



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on November 10, 2009

Wolves Will Thrive Despite Recent Hunts

In 1995 the federal government began transplanting Canadian gray wolves into Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. That program touched off a fierce range war that continues to rage, pitting farmers, ranchers, hunters, conservationists, outdoor recreationists, and rural folk against the major environmentalist lobbying organizations, government bureaucrats, the big-city media, and urban politicians.



After being protected for 14 years, limited hunting seasons have finally been allowed for wolves this fall, and around 150 wolves have been taken thus far. Wolf advocates are howling that the permitted hunts are "barbaric" and that [those who kill wolves are "murderers."](#) A coalition of radical environmental groups has challenged, and continues to challenge, the hunts with lawsuits in federal court. (See the list of coalition members at the end of this article.)

Those opposed to the wolf "recovery program" rejoiced when the hunting season finally was announced, but many believe it will barely begin to address the exploding wolf population that is decimating deer, elk, and moose populations, as well as causing havoc with cattle and sheep herds. They point out that wolf population estimates by fish and wildlife officials are notorious for undercounting (i.e., there actually are far more wolves than officially admitted), and even if hunters fill all of the tag quotas, wolf populations will continue to soar.

According to the [Idaho Department of Fish & Game's Wolf Harvest Status Report web page](#) (for November 9, 2009), 92 wolves have been taken thus far, out of the statewide harvest limit of 220 set by the IDFG. Eleven of the 12 wolf zones in the state remain open, with only the Upper Snake Wolf Zone (on the eastern side of the state, bordering Montana, and Wyoming) having closed, due to filled limits. The other zones will remain open until December 31, or until zone limits are filled.

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) officials closed wolf hunting in Wolf Management Unit 2 — which encompasses most of the southern half of the state — on October 26, after 14 wolves were reported killed, two over the 12-wolf limit for that unit. According to the MFWP web site, by November 9, fifty-eight of the statewide quota of seventy-seven had been taken.

When the plan to introduce the Canadian wolves into the United States was adopted, federal officials said the goal was 100 wolves per state, or 300 wolves total. Using that well-proven weapon of bureaucrats and environmentalist lawyers, the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologists argued that there was no reason to get worked up over a few wolves. As soon as ten wolf packs with one breeding pair each were confirmed to have litters for three consecutive years in



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any of the three recovery areas, the wolves in that area would be downgraded on the ESA list from "endangered" to "threatened" status. And when at least ten packs with breeding pairs had successfully brought forth litters in every one of the three states for three years in a row, the wolves would be "delisted," meaning they would be removed completely from the Endangered Species List.

Wolf population already 8-10 times original plan

In a video interview (["Open Season on Idaho Wolves"](#)) with the *New York Times*, Idaho Department of Fish & Game spokesman James W. Unsworth says the IDFG estimates there are now 1,020 wolves in Idaho. "Wolves are very prolific [and] can increase 30-50 percent per year," notes Unsworth. "That's one thing people are missing. We reached biological recovery levels in 2002 of one hundred wolves in each state and ten breeding pairs. We're eight times over those recovery levels, at a very minimum."

At a *minimum*; according to estimates from other sources that are arguably more reliable, the wolf population may actually be double the official figures, or even higher. An important set of articles by George Dovel in the Idaho-based publication, *The Outdoorsman*, ("What They Didn't Tell You About Wolf Recovery," January-March, 2008; and "FWS Biologist Says Wolf Numbers Underestimated; Mech Says 3,000 Wolves Exist in ID, MT & WY," May 2008) provides stunning details of deception by government biologists and officials, including admissions of using fraudulent wolf statistics and counting methods. Dovel's well-researched articles also cite many government documents and peer-reviewed scientific studies showing the government bureaucrats and officials know they are dramatically undercounting wolf populations, as well as drastically undercounting wolf predation on both wild and domestic ungulate herds.

Dovel mentions, for instance, an important study from Alaska's Denali National Park where "biologists found they had been underestimating total wolf numbers by 50% by documenting primarily packs of wolves instead of also documenting dispersing and transient wolves. Yet Idaho biologists continue to ignore the Alaska research and pretend that pups, yearlings and older wolves that emigrate from packs suddenly disappear from the face of the earth just because they are not wearing a radio-tracking collar." In other words, as far as IDFG biologists and officials are concerned, a wolf is not counted as a wolf in their census unless it is identified as a member of an officially identified pack.

One man who is not at all surprised over the brazen statistical deception by the federal and state fish and game departments, is Dr. Charles Kay, a noted author and wildlife biologist. In fact, Professor Kay exposed the fraudulent arguments and statistical chicanery behind the wolf introduction plan back in 1993, before it was implemented. His article in the August, 1993 issue of *Petersen's Hunting* magazine, ["Wolves in the West; what the government doesn't want you to know about wolf recovery."](#) has proven to have been uncannily prescient.

In an attempt to discover how the government had arrived at the figures it gave for the wolf recovery program, Dr. Kay filed a Freedom of Information request with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In response, the agency admitted it had "not contracted or undertaken any studies which deal with minimum viable populations of the Northern Rocky Mountain wolf."

Dr. Kay could find no scientific basis whatsoever for the claims being made by the government officials for the plan to introduce an alien wolf species into the three-state area. He wrote (in 1993, remember):

Because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed its 10 wolf packs, 100 wolf recovery goals with little, or no, supporting evidence, all the government's recent wolf recovery reports, wolf population models, and studies regarding possible impact on big-game hunting are arbitrary and



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capricious. They represent not science but a masterful job of deception.

