

The Outdoorsman

Bulletin Number 38

Feb-April 2010

Idaho F&G Director Warns F&G Commission Not to Show Controversial Wolf Documents to Public

By George Dovel

Despite Existing Proof, F&G Continues to Hide: 1) Its Role in Wolf Introduction and 2) Its Failure to Legally Remove Wolves Decimating Elk and Deer Populations

During the Idaho Fish and Game Commission's January 27, 2010 Public Hearing in Boise, Commissioners heard testimony from Idahoans who expressed concern and anger over the radical decline in big game populations and the spread of disease caused by uncontrolled wolf populations. Several of those testifying blamed the Idaho Fish and Game Department for introducing and protecting the wolves at the expense of Idaho game herds and rural Idaho residents. ([Click here to listen to the recording](#)).

Commissioner Budge Claims Charges Made by Citizens Who Testify at Commission Meetings are "Clearly Inaccurate"

Although Chairman Wright told those who testified, "All of the comments and your recommendations will be considered at beginning of the day tomorrow when we have our Commission meeting," none of the testimony concerning impacts of wolves on specific big game herds, livestock, human health or local economies was discussed. Instead, Commissioner Randy Budge launched a discussion charging: "folks come and testify in a heated meeting on information that is clearly inaccurate."

Sounding like a defense lawyer quoting other facts to obscure the guilt of his client, Budge, who is also an attorney, continued; "The Department and the Commission is accused of 1) introducing the wolf, and they seem to ignore the reality that we have a federal species introduced under federal law on federal land over the state's objection and we couldn't do anything about it and now we're trying to manage that suitably, and make you wonder if we shouldn't have some type of a policy statement – factual statement – from the Department or Commission and have available to disseminate to people that would have this false perception."

Budge continued: "What you see in some meetings like last night and Post Falls and elsewhere, that the first person or two that gets up on that bandwagon – if it gets said enough times then the perception becomes that

it is true. And that perception gets perpetuated. And I think that what we fail to respond, which we don't in these types of – the failure to respond, object and refute, becomes in the mind of many the perception that that is in fact accurate."

Budge Suggests Providing "Fact Sheet of Official Commission Position That We Don't Necessarily Agree With George Dovel's View on How the Wolf Came to Idaho – Documented by Facts"

He continued, "It troubles me a little in these public hearings that we repeatedly have folks that may want to lambaste us and the Department as if we either introduced the wolves ourselves or we signed a contract and perpetuated it – as opposed to we did get forced on it and we're struggling to manage and we have very limited options to manage – and this is our policy secretive and we've allowed this whole thing to become a problem. And, I don't know, it's never going to go away."

"It might be that we have a 'Here's the facts of the introduction,' on this fact statement and it might be an appropriate time to read it at the hearing before it gets out of control – at least have available that we don't necessarily agree with George Dovel's view on how the wolf came to Idaho period. – what our official adopted position is that is documented by facts."

Two Commissioners suggested that if the facts prove a prior Commission and prior Director had a direct hand in introducing the wolf, the Commission would have to live with it – but if not, the Commission should be in a position to present the facts in a one-page bulletin.

Wheeler Confirms Document Signed by Conley

At that point Commissioner Wheeler said, "I'd like to shed a little light on it. There *was* a document signed by Conley at that time and I've read it and I know a couple of Commissioners that were on the Commission at that time – they did not give him the authority to do that, but it was

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Director Warns – *continued from page 1*

signed and I've seen it – several legislators got it. So that's where this comes from.”

“You can like it or not like it, but that's the truth. The feds had to have some agency that was willing to put their “John Henry” on it, that's what he did. It'll never die.”

In response to a comment, “We might as well have it up front – what he did and what he didn't do and the rationale,” Wheeler said, “The rationale--it's hard to say. But that's a fact and that will always be out there. That's why, one of the reasons, it's so strong and that's what -- there's lots and lots of animosity towards this department in the last 15 years.”

Commissioner Wheeler was asked, “Cameron, was the agreement that he signed they were going to introduce them whether we like it or not and so this was an agreement we will participate in management?” Wheeler responded: “No. The agreement that he signed was an agreement to cooperate in the introduction. Actually there's enough there to keep this so-called myth alive.”

“Actually publishing the letter might be a great thing because the conspiracy side of it will grow—it's had a lot of impact on this Department. It's had a *lot* of impact on it. The Legislature, the Governor, the Commission itself was opposed to it. It's a tough deal for this agency to swallow – they paid a pretty good price for it.”

Commissioner: “Defuse Wolf Issue with Handout”

Another Commissioner said: “This wolf issue occurs every five years. I fully agree with the fact sheet, and I can tell you that the resolution that this Commission signed back in August is a good place to start. That lays out the entire history of it and maybe an introductory paragraph leading into that fact sheet... But I tried to find that resolution on our website and it ought to be up there front and prominent so that anybody going to the website that wanted to look at wolves could read about the history of how this all happened. This wolf situation is gonna get worse before it gets better. I think that if we can somehow defuse this wolf issue with some kind of a handout at these public hearings...”

Still another Commissioner asked, “So you agree that perhaps more disclosure might be best – and state all the facts – put as much sunshine on it as we can – and present that and live with it as a principle rather than, as Randy said, try to not necessarily hide it but to disclose less than the whole story?”

IDFG Director Groen Claims Letter Signed by Conley States: “We Did Not Want To Get ‘Em”

At that point Director Groen intervened with the following comments:

“I think we can do it – full disclosure – and you know that resolution, Commissioner McDermott, we can make sure that gets on there. But you have a Commission meeting and we respond sometimes. There was so much

emotion last night the response would not have helped. On the disease stuff, we had our papers out there – Ag and Fish and Game saying ‘here's the facts’.”

“Last night you had a very orchestrated group – *one* group – and they contacted many of the Moscow people. That group – our staff has spent more time explaining the facts to ‘em – they don't want to hear the facts period.

“And regarding that letter that came up at Post Falls – what that letter was, *it states that we did not want to get ‘em* (wolves) and we stood strong there for when they were ready to be put in no matter what. It was a letter that would keep our authority and the Director at that time signed that letter – I guess you'd call it, Jim, a ‘Transport Permit’ or whatever – and it was kinda just to try to keep our hands in it.

“Talking About It Just Gets Deeper and Deeper”

“That letter's gonna cause us problems for a long time. It's open – we have it – I asked the previous Director ‘Why did you do it?’ And uh he said ‘just to keep ourselves – it was going to happen – keep ourselves in the process.’ But how do you explain that? I always try to (put) this Commission forward – not backwards – and I think we've been pretty successful.

“That letter, if you start talking about it, just gets deeper and deeper – and the Wildlife Chief had signed the permit then, too. It was good faith at that time just so we could keep some stake. It was happening, we had no choice. Montana had no choice. Wyoming – half of their legislature even came on – that was the rational thing to do.

It's difficult to discuss it – it's there – I have it – I can give you the letters – I haven't openly discussed it but uh that was the past. We can explain. Staff and I'll talk about that.”

Who Was Telling the Truth?

If you have read this page carefully you noticed that Director Groen's version of the content of the letter and the reason it was written is exactly the opposite of Commissioner Wheeler's. To help you decide who was telling the truth and who was not telling the truth, the following pages contain photocopies of the controversial letter, the permit signed by then Wildlife Bureau Chief Tom Reinecker, and portions of other documents presented as exhibits during a Congressional wolf hearing in 1995.

Wheeler said, “The decision (by the Department to help introduce wolves) really runs deep into the fiber of both the sportsmen and policy makers of this state.” He questioned use of a document (“fact sheet”) on sportsmen who come to Commission meetings and said, “I'm not real sure that we want to get in the way of the truth.”

But despite his opposition, and without a motion or vote, other Commissioners, including Budge and Chairman Wright said they wanted the document prepared for their information and said, “At the appropriate time we'll use it with discretion.”

The following is a photocopy of Idaho Code Section 36-715(2) which was effective from enactment of the "Wolf EIS Participation Plan" in February, 1992 through June 30, 1996, with emphasis (underline) added:

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CAPTIVE WILDLIFE

36-715

the animal to determine species priority before the department of fish and game may take any action in accordance with the United States endangered species act.

(2) The department of fish and game shall not be authorized to expend funds, transfer assets or enter into a cooperative agreement with any agency, department or entity of the United States government concerning wolves unless expressly authorized by state statute except that the department is authorized to provide a representative to participate on the northern rocky mountain wolf recovery team and to participate in activities regarding nuisance wolves.

