



# Idaho Department of Fish and Game **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **OP-ED:**

### **Idaho's Wildlife Professionals to Advocacy Groups: Stop Crying Wolf**

By Virgil Moore, Director, Idaho Fish and Game

It's important for state agencies to understand and respect differing points of view. But when a few advocacy groups try to grab headlines by skewing Idaho Fish and Game scientific wolf monitoring data in ways that simply aren't true, it's also important to set the record straight.

Here are the facts:

- Idaho has more than 100 documented wolf packs and over 600 wolves. Idaho's wolf population far exceeds federal recovery levels of 10 breeding pairs and 100 wolves.
- After meeting federal recovery levels in 2002, Idaho's wolf population grew largely unchecked for the remainder of the decade, resulting in increased conflicts with other big game populations and livestock.
- After 4 harvest seasons since the 2011 delisting, livestock depredations have declined. Wolf predation continues to have unacceptable impacts to some elk populations, but there are signs elk populations are responding positively to wolf management.
- Wolves in Idaho continue to be prolific and resilient. Idaho will keep managing wolves to have a sustainable, delisted population and to reduce conflicts with people, livestock, and other big game populations.

Despite these facts, a few advocacy groups chose to take the breeding pair metric out of context to make claims that Idaho wolves are "teetering on the brink of endangered status once again." That's hogwash. And it's the kind of polarizing misinformation that undermines responsible wildlife conservation and management in Idaho.

Confirming a pack meets U.S. Fish and Wildlife's narrow definition of a "breeding pair" is costly and labor-intensive. With vast reductions in federal funding to the state and Nez Perce

Tribe for wolf monitoring, Fish and Game has focused our effort on demonstrating Idaho has at least 15 “breeding pairs” to comply with federal recovery requirements. Idaho closely surveyed 30 packs and confirmed that 22 of them met the breeding pair standard at the end of 2014. Because Idaho has shown it is well above federal recovery levels, we may rely on less intensive monitoring for the other 70 + packs as we complete our final 2014 population estimates. One can assume these 70+ packs include some additional breeding pairs. We will publish our annual monitoring report in March.

As trained scientists, Idaho Fish and Game stands by our data and our wildlife management plans. We manage wolves to ensure we keep state management authority and address conflicts with people, livestock, and other big game populations.

I hope people who truly care about wildlife conservation ignore the exaggerations and misinformation and help Fish and Game focus on the real issues affecting Idaho’s wildlife.

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