

- When the management population objective is achieved in a region (Phase III), wolf population monitoring in that region will transition to counting the number of wolf packs present in the state. A pack is defined as four or more wolves traveling together in winter.

Management Phases

Phase I management activities will be directed toward achieving the conservation population objective of four breeding pairs of wolves present in eastern Oregon for three consecutive years. During this phase, wolves will continue to be listed under the Oregon ESA. Once the conservation population objective is achieved, the process to consider delisting will be initiated.

A breeding pair of wolves is defined as an adult male and an adult female with at least two pups surviving to the end of December. The number of wolves associated with a breeding pair can vary from six-14 wolves (USFWS 2002, 2003). In Idaho, the number of wolf packs represented by a breeding pair varied between 1.5 - 1.63 packs per breeding pair during the period 2002-2004. The average pack size was reported to be 6.4 - 7.8 wolves per pack. Idaho data applied to Oregon wolf population objectives suggests the following: four breeding pairs equates to 6 - 6.5 packs. This number of packs would be equivalent to 38.4 - 50.7 wolves. Seven breeding pairs equates to 10.5 - 11.4 packs. This number of packs would be equivalent to 67.2 - 89 wolves.

Under the Oregon ESA, either the state may on its own initiate the process to consider delisting, or any entity or person may petition the Commission to consider it. Considering delisting requires a public rulemaking process before the Commission, complete with full public notice, public hearing, and opportunity to submit comments. The law requires the Commission to base any delisting decision on scientific criteria related to the species' biological status in Oregon and to use documented and verifiable scientific information.

If at the end of the process the Commission decides that delisting is justified, the Commission will specify where the conservation population objectives have and have not been met. After delisting and removal of Oregon ESA protections, if western Oregon has not met the conservation population objective, the Commission will continue to manage wolves in that area under a management regime that replicates Oregon ESA protections for individual wolves. Specifically, such a management regime generally will prohibit take of wolves, except as authorized by the Commission for damage and human safety. That management regime will continue until the Commission determines that western Oregon has achieved the conservation population objective, or until this Plan is amended through a public rulemaking process. The management regime for western Oregon is based upon the Commission's statutory authority to regulate the take of wildlife. Even when a species is reclassified as a game mammal, the Commission retains the authority to regulate (and, where appropriate, prohibit) take of that species as necessary.

Phase II management activities will be directed toward achieving the management population objective of seven breeding pairs of wolves present in eastern Oregon for three consecutive years. During this phase, the wolf no longer will be listed. This phase provides a buffer whereby management actions would be initiated to prevent an unexpected decline in the wolf population that could necessitate relisting under the Oregon ESA.

Federal Wolf Delisting Saga for Rocky Mountain and Northwestern States

- Apr 2003: Final Rule published designating a Western DPS (including all of WA, OR, UT, CO, MT, ID, WY) and downlisting that DPS to "Threatened" status. This included a 4(d) rule that allowed for wolf control to address chronic livestock depredation.
- Jan 2005: Western DPS Rule is enjoined and vacated by Oregon Court. Wolves return to federal endangered status.
- Feb 2007: Proposed rule published on FWS's intent to designate a Northern Rocky Mountains (NRM) DPS and to remove that DPS from the ESA list (i.e., delist).
- Mar 2008: Final rule published designating and delisting the NRM DPS. Wolves delisted in ID, MT, WY, eastern OR, & eastern WA.
- Jul 2008: Injunction placed on the NRM DPS Rule by Montana court. Wolves return to federal endangered status.
- May 2009: NRM DPS final rule is reissued, but Wyoming is excluded. Wolves delisted again in ID, MT, eastern OR, & eastern WA.
- Aug 2010: Montana Court invalidates NRM DPS rule. Wolves return to federal endangered status.
- May 2011: Congress reinstates the May 2009 NRM DPS rule (not subject to judicial review). Wolves delisted again in ID, MT, eastern OR, & eastern WA.
- Sep 2012: Final rule published delisting wolves in Wyoming.
- Sep 2014: DC Court invalidates the Wyoming wolf delisting rule. Wolves return to federal endangered status in WY.