols for wolves on BLM lands. These would be most effective if coordinated with other agencies.

These conservation measures are meant to be a tool to clarify what activities have impacted the species in the past, what conservation measures have been or could be used to minimize impacts, and to assist the agencies in the development of BAs and BOs. Implementation of the following conservation strategies is intended to minimize adverse impacts that are likely to result from implementation of the management actions provided in the RMPs. The BLM has committed to implement conservation measures 1 through 5. The BLM will also consider implementing best management practices (BMPs), items 1 through 6, at every opportunity to further protect the gray wolf. All conservation measures and BMPs apply to the known populations of the gray wolf. In the event that wolf packs are formed in new areas, these measures would apply to these areas as well.

CONSERVATION MEASURES

1. No project actions to be located within 100 m (330 ft) of den sites between April 1 and June 30. Areas within 0.8 km (0.5 miles) of a den site are recommended for protection from disturbance.
2. Take action to help reduce human-caused mortality wherever possible. For example, provide educational material, as appropriate, to avoid the inadvertent killing of a wolf mistaken for a coyote; provide information on compatible grazing practices (see # 3 below); avoid situations that lead to the adoption of human foods and garbage by wolves, which could lead to a bite and subsequent elimination of the wolf.
3. Disseminate information useful to livestock producers on wolf/livestock interactions, alternate livestock practices that minimize conflicts between wolves and livestock (e.g., dispersed grazing rather than concentrated grazing), and compatible lambing and calving methods that reduce or eliminate wolf depredation in occupied habitat.
4. Designate a state representative to attend the annual interagency coordination meeting.

5. Continue to attend the annual coordination meetings with Wyoming Game and Fish.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

1. Avoid an increase in miles of road in elk crucial winter range.
2. Avoid situations that allow for wolves to habituate to humans, or become exposed to and use human refuse as a food resource.
3. Foster public outreach/education programs to provide information on wolves in schools, campgrounds, and other places. Topics can include but are not limited to: How to be safe around wolves, wolf ecology, wolf mortality factors, and livestock grazing practices harmful to wolves.
4. Continue to support the research and documentation of wolf/livestock interactions and livestock grazing practices in order to improve these practices so that they are more compatible with wolves.
5. Continue to provide and improve wolf habitat by monitoring elk populations and improving habitat for elk.
6. Encourage reporting of wolf observations by BLM staff and the public to Wyoming Game and Fish.