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What They Didn't Tell You About Wolf Recovery

by George Dovel



One of four wolves shot by USDA Wildlife Services personnel north of Mountain Home, Idaho in September 2006 after the wolves continued to kill cattle on a rancher's private land in July and August. This wolf, the alpha male of the newly formed "Danskin Pack", was not weighed but its weight was estimated at 120-130 pounds.

During spring of 2006 an Idaho rancher reported wolf activity on private land several miles north of Mountain Home, Idaho. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) confirmed it was a new pack containing two adult wolves and three pups. During July and August

2006, USDA Wildlife Services (WS) examined four of the rancher's calves that were killed and confirmed that at least three and probably the fourth were killed by those wolves on the rancher's private land.

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In September 2006 the two adult wolves and two of the pups were killed by a Wildlife Services helicopter team and the other pup was not located again. Studies in 1985 and 2003 reported that only one in 6.7-9 wolf-killed calves are discovered in time for FWS to determine the cause of death and enable compensation to be paid.

How Many Wolves are Enough?

By 2006 many people in the West were aware that minimum estimated fall wolf numbers in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming already exceeded the criteria for delisting wolves by several hundred percent. But few seem aware that the FWS agenda to allow this to happen was exposed by wildlife ecologist Dr. Charles Kay way back in 1993 – before any Canadian wolves were transplanted into the three Northern Rocky Mountain states.

In an article entitled, “Wolves in the West – What the government does not want you to know about wolf recovery” in the August 1993 issue of *Petersen's Hunting*, Dr. Kay asked the question, “If wolves are brought back how many are enough?” He pointed out that the federal government's recovery plan announced that when 10 breeding pairs (approximately 100 wolves) existed in each of the three recovery areas for three consecutive years, wolves would be declared recovered and removed from the Endangered Species list.

Then Dr. Kay also pointed out that to prevent harmful inbreeding and protect against random environmental changes, most scientists believed that a minimum population of 1,500 wolves must be achieved. When he attempted to find out why such a low number was being sought for recovery FWS could not produce evidence of any scientific research to justify such a low recovery number.

Kay reasoned that when recovery goals of 100 wolves in each area were achieved, wolf activists could rightfully claim that the goals were inadequate and win lawsuits to keep them protected. He wrote, “Needless to say, 1,500 to 2,000 wolves will have a much greater impact on ungulate numbers, hunting opportunities and livestock operations than that projected in government reports.”

In “Wolves in the West,” Dr. Kay cited abundant scientific studies and facts to disprove the government's claim that expanded wolf numbers would have limited impact on big game populations and harvests. He argued that with 50,000 wolves already occupying North America, wolves were not a biologically endangered species and their listing served personal agendas that had nothing to do with conservation.

Scientific Game Management Threatened

He urged readers to provide their input to the Wolf Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) with copies to their Congressmen and Senators demanding the government stop spreading misinformation and tell the public the true impacts of wolf recovery. He added, “It is also time for

sportsmen, livestock operators, and other concerned citizens to form a coalition and launch a national educational campaign or scientific game management will be only a memory.”

FWS Attacks Dr. Kay

Six years after the 10 breeding pairs per area was established as the criterion for delisting, Wolf Project Leader Ed Bangs included Appendix 9 in the draft EIS stating that a questionnaire had been mailed to 43 wolf biologists in Nov.-Dec. 1992 asking whether they agreed with the minimum criteria of 10 pairs established in 1987. The names of the 25 biologists who reportedly responded and the specific answers they provided were not included.

Meanwhile Bangs initiated a letter-writing campaign to discredit Dr. Kay among his peers and elsewhere. Instead Kay's scientific associates defended him and rebuked Bangs for his attempt to destroy Dr. Kay's scientific reputation while also attempting to suppress legitimate scientific opinion.

10 Breeding Pairs - an Elaborate Deception

In 1996 Dr. Kay wrote “Wolf Recovery, Political Ecology, And Endangered Species” in which he described a scenario where both environmentalists and FWS knew that people would refuse to accept 1500-2000 wolves yet also knew courts would insist on having that many or even more wolves to constitute a minimum viable population (MVP). Kay presented strong evidence, which has never been refuted, that the 10 breeding pairs per area or 300 wolves in the three states was simply an elaborate deception designed to establish core wolf breeding areas to populate the entire West with wolves.

Following the 2007 announcement by FWS of its intention to de-list the wolves in 2008, the agency issued a *minimum* estimated wolf population in the three states of ~1500. And on May 8, 2007, the nonprofit environmental law clinic, Earthjustice, sent FWS a documented 35-page objection to delisting wolves in the three states.

A major objection to de-listing was that wolves in all three states do not meet the MVP of **2,500-5000** that computer models indicate is necessary to insure survival of any species for the next 100 years. The Objection, filed on behalf of the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance and the Humane Society of the U.S., points out that the 1979 Minnesota population of 1,235 wolves in 138 packs did not qualify for delisting and asks how only 300 wolves in 30 packs in three states could possibly meet delisting criteria, which should be comparable to Minnesota.

The Prophet Was Ignored

In 1996 Dr. Kay cited the same example as well as a federal court ruling that approximately 4,500 spotted owls (2,180 breeding pairs) were needed to meet ESA requirements. Everything that he predicted has come to pass and the wildlife managers in at least two of the three states continue to promote higher wolf populations.

On January 14, 2008 Idaho F&G Director Cal Groen authored a News Release titled, "Wolves Are Here to Stay." He emphasized that wolves will be managed like deer and elk but with the following differences:

Allow Wilderness Packs to Increase

"The point of wolf management will be to stabilize numbers, not to cut wolves to an absolute minimum. In fact, the (wolf) plan recognizes wilderness area packs as 'core' populations and as 'source' areas for surrounding regions.

"One other thing we know: Our public surveys show that once wolf populations are delisted and managed, animosity toward wolves will substantially decline." Groen ended his press release with the comment, "the state of Idaho has promised the nation that wolves are here to stay and we will manage viable and healthy populations."

According to an *Idaho Statesman* article posted at 5:01 P.M. on January 15, retired IDFG Salmon Region Supervisor Gary Power, who is now F&G Commissioner from the Salmon Region, told Idaho House Resource Committee members that Idaho has more than 800 wolves in 72 documented packs and 41 breeding pairs. The *Statesman* quoted Power, "(The Governor) believes wolves are here to stay and our job is to balance between the main user groups*, and we intend to."

No F&G Plan to Reduce Wolf Population

The article continued, "Idaho's plan is to keep at least 15 breeding pairs, though there is no plan to actively try to reduce the population, currently at more than 40 (breeding) pairs, to that level. (emphasis added)

(* "the main user groups" are hunters who pay IDFG 33 million dollars annually to support game conservation and management, plus thousands of Idahoans who produce food, housing and other essentials from wise use of our natural resources, and environmental extremists who contribute little or nothing to wildlife conservation and management or to the rest of society but achieve their "user group" status with intimidation and threats).

By infiltrating every federal and state natural resource management agency and many universities during the past 35 years, these extremists have substituted their radical agenda for sound resource management. They have even hijacked the term "Conservation" – changing its meaning from "*the protection, planned management and wise use of natural resources*" (Gasaway et al.) to restoration of native plants and large meat-eating predators in a made-made wilderness that restricts human use.

Second only to Alaska in total wilderness acres, Idaho's wilderness areas provided a nucleus population of elk and deer 40 years ago when IDFG biologists had over-harvested elk everywhere else except in the Panhandle. Director Groen's announcement that surplus wilderness wolves will be used to populate surrounding regions reflects F&G's allegiance to the real FWS wolf recovery agenda.

The Real FWS Wolf Recovery Agenda

That agenda has been promoted in "Society for Conservation Biology" publications by federal biologists involved in wolf recovery since Canadian wolves were first transplanted. David Mech's "The Challenge and Opportunity of Recovering Wolf Populations" appeared in the 1995 Volume. 9(2) issue of "Conservation Biology."

In 2001, environmental groups, including The Nature Conservancy and the World Wildlife Fund, joined with the National Park Service in creating a more sophisticated magazine called "Conservation Magazine" designed to sell the wildlands/biodiversity agenda to academia. In 2004 FWS Wolf Team Leader Ed Bangs praised a BS thesis by a biology student concerning non-lethal wolf "control" (later published in *Conservation*) and announced he had hired her as a wolf "specialist".

Wildlife biologists in all three recovery states knew about the numbers deception but only Wyoming G&F, under pressure from its Governor, attempted to hold FWS to the original de-listing criteria. IDFG Director Groen's Jan. 14th News Release declared the Department's intention only to "stabilize" (halt the dramatic annual increase in) existing wolf populations in Idaho.

Because IDFG estimates Idaho had a *minimum* population of 732 wolves in the fall of 2007 that means F&G intended to maintain a minimum of at least **seven times** as many wolves in Idaho as we were told would exist after recovery. But pretending that the biologists' estimated *minimum fall* wolf population is near the actual wolf population is simply another deception misleading Idahoans and their elected officials as will be illustrated later in this article.

Public input on the Draft Wolf Plan was accepted by IDFG through December 31, 2007 and that input was scheduled to be provided to the Commission during its January 15-18, 2008 meeting. The Commission would then discuss and adopt a final wolf plan during a legally advertised meeting that was open to the public.

Wolf Plan Ignores Idaho Wildlife Policy

Instead, on January 14, 2008, without knowledge or approval of the full Commission in a public meeting, Director Groen issued the News Release advising how wolves will be managed and on the following day Commissioner Power told the House Resource Committee members how wolves will be managed. Although the full Commission did not adopt a wolf plan until March 6, 2008, F&G publicized its intent to maintain 500-700 wolves.

Meanwhile a closed-door Commission session was held in which the Commissioners were apparently informed of legal complications they might encounter if they managed wolves to benefit Idaho citizens. Whether or not that information is completely accurate, the Wolf Management Plan announced by Groen and Power clearly violates Idaho Wildlife Policy (I.C. Sec. 36-103).

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What They Didn't Tell You...*continued from page 3*

Not controlling wolves in Idaho wilderness just as they are not controlled in national parks will ultimately result in the same depletion of big game and other prey species and rapid turnover in wolf packs. It is important to remember that Idaho law requires F&G to manage wildlife to provide continued supplies for hunters, fishermen and trappers to pursue and harvest – but it is being ignored.

Pretending that limiting the number of hunters who can harvest wildlife is somehow providing continued supplies of wildlife for all hunters to harvest (sustained yields) is absurd. Limiting harvest opportunity for everyone is a last resort tool that must be used when all of the other wildlife management tools at the Commission's disposal have failed to halt population and harvest declines.

