Stakeholder Activity

Stakeholder Group: Hunters

Photo credit: Wantulok

Photo credit: J. Varnardo

For the stakeholder meeting, your group will represent Hunters, primarily elk and deer hunters. Your job is to put yourself in the Hunter's hiking boots and think about how wolf conservation affects them. To help you get started, we've put together some materials about Hunters for you, which you will find in your Hunter Stakeholder Folder available for free download on the Bear Trust website (http://beartrust.org/gray-wolves-in-the-northern-rockies). To ensure you have a solid understanding of the Hunter perspective relative to wolf conservation, you may also need to do some additional research.

During the stakeholder meeting, there will be three goals:

1) **Understand the different perspectives of each stakeholder**
2) **Determine "common ground" among stakeholders**
3) **Work together to identify issues and possible solutions, and provide input on how we can collaboratively move forward to ensure all stakeholder perspectives/goals are considered in our wolf conservation efforts**

To help with Goal # 1, each of the 6 stakeholder groups will give a 3-5 minute presentation about its stakeholder group at the beginning of the stakeholder meeting. You can use powerpoint, prezi, or some other presentation format for your presentation. Feel free to use photos provided at the end of this document as part of your presentation.

For your 3-5 minute stakeholder group presentation, make sure to include AT LEAST the following:

A. Describe the Hunter perspective as it relates to wolf conservation. Make sure your class knows that there is a wide spectrum of perspectives when it comes to elk and deer hunters. At one end of the spectrum, many elk and deer hunters believe that wolves are making it difficult for them to hunt elk and deer. Some hunters believe that wolves have killed too many elk and deer. Some hunters believe that wolves have made elk and deer more wary, which makes it difficult for hunters to successfully hunt elk and deer. Some hunters believe that wolves have made elk and deer move onto lands that are harder to reach.

On the other end of the spectrum, some elk and deer hunters believe that wolves haven't really had much effect on elk and deer populations.

Here's a few papers and a video clip that will help you get started on understanding some of the perspectives that hunters hold. Read the following ARTICLES and watch the following VIDEO CLIP:

- ARTICLE: "Wolf Populations Continue to Hurt Prime Elk Country"
  What does this document say about wolves and elk in Idaho?

- ARTICLE: "Struggling Outfitters Say that Wolves are to Blame for Business Decline"
  In your presentation, include comments from Lee Hart, Dave Hettinger, and Rick Hafenfeld.

- ARTICLE: "Weighing In on Wolves"
  In your presentation, include the comment made by President of the Montana Outfitters and Guides Association.

- VIDEO CLIP: Go to the Idaho Public Television website and watch the video clip called "Effect of wolves on elk": http://idahoptv.org/outdoors/shows/wolvesinidaho/video.cfm

  According to this video, how have wolves had an effect on elk behavior? In your presentation, include information about the fact that many hunters rely on elk and deer meat to feed their families.

- Go online and learn about Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. What is their position statement on wolves? What does the Rocky

Mountain Elk Foundation do for conservation? (Hint: look here: http://www.rmef.org/Conservation/HowWeConserve.aspx).

In your presentation, include information about how Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation works for conservation and include their position statement on wolves.

- ARTICLE: "Finding a Way In"
  In your presentation, include information about how Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation worked with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and the Forest Service on this project.

B. In your presentation, show a picture of Figure 1 from your "Student Pages_QUESTIONS about Excel Data" and state whether most Hunters would like MORE wolves or FEWER wolves.

C. Read "True Identity of America's Conservationists" and include the following information in your presentation:

- According to this document, who are the primary funders of wildlife conservation in the United States?
- How does "conservation" differ from "preservation"?
- Are hunters conservationists or preservationists?
- Learn what the "user pays, public benefits" system means and describe it in your presentation.

D. Go to the US Fish and Wildlife Service website:
http://www.fws.gov/hunting/whatdo.html

In your presentation, report on how much money hunters contribute to wildlife conservation annually. How are these funds collected from hunters? For what programs is this money allocated and how does this help wildlife conservation?

E. Go online and learn about the Pittman-Robertson Act.
In your presentation, briefly describe this Act. How are hunters involved with this Act and how does funding from this Act affect wildlife conservation?

F. ARTICLE: "North American Wildlife Conservation Model"
Read this short article. In your presentation, briefly describe how hunters help wildlife conservation. Who does wildlife belong to? What is the basis for all wildlife management?

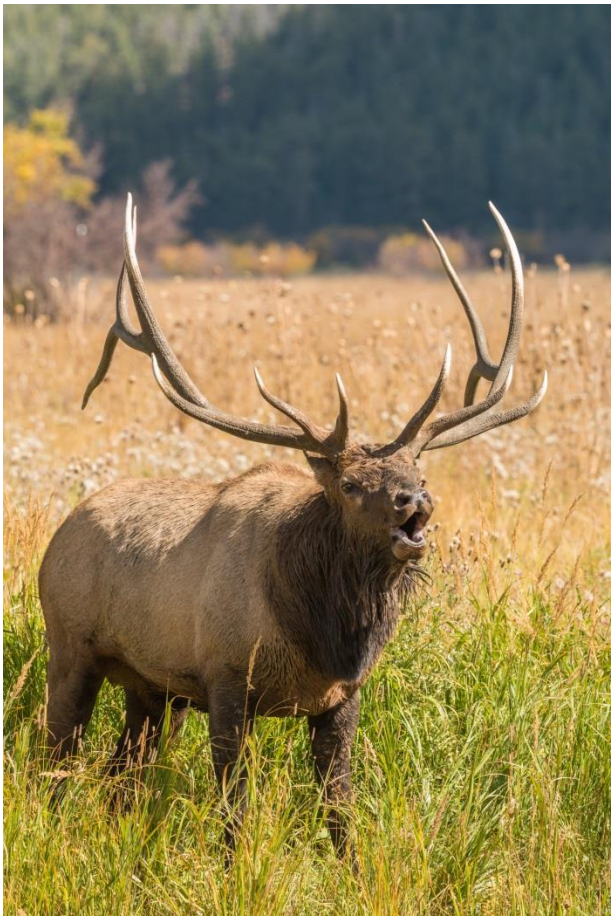
G. Hunters pump lots of money into local economies. Many local economies rely on hunter dollars to make a living: hotel owners, restaurants, supply stores, etc. Do a little research on this topic and report your findings in your presentation.

H. Why is hunting important to elk and deer hunters? There are many reasons hunters like to hunt, include at least 3 reasons in your presentation. You may need to do a little research to learn about this.

After you have put together your presentation, think about the issues that affect your stakeholder. After all groups have given their presentations, you will be working to identify common ground and then you will be discussing ISSUES. Be prepared to state one or more issues that affect your stakeholder during the Stakeholder Meeting.

Photo Section

Photos below provided courtesy of Shutterstock



The True Identity of America's Conservationists

At the beginning of the 20th century, Gifford Pinchot, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service and one of the fathers of the American conservation movement, developed the now widely accepted definition of conservation as the "wise use of the Earth and its resources for the lasting good of men." According to Pinchot, the purpose of conservation is to produce "the greatest good for the greatest number for the longest time," with sound science as the recognized tool to accomplish this objective.

