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New Revelations about Reintroduced Wolves

By George Dovel

In the early 1980s the 197-page unpublished research report, "Wolves of Central Idaho," surfaced. In it, co-authors Timm Kaminski and Jerome Hansen estimated that elk and deer populations in six of the nine national forests in the proposed Central Idaho Wolf Recovery Area could support a total of 219 wolves without decreasing existing deer and elk populations in those forests.

They based this on an estimated 16.6 deer or elk killed by each wolf annually, and on estimated increases in elk and/or deer populations from 1981-1985 in the two-thirds of forests where they had increased.

But even if their estimated prey numbers and calculations were accurate, their report said only 17 wolves could be maintained in the Salmon National Forest, five in the Challis NF, and none in the Panhandle, Sawtooth and Bitterroot Forests. Yet the obvious question of what to do when the number of wolves in any National Forest or game management unit exceeded the ability of the prey base to support them was not adequately addressed.

Relocating "Problem" Wolves in Idaho Wilderness

Although there were increased reports of sightings of single wolves or pairs in Idaho during the late 1970s and early 80s and credible reports of at least two wolf packs with pups, no confirmed wolf depredation on livestock had been recorded for nearly half a century. Realizing that livestock killing would occur as wolf numbers increased, Kaminski and Hansen recommended relocating livestock-killing wolves into the central Idaho wilderness areas.

That was written more than 25 years ago yet the recommendation was still followed by FWS and the Nez Perce Tribal wolf managers even after wilderness elk populations had been decimated by severe winters, excessive hunter harvest and excessive wolf populations.

In September of 2001, Idaho F&G Commissioner Alex Irby complained that FWS relocated two breeding pairs of "problem" wolves from Montana to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness despite the fact that the number of elk hunters there had "been capped for several years due to declining herds." But Tribal Wolf Recovery Leader Kurt Mack responded that these and other livestock-killing wolves probably wouldn't remain in the wilderness very long and were released there "to keep them out of trouble temporarily until they relocated someplace else."

Wolf Impact on Big Game Populations Ignored

Tribal, FWS and State biologists all ignored wolf expert David Mech's warning that relocating wolves that killed livestock did not stop their killing livestock. Transplanting even more wolves into areas like the Selway and Lolo Zones, with inadequate elk calf survival to support any wolves, guaranteed an accelerated decline in the elk population and the exploitation of alternate prey.

At a Predator-Prey Symposium in Boise, Idaho on Jan. 8, 1999, the featured speaker – North America's top wild ungulate authority Dr. Valerius Geist – spent two hours explaining to federal, state and university wildlife biologists why wolf populations must be carefully controlled to maintain a healthy population of their prey species. Idaho biologists and members of the Idaho Wolf Oversight Committee appeared to listen carefully – but later invented excuses not to follow his expert advice.

"New" Wolf Plan Prohibited Hunting Wolves

In the 2002 Legislative session, Idaho Senate Resources Committee Chairman Laird Noh introduced legislation to approve his Wolf Oversight Committee's seventeenth version of a proposed Idaho Wolf Plan. Previous similar versions had been rejected by both Idaho legislators and several former Wolf Committee members but alarming increases in wolf numbers convinced some groups that a state wolf plan that offered no solution was better than no plan at all.

The Wolf Plan promoted by Sen. Noh would not have allowed wolf hunting until five years after delisting occurred and Idaho assumed management. It included the statement, "The plan must satisfy the USFWS, wolf advocacy groups...and a diverse public," and gave IDFG full authority to update the plan solely at its discretion without Legislative oversight or accountability.

Two reviewers of the Plan, each with several decades of wolf research experience (Mech and Boertje) both predicted that Idaho wolves would multiply far beyond the alleged management goal of 10-20 packs before delisting. Boertje added that conflicts with too many wolves was probably the greatest threat to the responsible future conservation of wolves in Idaho and said pre-wolf prey data was vital to estimate wolf impact on elk and deer.

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Major Wolf Plan Flaws Corrected in Senate

Despite the pressure to pass the Plan that was written explicitly to please USFWS and pro-wolf extremists, a motion to amend it succeeded. Senators Bartlett (Judy Boyle), Brandt and Hawkins re-wrote parts of the Plan to shift the emphasis to protecting Idaho big game herds, livestock, property rights, and the physical and economic well-being of Idaho citizens as spelled out in the Idaho Constitution.

The Plan, which became official on March 15, 2002, directed the Idaho F&G Commission, with assistance from the Governors Office of Species Conservation (OSC), to: “begin immediate discussions with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to define unacceptable levels of effect on ungulate populations by wolf predation; specifically, they will define how these effects would be measured, and will identify possible solutions.”

Even before amendment, the Plan directed the Idaho Fish and Game Department (IDFG) to conduct *annual* census of selected important prey populations to include at least total population estimates and age-sex ratios, along with the annual census of wolf populations. As Alaska wolf researcher Rod Boertje emphasized in his review of the Plan, comparison of that prey data with data from pre-wolf introduction was of paramount importance in estimating the impact of wolves on prey.

Increased funding was approved by the Idaho Legislature for annual deer and elk census flights yet they were not conducted every year. Instead, IDFG biologists continued an unsuccessful effort to prove that declining habitat – not wolf predation – was the primary reason for both declining elk numbers and unhealthy calf-to-cow ratios in a growing number of elk units.

Idaho Is Allowed to Kill Wolves Impacting Elk

In 2005 the Department of Interior announced that all of the criteria for delisting wolves had been met in December of 2002. On February 7, 2005 FWS promulgated a new version of the 10J (Nonessential Experimental) Rule which allowed states with approved wolf plans to take over management of wolves under the new provisions until wolves were delisted.

On January 5, 2006, four years after the Idaho Wolf Plan was adopted, Interior Secretary Gail Norton and Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) giving Idaho broad powers to manage wolves including the following:

“The State will begin to implement its federally approved Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan of 2002 to the extent possible as permitted by the 10(j) rule.

B. The State shall:

6. Implement lethal control or translocation of wolves to reduce impacts on wild ungulates in accordance with the process outlined in the amended 10(j) rule.”

Before the Wolf Plan was adopted in 2002, the Idaho F&G Commission had already significantly cut the number of elk hunters allowed to hunt in the Lolo Zone, the Selway Zone and the Middle Fork Zone by placing caps on the number of tags that could be sold in those three elk zones. Total elk numbers and the percentage of surviving calves were severely declining in the Lolo Zone by the end of 1997 and the Commission capped the number of B-Tag (rifle) hunters for the 1998 elk hunting season at less than one-third the previous seven year average.