The following copy of a letter from former IDFG Director Jerry Conley to USFWS Wolf EIS Team Project Leader Ed Bangs, signed by Conley and dated September 27, 1994, was obtained from Idaho Wolf Oversight Committee Co-Chairman George Bennett by author in Jan. of 1995:



IDAHO FISH & GAME
600 South Walnut / Box 25
Boise, Idaho 83707-0025

27 September 1994

Ed Bangs, Project Leader
Wolf EIS Team
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
100 N. Park, Suite 320
Helena MT 59801

Dear Mr. Bangs:

For the record, I would like to take this time to acknowledge our support for the Experimental Rules on proposed establishment of nonessential, experimental populations of gray wolves in central Idaho and Yellowstone National Park. Specifically, a nonessential, experimental population area would be established in Idaho through regulation by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) under section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act. In accordance with the Experimental Rule, we will work with the FWS, to the extent allowed by Idaho law, to reintroduce wolves from British Columbia and/or Alberta into the Idaho experimental population area.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please don't hesitate to call me or one of my staff working on the wolf recovery program.

Sincerely,

Jerry M. Conley
Director

JMC/wm

Copy to: Ray Demarchi, Manager, Wildlife Management Operations Section,
B.C. Environment Wildlife Branch
John Gunson, Wildlife Biologist, Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife,
Fish and Wildlife Division
Members, Idaho Wolf Advisory Committee

In 1988 the Idaho Legislature restricted the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's involvement in wolf recovery activities unless expressly authorized by state statute (§36-715).

In 1992 in order to comply with the FWS requirement for a State to have an approved recovery plan before the wolf status could be reclassified from endangered to threatened – Legislators amended §36-715 as follows:

1. Created a Wolf Oversight Committee (WOC) to prepare the plan;
2. Authorized one IDFG employee to: (a) provide data to the FWS EIS Team to accurately project the impact of a recovered wolf population; and (b) coordinate between FWS and the WOC.

The underlined portion of Subparagraph (2) of 36-715 on this page clearly stated that IDFG was not authorized to enter into any cooperative agreement with any federal entity concerning wolves unless expressly authorized by state statute.

Yet while the final FWS Wolf Hearing in Boise, Idaho was being held by Ed Bangs on September 27, 1994, without any authorization from the Legislature, former FG Director Conley signed the letter agreement shown on this page and provided it to Bangs.

The document verified IDFG's unconditional support of the FWS 10J Rule published on Aug. 16, 1994 (which imposed an extreme fine or prison sentence for a landowner even throwing a rock at a wolf chasing livestock on his own property) and stated its support for introducing a nonessential experimental population of wolves into Idaho.

Further, it agreed that IDFG would work with the FWS to the extent allowed by Idaho law, to transplant the Canadian wolves, and invited FWS to contact Conley or "one of his staff working on the wolf recovery program."

Note that contrary to Groen's claim to the Commission on January 28, 2010, the letter/agreement says nothing about either the State or IDFG not wanting wolves. And it was not an agreement to participate in managing wolves as one Commissioner suggested.

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Director Warns – continued from page 3



IDAHO FISH & GAME
600 South Walnut / Box 25
Boise, Idaho 83707-0025

COPY

Cecil D. Andrus / Governor
Jerry M. Conley / Director

SPECIAL PERMIT

ISSUED TO: Mr. Ed Bangs, Wolf Reintroduction Coordinator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services
100 N. Park, Suite 320
Helena, MT 59601

PURPOSE: To reintroduce gray wolves into central Idaho by releasing wild wolves captured in Canada. A maximum of 15 wolves will be released in central Idaho for up to 5 years, or until 2 breeding pairs are each documented to produce 2 or more pups that survive until 31 December of that year for 2 consecutive years. The ultimate goal is to establish a population of breeding, wild wolves in central Idaho and to allow the population to increase by natural reproduction to the point that gray wolves can be removed from the endangered species list in Idaho.

SPECIES: Gray wolf (*Canis lupus*).

- PROVISIONS:**
1. The permittee is authorized to release, in central Idaho, a maximum of 15 wild gray wolves captured in British Columbia or Alberta, Canada during the effective period.
 2. The actual release site(s) will be jointly agreed upon by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Idaho Department of Fish and Game.
 3. Wolves released in Idaho must have been captured from an area in British Columbia or Alberta, Canada, that is certified by Canadian health officials to be free of the rabies virus.
 4. Releases will occur between 1 December and 31 May, or as otherwise approved by the Director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.
 5. Releases are to occur in accordance with the Idaho wolf management plan.

SUBPERMITTEES: Dr. Steve Fritts, (USFWS, Helena, Montana) and those designated in writing to the Department by the Permittee.

EFFECTIVE PERIOD: 1 December 1994 - 31 May 1995.

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
Jerry M. Conley, Director

original signed
9/27/94
by Tom Reinecker

By _____

Date _____

Keeping Idaho's Wildlife Heritage
An Equal Opportunity Employer

**Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Position Statement on Gray Wolves**

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission and Idaho Department of Fish and Game (Department) employees are frequently asked a variety of questions about our involvement in wolf recovery and wolf management activities. This statement describes the Department's position on several commonly asked questions about wolves in Idaho.

- What is the Department's position on wolf recovery in Idaho?

The Department supports wolf recovery in Idaho. The Department believes wolf recovery is compatible with other natural resource interests in the state, and that it will not have a negative impact on Idaho's economy. The gray wolf will be considered recovered when there is no longer a threat of extinction to their population in the recovery area.

This copy of the IDFG Special Permit, with the original signed by Wildlife Bureau Chief Tom Reinecker on that same day and given to Bangs, was also provided to me in January of 1995 by Wolf Oversight Committee Co-Chairman George Bennett.

Like most Idahoans and their elected officials who were involved in the FWS effort to recover wolves, I was not aware of either Conley's letter agreeing to the 10J Nonessential Experimental option and introduction of Canadian wolves, or this permit authorizing FWS to release 15 wolves per year for up to five years, until more than two months after they were signed and delivered to Ed Bangs.

As Chairman of the Boise County Commission Wildlife and Endangered Species Committee, I was aware that the ESA and 50 CFR 17 requires FWS to work closely with state governments in the development of plans to manage wolves, and that FWS needed permission from Idaho before it brought wolves into the state.

Paragraph 5. of the Special Permit signed by Reinecker stipulates that releases are to occur in accordance with the Idaho wolf management plan but Idaho did not approve such a plan for another seven years after the first wolves were introduced.

In mid-October 1994 I learned that several members of the WOC refused to support the new FWS 10J Rule. On about the end of November 1994, I pulled up the IDFG Bulletin Board on my computer and copied the next to last item at "WOLF.TXT LEGAL 6.5K 12/94 Position:" – and saved it (see "Idaho Department of Fish and Game Position Statement on Gray Wolves" here)

Then I met with former Montana Wolf Biologist Jon Rachael who served as advisor to both the Idaho Wolf Oversight Committee and to Ed Bangs on the FWS Environmental Impact Statement Team. In response to my questions, Rachael said the Department had approved the FWS 10J Rule and issued FWS the permit to bring wolves into Idaho two months earlier.

The position statement also included an admission that wolves already existed "in the Boise and Clearwater National Forests on opposite ends of the central Idaho wilderness areas." This position statement and information on existing wolves was repeated in the January/February issue of the Department publication, "The Wildlife Scene," by Jon Rachael.

The following is page 1 of a four page letter sent to FWS on Oct. 17, 1994 by four members of the Idaho Wolf Oversight Committee, and given to me in January of 1995 by Co-Chairman George Bennett who was one of the signers. Unlike Conley's September 27, 2004 letter, it disagrees with numerous provisions in the 10J Rule written by Bangs and published in the Federal Register on August 16, 1994.

October 17, 1994

To: Gray Wolf Reintroduction
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
PO Box 8017
Helena, MT 59601

Comments on Proposed Rule; 50 CFR Part 17, Endangered and Threatened Species: Gray Wolf

We are members of the Wolf Oversight Committee formed by the Idaho legislature in 1993 and currently charged by the legislature with developing a wolf management plan for the state of Idaho.

We view the current proposal and the associated proposed rule as an opportunity to solve the contentious issue of wolf recovery. In its current form, however, the proposal does not adequately resolve the economic, social, wildlife and private property concerns of many citizens.

Many hunters and hunter associations have contacted us expressing bitter opposition to the proposed rule in that it allows a wildlife experiment with the potential to plunder the ungulate herds of this state with no certain controls on the result. Furthermore, no provision has been made for certain reversal in the event of excessive overreach of population goals. Assumption has been made that wolf recovery is desirable, irrespective of regional history in this regard.