Conservationists are people who support and/or engage in this approach to natural resource management. Hunters and anglers are among the first Americans to endorse the idea. Their legacy is now over 100 years old. Through their leadership, state agencies were established to manage our nation's fish and wildlife, and to adopt laws and create programs to conserve these public trust resources.

Arguably, the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs (WSFR), a key component of the American System of Conservation Funding, were the most important of these programs to be created. Through this unique "user-pays, public-benefits" system, sportsmen and women are the primary funders of wildlife conservation, providing upwards of 80% of the funding for state fish and wildlife agencies. They also financially support conservation through the purchase of hunting and fishing licenses and permits, Duck Stamps, firearms, ammunition and archery equipment, philanthropy, and the creation of organizations whose sole mission is the restoration and enhancement of species of wildlife.

Unfortunately, the tremendous contribution made by sportsmen and women toward the restoration and conservation of our wildlife resources remains largely unknown to the general public. This situation is exacerbated by the media's broad-based use of the term "conservationist." They are unable to distinguish between individuals and organizations that financially support wildlife conservation and those that don't. The latter include animal rights and anti-hunting organizations, those whose funding is spent primarily on litigating resource management decisions and those that promote a preservationist "don't touch" philosophy in wildlife management.

It is not by accident that these groups and through their interaction with the media seized upon the term "conservationist" in order to cloak their preservationist, anti-consumptive use philosophy. In the 1990's, labels such as "environmentalist," "protectionist," and "animal rightist," became undesirable labels. These groups began the calculated adoption of the term "conservationist" in an effort to reverse the political and societal credibility that they were beginning to lose.

It is critical that we educate the American public about the fact that hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and trapping are closely related to fish and wildlife conservation. In fact, it is almost universally impossible to speak of one without the other. The term "conservationist" must be rightfully applied.

Using phrases like "sportsmen and other conservationists," or "sportsmen-conservationists" when describing ourselves accurately characterizes the relationship between sportsmen and women and our

nation's natural resources. "Conservationist" is a title sportsmen and women helped create, work hard to maintain, and are proud to rightfully claim. They truly earned and deserve this distinctive designation.

The community of hunters and anglers must take every available opportunity to educate the American people and the media on what the term "conservationist" means, who the conservationists are, and what conservationists have achieved in making this country's wildlife resources the envy of the world.

Archery Trade Association
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Bear Trust International
Boone and Crockett Club
Catch-A-Dream Foundation
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports
Dallas Safari Club
Delta Waterfowl Foundation
Ducks Unlimited
Houston Safari Club
Masters of Foxhounds Association
Mule Deer Foundation
National Rifle Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Trappers Association
National Wild Turkey Federation
Orion – The Hunter's Institute
Pheasants Forever
Pope and Young Club
Professional Outfitters and Guides of America
Quail Forever
Quality Deer Management Association
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Ruffed Grouse Society
Sportsmen's Alliance
Texas Wildlife Association
Tread Lightly!
Whitetails Unlimited
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Management Institute
Wildlife Mississippi

Finding a Way In

Millions of acres of public hunting land in Montana appear inaccessible. How hunters and others are figuring out ways to get there. By Paul Queneau

Lewistown bowhunter Kevin Kepler is a map-reading whiz. Twenty-one years as a U.S. Army pilot will do that to a fellow. So it's perhaps not surprising that, of all the hunters looking for ways to access portions of the nearby Big Snowy Mountains isolated by surrounding private land, it was Kepler who figured out a way to open up 18,000 acres of prime elk country to himself.

And, eventually, to everyone else.

For years the retired military aviator had been eyeing a vast tract of national forest—prime elk, mule deer, and black bear habitat cloaked in pines, aspens, and mountain meadows—tucked back in the Lewis and Clark National Forest. But after scouting the area on foot, Kepler knew that a cliff-faced canyon created a nearly impenetrable barrier.

Then, a few years ago, he spotted on a land ownership map what appeared to be a "back door" into that all-but-inaccessible U.S. Forest Service land. An oddity in the township grid caused a tiny 40-acre private tract along Red Hill Road, south of Lewistown, to overlap, for a mere 10 yards at one misaligned corner, with the national forest beyond. Parcels that meet at an exact corner can't be legally crossed without permission from all adjoining landowners, so the overlap proved crucial. It meant that Kepler would need permission from just one.

He called the parcel's owners, Marshall and Leslie Long, Montana natives living out of state. He struck up a conversation and eventually popped the access question. "No problem," the Longs told Kepler. They didn't ask for a trespass fee, just an over-the-phone handshake. Kepler spent the next two seasons hunting above the Longs' property.

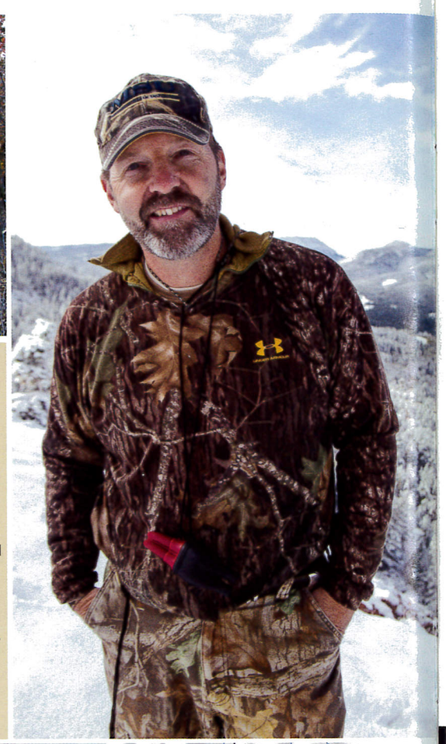
He pretty much had the entire 18,000-acre tract of national forest to himself and his family members.

Then he learned that the Longs had put the land up for sale. With the asking price well beyond his

UNOBTAINABLE NO MORE Thanks to a savvy hunter and a fast-acting elk conservation group, this 18,000-acre tract of the Big Snowy Mountains is now open to public access. Many other parcels across Montana, seemingly off-limits, may actually be accessible to hunters who possess new land ownership smartphone apps or the gumption to knock on a few doors.

PHOTO BY PAUL QUENEAU

budget, Kepler contacted the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF), of which he is a member. The Missoula-based organization, which has secured public access to more than 700,000 acres of elk country across the United States over the past 30 years, jumped at the opportunity, partnering with Fish, Wildlife & Parks and the Forest Service on the project. RMEF paid the $190,000 asking price, then sold the land to FWP for $50,000. Acquisition by the department ensured that the 40 acres, now called the Red Hill Wildlife Management Area, is open to hunting and year-round recreation access. Even more important, it provides a gateway to the national forest lands. "This gives the public access to some of the most incredible country in central Montana," says David Allen, RMEF president and CEO. For their part, the Longs say they were pleased to know their land would be protected and, along with the adjacent national forest block, open to all.