Sales of both “A” and “B” Elk Tags were capped beginning in 2000 and 2001 in the other two Zones for the same reason. That is why the 2002 amended Wolf Plan required the F&G Commission, with help from the OSC, to immediately obtain any requirements from FWS to reduce the impact of excessive wolf numbers on elk.

Later IDFG Big Game Manager Lonk Kuck told the Commission and the media that a specific decline in an elk herd over a five-year period was the IDFG criteria for removing wolves. Although some Idaho big game hunters and their elected officials saw the 2006 Agreement with DOI as the answer to halt declining deer and elk populations, IDFG Large Carnivore Coordinator Steve Nadeau continued to insist IDFG had no evidence that wolves were causing the elk declines.

The following FWS charts of minimum fall (end-of-year) wolf population estimates and minimum breeding pairs by FWS provide facts to refute Nadeau’s claims:

Minimum Fall Wolf Population by State:

Year	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
State														
MT	66	70	56	49	74	97	123	183	182	152	256	316	422	497
WY	21	40	86	112	107	153	189	217	234	272	252	311	359	302
ID	14	42	71	114	156	187	251	263	345	422	512	673	732	846
TOTAL	101	152	213	275	337	437	563	663	761	846	1020	1300	1513	1645

Breeding Pairs by State:

Year	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
State														
MT	6	7	5	5	7	8	7	17	10	15	19	21	39	34
WY	2	4	9	6	7	12	13	18	16	25	16	25	25	22
ID		3	6	10	10	10	14	14	25	26	36	40	43	39
TOTAL	8	14	20	21	24	30	34	49	51	66	71	86	107	95

The July 1993 Wolf EIS predicted limited impact on elk from a recovered wolf population in the Central Idaho (CID) Recovery Area (estimating a maximum 10% reduction in cow elk hunter harvest and no reduction in bull harvest). This was based on a recovered wolf population of 10 breeding pairs – about 100 wolves.

It was also based on a post-hunting season CID ungulate population of 241,400, including 76,300 elk and 159,500 deer; and on 100 wolves killing only 495 elk (only one elk killed for every 2.36 deer killed). But, instead, the wolves killed nearly four times as many elk as they did deer and that was only one of the flaws in the prediction.

As the FWS charts clearly show, by 2001 there were already twice as many wolves just in known packs as were supposed to exist in a recovered wolf population. And by 2005 there were at least five times as many wolves as were supposed to exist in a recovered population.

If 100 wolves would have required a 10% reduction in cow elk harvest as predicted, five times that many wolves – each killing three times as many elk as had been projected – would methodically destroy the elk herds. And 15 times as much wolf killing of elk as had been predicted in the EIS is exactly what happened while IDFG officials continued to claim wolves were having no impact on elk.

What about the 10J Provision to Remove Wolves Adversely Impacting Elk and Deer Populations?

The 1994 10J Nonessential Experimental Wolf Rule allowed the States to capture and relocate wolves if wolf predation was having an unacceptable impact on wild ungulate populations. The States – not FWS – were responsible for determining an unacceptable level of predation (still in the current rule).

The only FWS criteria for having the wolves relocated were: a) the State must have a wolf plan approved by FWS and b) FWS must assure that removal would not inhibit wolf population growth toward the 10 breeding pair recovery levels. In 2002 Idaho and Montana Wolf Plans were approved by FWS and Idaho had been forced to severely limit the number of general season elk hunters in all nine back country elk units – yet neither state F&G made any effort to reduce elk killing by wolves.

In 2003, FWS changed the 10J Rule to provide for automatic relocation of wolves depleting elk herds on a simple request from either state. Although the minimum estimated wolf population in Idaho was now increasing by nearly 100 admitted wolves every year, the Idaho F&G Commission was ignoring its mandate to preserve, protect and perpetuate Idaho's billion-dollar wild game.

Jim Peek's Fantasy

Wolf Oversight Committee member Dr. Jim Peek, who helped write the five-year-no-hunting Wolf Plan Draft No. 17, frequently publishes selected bits of scientific information mixed with personal opinion suggesting that wolf control is futile. As a University of Idaho wildlife professor, Peek taught future wildlife managers that habitat is always the real cause of declining prey populations regardless of how many are killed by predators.

In 2005 when FWS changed the 10J rule to allow Idaho and Montana to kill wolves, Peek followed the announcement with a media article suggesting that cow elk numbers should be reduced to only 50%-60% of biological carrying capacity. He cited red deer research on a tiny island off the coast of Scotland as proof of his claim that killing off half of the females will produce more and larger newborn male elk calves that can avoid predators and also provide more adult bull elk for hunters to harvest.

Peek's academic credentials establish him as an ungulate and wolf authority, regularly quoted by the media and by wolf advocates who repeat his false claim that wolves have not limited elk harvests in Idaho. Until recent events forced wildlife biologists in Idaho and Montana to admit part of the truth, hunters' lack of success was blamed on the change in elk habits rather than fewer elk.

Decline of the Clearwater Elk Herds

For nearly half a century, more than 45 percent of the elk harvest in Idaho occurred in the north central part of the state in the Clearwater Region. Large forest fires in 1910, 1919 and 1934 replaced timber with brush fields, providing additional winter range in the Clearwater, and this was credited for maintaining the bountiful elk harvest.

But following the end of World War II, the Wildlife Management Institute told the Idaho F&G Commission they must invite nonresidents to harvest excessive elk and deer herds that were damaging the forage in remote back country areas. Although there were some areas that were heavily browsed by abundant mule deer during severe winters, the WMI recommendation was part of a nationwide publicity campaign to create a new market for big game hunting and fishing following the economic slump after the War ended (IDFG Biennial Report).

By advertising in other states and creating several special cheaper classes of nonresident big game licenses, IDFG increased the number of non-resident big game hunters from fewer than 500 in the early 1940s to more than 15,000 in 1968. From 1951-1968 nonresident big game tag/license sales increased by 1,100% while resident big game tag sales remained virtually unchanged.

From 1960, to 1976 when all elk seasons were shortened and cow/calf harvest was halted, the total Idaho elk harvest declined by 75% (Thiessen 1977 Western States Elk Workshop). During that same period calf-to-cow ratios declined to only 25 calves-per-100 cows or less in the Clearwater (Schlegel 1977 Elk Workshop).

The 1964 Clearwater Elk Ecology Study

By 1963, thirteen years of unlimited either-sex elk hunting seasons lasting from the rut in September through the deep snow in December was decimating the back country elk herds. But IDFG biologists insisted that advancing plant succession (transition from brush back to conifers) was causing underweight elk calves that could not survive to be born.

In 1964, F&G initiated an elk ecology study to determine the best method of restoring the land to reproductive forage. According to the research reports, the area studied represented more than half of the elk harvest in the state.