Dr. Kay has been fully vindicated — and then some. But, at the time he was made to suffer a barrage of defamatory slings and arrows, including a campaign by government officials and environmental extremists to get him fired. (Ed Bangs, the USFWS biologist who still heads the wolf recovery program, spearheaded the attack on Kay, personally calling Kay's department Chairman, as well as the president of the university, in an attempt to get him fired for challenging the USFWS's statistics and phony science.)

Unfortunately, this kind of academic terrorism is far from rare. Many "liberals" who will defend the right of their university colleagues to teach the most ludicrous, perverse, and subversive viewpoints under the guise of "academic freedom," seem to have no problem with vilifying, or even banning and criminalizing, fellow academics who dare to question politically correct dogma on say, for instance (and perhaps most famously), global warming. As regular readers of *The New American* know, some of the world's top scientists in the fields of meteorology, physics, atmospheric physics, astronomy, chemistry, etc. have been subjected to vicious defamatory campaigns for challenging the bogus science put forward to support the hysterical claims of impending catastrophe that allegedly will be caused by anthropogenic climate change. (See [here](#) and [here](#).) Nevertheless, [31,478 American scientists have signed onto a petition](#) urging the U.S. Government to *reject* the Kyoto agreement "and any similar proposals," since they would "harm the environment, hinder the advance of science and technology, and damage the health and welfare of mankind."

In a recent article, ["Wolf Recovery Is Delisting Rigged?"](#) Dr. Kay demonstrates that the culture of deception is still alive and flourishing at USFWS. And even though the radical environmentalist groups can be counted on to attack the federal and state officials pushing the wolf programs, the performances are often about as convincing as WWF/WWE wrestling. As Dr. Kay notes, back when the wolves were being introduced "environmental groups did not object, knowing that 300 wolves would raise less political opposition than 1,500 to 2,000 wolves."

The radical Greens and the government bureaucrats have a symbiotic relationship that often includes some carefully contrived political theater. Professor Kay notes:

If you follow ESA issues, you know that the Greens win most of the lawsuits they file against the USFWS. That could be due to one of two things, incompetent federal biologists or the fact that the USFWS sets the lawsuits up to lose! Here is how it works. The USFWS makes a ruling, like wolf delisting, that appears to favor state or local interests, thereby alleviating political pressure on the agency and calls for Congress to cut the USFWS's budget or revise the Endangered Species Act. The ruling "outrages" the Greens who sue and win, which allows the USFWS to claim that they tried to do the right thing; i.e., what they promised the public in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), but now they can't because they have to comply with the court order.

In three recent articles, ["The High Cost of Predation"](#), ["Wolf Predation: More Bad News,"](#) and ["Predation: Lies, Myths, and Scientific Fraud,"](#) Dr. Kay skewers the wolf fanatics with overwhelming data showing the devastating economic and ecological toll the exploding wolf population is having on Canada, Alaska, and the Rocky Mountain states. With each wolf accounting for an average take of twenty-two elk per year, it doesn't take a math genius to realize that 2,000-3,000 wolves will have a huge impact on elk populations (44,000-66,000 killed per year!). And that's not even mentioning similarly horrendous impacts on moose, deer, caribou, and other game animals.



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Wolf Fanatics Now Demanding 6,000 Wolves?

However, that is far from the end of it; the wolf fanatics, who once accepted the 300-wolf introductory limit are now not even happy with the current wolf populations of eight to ten times that number. As Prof. Kay points out, EarthJustice and other enviro-litigants currently are calling for the federal courts to force the states to accept wolf populations of over 6,000! Let's calculate. Hmmmm, $6,000 \times 22 = 132,000$ elk killed per year. (Plus moose, deer, caribou and other game animals). That hardly seems like a rational way to promote "ecological balance" and "biological diversity."

With such astronomical wolf-kill numbers rapidly becoming a possibility, it is easy to see why organizations like Save the Elk are highly agitated. However, the numbers, as sobering as they are, do not begin to tell the whole story. [Gut-wrenching photos at Save the Elk \(www.saveelk.org\)](http://www.saveelk.org) starkly illustrate the grim reality of the too-frequently romanticized "Call of the Wild." Wolves do not kill only for food; hunting in packs, they are notorious for killing large numbers of elk or deer and just leaving them lie, after devouring only a few choice morsels. This is especially gruesome in the spring when female elk and deer are calving. The cows and does are especially vulnerable then. Unfortunately, the protected wolves, which have been allowed to reach unsustainable levels, are allowed to ravage the unprotected mothers as they try to give birth. All too often both the mothers and the babies are slaughtered — and only their tender internal organs eaten. True, the wolves are only doing what "comes natural" to their kind, but that's the point. For too long the wolves have been presented as the cute, cuddly, furry victims; their raw, dangerous, feral nature and their negative impacts on wildlife ecology have been airbrushed out of existence. Perhaps it's time for some genuine balance?

The members of the coalition of radical environmental groups that have challenged the wolf hunts with lawsuits in federal court include: EarthJustice, Defenders of Wildlife, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity, The Humane Society of the United States, Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance, Friends of the Clearwater, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Oregon Wild, Cascadia Wildlands, Western Watersheds Project, Wildlands Project, and Hells Canyon Preservation Council.

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