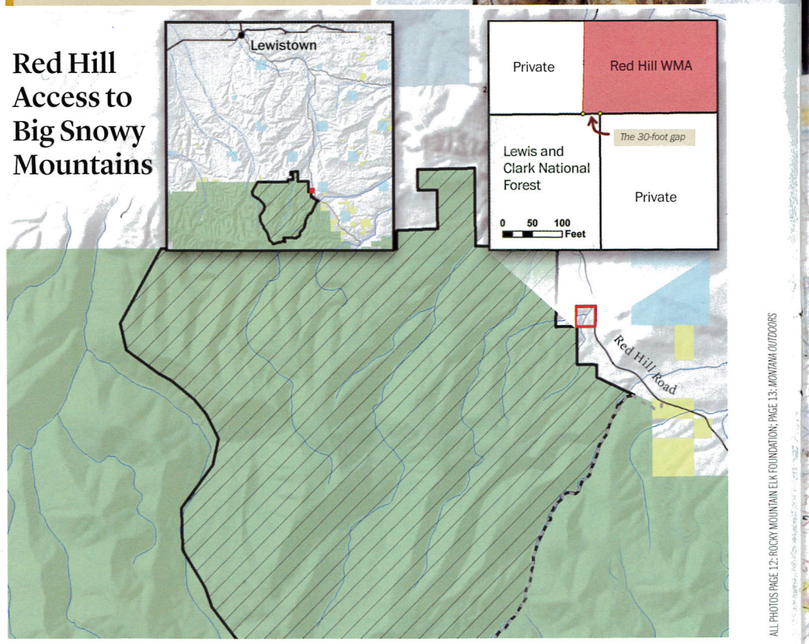


30 FEET TO PARADISE Right and below: Lewistown bowhunter Kevin Kepler was the first to figure out that a 30-foot gap between misaligned corners of a 40-acre tract of private land could, with permission to cross the property, allow him to reach 18,000 acres of Lewis and Clark National Forest. He later instigated a lengthy acquisition process by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and then FWP that resulted in the tract becoming the Red Hill Wildlife Management Area south of Lewistown (above) and opening up thousands of acres of public national forest land. "As sportsmen, we must make sure we have a voice," says Kepler. "We have the ability to make a positive impact on access. All we have to do is look around and have the situational awareness to see these opportunities."

FINDING THE STRANDED LANDS

The Red Hill project represents just one way that hunters, conservation groups, and public agencies help people reach seemingly inaccessible public holdings. Though Montana contains more than 30 million acres of state and federal land, much of it sees little use by hunters. Some isolated or apparently inaccessible parcels are stranded by cliffs, rivers, or other natural barriers. Many are unmarked and unknown to most hunters. Others appear too small or out of the way to make hunting worth the effort. And a growing amount of public land, like much of the Snowy Mountains, is surrounded or otherwise blocked by private property and requires landowner permission for access.

Demand to reach isolated and oft-ignored public hunting land is growing. Reduced hunter access to private property has created a cascade effect, putting more pressure on public lands. That forces hunters to be more creative in finding overlooked parcels that might hold game. It has also spurred FWP and private groups to devise new ways for hunters to find their way onto the nearly 2 million acres of public lands surrounded by private holdings without guaranteed access (see sidebar, page 14).



ALL PHOTOS PAGE 12: ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION; PAGE 13: *MONTANA OUTDOORS*

Paul Queneau is conservation editor of Bugle, *the magazine of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. He lives in Missoula.*

Most of these isolated public parcels are state school trust lands, managed by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. In 1889, Congress granted to Montana more than 5 million acres of federal land comprising 1-square-mile sections for the state to lease for grazing, mining, and logging. The revenue Montana generates from leasing school trust lands, often identifiable as blue squares marked 16 and 36 on township grids, goes to college and K–12 education.

It's hard to hunt these and other public holdings if you don't know they're there. Fortunately, GPS devices and smartphone apps loaded with land ownership maps make locating public land and staying inside legal boundaries easy. At least two Montana companies sell electronic maps that display property boundaries, landowner names, game management and hunting units, as well as topography, roads, trails, waterways, and other geographic features. The digital maps work in PCs and Macs, many Garmin GPS handheld units, and Apple and Android phones and tablets using a designated app, which costs $30 to $100.

A less expensive option is to use the Montana State Library's Cadastral, an online land ownership map available at svc.mt.gov/msl/mtcadastral. Hunters can print the site's maps and use them with low-cost built-in GPS base maps or a smartphone app, such as the GPS Topo USA, to avoid inadvertently trespassing even in areas with no cell phone coverage.

Also helping hunters find public lands are people like Dwayne Andrews, a retired FWP employee in Miles City. For more than a decade, Andrews and several colleagues at state and federal land management agencies have installed thousands of small signs indicating legal entry and exit points to hundreds of thousands of acres of state and federal parcels across eastern and southern Montana. "It's all public land, but until we got those markers up most people didn't even know it was there," says Andrews.

Hunters can reach these and other public parcels via public roads, rights-of-way, access easements, streams and rivers, or adjacent

HUNT HERE Another way to open up public land is to identify it as such. Many state school trust and BLM tracts in eastern Montana lack boundary signs, which people like retired FWP employee Dwayne Andrews have been installing over the past decade.

public lands. Some have even resorted to hiring helicopter services to drop them into remote or isolated areas and pick them up later. Though legal and cheaper than some private-land trespass fees, renting a chopper is hardly feasible for most hunters. An easier way to reach many stranded lands is to obtain permission from an adjacent landowner.

That's an approach highly recommended by Alan Charles, FWP landowner/sportsman relations coordinator. As manager of Montana's Block Management Program, Charles has spent 18 years helping hunters gain and maintain access to public and private lands. As an avid big game and bird hunter himself, he is always on the lookout for unmarked or isolated public parcels. Charles says that every time he plans an outing, he searches for remote public lands surrounded by private property. When he spots an interesting one, he approaches the surrounding landowners with a smile and a handshake.

"Some of my best hunting experiences have been on places that glowed orange with 'No Trespassing' signs," Charles says. "We still have many landowners in Montana who appreciate that hunters need a place to go. Many may be traditional ranchers and farmers who know that not everyone is as blessed with land as they are. So even if they might not want you hunting on their own property, many will say, 'Sure, you can go up and access that public land—you bet.'"

HERE'S WHERE I AM New GPS and smartphone apps loaded with land ownership maps make it easy for hunters and others to know their exact location relative to private property. The apps display property boundaries, landowner names, hunting districts, Block Management Areas, and more. Right: Hunters are quickly figuring out how to access isolated public lands in Montana and reach deer and elk that previously had been considered beyond reach.

ALL PHOTOS: PAUL QUENEAU

THE STATE HELPS OUT

Recognizing that some people might need incentives to get to "You bet," the 2013 Montana Legislature created the Unlocking State Lands Program, which gives landowners an annual $500 tax credit for allowing public access to isolated state parcels. Qualifying large-acreage owners holding multiple state sections within their borders can write off as much as $2,000 in taxes per year.

Access through the new program is walk-in only but requires no reservations or special fees. It's also not limited to hunting, says Ken McDonald, head of the FWP Wildlife Division. State parcels made accessible may also hold fishing, bird watching, and other recreational opportunities. "One of the many things we like about the program is that it's paid for with state general fund dollars rather than hunting and fishing licenses revenue, typically the case with so much of public access, even when it benefits other recreational users," McDonald says.