After five years of careful forage evaluation, the researchers found that only 25% of available forage was utilized yet the elk population continued to decline. In the primary elk study area between the Lower Selway and

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Lochsa Rivers (portions of Units 10 and 12), post-hunting season elk numbers dropped from 457 to only 60-80 in that five year period.

More research from 1968-1972 revealed high conception and calf birth rates but very poor post-hunting season calf survival. In 1973 an intensive study was begun to determine the cause of all elk calf deaths in that study area during the first six months of life.

Elk Calves Were Not Born Underweight

Over the next five years, average calf birth weights exceeded the minimum required for 90% survival (Thorn) by 6% and the newborn calves gained about two pounds per day. Yet two-thirds of the calves were killed by predators – 84% of those during the first two weeks after birth when they are most vulnerable.

Of the five predators documented as killing elk calves, black bear killed 75%, mountain lion killed 15% and the other 10% were killed by golden eagle, coyote, bobcat or unknown. Most of the killing was done at night and because black bears were the major predator, with a calculated bear density of two per square mile, it was decided to relocate some of the bears in 1976 to see how it impacted the post hunting season calf-to-cow ratio.

Removing Bears Tripled elk Calf Survival

The elk calf-to-cow ratio was 21-to-100 for the three years preceding the bear removal and it increased to 61-to-100 in 1977 after the bear removal. The 1978 ratio was 51 calves per 100 cows and that reflected the increased number of 1977 female calves that had survived to become yearlings and thereby increase the number of cows.

Researcher Mike Schlegel asked IDFG Director Joe Greenley to authorize incentives for increased bear harvests by hunters and the average elk count in the study area increased from 358 in 1977 to 605 after 1979. Schegel continued his portion of the research through 1985 and, despite bear densities returning to pre-removal numbers, the 1989 aerial census of Units 10 and 12 (later designated as the Lolo Elk Zone) totaled 15,270 elk.

If Prey Numbers Decline Predation Prevents Recovery

The 22-year-long Elk Ecology study concluded that bears and elk had always existed in the study area but in the early 1900s ranchers grazing sheep controlled bear numbers. After the sheep were removed both elk and bears increased but the window of opportunity for black bears to kill newborn calves is limited to two weeks and there were enough calves to offset the impact of spring bear predation.

But once F&G allowed too many cow elk to be harvested, the same number of bears killed the same number of newborn calves which severely impacted the now much smaller elk herd. Schlegel's study cited numerous similar long-term studies that reached the same conclusion (i.e. once the ratio of predator to ungulate becomes excessive, there are no longer enough surviving juveniles to replace normal adult death losses).

Even wolf researcher David Mech published the same long-term research conclusions for Isle Royale moose and Northeast Minnesota whitetails in 1985 and denounced the "Balance of Nature" myth that he helped promote as a graduate student. Yet Jim Peek and his followers in IDFG continued to ignore science and promote reducing cow elk numbers to allegedly increase bull elk numbers.

The Truth about the Decline in Lolo Zone Elk

When IDFG Fisheries Biologist Herb Pollard was appointed as Clearwater Region Supervisor in 1992 the Lolo elk herd was declining and he continued to deplete it by harvesting too many bulls. For several decades, Idaho biologists' justification for continuing to overkill a big game species has been to point out continuing abundant harvest numbers to "prove" the herd is not being depleted.

Lion hunter/logger Rob Donley explained to them that a forest manager with 10,000 harvestable trees in a forest can let loggers cut 1,000 trees each year for 10 years and all looks well from his desk. But in the 11th year there are no mature trees left for the loggers to harvest.

However the concept of sustainable annual harvest appears not to be a part of the biologists' agenda and in 1995 the phone survey reported that Lolo Zone hunters killed a record 1,759 male elk and 168 females with a quota of 150 antlerless permits in Unit 10 and 200 in Unit 12. Local residents were complaining vigorously about the Region-wide decline in elk numbers and the Commission promised to create a study committee to find solutions.

Meanwhile Pollard left the general bull elk season unchanged for 1996 and tested Peek's theory by increasing the number of antlerless elk permits in the Lolo Zone from 350 to 1,900! The phone survey reported only 599 male elk harvested that year plus 638 females.

F&G Denied Winter Losses – Increased Cow Permits

The following winter (1996-97) was very severe in north Idaho and as the snow began to melt local outdoorsmen reported finding heavy winter elk losses along the Lochsa River in Unit 12. They asked Clearwater Wildlife Manager Jay Crenshaw to eliminate the 400 Oct.20-to-Nov. 13 Unit 12 antlerless elk permits to save female breeding stock to rebuild the herd.

Instead, Crenshaw responded in a May 29, 1997 *Lewiston Tribune* article with the claim that IDFG biologists had been monitoring the Lolo Zone elk since January 1997 and said total losses did not exceed the normal 5-10% winter loss. He increased the 400 permits in Unit 12 to 450 beginning Oct. 20 and ending Nov. 24, and kept the same 1,500 permits in Unit 10, with 375 of them good through Nov. 30.

These and similar antlerless controlled hunt elk permits in other Clearwater units could not be justified biologically so all were listed as "Research Study" in the 1997 Big Game Rules. And when hunters in Unit 10 and other Clearwater units complained about the lack of elk, a Dec. 4, 1997 *Tribune* article said: "Aerial and ground

surveys of elk in the northern units of the Clearwater Region last spring showed no signs of unusual winter kill.”

As I explained in the April 2008 *Outdoorsman*, I obtained the “raw” (actual) 1997 and 1998 winter aerial elk counts from the Lolo Zone and other Clearwater Units and noted they were dramatically lower than the previous counts that were conducted in 1989. However Regional Biologist/Statistician George Pauley simply shrugged them off as “an anomaly” (an unexplained deviation from what was expected), and the media was not told the truth about the declining counts.

The Clearwater Citizens Advisory Council (CCAC) was formed and presented its recommendations to the F&G Commission in January 1996 yet no one made an effort to halt the breeding cow elk slaughter in either 1996 or 1997. Despite the increased opportunity in 1997 to harvest up to 1,950 adult female elk and their calves late in the season when they were more vulnerable, both male and female elk harvests took another nose-dive.

IDFG Lolo Zone Elk Harvest Statistics

	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>
Antlerless*	223	166	638	277	7
Antlered*	<u>1268</u>	<u>1759</u>	<u>599</u>	<u>316</u>	<u>264</u>
Total	1491	1925	1237	593	271**

* includes calves

** continuing phone survey (mandatory report showed only 194)

Between hunters, predators and not enough surviving elk calves to replace natural adult losses, by the end of 1997 the Lolo Zone cow elk population had been reduced by 35%. In February of 1998 when IDFG finally admitted the massive elk decline, the CCAC demanded the Commission cap the number of Lolo Zone rifle elk hunters at one-third of the average over the preceding seven years.

