

**SUBJECT:** Information Item: Annual Update on Wisconsin Wolf Management

**FOR:** AUGUST, 2011 BOARD MEETING

**TO BE PRESENTED BY / TITLE:** Adrian Wydeven/Mammalian Ecologist

**SUMMARY:**

The Natural Resource Board approved the Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan in October 1999, and approved the Wolf Management Plan update in June 2006. The Board has asked for annual updates on wolf management activity in the state, but no update was done in 2010.

Adrian Wydeven, Endangered Resources Mammal Ecologist and coordinator of the Wisconsin wolf management program will provide updates on growth and expansion of the wolf population, new federal wolf delisting proposal, wolf depredation management, and discussion on wolf management with key stakeholders..

**RECOMMENDATION:** Information item, no action needed.

**LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:**

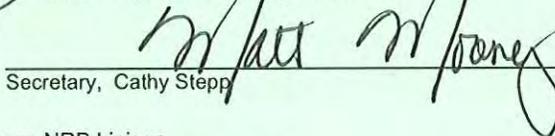
- No  Fiscal Estimate Required
- No  Environmental Assessment or Impact Statement Required
- No  Background Memo

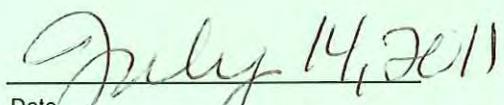
- Yes  Attached
- Yes  Attached
- Yes  Attached

**APPROVED:**

  
Bureau Director, Laurie Osterndorf, ER

  
Administrator, Kurt Thiede, Lands

  
Secretary, Cathy Stepp

  
Date July 14, 2011

July 19, 2011  
Date

7/20/11  
Date

cc: NRB Liaison  
DNR Rules Coordinator  
Lance Potter, ER/6

DATE: June 13, 2011

TO: Natural Resource Board

FROM: Cathy Stepp

SUBJECT: Wolf Management Update

FILE REF: 1700

The Natural Resource Board approved the *Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan* in October 1999 and approved an addendum/update to the plan in 2006 and 2007. In 2004, the Board approved removal of gray wolves from the state list of endangered and threatened species and listed the species as a protected wild animal. The 1999 wolf plan and its addendum in 2007 are adequate for immediate management of gray wolves when federal delisting is completed.

**2010-2011 Winter wolf count.** As conducted every winter since 1979-1980, the Department again completed its annual wolf count this winter using radio tracking of collared wolves, snow track surveys, and collecting public observations of wolves. In winter 2010-2011, 782-824 wolves were counted in Wisconsin, compared to 25 in 1980, and about 700 last year. Although population growth seems to be slowing down in recent years, the wolf population is still continuing to increase in the state.

**Federal Wolf Listing.** Gray wolves were initially listed as endangered in our region by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1974. They were downlisted to threatened status for 19 months in 2003 - 2005, delisted for 19 months in 2007-2008, and delisted for 2 months in 2009. On May 5, 2011 the USFWS began another effort to delist wolves in Wisconsin and the Western Great Lakes region. The 60 day comment period for the proposed delisting rule ended on July 5, 2011. USFWS plans to have gray wolves delisted in the Great Lakes area by the end 2011. As currently written, the proposed rule suggests that two distinct species - the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) and the eastern wolf (*Canis lycaon*) - are living together as separate species that hybridize in the region. However, the eastern wolf was first designated as a distinct species within the last 10-12 years, and considerable scientific debate still exists whether *Canis lycaon* is a separate species or rather a subspecies of gray wolf. Whether a species or subspecies, most scientists agree that the eastern wolf exists in its pure form only in southern Ontario or Quebec. In our comments to the USFWS, we have stressed that we feel the wolf in our region appears and behaves as a single species and should be delisted as such. We also have stressed that the delisting of gray wolves in the Western Great Lakes region should be kept separate from any other actions of reclassifying of gray or eastern wolves.

**Wolf Depredation Management.** In 2010, wolves depredated on 47 farms in the state resulting in death to 63 cattle, six sheep, and six deer (farm deer), as well as injury to five cattle and one goat. Wolves also attacked dogs near 14 homes resulting in death to six dogs and injury to ten. Attacks also occurred in hunting and training situations on 20 occasions, resulting in death of 19 dogs and injury to four others. The Department did not have authority to euthanize wolves causing depredation to livestock or pets in 2010, but did have authority to euthanize wolves that represented threats to human safety. USDA-Wildlife Services and DNR euthanized 16 wolves in human safety situations in 2010. In other depredation situations, USDA-WS relied on scare devices, fladry (special fencing placed around pastures), hazing, change in farming practices, and some trapping and collaring for monitoring purposes. One example of a scare device is a RAG (radio activated guards) box that is set out to make noise when

radio-collared wolves approach livestock. The Department initiated a new web-site list serve whereby a person can sign up in order to be notified whenever wolf depredations occur on dogs as well as any caution areas designated by the Department. Periodic updates on livestock depredation are also listed on the web site.

Through the end of June 2011, wolves have depredated dogs on four occasions, killing three dogs and injuring three dogs. Two wolves were captured and euthanized in human safety situations.

Wisconsin law requires that DNR pay compensation for verified livestock and domestic animal losses. The Bureau of Endangered Resources has paid \$1,083,163 for wolf depredation since 1985, with damage payments totaling \$203,943.51 in 2010 alone.

USDA-Wildlife Service (WS) investigates suspected wolf depredations in Wisconsin and provides advice and assistance to farmers and anyone having wolf depredation to domestic animals. When authorized by federal government or when wolves are delisted, WS will also capture problem wolves. A congressional federal funding directive for WS wolf depredation control in the Great Lakes region has been eliminated, resulting in a loss of \$267,000 in WS funding for Wisconsin and elimination of the services that WS currently provides. WDNR is attempting to locate funds to contract services of USDA-WS to continue their work.

**Wolf Management Discussions.** Meetings were held with the Wisconsin Wolf Stakeholders on April 17 2010, and April 16, 2011 to discuss updates on wolf population and changing federal status. A meeting was held with the Conservation Congress, Wolf Advisory Committee on October 8, 2010 to discuss wolf management and issues affecting wolf management. The Wisconsin Wolf Science Advisory Committee last met on June 9, 2010 to review population surveys, discuss and review ongoing research, and plan new research. We are planning to have the Wolf Science Committee meet in late summer or fall 2011.