Working with willing landowners, FWP has also acquired or is in the process of securing several right-of-way easements across parcels of private land to public holdings. "Some of these 'blockages' are only a quarter-mile to a half-mile wide," says McDonald. "We're working on one right now that will secure access to 40,000 acres of national forest." Funding the easements are license sales from the Come Home to Hunt Program, created by the 2009 Montana Legislature to give previous Montana residents now living out of state the opportunity to secure a deer or elk license.

> "Hunters may not realize that many parcels cut off by private property might be accessible to them right now."

Another route to public lands that should not be overlooked is through Montana's existing private-land access arrangements. Chinook rancher Richard Stuker allows access to isolated BLM parcels within land he has enrolled in FWP's Block Management Program. "I'm the second generation of my family to own this property," says Stuker, also a member of the Fish and Wildlife Commission. "My dad always allowed hunting and, as long as people obey the rules, I don't mind them out there."

Stuker says that whenever access involves private land, hunters need to employ their best etiquette in order to protect the privilege. As long as landowners feel respected, he says, hunters will be surprised at what gates open up, even—and perhaps especially—in situations like corner crossings.

THE CORNER CROSSING DEBATE

Corner crossings are a thorny issue, pitting the public's rights to access public land against landowners' rights over who sets foot on their property. The issue comes up where blocks of public land are intermixed, checkerboard fashion, with blocks of private land. The public parcels often touch each other at the corners, and hunters have long argued that, by literally jumping from one corner to another, they remain on public property and aren't trespassing on adjacent private holdings. The courts have yet to rule on the matter, but both FWP and the DNRC maintain that corner crossing constitutes trespassing.

A bill introduced in the 2013 legislative session would have made corner crossing legal, but it failed in committee. Stuker says such legislation may be unnecessary because many landowners are open to allowing corner crossings if asked. "If you can catch a landowner and say 'Hey, I know this is your property, do you mind if I cross?" it's really not a big issue if you cross right in the corner," he says.

John Gibson, president of the Public Land/Water Access Association (PL/WAA), is less convinced. He says his group regularly goes to court over access issues such as corner crossings, which often puts him at odds with some large landowners looking to restrict entry to public parcels abutting their property. The group is also fighting to maintain the legal status of hundreds of public roads in Montana that cross private land en route to key public ground. What exactly constitutes a public road can be a gray area in state law, says McDonald, adding that "FWP is working with legislators and the PL/WAA and other groups to keep public roads public to maintain public land access."

As for opening up more isolated tracts, FWP's Private Land/Public Wildlife Council—composed of legislators, sportsmen, and landowners—is currently working to enhance the Come Home to Hunt Program so it can fund additional access across private land. That won't completely solve the problem, says Charles, who acts as FWP's liaison with the council. But, like the Unlocking State Lands Program, it would provide additional financial incentives for landowners who allow hunters and others to cross their holdings. "It's a huge challenge trying to balance private property rights with the concept of public wildlife that belongs to everybody," Charles says. "But we've found that there are ways, like with Block Management and other FWP programs, to increase public access to wildlife."

In many cases, hunters already hold the keys to isolated public land in their hand. "They may not realize that many parcels cut off by private property might be accessible to them right now," Charles adds. "Pore over maps. Drive around and investigate. And then consider making that long walk up to the front porch and ringing the doorbell."

Montana the top western state in off-limits public land acreage

Recent analysis by the Colorado-based Center for Western Priorities shows that more than 4 million acres of public land in the West is inaccessible to the public. Topping the list is Montana, with nearly 1.96 million acres, followed by Wyoming (758,000 acres) and Colorado (541,000 acres).

In many areas, a quilt of public and private ownership results in state and federal tracts stranded within private holdings. In some cases, public roads that run through private land to public property are closed off, fenced, or illegally marked "Private."

Montana Senator Jon Tester is one of several members of Congress who have introduced bills, so far with no success, that would direct land managers to identify public property without public access and allocate funds to create permanent entry.

To read a copy of the report, "Landlocked: Measuring Public Land Access in the West," visit westernpriorities.org.

Public land in Montana inaccessible because the public can't cross corners	**724,000 acres**
Fully land-locked by private lands	**1,231,000 acres**
Total amount inaccessible and off-limits	**1,955,000 acres**

Mallards are one species of waterfowl protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The North American Wildlife Conservation Model

by James L. Cummins

PHOTO BY WILD EXPOSURES - MICHAEL KELLY

Are you a hunter or angler? Or do you prefer to simply observe wildlife in their natural environment? Whichever activity you prefer in terms of wildlife, you have hunters and anglers to thank.

The crusade to manage and conserve fish and wildlife began in the mid-1800s when hunters and anglers realized the need to set limits in order to protect disappearing species. This cause led to the one-of-a-kind, time-tested conservation program known as the North American Wildlife Conservation Model in which hunters and anglers were among the first to call for the conservation of fish and wildlife. Even today, hunters and anglers are some of the foremost leaders in conservation efforts.

Providing habitat for species such as elk and deer is one component of the public trust feature of the North American Wildlife Conservation Model.

PHOTO BY JAMES L. CUMMINS

There are two basic principles relative to this model: 1) that our fish and wildlife belong to all North American citizens, and 2) that these resources are to be managed so that populations will be sustained indefinitely. These principles are explained and expounded upon through a set of guidelines known as the "Seven Sisters for Conservation." These seven features are what gives this conservation program its distinction and are vital to conservation, so let's take a closer look at these precepts.

Sister #1: Public Trust.

This states that in North America, natural resources on public lands are managed by government agencies to ensure that we always have fish and wildlife as well as wild habitats and places to enjoy. Simply put, this means that individuals in the United States and Canada do not individually own fish and wildlife, but rather they entrust the responsibility of managing fish and wildlife, and their habitats, to their governments. This concept of public trust affords all citizens the opportunity to view, hunt and fish these natural resources.

Sister #2: Prohibition on Commerce of Dead Wildlife.

In the late 1800s, the selling of meat, hides, feathers and other parts of wild animals was a growing business. This led to excessive hunting which severely depleted some species and drove others to near extinction. Many of these threatened species rebounded and began to thrive again once stronger laws were written to restrict these practices. Therefore, the logic behind these laws stated that because we all share in ownership of the wildlife, it is illegal to sell the meat of any wild animal. However, the hides, antlers, teeth, fur and horns of some game animals may be sold.

Sister #3: The Democratic Rule of Law.

This means that you and every other citizen of the United States and Canada have the right to help create conservation and management laws. Managing government agencies provide citizens with opportunities to attend public forums to gather ideas about wildlife and their habitat. Citizens are also given the opportunity to vote on ballot measures that impact fish and wildlife. Although conservationists want to protect, restore and enhance wildlife, they also want to be able to enjoy fishing and hunting. This is where our laws come in to regulate these activities. Federal, state and provincial conservation officers and game wardens are responsible for checking hunting and fishing licenses and tags among other things to ensure that people are adhering to the laws and regulations that are in place.

Sister #4: Hunting and Fishing Opportunities for All.

This upholds that regardless of your race, creed, social status, religion or gender, you have the right to legally hunt and fish on most public lands in North America. As mentioned before, hunters and anglers led the crusade for wildlife conservation. Before Theodore Roosevelt became president, he helped found the Boone and Crockett Club as I covered in one of the features in the last edition of *Wildlife Mississippi*. The Club's Fair Chase Statement was the first document outlining a code of conduct as well as ethics for hunters and anglers. This statement became a cornerstone for our gaming laws and reinforces the idea that hunting should be open to anyone wishing to participate.