But as the following comparison of 1989 and 1998 Lolo Zone elk counts shows, calf survival was down to only 6-1/2 calves per 100 cows compared to 28-1/2 calves per 100 cows in 1989. Capping the number of rifle hunters was a band-aid solution comparable to closing the barn door after the horses have already gotten out.

IDFG Lolo Zone Elk Population Surveys

<u>Survey Year</u>	<u>Cows</u>	<u>Bulls</u>	<u>Calves</u>	<u>Total</u>
1989	10113	2265	2890	15270
1997 & 1998	6529	743	433	7746

And despite the cap and an end to antlerless permits in the Lolo Zone, the adoption of the A-B Zone Tag system of elk management beginning in 1998 allowed unlimited numbers of general season A-Tag archery hunters to kill elk of either sex in a 32-day Aug-Sept general season during the rut. Archery hunters immediately began killing large numbers of six-point bulls as well as a few cows during the rut and their success ratio jumped well above that of the October rifle bull hunters.

The ~3,000 Lolo Zone elk hunters who could no longer hunt with a rifle had several options: (a) buy an archery stamp and archery equipment and learn to hunt with a bow; (b) hunt in another zone such as the Panhandle Zone and create hunter congestion there; (c) apply for a limited number of special privilege permits for a reasonable chance to harvest elk elsewhere in hopes of beating the poor drawing odds; or (d) give up elk hunting.

Colorado warned members of the Idaho Elk Team that Colorado’s A-B-(C) Tag system was not intended to manage elk and deer but was designed solely to add revenue from 200,000 additional nonresident elk hunters and distribute hunters equally in three (now four) separate seasons to prevent overcrowding. Yet IDFG and the Commission adopted the system and used it immediately to mismanage Lolo Zone elk – increasing the harvest of scarce breeding bulls and cows by hunting them in the rut for the first time in decades.

While Idaho encouraged hunters to buy an archery stamp and deplete the remaining breeding stock, Colorado halted antlerless elk harvest for a period of time and used antler point restrictions to increase its elk herds. Both state agencies were money-hungry but Idaho sacrificed its elk for a quick buck using Peek’s theory as an excuse while Colorado rebuilt its elk herd to the point where it harvested three times as many elk as Idaho did in 2008.

Did A 35% Reduction in Cows Improve Calf and Bull Survival As Peek Suggested?

Following the extreme 1992-93 winter elk and deer losses south of the Salmon River and the 1996-97 winter losses north of the Salmon River, Idaho biologists pretended the 1980s adult male and female populations were excessive and used the depleted adult female numbers to establish elk cow objectives in their 1998-2003 Elk and Deer Plans. Instead of admitting their failure to mitigate the losses, they could show the depleted adult female populations were meeting new management objectives.

The Lolo Zone objective for adult females was set at 6,100-9,100 with 1,300-1,900 for bulls (a ratio of ~20 bulls per 100 cows). When I asked the Elk and Deer Teams why they did not establish a minimum surviving calf/fawn objective, biologists responded that this varied so much from year to year that they paid little or no attention to it!

Did reducing cow elk numbers by 35% produce more and larger bull elk calves that could avoid predators and thereby provide more mature bulls for hunters to harvest as Professor Peek suggested? The short answer is “No”.

Annual elk harvests in the Lolo Zone in the 11 years since then have averaged only 272 and the 2003 and 2006 helicopter counts each totaled only half of the *minimum* 6,100 cow objective. Yet IDFG has thus far accomplished nothing to correct the problem.

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Despite the fact that predators have killed 30-80% of radio-collared elk calves in F&G studies since 1997 (Zager 2001, 2008), Clearwater Elk Researcher Pete Zager, Regional Supervisor Groen and, of course, Professor Peek continued to claim that declining habitat was causing the declining elk herds. For nine years as Regional Supervisor, and continuing as State Director, Groen has used the media to promote his “Clearwater Elk Habitat Initiative” which was supposed to restore healthy elk populations to the Clearwater regardless of predation.

New Idaho F&G Revelations about Wolves

In 2008, Groen announced the Department’s intention not to reduce the number of wolves and to keep Idaho’s wilderness areas saturated with wolves to provide more wolves in surrounding areas. But on Feb. 5, 2009, Groen told the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee (JFAC) that, because of wolves, Idaho’s deer and elk populations are decreasing at the rate of 15% per year!

He also told them that without wolves the herds would be *increasing* at seven percent per year. Then he said that wolf packs have become overcrowded and wolves are beginning to kill each other. On Feb. 18, 2009, Lance Hebdon and Assistant IDFG Director Sharon Kiefer answered a request from Senate Resources Committee Chairman Gary Schroeder with a report stating that wolves are costing Idaho up to \$24 million per year in lost revenue from elk hunters.

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

New Facts Do Not Alter 20 Years of Mismanagement

The sudden admission of these facts about the impact of wolves on elk and deer does not alter two decades of ignoring science and mismanaging the elk. Jim Peek and wolf preservationist allies in IDFG had already given all the information I have discussed in this article to Defenders of Wildlife’s Suzanne Stone and others who are using it to oppose reducing the number of wolves.

When IDFG issued a draft proposal on Jan. 24, 2006 to kill a maximum of 43 wolves in the Lolo Zone it cited cow elk numbers below objectives in Units 10, 12 and 17 (Selway Zone). Stone responded correctly that F&G – not wolves – had deliberately caused the decline by increasing the cow harvest in these units “in order to increase calf recruitment” (implementing Peek’s theory).

She pointed out, as I and others have, the statistically inadequate sample size of the radio-collared cow elk (less than 2%) and said correctly that the plan still

implied that habitat is the root cause. She cited Groen’s Clearwater Habitat Initiative statement, “It will likely take a decade or more of habitat treatments to make a detectable difference on a basin-wide (or herd) scale,” as further “proof” that killing wolves now is not justified.

Peek: Wolf Predation “No Big Deal” to Elk Hunters

Stone and others also quoted Peek in both their 2006 and 2008 objections to IDFG killing wolves: “*Elk populations across the upper Clearwater apparently peaked in the late 1980s, after which surveys of numbers and of cow-calf ratios showed declines. This occurred well before the introduction of wolves...there is very little evidence that the presence of wolves has caused a decline in elk numbers anywhere, especially in Central Idaho.*”

These quotes by Peek were also printed in a Jan. 12, 2007 *Idaho Mountain Express* report of a teleconference with regional wildlife experts hosted by Defenders of Wildlife. According to the article, Peek said it's too early to tell how much wolves will influence elk populations in the long run and while there may be "some lower levels of elk, it won't be a big deal from the standpoint of a hunter."