We believe that the proposed rule is illegal in that it fails to fulfill the requirements of Sec 6 of the ESA which requires cooperation with the States to the maximum extent practicable, and Sec 17 50 CFR which requires agreement to the maximum extent practicable with the state agencies and individuals with an interest in land that may be affected by the rule. The consultation and cooperation performed by the F&WS has been inadequate in that it failed to adequately address concerns voiced by many individuals.

The EIS process and decision upon which the proposed rule is based is inadequate in that it failed to adequately address concerns voiced by many individuals and state agencies regarding:

- impacts on the states other than MT, ID and WY due to wolf migrations outside these states.
- impacts on human safety of a wolf population conditioned to no longer fear humans.
- impact on private property rights, especially livestock.
- cumulative impact of this and other DOI and USFS rules and actions and their impact on the western livestock industry.

The last paragraph (below) from page 4 of the letter, also signed by Ted Hoffman, Stan Boyd and Lois Van Hoover, is self-explanatory.

If the above deficiencies are not corrected, we shall urge the state legislature to retain the current language of Sec 36-715 Idaho Code that prohibits the Id Dep't of F&G from participating in any wolf recovery activities without the approval of the legislature, and urge the legislature to further prohibit any state agency from any activity that would support the federal wolf recovery effort.

Why 36-715 Prohibited IDFG From Participation in Wolf Recovery

During the late 1960s, IDFG biologists refused to control predators impacting declining game species. Idaho deer and elk populations and harvests reached record lows by 1975.

In the 1972 Legislative session, the F&G Commission and new Director Joe Greenley avoided implementation of a statewide coyote bounty by promising the Legislature to control coyotes in places like Dworshak Reservoir. But after the legislative session ended, Greenley reneged on the promise, using the excuse that "wildlifers" (biologists) did not believe in controlling predators to benefit other wildlife species.

Even with a law requiring the F&G Commission to designate where and how the money in its Animal Damage Control account must be spent to benefit specific wildlife populations, the Commission continued to ignore the intent of the law – unless some biologist wanted to use the money for limited predator control as part of a *study*.

By the 1992 legislative session, two decades after cougars were given big game status, F&G even refused to control lions that were decimating the endangered Selkirk caribou herd. Lion numbers had reached record highs and legislators made sure IDFG would not have the opportunity to do the same thing with wolves.

In January of 1995 when Idaho's newly elected Governor Phil Batt delivered his "State of the State" address to the Legislature, he vowed to "straighten out a Fish and Game agency that is out of control," and received a standing ovation. But when Batt asked the Commissioners for their written resignations, they refused to comply.

Instead, with help from Conley and the major media, they organized a protest demonstration on the Statehouse steps and Batt caved in and withdrew his request. When Steve Mealey was hired to replace Conley, he announced that Idaho would not have wolves if Conley had not allowed it.

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Director Warns – continued from page 5

Another important provision in §36-715 that was not properly addressed by IDFG and the majority of voting members of the Wolf Oversight Committee was included in subparagraph (4)(b) “Any plan so developed by the department and wolf oversight committee shall take into consideration the local economies, custom, culture, and private property rights” (emphasis added).

Letters from county officials ranging from the largest county (Owyhee) to the most heavily populated (Ada) were sent to Bangs objecting to the failure of FWS to address the impact of wolves on their respective counties. But Conley’s Sept. 27, 1994 letter provided unconditional support from the State of Idaho for the FWS 10J Plan’s failure to address local government concerns.

FWS did not respond to the October 17, 1994 letter from the four Wolf Oversight Committee members, which listed examples of FWS failure to address local concerns. With the exception of an amendment submitted by Boise County offering the same limited protection for domestic animals and pets as for livestock, the draft state wolf plan written by Rachael and submitted to the legislature was virtually a copy of the FWS plan.

During the Joint Legislative Resource Committee Hearings, the WOC members who refused to endorse the plan testified that it was basically an invitation to the feds to turn wolves loose in Idaho without adequate protection for game herds, livestock or private property rights.

Concerning Conley’s letter agreement, Groen’s Jan. 28th claim to the Commission, *“It was a letter that would keep our authority,”* ignored the reality that IDFG had no authority concerning wolves and everyone in the agency at that time, including Groen, knew it. In an Oct. 12, 1993 3-page letter to Ed Bangs, Conley wrote: *“However, for the Department to fully participate in wolf recovery and management, an existing Idaho statute will have to be amended or repealed by the Idaho Legislature.”*

Ever since IDFG co-sponsored the FWS Central Idaho Wolf Study by Montana biologists Kaminski and Hansen, dated 1984 but using some early 1985 figures, it was common knowledge that IDFG wanted wolves – and rural Idahoans and their elected officials did not. The public perception was that IDFG invited FWS to dump the wolves in Idaho believing the Legislature would then be forced to let IDFG manage them.

But that did not happen. The Legislature rejected the flawed 1994 draft state wolf plan and left the law prohibiting IDFG participation in wolf management unchanged for another seven years.

IDFG Grossly Exaggerated Ungulate Populations

Part of the Legislative anger at IDFG described by Commissioner Wheeler resulted from misinformation provided by IDFG Biologists Rachael and Jerome Hansen in regard to the impact bringing in wolves would have on Idaho big game, livestock and local economies. The

projected income from tourism generated by the existence of wolves was grossly exaggerated as were the claimed ungulate populations that would provide the prey base in the Primary Analysis Area to feed the wolves.

In both the 1993 Draft EIS and the 1994 Final EIS, the claimed *post-hunting season* population of ungulates in the 36 Big Game Management Units that comprise that **20,700** square mile PAA area were:

| | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Elk | 76,300 |
| Deer | 159,600 |
| Moose | 1,700 |
| Bighorn sheep | 1,800 |
| Mountain Goat | <u>2,000</u> |
| Total | 241,400 (11.7 per sq. mile) |

This reflected an *average* population of 11.7 ungulates in *every* square mile of that area, including human settlements, lakes and rivers, and mountain peaks. This was *after* the estimated annual death loss of 153,539 animals from all causes – including hunting.

The claimed post-hunting season deer population of 159,600 reflects an *average* of 7.7 deer per square mile in the entire 20,700 square miles. Yet IDFG records reveal that only the deer in six of the best deer Units were counted and, even after adding highly exaggerated “sightability” computer estimates to the actual counts, biologists still fell just short of counting even five deer per square mile in the best unit (see Unit 39 below):

IDFG Published Deer Counts for 36 Wolf Units

| Unit | Area (Sq. Miles) | 1992-93 | 1993-94 |
|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------|
| 21 | 477 | 1357 | 1017 |
| 30, 30A | 696 | 663 | 600* |
| 36B | 637 | 1809 | 1805 |
| 33 (+34, 35) | 1648 | 1033 | 480 |
| 39 | <u>2615</u> | <u>13008</u> | <u>3843**</u> |
| Totals | 6073 | 17870 | 7745 |
| Average deer per sq. mi. | | 2.9 | 1.3 |

* Estimate – not counted

** Actual count. A count was also made of 21 comparable subunits in Unit 39 but neither count is published now.

Ideally these deer and elk counts are conducted at the beginning of winter just after an extended snowstorm when the animals have been “brushed up” and are all out in the open feeding. The buck deer, and of course bull elk, have not yet shed their antlers and are easily identified as are the adult females and juveniles.

Counts Reveal Only One-Sixth of Deer Claimed

But even before the extreme 92-93 winter hit, the deer density in these “cherry-picked” Units averaged only *one-third* of the 7.7 deer per square mile claimed for all of the 36 Units. And one year later, after the most extreme winter in 40 years had taken its toll, the remaining deer density in those high-density Units averaged only *one-sixth* of the claimed 7.7 deer per square mile average!

If the average claimed deer density of 7.71 per square mile were true, the total deer counted in Units 33, 34 & 35 should have been 12,706 (1,648 Sq. miles X 7.71 deer = 12,706) yet IDFG Statistician Lou Nelson reported only 3,000 deer counted in the 1992-93 count. But under questioning from the Boise County Prosecutor and the three Commissioners, he admitted there were only 1,033 live deer counted under ideal count conditions – only eight percent of the average deer density claimed.

1994 Count in Payette River Deer Units Shows Less Than 4% of Claimed Average Deer Density

When only 480 live deer were counted early in 2004 (less than *four percent* of the average deer density claimed for the 20,700 square miles) our Committee was scheduled to testify before a joint hearing of the Resource Committees. Wolf Oversight Committee member Don Clower requested a meeting with us before the hearing and said nothing would be accomplished by “airing the Department’s dirty linen,” and promised IDFG would address our concerns.