Sister #5: Non-Frivolous Use.

This simply means that there are laws in place that restrict us from casually killing fish and wildlife. In North America, we can legally kill certain wild animals for food and fur, self-defense and property protection, but we cannot kill solely for feathers, horns or antlers or even to use only a small portion of the meat. These laws ensure that we show respect for wildlife and their habitats.

Sister #6: Wildlife and Fish as International Resources.

This recognizes that fish and wildlife are allowed to migrate freely across boundaries between states, provinces and countries and that we are all responsible for their protection. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 is an example of this concept. This act demonstrates a cooperation between countries to protect wildlife making it illegal to capture or kill migratory birds, except as allowed by specific hunting regulations. Treaties now exist between the United States, Canada, Mexico and Russia to protect birds migrating between these countries.

Sister #7: Scientific Management.

This takes into account the supportive aspect of scientific management. This holds to the belief that applying scientific research is essential to managing and sustaining North American wildlife and habitats. For example, researchers have put radio collars on different species to learn more about their needs, habits and reactions to different components within their environments. This has been invaluable in making sure that our wildlife remains abundant.

So, you see, regardless of how you feel about hunting or fishing, it is the glue that holds together this unique, world-renowned North American Wildlife Conservation Model. And it is a large reason why we in North America have bountiful fish and wildlife resources that we and future generations can enjoy.

James L. Cummins is executive director of Wildlife Mississippi

Congressman Bennie Thompson enjoys most forms of hunting. He has been a leader in the U.S. House of Representatives to foster legislation for the conservation of fish, wildlife and forest resources.

PHOTO BY WILDLIFE MISSISSIPPI - JAMES L. CUMMINS

Missoulian article: http://missoulian.com/news/opinion/columnists/struggling-outfitters-say-wolves-to-blame-for-business-decline/article_60e117b8-eb97-11e1-bf0d-001a4bcf887a.html

Struggling outfitters say wolves to blame for business decline

Guest column by Denver Bryan

Aug 21, 2012

A recent op-ed piece by Montana writer Todd Wilkinson claimed that hunting outfitters were "fibbing" about the negative impact high wolf populations are having on their businesses.

Wilkinson's only support for his conclusion seemed to be the fact that he had no problem finding 50 outfitter websites in Montana, Wyoming and Idaho that advertise high elk hunting success rates.

In subsequent discussions with Wilkinson, I tried to explain that it's easy to find outfitters with websites who are still in business. However, it's not so easy to locate outfitters who have either gone out of business, are going out of business or who are having to change how their business operates.

Additionally, I asked him if he knew anyone hoping to stay in business who actually advertises that their business is doing poorly? Unfortunately, Wilkinson didn't seem to see the logic and went on to challenge me to find even five outfitters who have gone out of business.

After several weeks and hearing back from a few dozen outfitters, I found considerably more than five who are either out of business or struggling to stay in business.

Here are a few comments from the few dozen that I received from outfitters regarding how high wolf populations and greatly diminished elk herds in their regions have impacted their businesses.

• From Lee Hart of Broken Heart Outfitters of Gallatin Gateway: "We used to guide 50-80 elk hunters every year up in the Gallatin Canyon region with good success. However, last year we had one hunter and so far none are booked for 2012."

• From Dave Hettinger of Dillon: "I was an outfitter in Idaho for 19 years and ended up walking away from the business a few years ago (unable to sell it) due to the serious decline of the Lolo region elk herd."

• From guide Rick Hafenfeld (also a certified wildlife biologist) out of Big Timber: "In our hunting area, where we previously booked four to five trips with four to six hunters on each, we now only book two hunts with only two clients on one hunt and four on the other.

“This amounts to a reduction in our business from 20-30 hunters to six or a 60 to 80 percent decrease. Contrary to environmentalists’ predictions, I know of no outfitters who have received inquiries about leading wolf watching safaris.”

• From Michael Story: “I outfit in Paradise Valley west of Emigrant. Before wolf introduction there were 16 outfitters in this region and now there are just seven still hanging on.”

• From Joe Cantrell of St. Regis: “Because high wolf numbers have significantly depleted the elk herd in the West Bitterroot hunting district, all of my businesses (outfitting, restaurant, bar and lodging) are down. The damage from wolves has already been done and our elk herd is down 60 percent. I still take a few hunters out but the day is coming for many outfitters when we won’t have enough elk to sustain both wolves and hunting.”

• From Liz Jackson of Cooke City: “The greater Yellowstone elk herd has been drastically reduced due primarily to wolf predation. We have experienced a phenomenal change in our hunting business.

“We are permitted by the Gallatin National Forest to take 18 hunters each fall. We used to be ‘fully booked’ every season but have only guided five, two and four hunters respectively over the past three years, and only harvested one bull in that time. We see the time in the near future when we will no longer be offering elk hunts in this region.”

I could relay similar comments from many other outfitters on this topic but space limitations here won’t allow for such. Suffice it to say, with well over a thousand outfitters in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming, the livelihoods of many have been and are still being seriously impacted by high wolf populations.

Denver Bryan is a wildlife biologist by training and a wildlife photographer by profession. He lives in Bozeman and his work has appeared on the cover of more than 500 magazines, including National Wildlife, Field & Stream and Montana Outdoors to name a few.

WEIGHING IN ON WOLVES

Montana works to strike a fair and biologically sound balance between having enough of the large carnivores and having too many. BY TOM DICKSON

SAME ANIMAL, DIFFERENT LENSES Many hunters see the wolf as competition for elk and deer. Ranchers consider the large carnivore a threat to livestock. Yet others, like wolf watchers who crowd Yellowstone National Park in winter, when viewing conditions are best (right), consider the large carnivore a natural wonder to be cherished and protected.

LEFT: CINDY GOEDDEL; RIGHT: ROBERT J. WESELMANN

DRIVING THROUGH THE FROZEN landscape of Yellowstone National Park's (YNP) Lamar Valley one recent morning, wolf watching guide Nathan Varley slows down and points to several ravens about a mile off. "There it is," he says, pulling over to set up his spotting scope and train it on a recent elk kill, which a few minutes earlier a colleague had told him was in the vicinity. For an hour we watch two wolves feeding on the carcass, a large gray male known to local watchers as "Crooked Ear" and a smaller black female called "Spitfire." The naming fosters anthropomorphizing, admits Varley, but it helps with identification, as do numbers given to about 20 percent of the park's wolves that wear radio collars for research purposes. Several other wolf watchers gather along the road in the bitter cold to view the large carnivores, clearly visible through high-powered optics. Crowded tour buses and minivans operated by wildlife-viewing companies pass by every 15 minutes or so, returning to Gardiner from another elk kill farther up the valley.

Varley, who lives in Gardiner, studied the park's carnivores for several years while earning a doctorate in ecology. But his primary concern with wolves these days is economic, not academic. "Every park wolf that steps over the border into Montana and Wyoming and gets shot is money out of our pocket," says the wildlife guide, who is also vice president of a local group called Bear Creek Council that tries

to increase tolerance for wolves and bison leaving the park. Varley and his wife run Yellowstone Wolf Tracker wildlife tours, one of a dozen or so guiding operations sanctioned by park officials. These kinds of services are at the heart of a thriving wolf watching tourism that a University of Montana study found pumps millions of dollars into counties surrounding the park each year.