New Montana FW&P Revelations about Wolves

After eliminating the sale of over-the-counter female deer tags in Montana’s Region 2 earlier this spring because of declining whitetails caused by wolves, in June Reg. 2 FWP Wildlife Manager Mike Thompson announced the lowest surviving calf-to-cow elk ratios they have ever counted in the Bitterroot. Thompson said that a reduced elk harvest last fall, a very mild winter and substantially increased wolf numbers all indicate that predation was the probable cause of poor calf survival.

Why Admit the Facts They Have Been Hiding?

Hunters and their elected officials who interpret these revelations as a change in management philosophy may not understand the agencies’ real reasons for admitting the truth about wolf predation. Because Idaho and Montana agreed to act as agents of FWS for at least the next five years in managing wolves for FWS, they have inherited several serious problems including how to address the loss of hunting license revenue caused by wolves depleting the game herds.

As wolf experts predicted in 2001, wolf numbers have expanded beyond their carrying capacity and are quickly decimating their wild prey base in both states. There is not adequate federal funding to monitor them and their prey – much less pay the cost for Wildlife Services to investigate the rapidly increasing livestock losses and locate and kill the offending wolves.

The animal rights groups that FWS and the State agencies have embraced for two decades have no intention of allowing wolves to be controlled in the lower 48 States any more than they did in Alaska. They have already won the battle to reverse wolf delisting in the Western Great Lakes and even if they fail in their request to the

Missoula Judge for an injunction to halt wolf hunting, they have promised to appeal it to the Ninth Circuit which has also been friendly to their cause.

A Benevolent “Mother Nature” That Balances Wildlife in Ecosystems is a Figment of Disney’s Imagination

After “being in bed” with animal rights preservationists and sharing their “far out” philosophies for their entire careers, too many state wildlife biologists lack the ability to embrace science and facts. In Idaho, Groen continues to ignore decades of undisputed scientific wolf research and blames too many wolves killing too many elk on human interference with “Mother Nature.”

When Mike Schlegel conducted the Clearwater Elk research in the 1970s he truthfully reported that Clearwater elk had been overharvested and concluded that spring bear predation prevented the elk from recovering because there were too few elk for the number of bears. Although Department biologists were as opposed to predator control then as they are now, Director Joe Greenley eliminated extended seasons, special privilege hunts and antlerless hunting and increased bear harvest until the Lolo Zone elk herd recovered.

Yet 20 years later SW Region Supervisor Al VanVooren referred to Schlegel as “a traitor” and criticized Greenley’s elimination of special privilege hunts. Today no one in the agency will admit that the Clearwater elk were overharvested again, which created a predator-prey imbalance (predator pit) from which the animals cannot recover.

Several years ago Utah’s Deputy Director told the Idaho Fish and Game Commission they must stop killing adult female elk or deer in order to justify controlling predators that are killing those elk or deer. Yet these basic principles of scientific wildlife management have been replaced with an irrational form of ecosystem worship which holds that if native predators and native vegetation are preserved and protected, ecosystems will “balance” themselves.

IDFG Refuses to Control Predators of Big Game

For several decades these dedicated “wildlifers” who call themselves “professional wildlife managers,” have refused to control predators of any big game species unless the killing can be classified as a scientific experiment, or the control is being accomplished to protect human life livestock or other property. Allowing hunters to kill a few extra bears, lions or wolves is somehow acceptable but arranging for Wildlife Services to control those same predators or pay a bounty to hunters in order to restore healthy elk populations is not.

Although game fish are a valued form of wildlife, Idaho wildlife managers readily pay bounties on them to increase populations of other species. For example in the world famous rainbow trout fishery in Lake Pend Oreille F&G currently pays a \$15 bounty on all lake trout and on all rainbow trout over 13 inches long.

As an added incentive for fishermen to catch even more rainbows to reduce predation on kokanee, on June 5, 2009 F&G announced it had implanted special tags in the heads of 100 Pend Oreille rainbow trout that are worth from \$50 to \$1,000 each. Biologists know bounties work but they have elevated large carnivores to a status comparable to humans and use excuses not to control them.

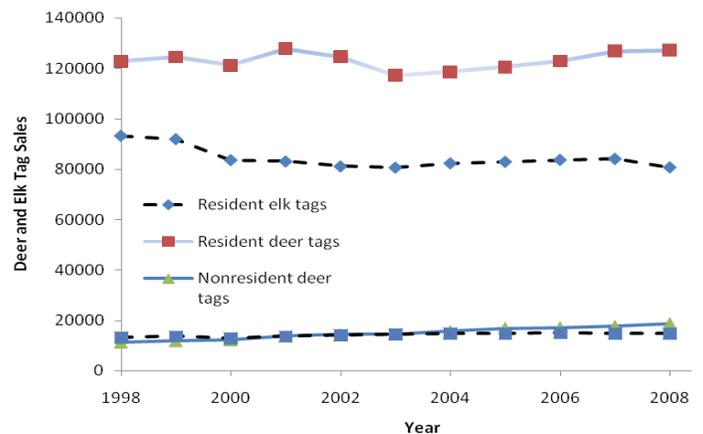
F&G Sells Opportunity to Harvest Scarce Females

The basic requirement for managing elk and deer is to establish an optimum population level consistent with the forage that is available during a normal year, and retain enough adult females, mature breeding males and surviving juveniles to maintain that population level. Minimum objectives were carefully established for adult male and female deer and elk in 1998 yet they are being ignored in order to increase income.

For the price of an archery or muzzleloader permit or a controlled hunt application fee, the agency charged with perpetuating wild game allows hunters to kill scarce female breeding stock that are vital to perpetuate the herds. How can F&G convince a judge that wolves must be killed because they are killing adult female cow elk whose numbers are below the minimum management objective, when F&G is allowing hunters to kill those same cow elk instead of protecting them?

Idaho Resident Elk Tag Sales Declining

The IDFG report sent to Senator Schroeder on Feb. 16, 2009 states: “From the perspective of the Department’s budget, sales of big game tags have been relatively constant over the past 10 years.” While the revenue may be constant due to fee increases, no change in the nonresident elk tag quota and a 1,500 increase in the nonresident deer tag quota, the following graph included in the report indicates significant declines in resident elk tag sales:



A sharp decline in resident elk tag sales occurred in 2000-2001 when several thousand more resident elk hunters were prohibited from hunting in seven more of the back country elk hunting units. As the impact of wolves on elk increased, another decline began in 2008.