He said the Wolf Oversight Committee knew the deer and elk populations in the Wolf EIS were highly exaggerated and expressed his opinion that there was nothing wrong with lying to accomplish a goal. His comment and a March 9, 1994 letter from WOC Co-Chair Jack Lavin to Ed Bangs stating “we would prefer wolf introduction with experimental status to no wolf introduction...” raised red flags concerning the agenda of at least some members of the Wolf Oversight Committee.

The hearing room was packed with angry citizens. Some of them, including State Senator Mary Lloyd, brought petitions with thousands of signatures demanding that Conley be fired for allowing more than half of the State’s mule deer and thousands of elk to starve.

Despite the largest *recorded* winterkill of deer and elk during the 1992-93 winter since records were first kept, IDFG and the F&G Commission extended several deer and elk hunting seasons in 1993 and added 2,150 bonus deer permits and 3,955 bonus elk permits (a 20% increase for both species)! But in spite of the extra hunting opportunity hunters killed 15,600 fewer deer and 5,800 fewer elk!

When angry hunters told the Commission about the shortage of elk, and especially deer, in December 1993 Commissioner Meiers responded “Instead of criticizing us for fewer deer you should be thanking us for giving you more opportunity to hunt them.” At that meeting former Director Joe Greenley said, “Lonn (State Big Game Manager Lonn Kuck), you’ve destroyed our deer – what are you going to do about it?”

F&G Denies Evidence of Abnormal Elk Losses

On November 29, 1993, Attorney Sam Routson and I met with Kuck in Boise F&G Headquarters to discuss the radical decline in deer and elk populations. Kuck admitted abnormal deer losses but claimed he had no evidence of abnormal elk losses.

I deposited 160 elk ivories on his desk and advised they were removed from 80 dead elk by one resident in the Garden Valley area and he admitted that was evidence. But then he indicated we were fighting a losing battle and predicted that public hunting as we had known it would be gone in another decade.

The claimed ungulate populations in the Wolf EIS were not based on counts, but solely on computer projections from models developed beginning back in 1985 when deer and elk herds were increasing rapidly. Early in 2004, Conley was forced to admit the 2003 mule deer decline in a House Resources Committee hearing, but claimed the deer would “bounce back in two years.”

That was 16 years ago yet mule deer populations have never recovered. *Actual* 2009 deer and elk harvests reported by hunters are the lowest in 27 years.

In the Wolf EIS, IDFG predicted that each wolf would kill 11.22 deer per year and only 5.28 elk per year. This represented 68% deer and only 32% elk for 15 total animals plus 10% excessive kill. Maintaining the highly inflated deer figures in the EIS was necessary in order to justify the projected minor impacts on elk harvests by hunters from either 100 or 150 wolves.

Of the elk units that were counted in 1994, most showed significant declines. Based on actual ungulates counted, the total of all ungulates comprised only one-sixth of the total claimed in the EIS.

When Steve Mealey was hired to replace Conley as Director he invited everyone – not just wolf advocates who had received favored treatment – to participate in decision making. Two months before he was fired in March 1999 by a 4-3 vote of the Commission, he facilitated a Predator Symposium in Boise with Dr. Charles Kay as part of the panel and Dr. Valerius Geist as the featured speaker.

Mealey had made considerable progress in restoring confidence in Fish and Game and his firing was soundly condemned by a majority of legislators. In the next session they passed Senate Bill 1490 creating the Office of Species Conservation (OSC) and giving it sole authority to negotiate with the federal government on endangered species and to set up a process for delisting upon recovery of the wolf.

Its purpose was also to receive citizen concerns and problems with endangered species issues and get a solution for those grievances. Senate Resource Committee Chairman Laird Noh, who also served on the WOC and supported the introduction of Canadian wolves, introduced Senate Bill 1491 to allow IDFG limited participation in discussions with other agencies about their plans but it was not even supported by members of his committee.

(NOTE: In my opinion the time has come for our state wildlife agency to stop trying to hide the truth about how we got where we are. Admit it – put it behind you – and get on with the business of restoring our billion dollar wildlife resource. Or is that wishful thinking? – ED)

Why Did F&G Support the 10J Rule and Then Refuse to Use It While Wolves Destroyed Game?

By George Dovel

In 1995 when I asked one of the Idaho Fish and Game Commissioners why he supported wolf introduction he denied it. But when I then asked him why he allowed the IDFG Position Statement supporting wolf introduction to be published unchallenged before the wolves were released in Idaho, he said, "We were going to get wolves anyway and the 10J Nonessential Experimental introduction gave us more freedom to manage wolves that would impact our big game herds."

The 10J Rule written in 1994 and in effect until amended slightly in 2003, provided that when a State or Tribe determined wolves were adversely impacting a game herd, all they had to do was ask the feds to capture and relocate those wolves. Yet neither Idaho nor Montana ever made such a request.

According to information published in the Federal Register by Ed Bangs in 2007 and 2008, Wyoming was the only one of the three states to make such a request. Bangs wrote: "The Service suggested that the State identify the sites in Wyoming where they would prefer the wolves to be moved, but no sites were ever identified and no wolves were ever moved."

Cow/Calf Permits Contributed to Lolo Elk Decline

Meanwhile as wolves began to invade areas with high elk densities such as Clearwater Region Units 10 and 12 (later called the Lolo Zone), calf survival began to decline. Instead of mitigating the losses by removing some of the lions and bears – and then requesting FWS to relocate some of the wolves if it was still indicated, the Region issued several thousand antlerless elk permits.

Unit 10 elk census counts 1989 – 2010

| Year | Mon | Total | Cows | Bulls | BAB | Calf | Spikes |
|------|-----|-----------------|------|-------|-----|------|--------|
| 1989 | Jan | 11507 | 7692 | 1516 | 912 | 2298 | 604 |
| 1992 | Jan | 7745 | 5688 | 752 | 363 | 1283 | 389 |
| 1994 | Jan | 9729 | 7486 | 1107 | 814 | 1070 | 293 |
| 1998 | Jan | 5079 | 4469 | 318 | 268 | 252 | 50 |
| 1999 | Jan | Age Comp Survey | | | | | |
| 2002 | Feb | Age Comp Survey | | | | | |
| 2003 | Feb | 2643 | 1832 | 419 | 344 | 371 | 75 |
| 2004 | Jan | Age Comp Survey | | | | | |
| 2005 | Feb | Age Comp Survey | | | | | |
| 2006 | Jan | 3452 | 2276 | 504 | 252 | 669 | 253 |
| 2010 | Feb | 1473 | 824 | 461 | 447 | 144 | 14 |

That, of course, only increased the calf decline which by 1998 in Unit 10 had dropped 89% in 10 years and had dropped 76% in four years (including the three years

since wolves were introduced. Part of that short-term calf decline must be attributed to the 48% decline in the number of adult female elk from 1994-1998.

Although not quite as dramatic initially, the elk decline in Unit 12 followed the same pattern of over-harvesting cows and calves – even after wolves were introduced – to make the bull-to-cow ratio look better:

Unit 12 elk census counts 1985 – 2010

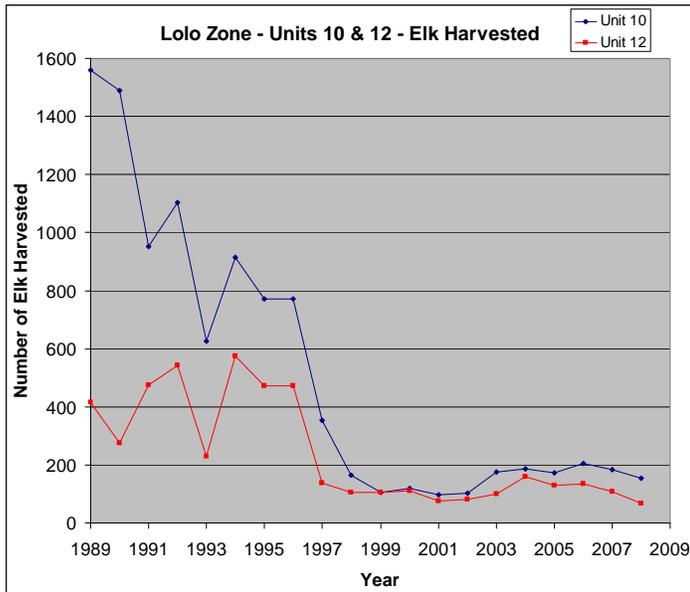
| Year | Mon | Total | Cows | Bulls | BAB | Calf | Spikes |
|------|-----|-----------------|------|-------|-----|------|--------|
| 1985 | Jan | 4767 | 2847 | 966 | 652 | 856 | 314 |
| 1986 | Jan | 4911 | 3059 | 1034 | 812 | 794 | 222 |
| 1987 | Jan | 4612 | 2905 | 703 | 463 | 907 | 239 |
| 1988 | Jan | 4547 | 2955 | 737 | 466 | 855 | 271 |
| 1989 | Jan | 3763 | 2421 | 749 | 472 | 592 | 277 |
| 1992 | Jan | 3452 | 2512 | 549 | 417 | 382 | 132 |
| 1994 | Jan | 3315 | 2412 | 446 | 301 | 325 | 145 |
| 1995 | Jan | 3832 | 2754 | 465 | 329 | 599 | 135 |
| 1997 | Feb | 2667 | 2060 | 425 | 327 | 181 | 98 |
| 1999 | Jan | Age Comp Survey | | | | | |
| 2002 | Feb | 2048 | 1281 | 422 | 253 | 343 | 169 |
| 2003 | Jan | Age Comp Survey | | | | | |
| 2004 | Jan | Age Comp Survey | | | | | |
| 2005 | Feb | Age Comp Survey | | | | | |
| 2006 | Jan | 1658 | 978 | 475 | 344 | 196 | 132 |
| 2010 | Feb | 705 | 534 | 133 | 124 | 38 | 9 |