Conclusions From Denali Wolf Study

The ongoing study of wolves in Alaska's Denali National Park, initiated in 1986 by David Mech and Layne Adams, with Adams heading the study team since 1993, has revealed exactly what happens to wolves when their numbers are not controlled. Prior to 1980 Mount McKinley National Wildlife Refuge comprised about 2.2 million acres but in 1980 the name was changed to Denali National Park and the size was increased by 4 million acres.

Subsistence hunting and trapping by local area residents is still allowed in the newer 4 million acres, and the territories of several wolf packs in the original 2 million wilderness acres include land outside the Park where wolf hunting and trapping is also allowed. Yet despite the opportunity for humans to hunt and trap most of the wolves at some time during the year, only **3%** of annual wolf deaths are caused by humans.

Of the remaining wolves dying from so-called "natural" causes, **60%** are killed by wolves in other packs. The average pack lasts three years or less and wolf population declines ultimately follow prey declines.

The Denali Caribou herd, which numbered in the tens of thousands for many decades, declined to 10,000 by the 1960s and numbered only about 1,000 by the late 1970s. Studies from the late 1970's indicated that early calf survival was very poor even though adult cows were in good condition and had adequate food resources.

Predation on young calves was concluded to be the major factor in the population decline and, despite some gradual increases during a series of mild winters, the herd has remained well below 10% of its former long-term numbers and remains incapable of recovering from the predator pit without intensive wolf control.

Warnings from Experts to Congress

In the late 1980s 15 scientists were secretly selected to provide their expert input to Congress about Northern Rockies wolf recovery and several expressed serious concerns. Some group members were academic biologists with limited research experience but bona fide scientists included Dr. A.T. Bergerud whose published

research on the mortality impact of wolves on elk, moose, Dall sheep and caribou in northern British Columbia is supported by top Canadian wildlife scientists.

Dr. Bergerud reported that membership in the elite group was kept secret even from its members and they were not asked whether or not they supported wolf recovery. They were asked only to provide the impact of introducing wolves to maintain a population of approximately 10 breeding pairs in each of the three proposed recovery areas over a 10-20 year period.

Dr. Bergerud, Dr. Robert Taylor and others disagreed with reintroduction of any wolves unless wolf numbers were strictly managed from the beginning – including in Yellowstone National Park – to prevent severe declines in elk and moose populations. They also warned that 10 breeding pairs exceeded total wolf habitat in YNP and the surplus wolves would spill over into other areas, causing unacceptable increases in livestock predation.

In other words, regardless of how many wolves are considered necessary to maintain genetic diversity, there was not enough designated wilderness in the three recovery areas to support even the proposed 30 breeding pairs without excessively impacting existing prey species and ranchers' livestock. With Congress insisting that the impact of wolf reintroduction must be minimal, wolf biologists began providing false information regarding the number of prey animals the average wolf would kill each year and about how many prey animals actually existed.

Ignoring the studies indicating that wolves kill two to three times as many prey animals as they can consume, the wolf advocates promoted the lie that wolves kill only what they can eat. The Wolf EIS estimated the average wolf would kill only 12 big game animals per year in YNP* – including both elk and deer.

(* All subsequent studies in YNP found the elk kill per wolf per year has averaged between 18 and 36.)

Predicted Wolf Impact Based on False IDFG Data

IDFG biologists Kuck, Nelson, Rachael and Hanson provided the 1993 FWS Wolf EIS with highly inflated wild ungulate prey numbers for the 20,700 sq. mile Central Idaho Primary Analysis Area. The claimed average post-season elk and deer populations were **six times higher** than the numbers counted by helicopter and recorded by IDFG biologists in any unit in the PAA.

In a September 24, 1993 draft letter to Wolf Project Leader Ed Bangs, IDFG Director Jerry Conley admitted that IDFG personnel had provided the data and the analysis in the Wolf EIS concerning the impact of introducing 100 wolves into central Idaho. His letter claimed a recovering wolf population "will rarely cause unacceptable impacts" and stated, "We believe these analyses provide a realistic picture of the probable environmental consequences of a recovered wolf population (about 100 animals) in central Idaho based on the best available data." (emphasis added)

The fact that FWS allowed the state game agencies to provide unrealistic impacts based on inaccurate data does not excuse Bangs' failure to correct that misinformation once he knew it was false. On that same day, September 24, 1993, I provided Bangs with three pages of testimony, with exhibits documenting the gross exaggerations in the central Idaho ungulate prey base.

Because Idaho's Wolf Oversight Committee approved communications from Conley to Bangs, I urged them to correct the misinformation contained in the EIS and in Conley's draft letter. Instead they simply directed Conley to substitute the words "reasonable estimate" for "realistic picture" in the final version of his letter dated October 12, 1993 – thereby allowing F&G's false information and erroneous predictions to remain in the EIS.

“Nothing Wrong With Lying to the Public”

In a February 17 1994 meeting with Sandy Donley and me, Oversight Committee member Don Clower told us the Committee knew the prey population figures were highly inflated when they were given to FWS but said that was necessary to support the rapid build-up of wolves that would occur in the Nonessential Experimental recovery option. Then he said he saw nothing wrong with lying to the public to accomplish that goal.

In a March 9, 1994 letter to Bangs signed by its Co-Chairman Jack Lavin, the Idaho Wolf Oversight Committee formally supported the “Nonessential Experimental” recovery option over the “No Wolf Introduction” option. Although three of the seven voting Committee members, including Co-Chairman George Bennett, withdrew their support for that option in a letter to Bangs dated October 17, 1994, their letter was ignored.

The IDFG 1993 and, later, the 1994 big game census information I provided to Bangs indicated there were only about 40,000 total post-hunting-season ungulates in the central Idaho primary analysis area instead of the 241,400 claimed in the Wolf EIS. In a private conversation with me Bangs admitted that the claimed populations were “probably exaggerated” yet in the August 16, 1994 Federal Register he wrote, “Millions of acres of public lands contain hundreds of thousands of wild ungulates (Service 1994) and currently provide more than enough habitat to support a recovered wolf population in central Idaho.” (emphasis added).

Oversight Committee Bias

But even if FWS and IDFG were willing to lie about the declining prey base in central Idaho, the Wolf Oversight Committee was formed by the Legislature in 1993 to protect Idaho's interests in the formation of a wolf plan. Why did that Committee fail to do its job?

One answer is that four of the seven voting members on the Oversight Committee supported the FWS/IDFG plan to import Canadian wolves and protect and manage them as a new big game species. Jack Lavin and Don Clower were hand-picked by IDFG to support its

agenda and both Resource Committee chairmen had a history of supporting IDFG agendas that were unpopular with grassroots sportsmen and other natural resource users.

Senate Resources Committee Chairman. Laird Noh was also actively involved in The Nature Conservancy whose goal to restore wolves and grizzly bears in a network of core roadless areas was already being implemented. But regardless of its members' personal agendas, the Oversight Committee was required by law to develop a plan that included consideration of local economies, custom, culture and private property rights.

Instead it virtually copied the FWS Plan and several of its members publicly ridiculed county government efforts to include protection of domestic livestock and pets on private property. The October 17, 1994 letter signed by Bennett, Ted Hoffman, Stan Boyd and non-voting member Lois Van Hoover, listed multiple violations of the ESA in the proposed FWS Rule and declared those members' intent to recommend the Idaho Legislature refuse to approve the wolf plan approved by the Committee.

F&G Illegally Agreed To Canadian Transplants

I.C. Sec. 36-715(2) expressly prohibited IDFG from entering into any agreement with any entity of the U.S. Government concerning wolves unless expressly authorized by state statute but that law had already been brazenly violated by IDFG Director Jerry Conley. On September 27, 1994, without authorization from the Legislature or even the full Oversight Committee, Conley signed a letter to Bangs supporting the FWS Experimental Rule and agreeing to work with FWS to reintroduce wolves from British Columbia and Alberta into the Idaho experimental population area.

On that same day, Conley also delivered a Special Permit to Bangs in Boise, signed by IDFG Wildlife Bureau Chief Tom Reinecker, authorizing FWS to “release a maximum of 15 Canadian wolves in Central Idaho for up to five years or until 2 breeding pairs are each documented to produce 2 or more pups that survive until 31 December for two consecutive years.” The permit stated that the wolf releases would be conducted in accordance with the Idaho wolf management plan.

Idaho AG, Congress Ignore False EIS Info

Although the plan was soundly rejected by the Legislature, Bangs and FWS went ahead and conducted the wolf release – legally from their standpoint – with the signed agreement endorsing the Nonessential Experimental Option and Rules and the signed Wolf Release Permit both in their possession. On January 25, 1995, Idaho Attorney General Alan Lance was provided with documentation of the misinformation and Code violations but no action was taken against Conley or any of the Oversight Committee members who authorized illegal issuance of the agreements.

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What They Didn't Tell You...*continued from page 5*

Un-refuted evidence of IDFG and FWS providing the erroneous information to Congress to justify wolf reintroduction was included in the hearing record of a Congressional Investigative Committee. Also included was an Aug. 12, 1994 letter from Bangs to FWS's Charles Lobdell insisting that he de-emphasize the wolves that already existed in Idaho and thus show unanimous FWS support for reintroducing Canadian wolves.

Bangs Ignored ESA Subspecies Criteria

In that letter Bangs changed the definition of a confirmed wild wolf to be protected under the ESA to any animal that looks and acts like a wolf and has either survived in the wild or reproduced in the wild. He boldly asserted that neither domesticated wolves nor wolf-dog hybrids can survive in the wild and said any animal that has been observed to survive is "confirmed" as a wild wolf.

By providing that new definition, Bangs ignored 20 years of scientific deliberation during which the FWS Deputy Solicitor ultimately determined that only the distinct subspecies known to have inhabited an area could be reintroduced to satisfy ESA requirements. Bangs paved the way to protect and propagate assorted wolf-dog, wolf-coyote and wolf-wolf hybrids in the Western Great Lakes and Northern Rocky Mountains Wolf Recovery Areas.

Minnesota's wolf population has exceeded the 1,250-1,400 delisting goal since the late 1970s and the Michigan/Wisconsin delisting goal of 100 has been exceeded since the winter of 1993-94. Thirteen years later on January 29, 2007, with an estimated minimum population of 4,000 wolves in the three states, FWS finally delisted the Western Great Lakes DPS of Gray Wolves.