Idaho F&G Minimizes Wolf Impact on Elk

Says Wolves Contribute to Elk Declines in Two of 29 Elk Zones

By George Dovel

(NOTE: During the last week in May we received several letters and emails from *Outdoorsman* readers who expressed anger concerning one of two letters received from IDFG by their elk hunting friends or family members who live in other states, and which were forwarded to us.

One of the letters, dated May 18, 2009 and signed by IDFG Communications Chief Mike Keckler, contained a control number on the front and nine multiple choice questions on the back asking why the recipient had not yet purchased a 2009 Idaho hunting license.

The second letter, also typed on IDFG letterhead, was undated and unsigned but also referenced the survey and offered reasons why the recipient should hunt in Idaho. One of the reasons appeared to imply that wolves have been shown to contribute to declines in elk numbers in (*only*) two of the 29 elk zones and that in (*the* 27) other elk zones, numbers are holding up or actually increasing.

Everyone who sent us a copy felt that, although the words in parentheses were not included, the intent of the letter was to deliberately mislead the potential license buyer about the wolf impact on Idaho elk herds. The second letter is printed below to let you decide whether it is an innocent solicitation or a deliberate misrepresentation of what an Idaho elk hunter should expect to find. – ED)

Idaho invites you for a great hunting experience this fall. The wild beauty and herds of big game will be waiting for you.

Bring your hunting buddies this time or bring the family along. Idaho offers one of the country's best deals for young hunters: just \$30 for a junior mentored hunting license (ages 12 through 17); \$20 for a junior mentored deer tag; and \$38 for a junior mentored elk tag. Someone who may want to share the trip but not the hunt can enjoy a wide range of activities from fishing for bright fall steelhead to lounging in one of Idaho's world-class resorts.

With all the publicity about wolves in Idaho, some have wondered what is happening to our famous elk herds. Truth is, in two of our 29 elk zones, wolves have been shown to contribute to declines in elk numbers and our Fish and Game Commission is acting aggressively to address those problem areas. In other elk zones, numbers are holding up or actually increasing. And this fall Idaho will likely be able to offer you a wolf tag for the possibility of a mixed bag hunt.

To apply for a controlled big game hunt with some of Idaho's highest hunter success rates, you need to move quickly. The application period closes June 5. But Idaho remains one of the few states to offer over-the-counter elk, deer, bear and (likely) wolf tags. And don't be surprised if you find a trophy animal in these general hunts – Idaho's uniquely diverse and remote landscape ensures a treasure could be found anywhere.

Many hunters appreciate helping to fund Idaho's Access Yes! Program by taking part in our Super Hunt drawings. (See accompanying brochure.) Super Hunt winners can hunt statewide in any open hunt – general or controlled. Funds raised through the Super Hunt drawings are used to open access to and through private land. Deadlines for these drawings are looming so don't wait.

To look for statistics, hunting areas and fees go to fishandgame.idaho.gov and use the Hunt Planner. Licenses and tags are available through any Idaho Fish and Game office and at more than 300 private vendors. (No service fee.)

To help us respond to your concerns and needs, please take a few minutes to answer the short survey enclosed.

(NOTE: The following letter reportedly sent to IDFG Communications Chief Mike Keckler by a former Idaho nonresident elk hunter is one of several forwarded to us. – ED)

Mike,

Thanks for your interest in my hunting habits. I appreciate, and share, your concern for the wildlife and economy of Idaho.

I must let you know from the outset that I am an avid fan of the Idaho Wilderness. I have been a licensed hunter in your state for over 20 years, with few exceptions. The exceptions were due to family health matters, or military deployments.

I last hunted in your state in 2007, for deer, elk, and bear. During that hunt, which was in Big Game Unit 27, I noticed a vastly different environment from previous years. There was a significant fire in the area that I had traditionally hunted, which eliminated a large majority of the cover that elk require. Armed with the knowledge that there would be no elk in that particular area due to the fire, I opted for another area within the unit, which I was somewhat familiar with. After a full day of pre-season scouting, I had not seen a single fresh elk track. However, I had observed several elk carcasses, ripped apart, as well as a ton of wolf tracks, and wolf scat,

On the second day of my hunt, just after a light snow, I hiked several miles along a U.S. Forest Service trail. During my hike, I encountered no fresh deer or elk tracks. Instead, I encountered the non-stop trail of a wolf.

During my 4 day hunt, I never saw, or heard, an elk. I met many hunters during my stay, none of whom had seen an elk. During one of the hunter-to-hunter conversations, I was informed that the number of elk killed in Colorado each year is greater than the entire elk herd in Idaho. This was news to me, and was a catalyst for change.

2009 Legislative Bills

By George Dovel

After the hunt, I made contact with a group of Idahoans that is highlighting the damage that the wolves are doing on the big game population there. The pictures, which I am sure were authentic, as well as their stories of wolves killing multiple animals in deep snow were shocking. These stories and images taken near Stanley, Idaho, were enough to answer all the questions I had about why there were very few elk in Unit 27.

As you can see, from my letter, I have made some hard decisions about hunting elk in Idaho. Although I hated to admit it, it appeared that elk hunting in Unit 27 was a waste of time. I understand from your letter that the state is taking some measures to control the wolf problem in some areas. I expect these efforts to be met with opposition from environmentalists, and ultimately fail. In any case, the effort to control wolves in Idaho is too little, too late for my hunting party (from 5 to 10 hunters total, depending upon the year).

I opted for SW Colorado last season, and for future elk hunts. I am sure that I speak for the remainder of my entire hunting party with regard to future elk hunts in Idaho. Thanks for your interest in my elk hunting preferences. I hope that the information I have provided will be of use to those who make decisions regarding the protection of wolves in Idaho.

Regards,

(Name and address on file)

(NOTE: I hope that at least some of the Idaho F&G Commissioners have already read the above letter from an ex Idaho elk hunter. I published it to remind them that despite their rhetoric the Commissioners have done nothing to protect Idaho's dwindling big game herds from excessive wolf predation and cannot hope to lure repeat hunters with flowery letters that don't tell the whole truth.

I could have published some of the angry emails we received from knowledgeable residents who asked how the Fish and Game Director could tell the legislature that wolves were causing an annual 15% decline in deer and elk populations – yet approve sending a letter soliciting money from elk hunters by implying that everything is rosy in the vast majority of elk zones.

The letter didn't bother to mention that they are not radio-collaring any elk in 18 of the 29 elk zones and don't have a clue how many cows and calves are being killed by wolves in most zones. Nor did it mention that hunter numbers have been capped in several of the 18 zones because of low cow and calf survival.