That economic argument is just one used by wolf advocates critical of growing hunter and trapper wolf harvests in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. Some are like Varley, who has no gripe with wolf hunting elsewhere but wants a kill-free buffer around Yellowstone. Others, often from outside the Rocky Mountain West, want to halt all lethal action on an animal that was classified as federally endangered just a few years ago.

On the flip side are those who demand that Montana kill more wolves, which they say harm ranchers' bottom line and deplete elk and deer herds. "We'd like the state to take much more aggressive measures in certain areas to bring these predator numbers down to a more tolerable ratio with prey populations," says Rob Arnaud, president of the Montana Outfitters and Guides Association. "We've got hunting outfitters around Yellowstone going out of business because of wolves."

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is listening to all sides. The department's job is to ensure there are enough wolves to maintain a healthy population in Montana, as mandated by its mission and federal law. At the same time, it works to limit livestock depredation, maintain abundant deer and elk, and foster public tolerance for wolves.

"Every park wolf that steps over the border into Montana and Wyoming and gets shot is money out of our pocket."

"We've got hunting outfitters around Yellowstone going out of business because of wolves."

It's a balancing act, and, with impassioned interests tugging every which way, not an easy one.

Tom Dickson is editor of Montana Outdoors.

Frustration fuels anger

The wolf has long represented conflicting views of untamed nature. Roman, Norse, and Celtic mythology celebrated wolves, yet the carnivores were feared and persecuted throughout Europe for centuries. Native American tribes revered wolves as guides to the spirit world. The United States nearly eradicated the carnivore with bounties and, later, wide-scale federal government extermination. In Montana alone, "wolfers" killed 100,000 wolves between the 1860s and 1920s, primarily with poison.

Public attitudes toward wolves began to change in the 1970s as part of the growing environmental movement. *Canis lupus*, nearly extinct in the Lower 48, became a symbol of the nation's vanishing wildness. In 1995-96, 66 wolves were live-trapped in Canada and set free in Yellowstone National Park and the wilderness of central Idaho. The goal: Restore wolves to a region where they had almost been eliminated. Western states objected but took some comfort knowing that management authority, which includes regulated hunting and trapping, would revert back to them once the wolf population reached federal recovery goals.

In the first decade after the Yellowstone introduction, the highly prolific carnivores grew rapidly in number and range. By 2001 the regionwide population count surpassed the federal goal of 300 in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming combined (at least 100 in each of the three states). By 2007 it reached at least 1,500—five times the initial target. Yet as wolf advocates cheered the growth, stockgrowers were reporting more and more livestock losses. Hunters in some areas began seeing fewer deer and elk and attributed the disappearance to growing wolf numbers. With the large carnivores still under federal protection, wolf critics felt powerless to stem the rapid population growth. They grew increasingly vocal, holding rallies, proposing legislation to defy federal rule, and even threatening illegal actions. "Shoot, Shovel, and Shut Up," read one popular bumper sticker.

Anti-wolf furor lessened after 2011, when the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) removed ("delisted") the Northern Rockies population from the federally threatened and endangered species list. Wolves could now be hunted under carefully regulated conditions. Still, many wolf opponents complained that too many wolves remained in areas where hunters were unable to reduce numbers. Demands grew for the state to kill pups in dens or, as Alaska and Idaho do, employ aerial gunning from helicopters.

FED UP Frustrated that wolf numbers continued to grow far beyond initial federal recovery goals, anti-wolf protesters turned up the volume during the early 2000s. Wolves were finally delisted in 2011.

LEFT: MONTANA FWP; OPPOSITE PAGE: KELLY GORHAM

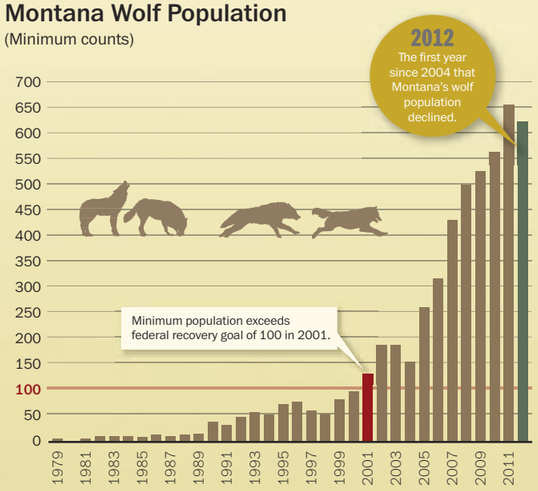
THE FACTS regarding concerns over Montana's wolf management

▶ PRO-WOLF BELIEF:

"Regulated hunting and trapping is decimating Montana's wolf population."

6X **FACT:** Montana's wolf population is still six times greater than the initial federal recovery goal of 100—a threshold reached in 2001.

Montana Wolf Population
(Minimum counts)

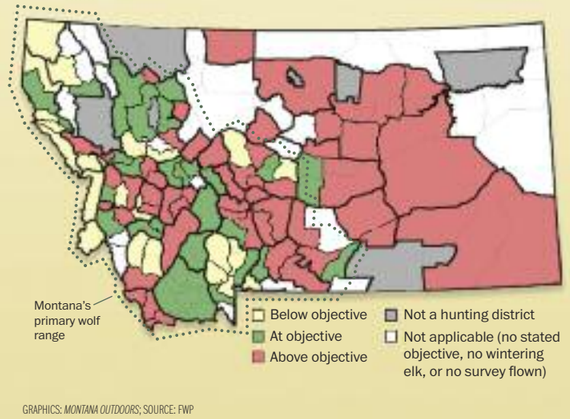


▶ ANTI-WOLF BELIEF:

"Wolves are decimating Montana's elk population."

81% **FACT:** Elk numbers are still at or over population objectives in 81% of hunting districts statewide. Numbers remain strong across most of the state's primary wolf range.

2013 Elk Population Objective Status by Hunting District



GRAPHICS: *MONTANA OUTDOORS*; SOURCE: FWP

Such radical proposals alarmed wolf advocates. With the species no longer under federal protection but instead subject to state control, they responded by ramping up their rhetoric and protests, just as wolf critics had a few years before. Public comments to FWP skyrocketed, from 500 on the first proposed wolf hunting season to more than 25,000 on the most recent. Most were coordinated e-mail "blasts" coming from outside Montana that denounced all wolf hunting.

▶ Outrage over killings

Much of the outcry from wolf advocates concerns the Yellowstone park wolves. Extensive coverage by the BBC, *National Geographic*, *The New York Times*, and other global media have detailed the carnivores' complex social interactions since reintroduction. Fans throughout the world track the Junction Butte, Blacktail, and other packs on blog posts and Facebook pages maintained by watchers who cruise the park's roads year round. Devotees can see where Tall Gray was spotted last week or learn how 686F is faring in Mollie's Pack, as though the wolves were characters in a reality TV show. Little wonder the Internet lit up this past August after a collared YNP wolf (820F) that had become habituated to humans was killed in Gardiner. "People become attached to these wolves that then leave the park and are shot. They get outraged," says Varley.