Another FWS Deception Exposed

But during a recently completed 2-year study, evolutionary biologists Leonard and Wayne genetically tested 68 of those wolves and found that **none** of them were the Eastern Timber Wolf (*Canis lupus lycaon*) that existed when they were listed as "threatened" in Minnesota. They found the wolves were crossbred with local coyotes (*Canis latrans*) and Eastern Canadian Wolves (*Canis lycaon*) or combinations from crossbred offspring.

Only 31% of the wolves tested had any Eastern Timber Wolf genes and none were purebred. Yet all of the genetic samples taken and preserved from Eastern Timber Wolves from the early 20th century tested purebred with no evidence of crossbreeding with coyotes or other wolves.

When confronted with this information by the news media in November 2007, FWS Eastern Gray Wolf Recovery Team Leader Rolph Peterson (Bangs' Great Lakes counterpart) admitted they had known all along that the wolves were crossbreeding with coyotes. When one of the evolutionary biologists suggested the wolves should be re-listed, FWS Wolf guru David Mech responded, "It is not clear what would be gained by keeping the Midwestern wolf population on the endangered species list."

"If It Looks and Acts Like A Wolf"

Mech continued, "Whatever their genetic identity, there are over 4,000 wolves in the population, they are increasing rapidly, and are legally protected by the states." From the statements by Bangs in Aug. 1994 and Peterson and Mech in Nov. 2007, the willingness of FWS wolf biologists to ignore the intent of the ESA and deceive Congress and the American public cannot be denied.

Residents of the three Great Lakes states are forced to protect thousands of "super coyote" hybrids that have become far more efficient killers because they are part wolf. And because all surviving wolf hybrids, including wolf/dog, are treated as endangered wild wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains, it appears that a similar situation may be developing in the NRM.

In the recent Outdoorsman article entitled, "The Big Bad Wolf...How Bad Is He?", the author reported that wolf damage claims from two Montana sheep ranchers totaling more than \$40,000 were rejected because genetic testing showed the wolf that did the killing was a wolf/dog hybrid. Hard evidence supporting the existence of wolf-dog hybrids in the wild exists in all three wolf recovery areas and that will be documented in a future Outdoorsman article.

Pen-Raised Wolves Released In SW U.S.

The FWS Mexican Wolf Recovery Program in the Southwest U.S. claims to use "mostly" purebred Mexican wolves with genes from five wolves caught in Mexico from 1977-1980 and kept in a zoo. Their offspring are bred, born and raised in ~50 pens scattered across the U.S. and Mexico and, after being released briefly in one of three larger facilities, including Wolf Haven International in Tenino, Washington and Ted Turner's Ladder Ranch, they are released into the wild in Arizona or New Mexico.

Yet FWS recently killed a litter of wolf-dog hybrid pups in that recovery area and other crossbred wolf-dog adults have been documented and photographed in the area. Contrary to Bangs' 1994 claims, a large percentage of the pen-reared wolves survive in the wild and, despite their alleged "conditioning" before they are released, show little fear of humans as they kill their livestock and pets.

Freeing Large Pen-raised Carnivores Is Dangerous

During his highly publicized cougar study in the Central Idaho Wilderness, biologist Maurice Hornocker learned how dangerous it can be to release a pen-reared large predator into the wild. He raised two cougar kittens in a large chain-link fenced enclosure near the Taylor Ranch on Big Creek and killed mule deer and even his lion hunter's horse to feed them.

When the young lions were nearly full-grown, they were quietly removed from the pen and were next spotted by loggers near a North Idaho campground. Several days later, one of them attacked pre-schooler Sally Carlson in that same campground while her mother, holding her hand, accompanied her to a restroom.

The youngster's father struck the lion repeatedly with a shovel until it released its grip on his daughter's head. His quick action undoubtedly saved the little girl's life as a newspaper account reported more than 90 stitches were required to close the wounds in her head, face and neck.

Children At Risk From Mexican Wolf Attacks

Citizens living in the Mexican Wolf Recovery Area report living in constant fear that a similar attack on their children will occur from the pen-raised wolves turned loose in their midst by FWS. Recently one resident contacted Canadian wildlife behavioral scientist Valerius Geist for indicators revealing when pen-reared wolves may be expected to attack humans.

Dr. Geist responded that, unlike wild wolves whose actions predict the degree of danger to humans, pen-raised wolves released into the wild attack humans for very different reasons and the timing of their attack is highly unpredictable. He explained that the pen-raised wolves may continue to kill cattle and pets yet not attack humans for an extended period but if an attack happens it will almost certainly be aimed at a child.

Dr. Geist also warned, "No matter what the origin of wolves in a settled landscape, be they wild or captivity raised, ultimately a (habituated) pack will attack a human. From that there is no escape, unless the offending wolves are shot as they start on their aberrant behavior."

He explained that wolves are plentiful where he lives but when they begin to be a nuisance they are quickly killed by licensed hunters who are allowed to kill three in a long annual season – or by landowners who do not need a license. In New Mexico and Arizona concerned residents cannot be sure whether the wolves they see were pen-raised and transplanted – or born in the wild either recently or several generations ago – which makes their situation more dangerous and unpredictable.

"Ignore All But Known Breeding Pairs and Packs"

In his 1984 letter to Lobdell, Bangs listed the "key recovery issues that will be consistently presented to the public." Issue number 6 stated, "Only breeding pairs of wolves that have successfully raised young are important to the recovery of viable wolf populations.

"At this time there is no such thing as a truly 'confirmed' wolf until it has been determined to have successfully raised young in the wild or has been captured, examined, and monitored with radio telemetry. (F)rom this day forward we (will) use the strictest definition of confirmed wolf activity (i.e. individual wolves or members of packs that have been examined, radiocollared and monitored in the wild).

"We should be comfortable with this definition in all phases of wolf recovery such as when discussing the criteria for use of an experimental rule or for delisting the species because the population viability criteria have been reached." (emphasis added)

Existence of Many Wolves Ignored

Bangs also explained that it was too difficult to locate individual wolves or small groups of wolves that were not packs and emphasized that the existence of these wolves was not important to recovery. Once the transplanted wolves began pairing and successfully raising young, the Nez Perce and FWS recovery teams declined to investigate sightings of individual wolves or groups of wolves unless they involved livestock killing.

But even then, if the livestock was moved to a different location and/or the wolf predation stopped, any investigation abruptly ceased. In some parts of Idaho where wolf populations are excessive, including the county we live in, local citizens report frustration over the Wolf Teams' refusal to investigate reports of apparent pack activity unless there is evidence of at least two pups.

The excuse used by the FWS/NezPerce Team for its failure to investigate such activity is that it is too expensive but it also is not interested in recording wolves unless they meet the confirmed wolf criteria agreed upon by Bangs, Ted Koch and Steve Fritts in 1994. The exception is the need to radio-collar one or more wolves to facilitate removal of one or more members of a pack that continues to kill livestock.

Wolf Numbers Underestimated

There are so many variables involved in attempting to estimate the total number of wolves in a state that any such estimate is prone to large errors even with the best information available. But when the existence of every wolf that has not been part of a "collared" pack is ignored, any such estimate is suspect.

For example, local residents reported several wolf packs in Boise County yet FWS had documented only two. When the Team finally documented the existence of three more packs there were 2-1/2 times as many wolf packs as had been recorded and a similar increase in the number of breeding pairs – indicated both by pups and by yearlings that were born in the prior year and survived.

Although FWS goes back and adjusts the number of breeding pairs for the prior year when this evidence is documented, this system always results in initially underestimating both total wolves and breeding pairs. Recovery goals in all three states were met at least 2-3 years before then current FWS estimates said they were, yet the actual number of breeding pairs was not admitted and recorded until after the fact.

In the future the policy of including only the wolves in currently documented packs in the "minimum estimate" could result in wolves being declared below the recovery minimum of 10 breeding pairs in any of the three areas when the actual number of breeding pairs could be 2-3 times what is estimated. Theoretically this could result in wolves being declared threatened in one or all three states and an end to state wolf management,

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Alaska Underestimated Wolf Numbers By 50%

In Denali Park an intensive two-year study was conducted to determine how accurate their wolf population estimates had been for nearly two decades. The National Park Service/FWS researchers found that despite recording all of the known wolf packs and sightings, they had been underestimating total wolf numbers by about **50%**.

If one similarly doubles IDFG's 2007 *minimum fall* estimate of 732 wolves in Idaho, it would reflect a total of 1,464 wolves in just one state – not counting the new crop of pups. Instead of managing for the 512 wolves (2005 population estimate) unanimously approved by the F&G Commission on March 6, 2008, Idaho may be perpetuating up to 1,000 wolves – or even more.

That is **10** times as many wolves as Idahoans were led to believe would exist following wolf recovery. Yet these numbers still do not include wolves in most of the **16** wolf packs recorded along the Idaho-Montana border in 2007.

Most Border Packs Given To Montana

According to the 2006 Interagency Wolf Report, Montana only had an estimated 316 wolves and 21 breeding pairs at the end of 2006 compared to Idaho's estimated 673 wolves and 40 breeding pairs. Although the 16 border packs recorded in 2007 reportedly originated in Idaho and hunt in both states, it was decided that Montana would claim all of the wolves in **12** of the 16 packs.

This paper transfer of wolves resulted in a **33%** increase in Montana's "minimum estimated" wolf population in 2007 and an **86%** increase in the number of Montana breeding pairs! This resulted in Idaho showing only a **9%** increase in "estimated" wolf numbers and an **8%** increase in "estimated" breeding pairs in 2007.

But this is not the only way wolf biologists influence estimated wolf numbers and breeding pairs. If a wolf pack with pups is killing livestock the specific wolves biologists direct Wildlife Services to kill determines whether or not the pack continues to be counted as a breeding pair.

Low Estimates Hide Extent of Impact

But regardless of the number of breeding pairs counted, central Idaho is saturated with wolves. Other wolf packs and breeding pairs are constantly forming and dispersing to saturate adjacent areas – yet an unknown number of them are never included in the current year's minimum estimated wolf population.

It can be argued that most of these undocumented wolves will probably be documented sooner or later if they remain in the area, since 17 new packs were reportedly documented in 2007. But by pretending that the minimum estimate reflects the actual number of wolves, officials and the media downplay their negative impact.

A refreshing exception was a March 16, 2008 *Coeur d' Alene Press* article by Sean Garmire in which he

stated, "Game managers have produced an estimate of 753 wolves in Idaho and 1,500 in the three-state region. But those figures represent the minimum, and the real number could be closer to 1,000 in Idaho alone."