And the letter also neglected to mention that in five of the 11 zones where elk are radio-collared, wolves and cougar – not hunters – are killing most of the collared elk that die. Finally, it failed to mention that, since the study began, only six of the 11 zones have achieved the 85% survival of radio-collared cow elk that is considered normal. – ED)

House Joint Memorials adopted by the Idaho Legislature and sent to Congress, the President and/or his Cabinet and the Idaho Congressional Delegation during the marathon 2009 session that officially adjourned on May 8th include the following:

HJM 1 – Urging the U.S. to honor its commitment to delist wolves, expressing support for the draft final rule, urging the Administration to withdraw its suspension of publication of the rule; directing IDFG to take all lawful action to control wolf-caused depredation and, pending delisting, to make annual reports to the Legislature relating to the economic impacts of wolf predation. (Opposed by Reps. Pasley-Stuart and Ringo; Voice Vote in Senate)

HJM 3 – Urging both houses of Congress to cease and desist attempting to enact federal legislation impinging on the individual right to keep and bear arms. (64-0-6 in House, Voice approval in Senate)

HJM 4 – Claiming sovereignty under the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States over all powers not otherwise enumerated and granted to the federal government by the Constitution. (Opposed by Reps. Boe, Burgoyne, Chavez, Chew, Cronin, Durst, Jaquet, Killen, King, Pasley-Stuart, Patrick, Pence, Ringo, Ruchti, Rusche, Sayler, Smith[30]; Voice vote in Senate)

HJM 5 – Opposing any proposed federal legislation similar to the Clean Water Restoration Act of 2007 and urging Congress not to enact any similar legislation. (Adopted by voice vote in both Houses)

HB 138 – Adds to existing law relating to actions for negligence to provide for negligence actions against certain individuals in the event of injury or death to a person caused by a nonnative animal species or subspecies introduced into the state of Idaho by a governmental agency. (House passed 46-24-0 **NAYS** -- Boe, Burgoyne, Chavez, Chew, Cronin, Durst, Eskridge, Gibbs, Higgins, Jaquet, Killen, King, Luker, Pasley-Stuart, Pence, Ringo, Ruchti, Rusche, Sayler, Smith(30), Smith(24), Thayne, Trail, Wood [27]); Rep. Phil Hart's bill held in Senate Judiciary Committee without a hearing by Chairman Denton Darrington)

HB 239 – Deletes the five year residency requirements for Seniors. Rep. Barrett's bill was held in House Resources Committee without a hearing by Chairman Stevenson.

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Wolves, Wyoming, and Where We Go From Here

By Harriet M. Hageman and Kara Brighton, Hageman and Brighton, P.C.

On April 2, 2009 the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) issued yet another “Final Rule” in the ongoing wolf “reintroduction” disaster. The latest FWS decision was issued in an obvious attempt to appease the environmentalists’ hand-picked Montana federal district court judge who attempted to erect a major roadblock to delisting by concluding that there was insufficient “genetic exchange” between wolf “subpopulations,” that Wyoming had “failed to commit” to managing for at least 15 breeding pairs, that there were alleged problems with the size of Wyoming’s trophy game area, and criticism of Wyoming’s steadfast decision to designate wolves as predators in part of the State (i.e., those areas of Wyoming that the FWS identified as “unsuitable” for wolf habitat).

The FWS’s latest effort to foist the responsibility and expense of managing the non-native Canadian gray wolves onto the States is to “delist” such animals in Idaho and Montana, as well as parts of Washington, Oregon and Utah, and to retain them as a “non-essential experimental” population in Wyoming.

The only real consistency in the FWS’s actions related to the Canadian gray wolf population is its consistency in making a bad situation worse at every turn. The latest decision is no exception, and only confirms that the federal government’s foray into wildlife management will, in the long run, result in the annihilation of many of our elk and moose herds, will end hunting as we know it, will financially ruin many of our outfitters and guides, and will force livestock producers out of business.

While those in the “environmental” community may cheer the last three side effects mentioned above, the long-term legacy of the “wolf introduction experiment” will be anything but positive, and will include the subdivision of some of the most beautiful open spaces left in the Western United States, and the loss of wildlife corridors and habitat. We will be able to thank the federal government, organizations such as “Defenders of Wildlife” (aka “Defenders of Predators,” and “Predators R Us”), and the wolves for spawning 35 to 100-acre “ranchettes,” for increasing the fire load and danger (from a lack of grazing) in our already high-risk national forests and other federal lands, and for destroying the livelihoods of the very people who have actually dedicated themselves, their careers and their businesses to increasing, protecting, and supporting our wildlife populations.

The latest “Final Rule” is yet another step in the wrong direction, and confirms that the FWS and the “environmental” groups never intended to abide by the recovery goals — 300 wolves evenly distributed between Wyoming, Montana and Idaho — with Wyoming’s 100

wolves to be distributed in and around the Yellowstone National Park area. They have now established that the real goal of introducing this non-native predator into our midst was part of the broader agenda of controlling our wildlife; of limiting access, use, and management of vast swaths of federal and private lands; and of furthering their radical mantra of “cattle free by ninety-three.”

The FWS estimates that, as of 2008, the Canadian gray wolf population exceeded 1600 head in Idaho (846), Montana (491) and Wyoming (302). According to the FWS’s 2009 Final Rule, “[t]hese numbers are about 5 times higher than the minimum population recovery goal and 3 times higher than the minimum breeding pair recovery goal.” Further, “[t]he end of 2008 will mark the ninth consecutive year the population has exceeded our numeric and distributional recovery goals.” The FWS has historically underestimated the actual number of wolves in the three States, so the foregoing numbers should be seen for what they are — minimums.

It has been said that “you can ignore reality, but you cannot ignore the consequences of reality.” While the FWS and the “environmentalists” have made a career of ignoring reality, and of aggressively misrepresenting the real impacts of their failed policies, the consequences of their actions are now becoming apparent, and the tragedy that has unfolded is begging for exposure.

The FWS and “environmentalists” released a killing machine into Wyoming and Idaho (with the Montana wolves being part of a “natural migration”), and that machine has been successful beyond their wildest dreams. On average, an adult wolf will kill and eat 1-2 large animals per month (which does not count the number of animals that they kill for sport — just drop by our office sometime and we will share our photo album). Using the FWS’s minimum estimates, the current wolf population is killing upwards of 3000 animals per month. Simple math is all that we need to understand the impact to our wildlife herds and livestock producers. We are losing close to 40,000 head of animals (wildlife and livestock) every year (if not more), a statistic that the FWS and “environmental” groups neglect to mention when they describe the wolf situation.

Despite the “success” of its predator breeding program, the FWS has refused to allow the State of Wyoming to assume management of the wolves within our borders. The FWS’s decision in that regard — as represented by the 2009 Final Rule — is not based on science; it is not based upon any legitimate concern as to whether Wyoming will be able to maintain a wolf population at or above recovery levels; and it is not based on the requirements of the ESA.