Yellowstone's wolf population has declined in recent years, not due to outside-the-park hunting, as some suggest, but mainly from a shrinking elk population. (All hunting is banned within the borders of national parks.) In the late 1980s and early '90s, the northern Yellowstone elk herd was one of the nation's largest. Reintroduced to this prey-rich environment, wolves grew from 41 in 1997 to a peak of 174 in 2003. As park biologists predicted, once elk numbers dropped (due to predation, weather, and

5% Today just over five percent of the 1,600 or more wolves in the Northern Rockies reside in Yellowstone.

6 Montana's wolf hunting season now lasts six months. Hunters and trappers may (though rarely do) take up to five wolves each.

liberal elk hunting seasons outside the park) so did the wolf population, which now numbers 86. Hunters have legally killed wolves that wander out of Yellowstone, but far more of the animals have died from wolf-on-wolf attacks, starvation, and disease. Mange alone has killed dozens.

Though the park's wolf decline understandably concerns watchers and guides, "the Yellowstone introduction was not designed to create wolf viewing opportunities or businesses," says Ken McDonald, head of the FWP Wildlife Division. "It was meant as the base for expansion far beyond the park's perimeter. Park visitors focus on individual animals, but here in Montana our responsibility is to manage wolves at a population level."

Wolf numbers in Montana and elsewhere in the Northern Rockies are robust, making the park's packs less significant to the regional population than their popularity would indicate, says McDonald. Today just over 5 percent of the 1,600-plus wolves in the Northern Rockies reside in Yellowstone. The species is thriving across the West and Midwest, despite recent claims by the Sierra Club that hunting "has driven the gray wolf nearly to extinction." According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Lower 48's wolf population has grown by 50 percent over the past decade to 5,360.

Outlandish claims show up on both sides of the issue. Some wolf critics still insist the carnivores are "wiping out" most of western Montana's elk populations. True, numbers are considerably down in some areas that have especially high wolf densities, notably the upper Gallatin, Blackfoot Valley, and Gardiner areas. But elk numbers remain at or above "population objectives" (what the habitat base and landowners will tolerate) in 81 percent of the state's hunting districts.

▶ Addressing reasonable concerns

Exaggerations aside, most apprehension over wolves is well within reason: A Dillon rancher needs to protect his sheep; a Missoula hunter wants to see elk next November; a Bozeman naturalist desires to live in a state with a healthy wolf population; a Florida tourist hopes her favorite Yellowstone wolf stays free from harm. "We take all reasonable concerns about wolves seriously," says Jeff Hagener, FWP director.

The department notes that livestock losses declined last year thanks to higher hunting and trapping harvest. Also credited are ranchers working with the department's six wolf specialists to protect sheep and cattle using fence flagging (fladry), carcass removal, and other measures.

Following reports of wolf predation on the southern Bitterroot Valley's elk herd, the department launched a large-scale investigation in 2011. Researchers recently found that mountain lions are more responsible for elk population declines there than wolves are. What's more, the southern Bitterroot elk herd is rebounding, likely thanks to favorable weather and habitat conditions.

As for criticism that Montana hasn't done enough to control wolf numbers, "FWP fought for years to restore state management authority that includes public hunting and trapping," says Hagener. Because wolves are wary and difficult to hunt or trap, FWP has supported liberalized regulations that now include a six-month season, electronic calls, and a wolf limit of five (a number that very few hunters or trappers actually take).

Montana is working to pare down the population of 600-plus wolves living here. But the state will not drive numbers low enough to trigger federal re-listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). "We can keep the ESA at bay only if we continue to show we have adequate regulatory mechanisms in place and are not advocating wholesale wolf slaughter," says McDonald.

In support of wolves, Montana's wolf conservation plan—the document that guides its wolf management—recognizes that many people value wolves, the large carnivores play an important ecological role, and the population must remain genetically connected to those in other states and Canada if it is to survive over time. FWP opposes poison, aerial gunning, and proposed legislation classifying wolves as predators that can be shot on sight. The department has created special hunting zones around YNP and Glacier National Park that reduce the chances that a park research wolf will be killed, and it urges hunters not to shoot radio-collared wolves.

> "As hard as it might be for some people to believe, allowing Montanans to hunt wolves actually builds tolerance for wolves"

FWP has also committed to keeping the population well above what the USFWS originally deemed sufficient for recovery.

Despite protests from wolf advocates, Montana will continue to allow hunters and trappers to kill wolves. That was part of the recovery agreement. Paradoxically, it's also in the wolf's best long-term interests.

"As hard as it might be for some people to believe, allowing Montanans to hunt wolves actually builds tolerance for wolves," says Hagener. He points out that overall anti-wolf anger in Montana, though still strong in some circles, has eased considerably since hunting and trapping seasons began in 2011. "As long as we can manage wolf numbers at what most Montanans consider an acceptable level, people here will accept having a certain amount of wolves on the landscape along with some loss of livestock and prey animals."

But without regulated harvest, Hagener says, "there'd be much more pressure to treat wolves like varmints that could be shot anytime, year round." Such relentless mortality would drive down Montana's overall wolf population. And it would prevent Yellowstone wolves from moving freely across the region to breed with counterparts in Idaho and northern Montana, threatening that population's genetic health and future survival.

Most people, including Montanans, want wolves to exist in the Northern Rockies. But how many, and where? It should come as no surprise that what is considered "enough" differs widely between those trying to live their lives on a landscape where wolves live, too, and those watching the drama play out from hundreds of miles away.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JAMIE & LISA JOHNSON; JAMIE & LISA JOHNSON; BLUEDOLPHIN.COM; WIKIPEDIA; ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY; PUBLIC DOMAIN; PUBLIC DOMAIN

EATING OR STEALING? There's no argument that wolves kill prey animals and livestock to survive. Where tempers flare is over how much, if any, of that predation is reasonable.

HISTORICAL PERCEPTIONS OF WOLVES

In Roman mythology, the twins Romulus and Remus, raised by a she-wolf, found the city of Rome.

For centuries Europeans feared wolves. "Wolves Chasing Sleigh" was a popular subject for painters.

President T.R. Roosevelt declared the wolf a "beast of waste and destruction" as the U.S. embarked on systematic eradication.

In fables and cartoons, the Big, Bad Wolf uses cunning and deceit to trick Little Red Riding Hood, the Three Little Pigs, and other innocents.

Modern fans embrace the wolf as intelligent, sensitive beings restored to their rightful place.

The Missoulian, Oct 2, 2014 (http://missoulian.com/lifestyles/recreation/regional/wolf-populations-continue-to-hurt-prime-elk-country-in-idaho/article_02978f04-4a52-11e4-bfed-abb8e98d1f59.html: accessed 12/1/2015)

Wolf populations continue to hurt prime elk country in Idaho

By ROGER PHILLIPS, Idaho Statesman and RICH LANDERS, Spokesman-Review

Oct 2, 2014

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SPOKANE – Idaho's traditional elk-hunting breadbasket – those mountainous, backcountry units stretching from the Selway country down through the Salmon River country – continues to falter at producing elk.

Wolves are part of the problem.

