



Department of Natural Resources Fact Sheet



2010-2011 BIENNIAL BUDGET FACT SHEET

Gray Wolf Management

\$220,000 FY 2010 / \$220,000 FY 2011

It is needed because

With the implementation of the Minnesota Wolf Management Plan following the federal delisting of gray wolves in March 2007, the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Division of Fish and Wildlife seeks to improve monitoring of gray wolves for future management actions. In addition, the division seeks funding to support the ongoing depredation control program through a cost share agreement with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Wildlife Services to mitigate livestock losses caused by gray wolves in Minnesota.

Major program elements

The Minnesota Wolf Management Plan identified gray wolf management and research priorities to be implemented when wolves were delisted from the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). This initiative is to establish annual base funding of \$100,000 to monitor and conduct research of the wolf population in Minnesota and \$120,000 for gray wolf control in response to livestock depredation.

DNR has conducted periodic surveys of Minnesota's wolf population since 1978. Current survey techniques require extensive cooperation among agencies throughout Minnesota and are in need of revisions to improve the existing process. DNR can improve the current method of counting wolves in Minnesota with the development of new techniques. A two-year pilot study will assess the feasibility of a promising aerial survey method for enumerating wolves in Minnesota. This method should provide a more accurate assessment of Minnesota's wolf population. The Minnesota Wolf Management Plan identified evaluation of the wolf population survey method as a leading research priority.

Funding for wolf research and monitoring will be used to fulfill the USFWS five-year post-delisting monitoring requirements. During this five-year

period, it is anticipated that wolf management in Minnesota will be closely watched.

Since 1978, federal agencies (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and USDA) have provided essential wolf depredation control in Minnesota. Gray wolf depredation management is a critical component of the Minnesota gray wolf management plan. Current gray wolf control activities are conducted by USDA-Wildlife Services through a cooperative agreement with the DNR. The federal USDA-Wildlife Services budget has experienced an unanticipated reduction in funding. In order to provide the same level of service to Minnesota livestock producers, USDA-Wildlife Services has requested a cost share program with DNR to support wolf depredation control in Minnesota. USDA-Wildlife Services depredation programs typically require a 50/50 cost share agreement with state agencies. Minnesota has successfully argued that depredation control be federally funded throughout the recovery process. To date, DNR has not paid any cost of wolf depredation control, but with the transition to state management supporting this program and maintaining the same level of depredation, relief is necessary.

Priority-setting

- ◆ Maintain an effective and responsive wolf depredation control program;
- ◆ Assess methods for estimating Minnesota's wolf population to increase accuracy and efficiency; and
- ◆ Fulfill 5-year post-delisting monitoring requirements by sampling wolves in different parts of the state to document disease prevalence and mortality factors.

Project locations

Depredation management occurs primarily in the western and southern two-thirds of Minnesota's total wolf range. For research and monitoring purposes

the DNR will target current study areas where there is ongoing wolf research or where research has occurred in the past. Additional study areas will be determined to establish a representative sample of Minnesota wolves.

Key measures and outcomes

Gray Wolf Population Monitoring and Research:

- ◆ Evaluation of proposed wolf survey method
- ◆ Improve accuracy and efficiency of current survey method;
- ◆ Quantify wolf mortality and disease prevalence;
- ◆ Collection and analysis of blood and tissue samples for disease screening and tracking; and
- ◆ Establish partnerships with other agency, tribal, or university researchers.

Depredation:

- ◆ Support existing program to resolve wolf-livestock conflicts;
- ◆ Maintain adequate level of wolf-livestock depredation response;
- ◆ Assist livestock producers and pet owners experiencing losses due to wolf predation;
- ◆ Reduce impacts to livestock producers with verified losses (annually 70 – 100 farmers and pet owners experience wolf damage in Minnesota); and
- ◆ Training of conservation officers and state certified predator controllers.

Financial implications

The Fish and Wildlife Management program budget for FY 2010 is \$67.985 million. The requested annual appropriation of \$220,000 per year is a less than one percent increase. This program is essential in the state's wolf management program.

- ◆ \$120,000 each year for depredation control; and
- ◆ \$100,000 each year for wolf research and monitoring.

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