In 1997 when Cal Groen became the new Regional Supervisor, the Clearwater Citizens Advisory Council (CCAC) expressed concern about extreme winter losses during the 1996-97 winter. It recommended eliminating antlerless elk permits and reducing the number of hunters in the Lolo Zone.

Instead, IDFG claimed the winter losses were normal and Groen increased the number of antlerless Lolo Zone elk permits from 1,900 to 1,950, and did nothing to decrease either the season lengths or the number of hunters. These and similar antlerless controlled hunt elk permits in other Clearwater units could not be justified biologically so all were listed as "Research Study" in the 1997 Big Game Regulations.

The new A-B Elk Tag system was adopted and in 1998 the CCAC demanded the F&G Commission cap the number of elk hunters in the Lolo Zone which is how that unwieldy system was designed to work. The Commission cut the number of "B" Tag hunters by two-thirds but Groen responded by giving an unlimited number of "A" Tag purchasers a 32-day either-sex archery elk season.

That season was set during the rut for the first time in decades and resulted in much higher hunter success than for the capped October rifle hunters with “B” Tags. To better understand the impact of Groen’s actions, the following chart portrays elk harvest data for Lolo Zone Units 10 and 12 from a spread sheet provided by IDFG’s Bruce Ackerman and Mike Elmer – but the 1995 harvest was actually **much** higher than they reported:



It actually totaled 1925 elk (nearly as high as the 1989 harvest of 1975 elk) and if the graph were corrected it would show a tremendous dive from '95 to '96 (one year before the bad winter). The classic predator pit that was forming even before the 1996-97 winter hit, plus Groen’s increasing rather than halting antlerless harvest in 1997 and still allowing archery antlerless harvest after that, drove the elk into a predator pit from which they could not recover.

Commission Enacts New Predator Control Policy

During the January 1999 Predator Symposium in Boise, attended by the F&G Commission, IDFG biologists and representatives of various interest groups, world-renowned wildlife authority Dr. Valerius Geist spent two hours patiently explaining why it is vital to control wolf populations to a strict minimum to keep them from destroying other wildlife populations.

In its August 1999 Commission meeting, after age-sex surveys revealed the number of elk calves per 100 cows in the Lolo Zone was less than 10, the Commission stopped listening to Groen’s claims that it was lack of habitat and unanimously passed the following resolution:

“That it be the policy of the IDFG to severely and demonstrably reduce the number of predators adversely affecting, or that may adversely affect, big game, upland game birds, fish and migratory waterfowl. And to that end, the Department will suggest an action plan that will accomplish this objective.”

Acting Director Mallet and Wildlife Bureau Chief Huffaker did their best to turn Commissioner Roy Moulton’s motion into another study but the Commission refused to accept more unsubstantiated claims that lack of forage was the problem. However calls went out to the Department’s predator preservationist allies and the next morning news headlines across the state described “The F&G Commission’s War on Predators.”

Although Groen took steps which increased the hunter harvest of bears and mountain lions resulting in more newborn elk calves and adult cows surviving, the increases were not enough to offset the added wolf predation. That was the extent of the “war on predators.”

Working behind the scenes without the constraints of law or ethics, the old guard of “wildlifery” that actually runs the agency destroyed Moulton’s ability to function as a Commissioner just as they had destroyed Steve Mealey’s ability to lead the agency a few months earlier. Commissioner Fred Wood quickly learned he had no support among the Commission for attempting to address the real problems with the declining Clearwater elk herd.

Twelve Years of Habitat Planning Result in No Change

Groen formed a Habitat Initiative with the FS and other agencies to allegedly address the changes in elk habitat and has spent the last 13 years blaming elk declines throughout the Clearwater Region on changes in forest canopy. In December 1998, hunters, loggers and other local area citizens formed the Clearwater Elk Recovery Team (CERT) which worked with state and federal agencies to implement changes in forest health practices.

By Dec. 2002, none of their suggestions had been adopted so they appealed to Sen, Crapo who expanded the participants to include outfitters, various environmental organizations and the Nez Perce Tribe. But in 2006 environmental members threatened to sue if either timber cutting or wolf control was implemented and the Feb. 2010 USFS joint meeting minutes agreed that not even one change had been adopted as a result of 12 years of citizen consensus and recommendations.

10J Rule Change Seen As Way To Save Declining Elk

When FWS rewrote the 10J Rule, published in the Jan. 6, 2005 Federal Register, it recognized that “wolf translocations would likely fail because no unoccupied suitable habitat remained in Idaho.” It simply required the States or Tribes with FWS approved wolf plans to make a determination that wolf predation was one of the primary causes of an unacceptable decline in a wild ungulate population or herd before they submitted a plan to kill most of the wolves for several years until the herds recovered.

Hunters and residents of more than two dozen deer and elk units that were being decimated by wolves saw this as the answer to their wolf problems, regardless of whether or not Idaho wolves were de-listed. FWS signed an agreement with MTFWP where that agency agreed to take

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F&G Refused Wolf Control – *cont. from Page 9*

over wolf management for the feds and on January 6, 2006, Idaho Gov. Kempthorne signed a similar Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Secretary of Interior agreeing to manage Idaho wolves for the feds.

10J Wolf Control Plan Sabotaged

One of Idaho's duties listed in the MOA was "Implement lethal control or translocation of wolves to reduce impacts on wild ungulates in accordance with the process outlined in the amended 10(j) rule." IDFG spent a year completing preparation (scoping, peer review, etc.) of the Clearwater 10J Wolf Control Plan and it was made public on Jan. 26, 2006 – but IDFG obviously had no intention of killing any wolves.

Instead of accurately and truthfully reporting that wolf predation was the primary cause of the decline in cow elk numbers from about 1998 to January of 2006, the proposal claimed forest maturation was the sole primary cause of the decline! Neither the authors nor their peer reviewers had evidence to support this false claim (e.g. excessive forage utilization, subnormal birth weights, subnormal weight gains in calves that survived, etc.) yet it was accepted as fact like any other lie that is repeated often enough.

The list of secondary causes included allowing hunters to kill cow elk in the mid 90s to allegedly increase calf elk survival, losses from the severe 1996-97 winter, calf predation by bears and adult predation by mountain lions and, finally, predation of cow elk by wolves. How could IDFG possibly claim wolves were killing too many cow elk when Groen continued to allow cows to be harvested by A-Tag archery hunters until he left in 2007?

IDFG Knowingly Sacrificed Elk and Deer Herds to Improve Its Chances for Managing Wolves Sooner

If you go back and look at the elk populations in both Unit 10 and Unit 12 during the counts in 2006, you will see there were still 3,254 cows, 865 calves, and 385 spike bulls – most of which would survive the remaining month of mild winter if IDFG began killing 43-50 wolves per year for five years then. But even if IDFG refused to change its undocumented claim that lack of habitat was the primary reason for poor elk survival, it could still have saved this and other elk herds by controlling wolves once the "primary" requirement was removed from the 10J.

That change was published in July of 2007 and the Final Rule, which allowed Idaho and Montana to remove all but 20 breeding pairs (200 wolves), became effective on Feb. 28, 2008. IDFG had plenty of time to either resubmit its original plan to kill ~50 wolves in the Lolo Zone – or have a new plan ready to kill more wolves in a larger area.

But instead of being concerned about the tens of millions of dollars in lost revenue to Idaho from hunters, and the millions more this fiasco was costing rural Idahoans, IDFG chose to listen to Defenders of Wildlife Northern Rockies representative Suzanne Stone. Late in

2007, Steve Nadeau finished a shocking new Wolf Management Plan vowing to manage for 5-7 times as many wolves as had been agreed upon!