The FWS's "my way or the highway" approach is simple — either Wyoming agrees to do exactly what the FWS says, or we will be punished by being prohibited from assuming control of the wolves. That attitude is significant — and scary — on many different levels.

First, Wyoming is not an arm of the FWS and should not be forced (blackmailed) into acting like one. The only prerequisite to Wyoming managing the wolf population is that it have a program in place to protect a recovered gray wolf population. Wyoming's management program meets that obligation.

Whether the FWS and "environmental" groups like Wyoming's plan is irrelevant. The numbers are the only objective benchmark, we have met the recovery goals, and our plan will work — a fact that has been confirmed by nine wolf experts hand-picked by the FWS.

Second, the FWS is attempting to force Wyoming to assume all of the obligations for wolf management (with related expenses to exceed one million dollars), while retaining all of the decision-making authority with the brain-trust in Washington, D.C. This "obligation with no authority" approach is so obviously flawed that it requires no further comment.

Finally, the wolf situation is a disaster and the FWS knows it. The extent of the destruction caused by the Canadian gray wolf will only become more apparent with time. Wyoming's plan provides the only real and effective chance we have to protect Wyoming's wildlife, our outfitting industry, our sportsmen groups and our livestock producers.

If Wyoming were to cave now — and adopt the FWS's wish list — the resulting damage will most likely be irreversible, and we will make one final prediction: the FWS will eventually move to take over ownership and responsibility for the wildlife in Wyoming, arguing that everything was fine until Wyoming took over the wolves, at which point our elk, moose, and wild sheep populations cratered. The FWS and "environmental" groups will then push to add such wildlife to the list of "endangered" species, and seek to curtail "man's" activities, including hunting and grazing of livestock, for their "benefit." Rest assured, they will not seek to control the predators that created the problem in the first place.

We represent the Wyoming Wolf Coalition, which is made up of agricultural interests, the Wyoming Conservation Districts, outfitter associations, sportsmen groups, and predator boards. We plan to file a Motion to Intervene on their behalf in the lawsuit that was recently filed by the State of Wyoming challenging the FWS's Final Rule. That challenge is primarily directed to the FWS's decision to reject the State's wolf management program and to refuse to delist wolves in Wyoming. We continue to believe that the wolves should be delisted, and management turned over to the State. Wyoming cannot afford, however, to assume such responsibility if it does

not have the necessary authority to effectively manage and control this dangerous predator.

The Wolf Coalition members are the front line of defense when it comes to protecting our wildlife, our livestock and our way of life. Many of them have been engaged in this battle since long before the first Canadian gray wolf was hand-carried into the State by Bruce Babbitt. They understand the consequences of capitulating to the FWS's and "environmental" groups' demands. Before anyone else calls for such an action, perhaps they should sit down with the Wolf Coalition and find out the truth about the "success" of the Canadian gray wolf "experiment."

The Partners of Hageman and Brighton focus their practice almost exclusively on water, natural resource, and land use issues, representing clients in Wyoming and Nebraska. They currently represent the "Wolf Coalition" challenging the FWS's Final Rule.

2009 Legislative Bills – continued from page 9

HB 333 – Appropriates \$73,368,000 to the Department of Fish and Game for fiscal year 2010; limits the number of full-time equivalent positions to 528; directs the transfer of \$200,000 from the Winter Feeding Set-aside Fund to the Depredation Control Set-aside Fund; appropriates an additional \$2,112,000 to the Department of Fish and Game for fiscal year 2010; and directs a salary reduction. (House passed 47-20-3 **NAYS** -- Andrus, Barrett, Boyle, Clark, Crane, Durst, Hagedorn, Hart, Harwood, Higgins, Loertscher, Marriott, Mathews, Nielsen, Palmer, Schaefer, Simpson, Thompson, Trail, Wood(35); passed Senate 32-0-3)

SB 1015 – Requires the Department of Fish and Game to make contact with certain agencies of other states within 30 days for the purpose of soliciting the transfer of wolves; and those states pay all costs. (Senate passed 31-1-3 **NAYS**—Bock; passed House 53-12-5 **NAYS** -- Boe, Burgoyne, Chavez, Chew, Higgins, Killen, Pasley-Stuart, Ringo, Ruchti, Rusche, Saylor, Smith(30)

SB 1020 – Prohibits persons who have unlawfully taken wildlife from purchasing unlawfully taken wildlife. (Senate passed 33-0-2; House passed 64-1-5 **NAYS** -- Boyle

SB 1022 – Increase big game meat processing fees paid by violators (Senate passed 34-0-1; House passed 65-0-5)

SB 1141 as amended twice. The original IDFG fee increase bill purported to raise all license, tag, permit fees, etc. 20% but actually raised some fees several hundred percent. When it was determined it would not pass without amendment IDFG provided a new version
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2009 Legislative Bills – continued from page 11

which it said would increase fees by only 15% – and which would not have increased certain fees such as the resident combination hunting and fishing license.

The amended version that finally passed the Senate on April 1st increased most nonresident fees at least 20% and some more than 100%, but did not increase resident fees. There were several new fees charged to residents (e.g. sage and sharptail grouse) plus a \$4.50 application fee to apply to purchase controlled hunt bonus or preference points.

The amended bill authorized the Fish and Game Commission to establish procedures for the purchase of controlled hunt bonus or preference points. When asked why such broad power was given to the Commission, one legislator responded that its rule could always be overturned at the next legislative session.

Based on past experience, it will require careful monitoring of the temporary rules process and insistence on providing input to the Rules Subcommittee, just as it did in this session to get IDFG’s overly restrictive wolf harvest rules rejected in SCR 104 and SCR 105.

The Idaho Legislature also passed several bills that reinforced Idaho citizens’ Second Amendment Right as individual citizens to own, carry and use firearms. These bills will be briefly described in a future issue.

If you are a hunter and plan to continue to participate in public hunting and pass that legacy on to future generations, you can no longer depend on someone else to get the job done. The next Outdoorsman will outline a few simple steps you must take to halt our wildlife managers’ destruction of the wildlife you share ownership of.

The only place you can put a stop to their misguided agenda is in the political arena at the level where you are closest to your government and still have a voice. If you aren’t willing to join the battle using facts, and continue to support the distribution of those facts, I suggest you give it up and make hunting a spectator sport by tuning in the Outdoor Channel.

I urge you to share your knowledge with others and that includes sharing your Outdoorsman with friends, or making a few copies and passing them around. To the few who have donated recently, you are helping to make this possible.

Be sure to read the next issue.

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