"Wolf Advocates Give Low Estimates"

"Because the animals often live in remote areas, the number 'is extremely difficult to produce,' said Idaho Fish and Game (Panhandle Region wolf) biologist Dave Spicer. 'Groups tend to skew the number, with wolf advocates giving low estimates, and some anti-wolf advocates giving higher figures,' Spicer said.

"Wolves, like mountain lions, bears and other predators, often kill more animals than they eat. Spicer said while overkill has been documented in North Idaho, hunter harvest rates have been similar over the past 15 years. 'Have we seen a level of predation that indicates we have a significant problem? Data indicates that's not the case, our elk and deer herds are healthy,' he said."

Yet a March 7, 2008 Idaho Statesman article by Roger Phillips reported, "Elk hunters will see a more restrictive season in 2008 because of shrinking elk herds. Hunters killed more than 19,000 elk in 2007, which is the first time in four years the statewide harvest has dropped below 20,000 animals. Factors contributing to the decline include poor habitat and calf production and wolves."

Panhandle Region Managed Differently

So which article is accurate? The short answer is that parts of both of them are through the fall of 2007. For years the Panhandle Region has operated like a separate entity from the rest of IDFG, generally obeying the law and, with a few notable exceptions, managing its wildlife to provide continued supplies for Idaho citizens to harvest.

Years ago it recognized that telephone harvest surveys are unreliable at the unit and regional level and implemented its own mandatory report for elk hunters. Despite all the wolves north of Highway 90 receiving full protection rather than the Non-essential Experimental classification, it reports far fewer wolves and lower wolf densities than are found throughout Central Idaho.

Few Wolves Counted in Panhandle

Whether this is due to the "shoot, shovel and shut up" wolf policy of some independent north Idaho residents or a combination of factors, in 2007 Panhandle Region biologists counted only **37** wolves in 8 resident packs. This compares with **148** wolves counted in the Clearwater, **169** in the full SW Region and **116** in the Salmon Region.

The eight resident wolf packs in the Panhandle produced only 5 *documented* pups and one breeding pair in 2007. The nearly 5,000 square miles north of Highway 90 shares its 3 wolf packs with British Columbia and Montana and includes three of the four highest producing deer and elk units in the Region (Units 1, 3 and 4).

Detecting only 32 adult wolves and five pups in the 7,409 square miles of the Panhandle Region reflects an *observed* fall 2007 wolf density of only 2 per 400 sq. miles.

By comparison the 148 *observed* wolves in the 11,954 sq. miles of the Clearwater Region reflects an *observed* fall 2007 wolf density of 5 wolves per 400 square miles – 2-1/2 times as high as the Panhandle.

Min. Wolf Density 3X Density in Denali Park

The current formula used to estimate the *minimum* number of wolves in the Clearwater puts that minimum number at 258 – reflecting a *minimum* wolf density of 9 wolves per 400 square miles with the potential for an *actual* wolf density of 13-18 or more wolves per 400 square miles.

When the size of the Clearwater Region is adjusted to the two-thirds that contains documented wolf packs or is considered wolf habitat, the minimum estimated wolf density is **13 wolves** for each 400 square miles. To put that *minimum* Clearwater wolf density in proper perspective, the published minimum 2005 wolf density in the 69% of Denali Park that is considered wolf habitat is only **4.64 wolves** per 400 square miles! (Meier et al 2006).

Wolves in Most Known Packs No Longer Counted

Beginning in 2006 Idaho wolf biologists stopped trying to count all of the wolves in known packs and assumed they were the same as the average number counted in a sample. For example in 2007, the average was 7.7 wolves per pack in the packs they actually counted so they multiplied 7.7 times the known 83 packs that existed at the end of the year which totaled 639 *estimated* wolves in 83 *documented* packs.

They also included 12 radio-collared wolves that existed in 8 groups too small to qualify as packs and added them to the 639 wolves in packs – but did not include wolves that were not collared. Then, based on studies and papers reporting an average of one lone wolf for every eight found in packs or groups (Mech 2003) they multiplied the 651 wolves by 1.125 and came up with a “minimum estimate” of 732 “documented” wolves.

New Estimation Technique Also Ignores Undocumented Wolves

Although their 2007 report and maps include seven “suspected” packs and 382 reported sightings of single or multiple* wolves (*either packs or groups of less than four wolves), these were counted as “zero” wolves and/or assumed to be part of a documented pack or group.

The information in the three preceding paragraphs is found in Idaho’s 2007 Annual Wolf Report – Appendix A, titled, “Population Estimation Technique Used to Determine Wolf Population Numbers in Idaho,” but the title is grossly misleading.

The “Estimation Technique” described has nothing to do with determining total wolf populations in Idaho but is being used to estimate the number of actual wolves in *confirmed* packs rather than spend additional time and money trying to count them. During 2007 Idaho wolf biologists spent weeks unsuccessfully trying to capture and radio-collar even one wolf in a wilderness pack.

F&G Ignores Legislative Wolf Plan

By allowing wolves to multiply without interference, except for the few dozen that are killed each year after attacking livestock, a growing number of uncollared wolves will be overlooked. With admittedly inadequate resources to continue to document, count and radio-collar 1 or 2 wolves each in the rapidly increasing number of packs, accurate estimates of total wolf numbers will be impossible to obtain. (see admission in Appendix A that the actual number of wolves is likely more than the 732 estimated due to failure to include the [seven] suspected packs in the estimator.)

“Appendix B” describes how FWS will allow all three states to estimate rather than continue to document the number of breeding pairs as they assume management. With the requirement for accurate wolf counts waived, it becomes increasingly important for state wildlife managers to admit the impact of excessive wolf populations and reduce wolf numbers dramatically where it is indicated.

Instead, on March 6, 2008 the Idaho F&G Commission ignored the wolf plan approved by the Idaho Legislature and FWS to manage for 15 breeding pairs, and unanimously endorsed a plan to maintain at least 500 wolves – the equivalent of 50 breeding pairs!

Excuses For Not Controlling Wolves

In January 2008, FWS Wolf Project Leader Ed Bangs told the media, “Wolves are never the primary cause (of failure to achieve elk population objectives). The primary cause is always habitat.”

In a February 20, 2008 article in the *St. Maries Gazette-Record*, IDFG Wolf Biologist Dave Spicer told Editor Ralph Bartholdt that deep snow in the Coeur d’Alene and St. Joe River drainages was preventing normal movement of deer and elk. Spicer predicted a high winter mortality for elk, especially elk calves, and said in addition to floundering in the deep snow, game herds must contend with predators that can walk on the snow’s crust

The article quoted Spicer, “Predators from cats to wolves have an easier time killing their prey when the snow piles up – it’s like a kid in a candy shop, they are out there doing their thing. The health of game herds, though, is driven by weather not predators,” he added.

Lacking fact or science to justify their failure to control excessive wolf numbers, the federal biologist used the magic word “habitat” and the state biologist blamed unhealthy game herds on “the weather.” Yet the vast majority of wolf-big game research concludes that wolves – not habitat or weather – prevent big game species from recovering once their numbers are temporarily reduced by either natural or man-caused disasters.

(NOTE: Unless Idaho citizens or their legislators overrule the F&G Commission plan to perpetuate unhealthy wolf populations, it appears that delisting may be a case of jumping out of the frying pan into the fire for Idaho elk hunters and livestock owners.-ED)

Two Letters from Dr. Valerius Geist

("Beware of 'Natural' Wildlife Management" by Dr. Geist in the July 2004 Outdoorsman, was the first of several articles we have published by this highly respected Canadian Wildlife Scientist. Despite literally hundreds of conversations I have had with state, federal and provincial wildlife biologists over the years, I remain inspired by Val Geist's knowledge, wisdom and dedication to science based on fact.

Saskatchewan government officials refused to accept overwhelming evidence from the local coroner and other officials on the scene that 22-year-old engineering student Kenton Carnegie was attacked, killed and partially eaten by wolves on November 8, 2005. Instead, they and the media promoted the claim by Paul Pacquet, Co-Founder of the Central Rockies Wolf Project, that photos suggested the victim was killed by a black bear.

Officials stalled resolution by a coroner's jury for nearly two years until Nov. 1, 2007 and Kenton's grieving parents asked Dr. Geist and retired Alaska Biologist Mark McNay to represent them. Dr. Geist provided >50 pages of testimony to the Coroner and attorneys documenting that there was no evidence of bear presence and that wolves were the direct cause of death.

He also presented evidence to substantiate his belief that widespread circulation of the myth that wolves are harmless to humans was the indirect cause of death. But the jurors were not allowed to consider that and it was not discussed in the media.

The following letter was sent by Dr. Geist to The Editor, Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* newspaper on Nov. 3, 2007, to expose the cover-up to its readers: - ED)

Dear Editor,

I am one of two scientists asked by Kenton Carnegie's parents to investigate the matter of his death. My reports were submitted to the coroner as well as both parties to the case and are available to you upon request.

The jury at the coroner's inquest has found that wolves killed Kenton Carnegie and it is gratifying that science and not politics carried the day. However, when the coroner decided to limit the number of expert witnesses that could testify on behalf of the Carnegies to one, and chose Mark McNay and his excellent report (to which I hope you have access), he also signaled that the inquest would stay away from policy issues.

That is, the coroner's inquest would focus on the narrow question of who killed Kenton Carnegie, to which the answer is "*a wolf pack*". The answer to the question of what killed Kenton Carnegie is "*the belief that wolves are not dangerous to humans*".

Consequently, neither the jury nor the public were made aware of the fact that this belief has killed three persons in the recent past, and that it has a very long and most unsavory political history. Thus the attempt to whitewash wolves in the Kenton Carnegie tragedy by

blaming bears is but one instance in a very long history of misrepresenting wolves.

Moreover, this misrepresentation is not only historical, but ongoing, and involves scientists – both so-called and genuine – as well as agencies, governments, environmental organizations and, in the past, political parties. The recommendations of the jury predictably fall short of addressing matters of broader public concern. Please allow me to illustrate:

The Kenton Carnegie tragedy would very likely not have taken place in British Columbia because that province has in place laws that quickly eliminate habituating garbage wolves as well as wolves aggressive to humans - and Saskatchewan does not. The only exception is where wolves are protected *de facto* or *de jure*.

I soon found out that this was a very touchy subject in Saskatchewan. So, shall we discuss this issue in detail or not?