When Idahoans soundly rejected his effort during a Dec. 2007 Commission meeting, IDFG spent the winter convincing urban media readers to support the plan. Yet with elk numbers nose-diving, no one said where the extra animals to feed the extra wolves would come from.

According to Deputy Attorneys General and other advisors to IDFG, this massive step backwards was supposed to stop the inevitable lawsuit by DOW and its accomplices to halt a proposed 2008 hunt – but of course it didn't work. They filed suit at the last minute and three months later the Judge canceled the 2008 wolf hunt on July 18th and returned the wolves to federal protection.

F&G Commission "Sort Of" Directs Use of 10J Tools –

That was a real slap in the face to the citizens who had been watching their game herds and livestock destroyed by wolves for more than a decade and the Idaho F&G Commissioners pretended they were going to do something about it. On Nov. 6, 2008, they passed several Wolf Management Directives for IDFG including: "4. *To develop and aggressively utilize all tools and methods available under the new 10(j) Rule to control wolves in critical areas that are impacting ungulates starting with the Lolo zone and progressing to other critical areas, in the event de-listing does not occur.*" (emphasis added).

Biologist George Pauley estimated there were 130 to 150 wolves in the Lolo Zone and helped prepare a plan to remove at least 105 wolves each year (about 80%), leaving 25 wolves. He and other biologists used their telemetry studies to prove that wolves continued to be the major cause of death among both cow elk and elk calves that survived to six months of age.

– But Then Fails to Use 10J, Except as a Threat to Get Wolves Delisted – Despite 40% Loss in Elk Harvest

Except for a brief six-day period when the Bush administration was leaving office, NRM wolves were not de-listed until six months after the Commission passed its Wolf Management Directives. Yet the annual expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars for radio-collaring and monitoring antlerless elk and deer was wasted money and effort as the Commission still failed to use the 10J Plan.

On May 6, 2009, two days after wolves were finally delisted, IDFG Biologist Pete Zager told a Western States and Provinces Deer and Elk Workshop in Spokane that the number of elk harvested annually by hunters in Idaho had been declining, from around 25,000 in the mid-1990s, when wolves were reintroduced to the Northern Rocky Mountains, to roughly 15,000 last year (2008). That represents a 40% decline from the average harvest and even more from the 1994 harvest of 28,000 just before the wolves were released into Idaho."

If the Commission's concern had been trying to maintain healthy wildlife populations as required by Idaho

Law, it would have told Wildlife Services to begin killing at least the proposed 105 wolves in the Clearwater Basin during the 2008-09 winter when the job was easily done using aircraft. This would also have prevented several times that many wolf pups from being conceived and born and would have prevented the near total destruction of the elk and deer in the Lolo and Selway Zones before the September 1, 2009 sport wolf hunting season even began.

But regardless of what IDFG may say now as more Idahoans are learning the extent of the extreme wolf damage to our deer and elk herds, Director Groen, Deputy Director Unsworth and virtually every other IDFG official have made it abundantly clear that their only goal concerning wolves has been to build a huntable population of wolves as a big game trophy species and ignore their impact on Idaho wildlife and rural Idaho citizens.

Printing Graphs Prompts Damage Control by Groen

When Mike Dubrasich provided graphs depicting the destruction of the largest elk herd in Idaho (see: westinstenv.org/wildpeop/2010/02/27/lolo-elk-decline/) on Feb. 27, 2010, they were quickly circulated around the U.S. Then in a damage control op-ed News Release on March 8, 2010, Director Groen wrote, "Idaho Fish and Game is committed to saving the Lolo herd and keeping Idaho's other elk herds healthy."

Then Groen described the so-called "aggressive steps" they took to prevent the elk from declining, but carefully omitted the fact that, as Clearwater Region Supervisor for nine years, he was responsible for that decline. When he took over in 1997, despite what he now describes as "the severe winter of 1996-97," the number of cows in the Lolo Zone still exceeded the 6,100 minimum goal by an estimated 1,000 or more (see '97 & '98 counts).

But, as previously stated, instead of compensating for the starvation loss of several thousand cows and calves in the higher elevations in the 1996-97 winter by eliminating antlerless hunts in 1997, Groen *increased* the Lolo Zone antlerless permits to 1,950! There is simply no rational excuse for that and what happened next.

Wolves Decimated Cow Elk in Lolo Zone

Although significant bear removal temporarily increased the *ratio* of surviving calves to cows, the number of cows counted in surveys that were five years apart had declined by nearly two-thirds! By 2002 and 2003 the total number of cows in Units 12 and 10 (the Lolo Zone) had declined from 1,000 more than the minimum goal of 6,100 to 3,000 less than that goal!

Five years of increasing predation by wolves on elk cows and older calves had systematically destroyed the herd's ability to recover from the 96-97 winter. The sharp decline in *total* calf recruitment was so obvious that even a biologist with no math skills could not have missed it – but in case they did – graphs illustrating the radical elk decline and harvest trend were printed in color in the 1998-2003 Elk Management Plan for the Lolo Zone.

Groen Has Led Refusal to Utilize 10J Rules

In January of 2006 Groen approved submitting the plan to FWS for removing 43-50 wolves per year for five years knowing it could not be approved because it emphasized wolf predation was *not a primary cause* of elk not meeting management goals. Early winter calf-to-cow ratios in the Lolo Zone were 27-to-100 due to extra bear kill by hunters, yet the total of female calves that survived until spring were only *one-third* of the number needed to replace the cow elk being killed each year by wolves!

Groen's refusal as Director to recommend Wildlife Services start killing at least the 105 wolves in the Clearwater in 2008-09, and again in 2009-10, guaranteed the Lolo Zone elk herd would be decimated. A long list of bona fide experts including Bergerud, Geist, Kay, Taylor and even Mech warned IDFG it would not be able to control wolves with sport hunting and trapping – yet Groen is still telling the public he will do the impossible.

At the beginning of the Commission review of public input discussed at length in the lead article in this issue, Groen admitted that the Forest Service gave him \$100,000 to live trap and collar wolves in the wilderness. Yet he admitted the expert wolf trappers could not even catch one wolf in the wilderness during the entire summer.

The fact that Mr. Dubrasich created and published only two graphs illustrating the near demise of the Lolo Zone elk herd was because that was the only one of the 29 elk zones he received the information on. And because those graphs were published and widely circulated, Groen responded with his claim that IDFG would save the Lolo elk and keep Idaho's other elk herds healthy.

But the Idaho elk harvest does not drop 40% by 2008 and even more in 2009 just because only one of 29 elk Zones is in trouble. Among those that are in serious trouble are 11 Units in the Selway, Sawtooth and Middle Fork Zones – with a dozen Units elsewhere not far behind.

The Demise of Idaho Public Lands Hunting for All

The actual number of wolves in Idaho right now, including several hundred new pups, is undoubtedly closer to 1,600 than to the 856 *minimum* estimate for Dec. 2009. But feeding even 1,000 wolves for one year will require 16,421 to 32,840 elk (White & Garrott WSC Vol 33 No 3). Either figure is more than hunters killed in 2008 or 2009.

The propaganda statements by Groen are in direct contrast to claims from his wolf expert/Game Manager Jon Rachael in the *Boise Weekly* the following day. Rachael stated that any eventual balance between big game and wolves is not likely to be acceptable to those who for the last 100 years have looked at deer and elk as a food source.

(In 16 years I have never seen any evidence that IDFG officials had any intention of using 10J to control wolves. The evidence remains clear it has been a colossal deception to hide the real agenda which will ultimately end or sharply curtail the heritage of public land natural resource uses we have enjoyed since statehood. – ED)

The Truth about What Lies Ahead for Hunters and Other Natural Resource Users

By George Dovel

On March 22, 2010, former Canadian wolf researcher Mark Hebblewhite told about 160 Montana elk hunters the “shocking” results of his 10-year studies of the impact of wolves on wild ungulates in the Banff, Canada, ecosystem. Thanks to Dr. Charles Kay, I had already read his 2007 report titled “Predator-Prey Management in the National Park Context: Lessons from a Transboundary Wolf, Elk, Moose and Caribou System” and recognized it as “Phase 4” (explained later).

Phase 1 – Downplaying the Number of Wolves and

Phase 2 – Suing to Dramatically Increase Wolves

In his August 1993 *Petersen's Hunting* article titled, “Wolves In The West – What the government does not want you to know about wolf recovery,” Dr. Kay explained what I call “Phase 1” in which the feds minimized the impact of 10 wolf packs in each of three recovery areas. FWS assured everyone that when at least 10 breeding pairs had been established for three years in each recovery area, wolves would be de-listed.

