Federal Delisting Lawsuit – Selected Quotes from Affidavits by USF&W Wolf Recovery Officials: Edward Bangs, David Mech, PhD., Mark Boyce PhD, Douglas Smith PhD

Bangs

- Yet the overall NRM wolf population has still increased at a rate of 24% annually. (P14)
- If the wolf population continues to grow the number of domestic animals and livestock killed, the economic losses, and the level and cost of agency control required to resolve those conflicts will all occur at an increasingly higher rates. (P14)
- The experts selected to review the earlier recovery goal analysis by Fritts (Service 1994), the State wolf management plans, and the final delisting rule, including the recovery criteria, are recognized as among the most experienced and professional wolf and conservation biologists in North America. Virtually none of those experts ever suggested a wolf population must contain 2,000-5,000 wolves to be considered viable or recovered.(P16)
- The plaintiffs mischaracterized the Oakleaf study, which I was a co-author.P16
- YNP is saturated with wolves and there is simply no room left for wolves to disperse into YNP, logically explaining the past limited evidence of genetic or radio collared wolf dispersal into YNP itself.(P17)
- Within 12 years the GYA went from 41 founders in 1996 to over 453 wolves in 2007.(P18)
- The 2007 Wyoming wolf plan is a solid science-based conservation plan that will adequately conserve Wyoming's share of the GYA wolf population so that the NRM wolf population will never be threatened again.(P20)
- The USFWS has removed problem wolves since 1987 and the wolf population has continued to expand at 24% annually average rate despite an average annual removal of 10% of the wolf population for chronic livestock depredation.(P20)
- Most wolf populations in North America (representing about 60,000 wolves) and in other parts of the world are hunted, trapped, and individual wolves are killed through a wide variety of other methods by people.(P21)

MECH

- It has not been demonstrated that "a substantial reduction" in wolf abundance will occur, and my opinion is that it will not because merely to hold a wolf population stationary requires an annual take of 28-50% per year.(P7)
- Starting with a base population of 1,545 wolves in late 2007 (Final Rule) and adding the average 24% annual increase shown from 1995 through 2006 yields 1,916 wolves expected to be present in fall 2008.(P7)
- (Here I should note that the estimate of 1,545 wolves is a minimum estimate, i.e. there were supposedly a minimum of 1,545 wolves. As wolf populations increase, it becomes increasingly harder to count them accurately and the minimal counts become increasingly lower than actual. Thus a better estimate of the actual population could be about 1,700, and thus the 2008 estimate would be 2,108.)P8

- Assuming the minimum figure and that ID actually takes 328 wolves which is its limit but which seems very unrealistic (Mech 2001) that would still be only 17% of the minimal population.(P8)

- Wolves from YNP have traveled to central Colorado and Utah, and wolves from ID have traveled to Oregon and Washington.(P9)
- In any case, the number of wolves projected to be killed under state management should not jeopardize the viability of the NRM wolf population. Every year, most wolf populations almost double in the spring through the birth of pups (average = 6/litter [Mech 1970]; most packs produce a single litter, but several YNP packs produce 2 or 3 litters per pack). For example in May 2008, there will not be 1,500 but 3000!
- Wolf population estimates are usually made in winter when the population is at the annual nadir. This approach serves to provide conservative estimates and further ensure that management remains conservative. As indicated above, 28-50% of a wolf population must be killed by humans per year (on top of natural mortality) to even hold a wolf population stationary. (P13)

BOYCE

- Since their reintroduction to Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho in 1995, the NRM wolf population has increased by approximately 24% per year despite poaching and removal of wolves that were depredating livestock. P4
- Sustainable harvests of wolves have been demonstrated in many populations in Canada and Alaska, confirming that removals of 40% or more of the population can be sustainable. (P5)
- Wolves have high reproductive capacity. Like dogs, wolves have litters of puppies, typically with 5-9 pups in a litter. Most often we see a single litter per pack each year but when prey are abundant, as in Yellowstone National Park, multiple litters can be produced within a pack of wolves. (P5)
- In Alberta, for example, the provincial government estimates a current population of 7,000 wolves. Wolf harvest is by hunting and legal trapping on registered traplines where 400-800 wolves are removed each year, or about 10% of the population. This low harvest rate occurs even though there is no bag limit during the harvest season on the number of wolves that may be killed by hunters or trappers. Although the number of wolves killed by hunters and trappers is unregulated, this harvest does not limit the population of wolves. (P6)
- To achieve these desired control removals the Alberta Department of Sustainable Resource Development has used aerial gunning from helicopter and poisoning wolves with strychnine baits. These methods of aerial gunning and strychnine poisoning are deemed necessary by the Alberta provincial government because killing by hunting and trapping has been insufficient to reduce wolf numbers. (P6)
- In areas where wolf hunting and trapping is allowed wolves become wary and more difficult to kill. This wariness makes it more difficult for removals by hunters and trappers to have a substantive effect on wolf populations.(P6)

SMITH

- Overall the annual survival rate is 66% for pups, 71% for yearlings, and 82% for adults,(P4)
- we found that YNP wolves kill each other at a high rate (this is the leading cause of mortality for YNP wolves) and that they nearly always adjust to the removal of lost pack members.(P8)
- I fully support delisting of the NRM wolf population as I believe the population is biologically viable, and this is the correct action given policy and statements made to the public throughout this entire process. The goal has been achieved, and as promised, it is time to move on.(P9)