The jury's recommendation that garbage dumps be fenced is well meaning but innocent. Fences are ripped apart, dug under, climbed over by bears and wolves, while fallen trees and snowdrifts make fences useless.

The pitfalls of fences have been minutely covered in debates and court cases about game ranching. Wolves are not only superlative escape artists but also break-in artists! Should the public not know?

Nobody in Saskatchewan had the expertise or had done the scholarly homework that showed that both, wolves and urban dwelling coyotes, target human victims in an identical manner. This is but one instance of scholarly and professional shortcoming.

There are plenty more! Are scientists and professionals not accountable for their statements? Moreover, such knowledge is absolutely essential in forewarning travelers or residents in wilderness areas about impending wolf confrontations or attacks. Is such of no interest to the public?

The public is being overwhelmed by statements that wolves are harmless, misunderstood creatures, not dangerous to humans. Such a message has come not only from North Americans and Europeans, from environmentalists and Russia's communist party, from respectable scientists and romantic literati, while evidence to the contrary has been systematically suppressed, censored, belittled and misrepresented. It's a sordid history, some of which is a systematic hoodwinking of the public.

Wolves are virtually harmless under some conditions and exceedingly dangerous in others. Is the public not entitled to know this?

The above is but a sample of the concerns not covered.

Valerius Geist

(Dr. Geist's letter on the preceding page was not published timely in the Star-Phoenix – nor by Idaho Statesman environmental Editor Rocky Barker in Boise who also reportedly received a copy. In response to a February 8, 2008 Star-Phoenix article discussing the fencing recommendation, Dr. Geist sent the following letter-to-the editor the following day. But it too was reportedly not published timely. - ED)

Dear Editor:

I am one of two scientists asked by the Carnegie family to independently investigate the death of Kenton, their son. The coroner's inquest into this matter was narrowly focused on who killed Kenton Carnegie, to which the correct answer is: a wolf pack. It did not address wider policy issues such as conservation legislation.

The tragedy would almost certainly not have happened in British Columbia despite that province's share of wolf attacks on humans, nor the failures in scholarship that led to the wide and dogmatic acceptance of the view that wolves are not dangerous to humans. That myth has killed at least three persons in North America in the past decade, two of which were highly educated young people.

Nor did it dwell on what circumstances lead to the habituation of wolves to humans, one of which is scarcity of natural prey, which could be due to increased wolf populations. In short, there is more to the story than has been addressed by the court or the press.

Nobody involved in the tragedy, including the wolf specialist working on behalf of the coroner's office, noticed that the habituated wolves had been targeting humans. However, students of urban coyotes described a stepwise progression of behavior, which is shown by coyotes that are targeting children in urban parks.

This pattern of increasing familiarization with potential prey is identical in wolves and coyotes. In short, the situation at Camp North Landing was a disaster waiting to happen.

Ironically, while biologists studying coyotes affirmed that coyotes targeted humans as prey, wolf biologists denied that wolves were dangerous to people. The view that – in the absence of rabies - wolves do not attack people has taken so solid a grip in current times, that even after an exploratory attack by two wolves on two camp personnel at Camp North Landing, the threat posed by wolves was not fully recognized.

A captive pack of wolves destroyed their new keeper, a biologist with a master's degree, within three days, a tragedy traceable to the belief that wolves do not attack people. A similar fate befell a lady keeping a pack of wolf hybrids for similar reasons.

The view of the harmless wolf may have prevented North American wolf specialists from developing an understanding of the circumstances when wolves are very dangerous to people and when they are not. In North America, unlike in some European and Asiatic countries,

the circumstances when wolves pose a danger to humans is rare, but is not absent.

The most important sign that wolves are targeting humans as prey is wolves patiently observing humans. Such wolves may be short of natural prey or they may be well fed on garbage and already habituated to humans.

Wolves patiently observing humans have begun the process of slow and steady familiarization with humans, which finally leads to an attack on humans. Such wolves need to be taken out.

In British Columbia any licensed hunter can do that. The limit on wolves is three and the season long. It's a safety valve. Healthy free-living wolves are virtually unhuntable, and the most likely candidates to be taken out are wolves disadvantaged by age or condition or rejected by their pack.

A historical review of wolves and humans shows that nobody has as yet succeeded living in peace with packs of wolves, unless there was a buffer between wolves and humans of livestock and pets, especially dogs, and the wolves were hunted and shunned people. Nor have we paid attention to the experiences of native people with wolves, who pointed out correctly that wolves eat and disperse the evidence of wolf-killed humans.

Wolf packs attacking dogs pulling sleds were not uncommon in the north or in Greenland. The Danish explorer of Greenland, Peter Freuchen, lost one companion to wolves, shot one of two wolves advancing on his children, had some harrowing experiences himself with wolves and describes how he could not be provisioned because every dog team sent his way was halted by wolf attacks.

The fairytale by the brothers Grimm of Little Red Riding Hood is, alas, not based on myths, ignorance or a misunderstanding of wolves, but on very real and terrible experiences with wolves throughout the centuries. The "modern" view that wolves are harmless is based not on science, but on flawed scholarship and politics too long to discuss in a letter to the editor.

The philosopher Kant's quip that we learn from history that we do not learn from history has again been validated.

Sincerely,

Valerius Geist, PhD, Professional Biologist
Professor Emeritus of Environmental Science
The University of Calgary

(Dr. Geist has provided his report to us along with his permission to publish it and make the information available to outdoorsmen and women. We plan to publish it in installments in future issues as time and space permits.

I found it fascinating reading as well as very informative and I think readers will enjoy it. – ED)

Attempt to End Airborne Predator Control

How Alaska's Governor Responded

On September 25, 2007 Representative George Miller, Democratic Congressman from California, introduced H.R. 3663 the so-called "Protect America's Wildlife Act of 2007." If passed the Act would prevent a state from authorizing shooting predators from an aircraft for the purpose of increasing any game population and would also prohibit shooting or attempting to shoot any bird, fish or other animal on the ground before 3 A.M. of the following day after flying.

The exceptions would be that state wildlife employees may shoot any wolf, bear or other predator only to prevent an imminent irreversible decline of a species by a predator when no other means will prevent the decline or extinction. The bill, initiated by the Washington, D.C. based Defenders of Wildlife (**DOW**), would also increase the penalty from \$5,000 to \$50,000 and allow any person to bring a private civil action against any individual or government entity to collect damages for violating the act..

Miller Charges Alaska Ignoring Will of Congress

At a press conference on the Terrace of the Cannon House Office Building with a tame Arctic wolf at his side, Miller declared, "The time has come to ground Alaska's illegal air war against these animals." Miller charged that Alaska's wolves are being unlawfully hunted from the air and said his bill would halt that practice.

In a simultaneous press release, DOW President Rodger Schlickeisen called Miller a "true conservationist" and said his bill would "close the loophole in the 1972 Airborne Hunting Act, which was clearly intended to end aerial hunting by private citizens." Schlickeisen added, "To make matters worse, other states (Idaho and Wyoming) are now proposing to follow Alaska's example."

Gov. Palin Responds to Rep. Miller

Two days later Governor Palin sent the following letter to Congressman Miller:

Dear Congressman Miller:

On behalf of the state of Alaska I am writing to express my displeasure with your introduction of a bill that proposes to end what you refer to as "airborne hunting" of wolves and bears in Alaska. You have misconstrued the reality of life in Alaska and the importance of wild game as food to the people of this state. You displayed a shocking lack of understanding of wildlife management in the North and the true structure and function of Alaska's predator control programs. You have threatened the very foundation of federalism and the states' abilities to manage their affairs as they see fit.

I am dismayed that you did not attempt to contact the state your bill affects most directly before announcing your legislation. At the very least, we could have helped you correct the many inaccuracies and misstatements of fact in both the written and the oral portions of your media presentation yesterday.

For example, Alaska's wildlife management programs are conducted entirely within the tenants of the Airborne Hunting Act as the annual reports we file with the U.S. Department of the Interior clearly demonstrate. Predator control is not hunting; it is a carefully prescribed directed management action. Airborne hunting is illegal. Our science-driven and abundance-based predator management program enlists volunteers permitted to use aircraft to kill some predators in specified areas of the state where we are trying to increase opportunities for Alaskans to put healthy food on their families' dinner tables.

I am especially concerned your draft bill threatens the constitutionally guaranteed sovereignty not just of the state of Alaska, but all states. Under our system of federalism, fish and game management is generally conducted by the states, not the federal government. Courts have repeatedly recognized wildlife management as one of the aspects of traditional state sovereignty reserved to the states under the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Federal powers to regulate wildlife are limited and seldom result in broad, area-wide effective management strategies, but Alaska's fish and game management programs have been widely recognized for their excellence and effectiveness. Alaska, alone among the states, has managed its wildlife so that we still maintain abundant populations of all of our indigenous predators almost fifty years after statehood. Your proposal to limit this effective management program to addressing only biological emergencies caused by irreversible declines of important moose or caribou herds is an unworkable and unwarranted interference with time-honored principles of federalism and with effective state programs. If a decline is irreversible, it is by definition unresolvable by deploying management tools. That may be acceptable to you, but I cannot allow wildlife management challenges to deteriorate to unsolvable levels.

Alaska's predator control program is mandated by the Alaska State Legislature, regulated by the independent Alaska Board of Game, and implemented by the world-renowned scientists at our Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Our state Constitution requires wildlife to be managed on the sustained yield principle, subject to preferences among beneficial uses. When game populations or harvest goals are not met, Alaska's intensive management law mandates action, including habitat improvement and/or predator control.

Our state biologists use radio tracking, visual surveys, and numerous other scientifically proven methods

to assess the health of wildlife populations. Often, predators keep prey populations lower than the area habitat could support. In most states, wildlife populations are limited primarily by habitat; in many parts of Alaska, however, moose and caribou are prevented from reaching abundant levels by heavy predation. Wolves and bears are powerful and effective predators; these predators kill far more moose and caribou than do humans hunting for food.

Our science-based program is designed to reduce the effect of predators in given areas with the intent to allow a higher harvest of moose and caribou by humans for food. By thinning the numbers of predators in selected areas we are enabling more Alaskans to hunt moose and caribou and put food in their freezers. Each program is specifically designed, carefully considered, and closely monitored. We do not undertake predator control lightly.

Predator control is not hunting. Fair chase ethics do not apply. The notion that it is "unsportsmanlike" is simply not applicable. To participate, Alaskans must qualify for permits to shoot the same day they fly, and, in some cases, to shoot from aircraft. A successful program reduces predation and/or allows prey numbers to increase, enables people to take more moose and caribou, and allows healthy populations of predators to thrive. We have healthy populations of wolves and bears all around the state, and we intend to keep it that way – always. We would not conduct predator control if there were even the slightest concern predator populations were in jeopardy.