Dr. Kay also predicted what I call “Phase 2” – that wolf advocates would go to court and demand 1,500-2,000 wolves instead of the 300 that everyone had accepted. While that was being considered, FWS Wolf Leader Ed Bangs reportedly promised the three states that if they would agree to manage for 150 wolves – a 50% increase over the original FWS proposal – he would agree to ignore claims for more wolves and de-list them as soon as all three states had 10 breeding pairs for three years in a row.

Although he was several years late, Bangs kept his promise but the delisting was quickly overturned in court. An emerging problem was that some rural residents were noticing severe declines in elk and deer populations so in 2009 Big Game Manager Brad Compton told RMEF that, despite a problem in a couple of areas, elk had still increased by 5% in Idaho since RMEF was founded.

In the Same August 1993 Article Dr. Kay Also Forecast What I Call “Phase 3” – The Predator Pit

Compton's rosy 2009 elk hunting forecast was shot full of holes by IDFG elk/wolf researcher Pete Zager's announcement less than a month later that Idaho's annual elk harvests had declined by 40% since the 1990s. While predator preservationists are trying to convince their judge of the need for up to 5,000 wolves, some of the wolves we already have are running out of prey and killing each other.

The 1980s study, “Wolves of Central Idaho” by Kaminski and Hansen, found enough elk to support 219 wolves. Units 10 and 12 could support 45 of the wolves in 1985 when the elk population there was 20,115, the harvest was 1,430 and the elk were increasing by 805 per year.

But four years later in 1989, the Lolo elk harvest had increased to 1,975 and Lolo Zone elk numbers had dropped 4,845 in just four years! With no more emphasis on bear removal and a 1995 elk harvest of 1,925, increasing the number of cow hunting permits in 1996 and 1997 left big gaps in what was previously a healthy herd.

By 2002 (2003 in Unit 10), despite increases in bear and cougar harvests which increased newborn calf and cow survival, the Lolo Zone elk population had declined to 4,691, the hunter harvest was only 184, and the Lolo Zone could not support *any* of the 45 wolves. This proved that reducing bear, cougar and human take did not stop expanding wolves from destroying a declining elk herd.

F&G Ignores Warnings from Experts

Also in 2002, the most experienced researcher of the impact of wolves on wild ungulates in North America, Tom Bergerud, told the Idaho Fish and Game Commission wolves would cause a major decline in Idaho elk herds. He described watching herd after herd of caribou become extinct across Canada and said wolves will concentrate on one prey species until it is depressed, then move on to another that is available.

Bergerud insisted that wolves must be reduced over a wide area and for a long period of time, but Panhandle biologist Jim Hayden suggested this and other similar advice “must be taken with a grain of salt.” He provided the Commission with a computer model he designed alleging that it would not be necessary to manage wolves if bear, lion and human take is regulated.

He did this despite the fact that his computer solution was already proven a 100% failure in the adjacent Clearwater Region in the Lolo Zone. It is that attitude, ignoring 40 years of painstaking wolf research by legitimate scientists in Canada and Alaska, which characterizes those who are destroying our wildlife and our way of life.

Unable to defend or even debate their so-called “restoration of native ecosystems,” they protect large carnivores in a network of man-made wilderness areas connected by a system of man-made predator corridors. And our Western Governors not only endorse but are facilitating the projects while no one (except a few top wildlife scientists in North America) is willing to discuss what happens once the carnivores decimate their prey.

If Major Elk Units No Longer Have Enough Elk and Deer to Feed 219 Wolves, How Can They feed >518?

The biologists, Commissioners, Governor and DAGs who agreed to manage for 518 or more wolves in Idaho ignored the research by Kaminski et al which found

that, under ideal conditions existing in 1985, all of the elk units in the Central Idaho Ecosystem could only feed a *maximum* of 219 wolves without elk numbers declining. Managing for 100 wolves, or even for the 150 that was later agreed to, would have worked providing the number of elk in the high density elk units remained stable.

But if the number of wolves increased or the number of elk decreased, an immediate reduction in the number of wolves was necessary to prevent the elk population from declining from then on. Once the ratio of wolves to elk became too high, the elk were in a predator pit and their population would continue to decline.

Major Elk Declines in High Density Units Concealed

That is exactly what was happening in 2002, 2006 and in March 2008 when the Commission approved the absurd plan to manage for at least 518 wolves. But to hide this from the public and from several Commissioners who didn't have a clue what was happening, IDFG claimed there was only a problem in a couple of the 29 elk zones.

It did not explain that the units in only a handful of high density elk zones provided most of Idaho's elk – and the majority of Idaho's elk harvest. For example just before wolves were introduced, units in the Lolo, Middle Fork, Salmon, Sawtooth and Selway Zones all had several times as many elk per square mile as the majority of other units and this is where most of the wolves settled initially and multiplied.

Possibly because of the thousands of elk in most of these units, biologists paid little attention to significant declines they measured every four or five years until the wolves found their abundant food supply becoming scarce. Once they began killing each other or moved to other units like 10A and 11A, the attempt to control them after the fact with a sport hunting season was a waste of time.

Time for Phase 4 – Admitting the Truth

Recent admissions by YNP wolf biologists that declining wolves in Yellowstone are diseased and killing each other competing for limited prey, and elimination by MTFWP of the Gardiner late elk hunt after 35 years, are cited as reasons for admitting the truth about wolves and hunting. Canadian researcher Mark Hebblewhite, who spent 10 years studying the relationship of wolves and their ungulate prey in the Banff ecosystem, is doing just that.

Dr. Kay originally picked important conclusions from the above referenced 18-page Hebblewhite report and they are listed here for your convenience. I urge you to read them very carefully because they will alter your future and the future of your children and their children unless you demand an end to the farce of ecosystem management!

Those with internet access who wish to read the report can find an easy-to-read version by clicking on: <http://westinstenv.org/wibio/2010/03/08/lessons-from-a-transboundary-wolf-elk-moose-and-caribou-system/news> . You can also find more on Hebblewhite's background at: <http://rliv.com/wolf/Hebblewhite%20Dec.pdf> .

10-Year Study of Wolf-Ungulate Interaction at Banff

1. Wolves destroyed 90% of the elk population.
2. Elk slaughter by wolves increased in proportion to the severity of the winters.
3. 60% of the elk that were part-time residents stopped migrating to Banff after wolves arrived.
4. Wolves destroyed 56% of moose populations and nearly eliminated calf recruitment.
5. Wolves decimated woodland caribou, driving numerous herds to extinction.
6. Wolves stole 57% of prey kills by grizzlies.
7. Any attempt to manage ungulates anywhere near pre-wolf numbers is “a fantasy.”
8. Increasing quality habitat for elk in 77.22 square miles caused more – not fewer – elk to be killed by wolves.
9. To begin replenishing ungulate populations, wolf numbers need to be reduced every year by at least 70%. The reduction has to last until the ungulates recover and must reoccur if ungulates decline.
10. Sportsman wolf hunts utilized to control wolf populations are never effective. (emphasis added)

Hebblewhite, who is now an Assistant Professor at the University of Montana, explained that wolves had been exterminated from Southern Alberta in much the same fashion as they were from the lower 48 states. But they moved down from the North beginning in the 1980s – about 10-20 years ahead of wolves in the Northwest U.S.

He presented this material at the 72nd North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in March 2007 as a preview of what U.S. wildlife managers can expect as introduced wolves continue to populate the lower 48. Idaho biologists accepted his views and hired him to analyze fawn survival in 2008.

Hebblewhite Suggests Letting Predators Drive Prey Populations into Predator Pit Outside of Parks

Hebblewhite suggests that our failure to maintain elk in a predator pit (“low-density equilibrium”) outside of National Parks creates problems with park managers because more game will eventually exist outside of the park than in it because of wolves. That is exactly what is finally happening in Yellowstone – and what exists in Denali, Wood Buffalo, Banff and Jasper since National and Provincial Parks embraced “Ecosystem Management” (protecting wolves and not interfering with nature).

There is little doubt that Hebblewhite's analysis of what happens when we don't control wolves outside of National Parks is accurate. But when he addressed the 160 Montana hunters on March 16, 2010, he went to great lengths to explain that it cost \$2 million to kill 60-80% of wolves in a Yukon area for three years and told them wolf numbers had recovered two years after the control ended.

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What Lies Ahead for Hunters – cont. from Page 13

Unfortunately they weren't told the rest of the story. What was the value of the caribou that were saved from extinction and of the other ungulates that had five years to rebuild their numbers to healthy levels that could sustain reasonable predation?