Idaho Fish and Game officials say they are trying to help those herds in various ways, including sending a professional hunter into the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness last winter to kill wolves to improve survival of elk in one of the state's worst-hit herds.

It was controversial, but "we're not giving up on the backcountry," said Jon Rachael, state wildlife manager.

Elk hunters have been among the wolves' most vocal critics, and if there's a grudge match, hunters are gaining ground.

Idaho's generous hunting and trapping seasons have helped significantly reduce wolf populations in some elk zones.

Hunters killed 198 wolves in the 2013-14 season and trappers took another 104.

"We've been reducing the wolf population annually since our first wolf hunting season in 2009," Rachael said.

Fewer wolves has meant more elk in some cases.

"There are areas we would be very comfortable saying that," he said.

Though that may be good news for elk hunters, there are still hurdles facing elk.

Elk habitat has declined dramatically in some zones because of fires, noxious weeds and other factors, including those backcountry units once famed for their elk herds.

Killing all wolves probably wouldn't bring Idaho's elk herds back to the level they were in the mid-1990s.

But killing some of the wolves each year could bring a balance.

In their most recent required annual report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho wildlife officials estimated the state held a minimum of 659 wolves at the end of 2013. That's the bottom line after the population grew during the year from pup production and then decreased by natural and human-caused mortality.

At least 473 wolf mortalities were documented in Idaho last year, with 466 caused by humans.

Hunters and trappers killed a total of 356 wolves in 2013, with 97 of them taken in the Idaho Panhandle. Official wolf control and livestock protection kills totaled 94. Other human causes such as vehicle collisions added up to 16 while causes of seven wolf deaths are unknown.

The Panhandle Region leads the state in wolf harvest by hunters and trappers.

Panhandle licensed hunters killed 44 wolves last season and licensed trappers killed 53 for a total of 97. The Dworshak-Elk City Zone was the next closest of the 13 state wolf zones with a total of 48 wolves killed.

Wayne Wakkinen, Idaho Fish and Game regional wildlife manager, estimated the current wolf population in the Panhandle at 125-150.

"But that's only an estimate," he said. "We can use all the help we can get. Trail cam photos and other reports from the public are a good starting point for us to focus our monitoring efforts."

Other sources of wolf census data come from den site monitoring, GPS collars, trail cameras at rendezvous sites, DNA collected from scats, sightings during winter aerial big-game surveys and harvest reports from hunters and trappers.

Only about a third of the 125 or so packs in Idaho include a wolf wearing a radio collar to help with monitoring, he said.

Pups have a high natural mortality – half of them can die without any contact with humans – and adult wolves normally live only 7-8 years.

"Being a wild wolf is a tough life," Wakkinen said. "A broken jaw or other injury while taking down an elk can lead to death."

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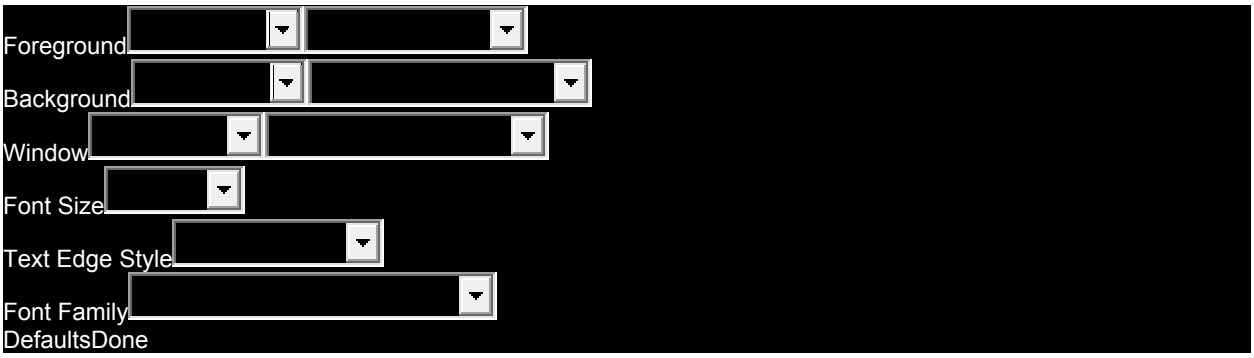

And wolves commonly kill other wolves when packs compete for territory.

Panhandle wolf hunting season is Aug. 30-March 31 on public lands and year-round on private lands. Wolf trapping seasons in the Panhandle run Oct. 10-Nov. 14 or Nov. 15-March 31, depending on the unit.

Idaho wildlife managers are seeking to decrease the wolf population while leaving a margin above federal endangered species thresholds to avoid lawsuits from wolf advocates, Wakkinen said.

Research indicates that a statewide wolf population won't decline until human-caused mortality exceeds about 30 percent, he said.

Human-caused wolf kills have totaled 36 percent to 40 percent helping bring the overall wolf numbers down from the 846-wolf minimum population estimated in the state in 2008. Wolf numbers probably peaked around 1,000 after pups were born in 2009. The numbers have declined since Idaho opened wolf hunting seasons that year, but the state still has at least four or five times more than the 150-wolf minimum set in the federal wolf reintroduction agreements.

"The key is not to go below the required minimum 15 breeding pairs," Wakkinen said.

The average pack size has decreased from 8.1 to 5.4 wolves since wolves were reintroduced, but a pack may not meet the "breeding pair" criteria.

Idaho generally defines a breeding pair as two adults – a male and a female – and at least two surviving pups in December.

“Under the strictest criteria, we’ve been able to document about 25 breeding pairs at this time,” Wakkinen said.

The number of documented packs in Idaho increased from 1995 through 2012, but declined in 2013, when 128 Idaho wolf packs were documented at some point during the year. Nine new packs were documented and 21 packs were removed for depredation control.

Accurately counting the number of wolves isn’t as important as assessing their impacts, Wakkinen said. “If they’re not bothering anybody, there’s no problem,” he said.

But wolves do raise issues, especially with ranchers and hunters.

St. Joe River drainage elk offer a glimpse at the complexity in managing a mix of wildlife.

Wolves definitely have had an impact on that area, once a mecca for the region’s elk hunters. But how much?

The St. Joe had healthy elk ratios of up to 38 calves per 100 cows during winter survey flights as recently as 2008, Wakkinen said.

“In 2009, they dropped to 9 calves per 100 cows largely as a result of some tough winter conditions.

“In the past we saw a fairly rapid rebound within a couple of years. However, this time calf ratios remained low.

“In 2012 for Unit 7 they were still at 9 calves to 100 cows. In 2013, they increased to 12 per 100. Early in 2014, they were at 13 per 100.

“So we are a long way from where they were in the recent past, but we are slowly heading in the right direction.”

Biologists won’t know if this upswing is a trend or “just noise in the data” for another year or two, Wakkinen said.

“I’m very interested in what the 2015 flights will show, given the pressure on predators combined with the mild winter.

After federal oversight of wolf recovery ends in 2016, little will change in Idaho, he said.

“We’ll be monitoring wolves as a native big-game animal just as we manage mountain lions and black bears,” he said.

“We hope we can continue to count on the participation of hunters and trappers in harvesting wolves. One thing we don’t want is to give someone an avenue to petition wolves again for endangered species status.

“Wolves are on the landscape to stay,” he said.