With all due respect, Congressman Miller, you failed to do your homework. I urge you to learn more about the realities of Alaska's predator control program, and not to swallow the rhetoric of special interest advocacy groups trying to raise money for their inaccurate campaigns. In addition, I invite you to come to Alaska and see for yourself how we manage our wildlife, and meet some of the many hard-working Alaskans who rely on our predator management programs to give them access to the food they need.

Sincerely,

Sarah Palin
Governor

(NOTE: A comparison of the impact of Idaho's major predators of big game species – coyotes, bears, mountain lions and wolves – with Alaska reveals major similarities. Fifty years of IDFG records show that of the several hundred thousand wild ungulates that die from all causes in an *average* year, hunters harvest less than 20% and predators kill more than 60%.

As in Alaska, occasional deep snow or long winters take a heavy toll once every 6-10 years but the *average* annual loss to malnutrition, accidents, disease, etc. remains less than 20% in both states*. [*The token radio-collared calf and fawn survival rates published by IDFG biologists are meaningless in terms of annual survival since they measure only losses from January-April.]

And like the Alaska Constitution which mandates managing all of its natural resources for sustained yield, Idaho Wildlife Policy, enshrined in Idaho Law by citizen initiative 70 years ago, also mandates managing wildlife to provide continued supplies (a sustained yield) for hunting, fishing and trapping. And also like Alaska, the Idaho Legislature has, over the years, designated dedicated funds (from three different sources – including the big game winter feeding account) to be used to control predators affecting big game populations.

But the obvious difference in wildlife management between the two states is that the Alaska Board of Game obeys its lawful mandates while the Idaho F&G Commission allows Department biologists to quietly ignore the law and substitute their own de facto policy.

Alaska addresses declining localized game populations by documenting unhealthy predator-to-prey ratios and killing enough predators to allow the game to quickly recover. Idaho ignores excessive predator-to-prey ratios and wastes vast amounts of time and money creating "Teams", "Initiatives", "Plans" and years of agenda-driven research rather than restore healthy game populations.

Alaska has the same internal conflict as Idaho between those who support conservation and wise use of our natural resources and those who embrace the hands-off-let-nature-take-its-course philosophy. But Governor Palin has ignored attempts at intimidation and blackmail and is putting the welfare of Alaskans and their wildlife resource above political correctness.

Other Affected States Remain Silent

In order to increase the number of House members listed as sponsors of Miller's anti-predator control bill DOW reportedly spent \$4,500 on posters showing photos of cute wolf pups and a photo of a dead wolf hanging from the strut of an airplane. They hung these posters in a subway station used by 6,000 visitors and House staffers daily, and on January 27, 2008 the bill had 111 cosponsors.

Although DOW claims bipartisan support of H.R. 3663 in a January 23, 2008 news release, 106 of the 111 co-sponsors are Democrats. That same news release urges House members to support Miller's bill *to prevent potential aerial wolf hunts in Idaho and Wyoming*.

In an effort to combat the false information Miller and DOW are providing to Congress, Alaska's lone member of the House, Congressman Don Young, sent a letter to fellow lawmakers urging them not to be deceived. He pointed out that H.R. 3663 is a direct threat to the constitutionally guaranteed state sovereignty over wildlife management – not just for Alaska, but for all states.

But despite the increasing support for H.R. 3663, Congressman Young and Governor Palin received little or no help opposing it from their counterparts in the Western states that will be most affected if it were to pass. Fear of losing their ability to "manage" wolves apparently dictated silence.-ED)

Relative risks of predation on livestock posed by individual wolves, black bears, mountain lions and coyotes in Idaho

By Mark Collinge

(Mark Collinge is State Director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services headquartered in Boise, Idaho. Among their duties, this organization has the responsibility to investigate reported livestock kills and determine what species caused the deaths. When directed to lethally remove one or more of the predators responsible for the deaths, WS employees accomplish that action (see photo on Page 1).

The following research paper was presented by Director Collinge at the 23rd Vertebrate Pest Conference in San Diego during the third week in March 2008. It provides documented answers to several important questions frequently asked by both wolf advocates and hunters.-ED)

INTRODUCTION

Gray wolves (*Canis lupus*) were reintroduced into central Idaho and Yellowstone National Park in 1995 and 1996, and since that time have far surpassed recovery goals. The biological criterion for a fully recovered wolf population in the three-state (Idaho/Montana/Wyoming) Northern Rockies recovery area was to have at least 30 breeding pairs of wolves (anticipated to be at least 300 total wolves) equitably distributed among the 3 states for at least 3 consecutive years. That criterion was met by the end of 2002 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, et al. 2003). The wolf population in the Northern Rockies as of December, 2007 was estimated at about 1,500 wolves, with about half of those living in Idaho.

One of the most controversial aspects of wolf recovery and management has been wolf depredations on livestock. Incidents of wolf predation on livestock in Idaho have steadily increased as the wolf population has increased (USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services 2008). Some wolf advocacy groups have attempted to downplay the significance of wolf predation on livestock by pointing out that in relative terms, only a very small proportion of livestock losses (< 1% for cattle and < 2.5% for sheep) are typically caused by wolves, and that other predators, such as coyotes (*Canis latrans*), are responsible for many more livestock deaths than are wolves (Defenders of Wildlife 2007). While both of these are valid points, it is also important to recognize that even though predation losses due to wolves may represent a relatively minor portion of total overall death losses, these losses are not evenly distributed across the industry (Mack et al. 1992).

Most livestock producers will experience no predation by wolves, while some producers in certain areas may suffer significant losses to wolves. Coyotes, by virtue of the fact that their populations are typically many times greater and more widely distributed than wolf populations, do cause more overall predation losses. But assessing the relative likelihood of predation by individual wolves versus individuals of other commonly implicated livestock predators can provide insight as to why wolf predation is a bigger concern to some livestock producers than predation by other species. One simplistic approach to making this type of assessment would be to contrast the estimated population of the most commonly implicated predator species, coyotes, wolves, black bears (*Ursus americanus*) and mountain lions (*Felis concolor*), with the estimated number of livestock killed by each species, thereby arriving at a relative likelihood for individuals of each species to kill livestock.

PREDATOR POPULATION ESTIMATES

Wolves

Of the four predator species being considered in this analysis, the population estimates available for wolves in Idaho are probably the closest to representing the actual number of individuals in the population. Because the criterion for delisting wolves as an endangered species require accurate population data, intensive monitoring of Idaho's wolf population has been conducted annually since wolves were first reintroduced in 1995. This monitoring has included regularly occurring surveys conducted both from the ground and from the air, facilitated by the fact that many of the wolf packs in Idaho contain one or more radio-collared animals. Additionally, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) maintains an on-line reporting system which allows members of the public to routinely report any wolf sightings, and these reports can subsequently be followed up to facilitate monitoring efforts. Idaho's wolf population has increased steadily since wolves were first reintroduced (Figure 1), and the estimated population for calendar years 2005-2007 was 518, 673, and 732 individuals, respectively (Nadeau et al. 2007, Nadeau et al. 2008).

Mountain Lions and Black Bears

Mountain lions and black bears in Idaho are game species managed by the IDFG to maintain stable

populations, and populations of both of these species are currently believed to be relatively stable. Based on harvest estimates, known reproductive capabilities, and age structure of the harvest, IDFG estimates there are currently about 2,500 mountain lions and 20,000 black bears in the state of Idaho (Steve Nadeau, personal communication).

Coyotes

The IDFG has never attempted to estimate coyote populations in the State of Idaho, but the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services program developed coyote population estimates in conjunction with the preparation of several different environmental assessments (USDA-APHIS 1996a, USDA-APHIS 1996b, USDA-APHIS 2002). Idaho's coyote population was estimated in these analyses by considering the most relevant available scientific information on coyote densities, then extrapolating a conservative density estimate to the total land area of Idaho. Density estimates ranged from a low of 0.63/mi² (Clark 1972) to a high of 5-6/mi² (Knowlton 1972), and the lower end of this range was applied to the total area of Idaho to arrive at a conservative statewide coyote population estimate of about 50,000 animals.

ESTIMATES OF NUMBERS OF LIVESTOCK KILLED BY EACH SPECIES

The Idaho office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts an annual statewide survey of sheep producers to determine death losses due to all causes, and cattle producers have been surveyed every 5 years regarding their total death losses. NASS survey procedures ensure that all sheep and cattle producers, regardless of the size of their operation, have a chance to be included in these surveys, but larger operations are sampled more heavily than smaller operations.

During a public comment period held in conjunction with preparation of an environmental assessment regarding predator control activities (USDA-APHIS 1996), some respondents expressed concerns about the reliability of rancher-supplied data on death losses, and suggested that ranchers might be inflating their estimates of losses to justify more predator control. However, these data are believed to provide the most realistic assessment available of actual losses. Schaefer *et al.* (1981) employed several different methods to survey sheep producers regarding predation losses, and based on their own field necropsies, concluded that producers' estimates of losses were realistic. Sheep loss survey data for the most recently available 3-year period (2005-2007) in Idaho indicates predation losses ranged from 25.3% to 32.9%, and accounted for an average of about 30% of total death losses among Idaho sheep producers (USDA-NASS 2008). However, through intensive monitoring conducted during a

study on 3 typical range sheep operations in southern Idaho, Nass (1977) found that predation was actually responsible for 56% of total death losses. This would suggest that attributing an average of 30% of total death losses to predation is not unrealistic, and may even suggest that Idaho sheep producers could be underestimating their losses to predators.

NASS has been conducting their annual survey of sheep losses to predators in Idaho since 1981, and losses attributable to coyotes, black bears and mountain lions have been tabulated separately during all that time. Losses caused by species that kill relatively few sheep, such as bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) and eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos* and *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) have historically been lumped into a category of "other". Wolves were reintroduced to Idaho in 1995 and 1996, and beginning in 1996 the relatively few losses caused by wolves in the early years after reintroduction were first lumped into the category of losses caused by "other" predators (USDA-NASS 1997). Losses attributable to wolves continued to increase as Idaho's wolf population increased, but NASS did not begin reporting them separately until the 2005 reporting period (USDA-NASS 2008).