If IDFG figures provided to Sen. Gary Schroeder more than a year ago are correct, Idaho lost between \$15 million and \$24 million just from elk hunters who refused to hunt elk in 2008 because of wolf predation. If the massive losses to livestock owners caused by wolves and the eventual cost of diseases spread by wolves are added to the equation, spending a few million dollars in 2008 to control wolves would have paid generous dividends.

Hebblewhite uses the worn out argument of all predator advocates that predator control is not a long term solution. There is no long term solution.

Conditions change and management must keep up with the changing conditions. That's why they call it wildlife "management."

Revisiting a Former Deer and Elk Paradise

In August of 2009 several of our sons and their families flew my wife and I into a remote airstrip in Unit 26 in the Frank Church Wilderness near where I lived for 18 years. My wife and I hiked and fished our way to the Taylor Ranch where we briefly visited with Jim Akenson who, along with his wife Holly, operates the ranch for the University of Idaho and studies wolves.

We saw almost no deer sign except for a few tracks on and near the ranch and Jim volunteered that wolves had virtually killed off the deer except for the handful that hung out at the ranch for protection. I used to live on that ranch and put up timothy hay during the summer and I never saw a mature buck there in the 90-degree heat of August.



Yet my son Joe and grandson Denver photographed this mule deer buck living on the Taylor Ranch in 90-degree heat to escape the wolves that were in the high country killing elk.

We had not yet discovered the Fish and Game cover-up of the massive infestation of hydatid disease eggs spread over the landscape and, since we saw no sign of wolf scat, we filled our canteens from a creek that runs above ground only a short distance. My sons and I had taken water from that creek many times, moving a short distance into the dense brush above the trail to avoid the horse slobbers.

My son Jim and his family filtered the water they drank but the rest of us thought nothing of filling our canteens with a water source I had used for 50 years. But that water source and the spring we used where we camped on the side of a mountain are two logical places *E. granulosus* eggs might survive in the hot weather, and we certainly would have boiled the water had we known.

The decision by Idaho officials to test biologists who have been handling wolves for antibodies but who knew about the disease and hid it from the public; yet ignore the mushroom and berry pickers, wolf hunters and other exposed private citizens who did not even know of its existence; typifies the attitude of many "public servants."

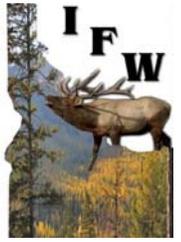
Another example of this occurred in the 2010 Legislature when Rep. Dick Harwood of St. Maries got the House Resources Committee to print HJR 43. It pointed out the drastic impact eight times as many wolves as originally agreed to are having on rural Idaho. If passed by both Houses, HJR 43 simply encouraged the Governor to declare a state of emergency and authorize and direct IDFG to use any legal means to reduce wolf numbers to those designated for recovery of the species.

Yet Committee Chairman Bert Stevenson refused to allow the resolution to be discussed in the Committee. When asked why by a citizen at the recent Commission meeting, he responded that the Attorney General's Office had told him it might affect the ongoing wolf lawsuit.

(NOTE: What manner of people are we electing who jump to obey the desires of misguided DAGs, biologists and radical groups that profit from litigation that is destroying our billion-dollar wildlife resource? The steps the F&G Commission just took to halt the elk decline in the Lolo and Selway Zones, and to a lesser degree in other backcountry zones, are the very same steps Commissioners demanded in 1999 – but didn't get.

But these steps now are too little too late and will not solve the problem unless wolves are removed from all of these areas until they recover. Continuing to allow antlerless harvest in most of the other depleted units, including Big Creek Unit 26, is proof of their intention to create additional permanent predator pits.

The time has come to hold everyone who is involved legally responsible for their part in the destruction of our natural resources, the spreading of disease over our countryside, and the added cost we have been forced to bear as a result of their switch from managing wildlife to pretending they are managing ecosystems.-(ED)



IDAHO FOR WILDLIFE

News Bulletin No. 4

MISSION STATEMENT

“To protect Idaho’s hunting and fishing heritage. To fight against all legal and legislative attempts by the animal rights and anti-gun organizations that are attempting to take away our rights and freedoms under the constitution of the United States of America. To hold all Federal and State Agencies who are stewards of our wildlife accountable and ensure that true science is used as the primary role for our wildlife management.”

Idaho for wildlife is very unique and different from most Wildlife groups. While most wildlife groups send most of the money earned to the state or corporate office, IFW Idaho chapters keep 80% of the money in their local chapter. This means when you become a member of IFW you will see the money hit the ground in your local area. This has been very evident in the Burley, Pocatello chapter where the surrogator program has really taken off.

The surrogator program has been a big hit with sportsmen, farmers and landowners. Some of our chapters have released thousands of birds and have encouraged youth participation. Many of us who were first introduced to hunting started with hunting birds. If we want to keep this hunting legacy going, we must mentor the youth. The surrogator program is a cost effective program, bringing landowners and sportsman together. Keep in mind this is only one example of the many things chapters are working on to improve hunting and fishing in their area.

The Idaho for Wildlife website, along with information from the Outdoorsman and the saveelk.com website, has been crucial in keeping sportsmen up to date with wolves and the disaster which has come from the reintroduction of these wolves. With the graphs provided from the Idaho for Wildlife website and information from its partners, sportsmen are asking why wasn't the 10j rule used, particularly in areas where we now see that we have lost 85% of our elk herds? There is no excuse for this and sportsmen need to be asking for some accountability. If we are going to save our big game herds sportsman from all over the country must be involved in the wolf fight.

We have established chapters in many areas. If you want to become involved in helping wildlife check our website to see if there is a chapter in your area. If we don't have one in your area, we would be more than happy to help you start one. Please get involved.

Kelton Larson, President
Idaho For Wildlife

Hydatid Disease in Idaho (from an Expert)

By Dr. Delane C. Kritsky

I worked (conducted research) for seven years on *E. multilocularis* in North Dakota during the 1970s and indeed it is a very dangerous parasite to human beings. However *E. granulosus* is much more dangerous because it is highly infective to man and also is a parasite of sheep which much more easily brings the parasite into homes in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming where human beings can be exposed.

Utah had a focus of *E. granulosus* during the 1970s and 1980s during which time people were dying or undergoing dangerous surgery for the parasite cyst. The Utah focus occurred primarily in rural areas where sheep were raised.

My friend and colleague, Dr. Ferron Anderson at BYU, was conducting research on *E. granulosus* in Utah and developed an educational program that primarily included the burying of sheep carcasses and de-worming of dogs, and which eventually eliminated the parasite in central Utah. The parasite in Idaho will not be dealt with as easily (and I doubt that it can ever be eliminated as long as wolves are present) because wolves and ungulates (deer and elk) will maintain a sylvatic (wild) cycle, which did not occur in Utah during the 1970s and 1980s.

Thus, elimination of the parasite from sheep and dogs will not be successful as it was in Utah because the wild cycle will continuously provide eggs of the parasite for infection of man and his domestic animals in the future. The only way that the parasite will be eliminated from our area is elimination of the wolf.

By the way you should also know that I have examined coyotes and foxes (which can carry both species of tapeworm) from southeastern Idaho since 1974 and have

never found either *E. multilocularis* or *granulosus*. Ferron Anderson never found the latter species in Idaho either when he examined canines in Idaho during the 70s and 80s (that is, *E. granulosus* was never [regenerating] in Idaho until introduction of the wolf).

Finally, I asked Fish and Wildlife during one of their public meetings concerning introduction of the wolf and was "brushed off" with their "promise" that the wolves introduced to Idaho would be "wormed" – which everyone, especially they, should have known that such actions are never 100% effective.

We should be asking who (the U.S. Government, the FWS, the wolf advocates) will be paying the health bills and funeral expenses for those who will ultimately become infected as a result of wolf introduction into Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.

(Delane C. Kritsky; Professor Emeritus, Idaho State University Associate Dean and Professor (35 years) within Department of Health and Nutrition. Extensively published in over 150 publications, Dr. Kritsky's primary expertise is in Parasitology with an impressive list of leadership credentials in that field.)

I received a critical letter from Idaho Senator Tim Corder because I didn't contact him prior to criticizing his comment, "The increase of the wolf population does not constitute a threat to human health or domestic livestock."

I have mailed a hard copy of each *Outdoorsman* to every elected state and federal legislator in Idaho for the past six years, and to several hundred officials in other states more recently. I have donated 15,000 hours of research to provide facts so they can make informed decisions. Donations support my printing and mailing costs of \$25 per year per person for one year. Thank you.

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