The most recent survey of death losses for Idaho cattle producers was conducted by NASS as part of a nationwide survey for calendar year 2005 (USDA-NASS 2006). At the national level, the NASS data for predation losses due to coyotes, mountain lions, bears and wolves are tabulated separately. At the state level, losses to coyotes and mountain lions are listed separately, but the losses attributed to wolves and bears are combined in a category called "other predators", which includes grizzly bears (*Ursus horribilis*) as well as black bears, along with any cattle losses caused by vultures (*Cathartes aura* and *Coragyps atratus*). Cattle losses to vultures are not known to occur in Idaho, and very few incidents of grizzly bear predation on cattle occur because of the very low population of grizzly bears relative to black bears. The number of calf and adult cattle losses to bears and wolves combined in Idaho for 2005 was reported by NASS as 1,000 animals. The Idaho Wildlife Services program confirms relatively few calf losses to bears as compared to the number of calves and adult cattle confirmed killed by wolves, and the majority of the 1,000 reported animals killed by wolves and bears were probably killed by wolves. In 2005, the Idaho Wildlife Services program determined that 2 calves reported killed by black bears and 1 calf reported killed by a grizzly bear were either confirmed or probable incidents of predation, whereas a total of 24 calves and adult cattle were judged to be confirmed or probable wolf kills. If this same ratio (3 Wildlife Services-verified bear kills out of 27 combined Wildlife Services-verified bear and wolf kills) were applied to the 1,000 combined calf and adult cattle losses attributed to wolves

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Relative Risks...continued from page 15

and bears in the NASS report, this would suggest about 111 of the 1,000 combined losses were attributable to bears, while about 888 of those losses were attributable to wolves. Table 1. provides a summary of the NASS data on Idaho sheep producers' losses to predators for 2005-2007, and cattle producers' losses for 2005.

NASS estimates of predator losses to wolves, bears, lions and coyotes are typically much higher than the number of losses actually documented as predator losses by the APHIS Wildlife Services program, but there are several reasons for this difference. In the case of losses reported to be caused by wolves, black bears or mountain lions, Wildlife Services field employees make every effort to investigate these reports promptly in an attempt to determine the cause of death. Compensation programs exist to reimburse livestock operators for damage caused by all three of these species, but compensation is contingent on Wildlife Services being able to verify that predation by one of those species was actually the cause of death. Reports of wolf predation are classified as "confirmed" incidents when there is reasonable physical evidence that the animal was actually killed by a wolf. Typical evidence used in confirming wolf predation would include the presence of wolf-sized bite marks and associated subcutaneous hemorrhaging and tissue damage, indicating the victim was attacked while still alive, as opposed to cases where wolves had simply fed on an already-dead animal.

In many cases, however, wolves may have been responsible for the death of a rancher's livestock, but there was insufficient evidence remaining to confirm wolf predation. In some cases, those portions of the livestock carcass that might have contained the evidence of predation may already have been totally consumed or carried off. Some of these incidents might be classified as "probable" predation, depending on other evidence that might still remain. But in many cases, there may be little or no evidence of predation, other than the fact that wolves are known to be in the area and some livestock have seemingly just disappeared. Oakleaf (2002) conducted a study on wolf-caused predation losses to cattle on U.S. Forest Service summer grazing allotments in the Salmon, Idaho area, and concluded that for every calf found and confirmed to have been killed by wolves, there were probably as many as 8 other calves killed by wolves not found by the producer. Bjorge and Gunson (1985) likewise were able to recover only one out of every 6.7 missing cattle during their study, and suggested that wolf-caused mortalities were difficult to detect.

RELATIVE LIKELIHOOD OF PREDATION ON LIVESTOCK BY EACH SPECIES

Table 2.(missing*) provides a summary of the 2005 NASS data on sheep and cattle losses to wolves,

bears, mountain lions and coyotes in Idaho, along with the 2005 population estimate for each of these species. The estimated number of livestock killed by each species is divided by the estimated population for each species to arrive at the estimated number of livestock reported killed by each individual of those four species. In considering the combined total number of sheep and cattle reported killed by each species, **each wolf in Idaho killed**, on average in 2005, **2.68 head of livestock**. The next highest number of livestock killed per individual predator was for mountain lions, at 0.28 head of livestock. Dividing the 2.68 wolf figure by the 0.28 mountain lion figure suggests that **individual wolves were about 10 times more likely to kill livestock than were individual mountain lions**. Individual coyotes were less likely to kill livestock, at 0.13 head of livestock killed per individual coyote, which suggests that **individual wolves were about 20 times more likely to kill livestock than coyotes**. Black bears were the least likely to kill livestock, with just 0.05 head of livestock killed per black bear in the population, and the **likelihood of an individual wolf killing livestock was more than 50 times greater than the likelihood that an individual black bear would kill livestock**.

Calves and adult cattle are much more susceptible to predation by wolves than by coyotes, particularly during the summer months when cattle are grazed on forest allotments where they are more likely to be exposed to wolves. Coyote problems for the cattle industry in Idaho are primarily limited to predation on calves during the winter and early spring months when the calves are smallest, so it is of interest to note the differential likelihood of individual wolves versus individual coyotes preying on just cattle and calves, without considering sheep in the calculations. The information in Row 5 of Table 2. suggests that **each individual wolf** in Idaho was reported to have **killed about 1.7 head of cattle** in 2005, compared to only about 0.01 head of cattle killed per individual coyote or bear. Dividing the average number of cattle killed per individual wolf by the average number of cattle killed by the other three species suggests that **in 2005, individual wolves were about 170 times more likely to kill cattle than were individual coyotes or bears**. Individual wolves were about **21 times more likely to kill cattle than were individual mountain lions in 2005**.

Because gray wolves occupy only limited portions of the U.S., most livestock producers will never be exposed to wolf predation on their stock. But for those producers who graze stock in wolf country, this analysis suggests wolf predation may be a much bigger concern than predation by other species. In terms of prioritizing resources, wildlife damage managers should recognize that responding to wolf depredation problems may in some cases take precedence over dealing with problems caused by other predators.

(***Bold** type substituted for missing Table 2)

Outdoorsmen Document Surplus Wolf Kills

Hunters Comment on Declining Elk Harvests

By George Dovel



Cow elk killed by wolf that opened her up, removed unborn calf and ate it. She was still barely alive when found.



Bull elk killed by two wolves after he tossed one of them into the air. The wolves ate only a few bites and left.

In 2007 IDFG Large Carnivore Coordinator Steve Nadeau announced that Department biologists lacked sufficient evidence to indicate that wolves were having an impact on Idaho elk populations. He said the Department had no plans to reduce the number of wolves once wolf management was turned over to Idaho and indicated it might take several years of monitoring radio-collared elk to accumulate that kind of evidence.

Several North Idaho outdoorsmen, who observed increased wolf predation on elk and deer as the number of wolves rapidly increased, began carrying a camera or at least a cell phone with picture taking capability to record what they saw. One recorded bone marrow content and another documented cow elk killed in late winter when the wolves removed and consumed the unborn calf but ate little or nothing else on the cow.

I documented this practice by grizzly bears in May in the Central Yellowstone Park elk herd between Canyon and Old Faithful 39 years ago. We observed bears easily run down and kill pregnant cow elk that were close to calving and I published photos of four tiny partially covered legs that were all that was left of the fetus.

A number of the current photos are identifiable as wolf kills from the telltale bites missing from the nose/mouth area and/or the slashing of flanks by sharp teeth that exposed the intestines. Yet when these photos were published on the www.saveoure elk.com website, a self-proclaimed expert from Alberta wrote the following:

Dear Tony and Rick,

I was amazed at the misinformation you guys are spewing on the internet about wolves. I'm sure there must

be a motive here for wanting to exterminate Idaho wolves, other than what you're claiming?You tell me!

I am a hunter of 40 plus years from Alberta, Canada I spend a great amount of time in the bush and on several occasions had the opportunity to observe the same wolf pack from a distance. I am very familiar with the Sand Hills pack near Calgary Alberta and know the area they call home like the back of my hand. I have yet to see the kind of carnage you claim created by these wolves.

FYI, I am not a wolf lover nor do I belong to any 'save the wolf group' but I do believe they play an important role in our eco-system. If not for natural predators our forests would be overrun with ungulates. Disease, overgrazing, deer/vehicle collisions would all be on the rise. Wolves help keep nature in balance and are highly successful in controlling deer/moose/elk populations and weeding out the weak, sick animals.

I have no explanation for the pictures you post of rotten elk on your website but I highly doubt that this is the work of wolves. A wolf will waste nothing and clean every last bit of meat off a carcass, they do not kill for pleasure as would you or I, only for survival. I have personally watched over wolf kills and they keep coming back until there is nothing left.

Alberta has a problem with too many elk in and around the town site of Banff national park. Every year elk cause thousands of dollars damage to golf course, private and commercial property. During the rut the bulls are very aggressive and we often read that an elk has attacked a tourist that got too close for a picture. Why? The elk in Banff have no natural enemies. Though there are a few different wolf packs in the Bow Valley Corridor they will not come in or near the town site of Banff. Yes, it is a problem but can you imagine the magnitude of this

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Surplus Wolf Killing...*continued from page 17*

situation if there were no wolves at all in Banff National Park??? Ten fold I'm sure!

Another option our park rangers were toying with was sterilization, thank God they opted not to take this route. It's always been my belief you don't mess with mother nature.

Ron Grover

However well-intentioned Mr. Grover may be, He is guilty of repeating what he has heard or read – rather than what he knows is fact – and he, and others like him, must share the guilt for the destruction of our wonderful history of wildlife conservation and wise use. He uses Banff National Park to illustrate his point yet ignores the fact that, in his own hunting area along the East side of the Rockies, Alberta is planning to shoot a number of wolves, including wolf pups, to restore deer, elk and moose populations that are in a predator pit.

A spokesman for Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Darcy Whiteside, reminded critics, “While a wolf is a beautiful animal to look at, it can cause a lot of damage,” and added, “No one has a problem swatting a mosquito!” The Alberta government was similarly criticized in 2006 when it starting killing 170 wolves near Hinton in order to protect the threatened woodland caribou population, which had declined by two-thirds.

When Mr. Grover repeats the tired cliché “It has always been my belief you don't mess with mother nature,” he ignores the fact that wise people who “messed” with “mother nature” provided him with his high standard of living while doubling his expected life span.

Tony and Rick Mayer who maintain the “Save Our Elk” website are trying to help gather the required number of signatures to get the initiative directing state agencies to discontinue wolf recovery on the ballot. But the decision by the environmental groups not to seek an injunction or even file their lawsuit until it is too late to gather more signatures, may have dealt a mortal blow to the initiative sponsors for the second time in two years.

With the media reporting that states now have control of their wolf populations and less than 30 days to gather thousands more signatures, adding paid signature gatherers to the volunteers may be needed to convince enough voters to sign. The website maintained by the Mayers is reportedly reaching thousands of people, with letters like the following indicating agreement with their goal:

Tony,

I have to hand it to you on doing a great job of explaining and showing pictures of the situation in Idaho. I have been hunting deer and elk in the Frank Church Wilderness for over 20 years. This past season, I hunted and hiked hard for 4 days over rough terrain and to places

that only a horse or a boot could get me. Over those 4 days, I saw only one fresh elk track. This was unprecedented only 3 years ago in the same area. Granted, there has been a good deal of damage due to fires, but the wolf sign was overwhelming. Wolf tracks, wolf scat, and dead carcasses littered the area.

As a result of my last season hunt, I have decided to hunt Colorado in the future for deer and elk. I still love the Idaho wilderness, but the poor hunting has forced me to look elsewhere. Just for your information, I was not the only hunter who had a poor season last Fall in Idaho. Of the hunters I encountered in the Frank Church Wilderness area (over 20 different groups), only one hunter had even seen an elk. Almost all had seen wolf sign.

The decision to reintroduce the wolf into Idaho about 15 years ago will soon come home to roost in the form of loss of revenue for Idaho Fish and Game through the sale of out of state licenses and tags. Additionally, the state's economy will suffer from the loss of business revenue from hunters like me who normally purchase up to \$1000 of food, lodging, and fuel while in the state for 7 - 10 days.

I wish you luck on your initiative. I also wish I could vote in Idaho.

Regards,

Lee Futch
Arcadia, LA

Gentlemen,

You have a great idea. I'm hopeful, but not optimistic. Years of misinformation and lies are very difficult to overcome. Being from Wyoming, I have been actively involved in the struggle to at least slow down the carnage from the very beginning of this scam. I really think that the reintroduction goes much deeper than just reestablishing wolves in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem.

The one species that you left out in the slide show was the Shiras moose. In those parts of Wyoming where wolves have been introduced moose populations have plummeted. I am of the belief that moose will be the first species impacted enough to seriously limit or stop hunting altogether. I'm sure that the party line explaining the decline will be bad winters (if we have snow), drought (if we don't have snow) and the ever popular "human encroachment". Whichever excuse they use will not explain away the fact that the downward spiral of the species coincides exactly with the wolf introduction.

The biggest problem from the start and continuing through today is the inability of sportsman, sporting groups, and the three most impacted states (Idaho, Montana and Wyoming) to unify on any level. I think we would be far ahead of where we are in this conflict if Idaho and Montana wouldn't have rushed forward with an unsatisfactory and unworkable management plan. This placed Wyoming in the third man out position in their fight to classify wolves as predators outside of federally established boundaries thus prolonging the cost and timeframe for a final acceptance.

Good luck with your signature campaign. I certainly appreciate the amount of work and effort that you guys have put into your website. If there is anything that I can do from Wyoming, I would be happy to help.

Sincerely,
Val Jones

George:

I believe the entire predator "push" from grizzly increases in range and numbers; to limiting methods of take of cougars (dogs, on-sight); to federal requirements (in the works as grant requirements) to make cougars invading places like Iowa, Kansas, etc. Protected Native Species and not classified as unprotected so that any take is difficult; to keeping black bears on the Threatened List in LA and FL (and adding other states opportunistically) --- all are seriously jeopardizing 2nd Amendment Rights.

Not only will game numbers (and hence seasons and harvest and license revenue and ancillary expenditures) decrease: hunter participation will necessarily decrease. Then there is the SAFETY EFFECT. Hunters that leave a kill to get equipment to haul it out or to get help will increasingly return to a predator on the kill. Hunters using bows for big game or turkey hunters or predator callers, all sit still and watch INTO the wind. There will be more run-ins with un-harassed grizzlies and cougars and black bears as food dwindles or as rabies or other disease outbreaks ravage the increasing predator population. What hunter will dare to sit and call after hearing how some guy was attacked FROM BEHIND by a grizzly or jumped by a wolf? What parent will let their kid go out after school to hunt alone after reading these accounts of attacks?

All of this will shrink the number of hunters and urban hunters especially. While the rural residents (both hunters and non-hunters) will increasingly want, need, and use guns - the anti-gunners will have a big leg-up as fewer and fewer urban folks hunt and become less vociferous in challenging the take-away activities of anti-gunners and urban mayors. Bottom line is a shrinking contingent of gun users and gun defenders with a concomitant increase in the need for guns in a shrinking rural American population that is more and more subject to the imaginary whims of urban voting blocs.

As an old bureaucrat it looks good for federal growth and bureaucrats that will have less opposition to buying more and more of rural America for everything from re-establishing Native Pre-Columbian Ecosystems to establishing "Corridors" and "Roadless" "Wildernesses" as more rural areas are evacuated. The only "winners" will be bureaucrats, politicians, and the rich land-buying aristocrats. The environmentalists and the animal rights radicals never "win" because they will never be "happy" until they are the only ones left and that will never happen. I am reminded of that great line by Eli Wallach (the bandit chief in *The Magnificent Seven*). As Yul Brynner invites Wallach to move on and leave the villagers alone, Wallach says "If God did not want them shorn, he would not have made them sheep!" For too long we have been sheep

Jim Beers

Editor:

I have been an outfitter in Salmon, Idaho for over 30 years and have seen the change! In 1996 our Unit 28 opening week saw 10 hunters harvest 9 bull elk. 1- 7x7, 6- 6x6's and 2- 5x5's. All Mature bulls, all happy hunters! Eleven years later after the wolves have been here, this season (2007) we harvested only one spike bull and four deer out of 20 total hunters. On my first three hunts, I went 15 days horseback guiding and never saw an elk!! Almost all of the hunters never wanted to see Idaho again, yes very upset!

I wonder what this is doing to the economy of our small towns in Idaho and I hear this from my friends, locals and pretty much everyone I talk to. I have yet to run into anyone on the trails, dirt roads, paved roads or on Main Street that came to our county to see a wolf! I guess most of them are in New York City watching them on TV as I have yet to meet one here, much less see them spend a dollar in our communities!

I know as a fact there are hundreds or maybe thousands of elk hunters that will not return! Wow, wolves really do impact the economy of small Idaho towns! I have talked and pleaded with our Fish & Game Department in the Salmon Region to no avail. They say basically nothing can be done? A few wolves have been taken out by the Feds only because of Beef kills. Not one wolf that I know of has been taken out because of Elk kills.

About 6 years ago while lion hunting in my area in winter on snowmobile, I found 9 dead elk (8 cow elk and one 6 X 6 bull) on Silver Creek Road (a 14 mile stretch) all killed within a week in my opinion. All were killed by a pack of about 8 wolves in my opinion, by the tracks around the kills, the way the elk were killed, and the fact I lived with the pack in the area constantly.

Wolf tracks everywhere, some of the elk eaten, some not, most had intestines pulled out some didn't. All typical wolf kills I was used to seeing. Not one was covered by snow or brush as lions do. Almost all had their noses pulled off, as usual for a wolf kill as I was used to seeing.

A lion had never pulled a nose off an elk that I had ever found. Lions had never killed over 2 to 3 deer (hardly ever an elk) on the 14 mile stretch of this road in the course of a winter during the 20 + years I had been there! Also no lion tracks were found by me and my lion hunters over a 2 week period in the area when the elk were found.

Obviously a case of binge killing by the wolf pack that was in there. I would swear to this on a stack of Bibles then and today, they were killed by the pack in the area!

On my way out on snow machines with my hunter that day I ran into Jason Husselman (now Idaho Fish and Game wolf biologist in the Salmon Office) who was then doing a wolf study under Gary Power (now Idaho Fish and Game Commissioner in the Salmon Region). I told Jason about the 9 dead elk on Silver Creek Road and said that, in my opinion, they were all killed by the pack of 8 wolves in the area. He said he would check the kills as he was doing the study on the impact of wolves on big game in the area.

On my return a few days later, I ran into him on snow machines again. I asked him if he saw the elk kills on

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Surplus Wolf Killing...continued from page 19

Silver Creek and he said that he did. I asked him what he wrote down in his study reports. He said he determined that all 9 elk were killed by lion and that he wrote it down as such in his reports on the wolf study he was doing under Gary Power.

I was floored to say the least and asked him if he was for the wolves or against them. He told me he was for the introduction of wolves and wanted them in Idaho. The important thing to remember here is; if the 9 wolf kills on Silver Creek road that week were reported as lion kills, what about the rest of the wolf kill study in the whole Salmon area that winter?

Now both these guys are pulling good wages and have been for years, working for the Idaho Fish & Game Dept. I hope they are proud of their study. I just wanted them to know I didn't forget about that special moment. Believe me I never will. Thanks for the opportunity to tell you my story. Feel free to send it to anyone you please.

Sincerely,
Shane McAfee

IDFG "Transparency"

By George Dovel

On February 29, 2008 well-known Utah wildlife ecologist Dr. Charles Kay was contacted by an Idaho sportsman group with a request for scientific data on wolf kill rates on elk and asked to provide a comparison of the projected elk kill by wolves in the three Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery States with elk harvest by hunters in those same states.

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Although I was not involved in the request, Dr. Kay sent me the following copy of his email to IDFG dated Feb, 29th to see if I knew how to access that information.

Dear Sirs-----I have checked your website and I could not locate a figure for how many total elk were harvested in Idaho in 2006. Would it be possible for you to provide me with that figure??

Thank you for this consideration.
Charles Kay Utah State University

He received a rather terse reply directing him to the published annual big game hunter harvest reports which, of course, he had already checked out and I explained that several years ago the IDFG Wildlife Bureau had ceased publishing total annual harvest statistics and it requires someone with mathematical skills and a knowledge of harvest statistics to spend several hours interpolating the data to get an estimate of the total. I also explained that IDFG had inserted a provision in the contract that the provider of harvest statistics could not provide that information to anyone outside IDFG without forfeiting its contract.

Dr. Kay advised that he had accessed the information from Montana with mild difficulty and the information was available from Wyoming, including hunter stats and a 10-year comparison of harvests, in less than one minute after typing the request in a Google search.

This subject of IDFG transparency will be discussed in more detail in the April issue and the Final Legislative Report and an interesting article on Nevada predator control issues will also be included.

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