

A Ride to Avoid

by John L. Runft

Enacting a "delisted" wolf management plan under the direction of the USFWS is another ride which Idaho should avoid. The appeals will roll on, so will the delay. There will be the "bevy of the incredulous" who will always say we should again wait. When do the incredulous become suckers? Idaho must act now to extract itself from this federally created disaster. In so doing, one must ask the hard question: What is delisting? What really changes under "Delisting"? Why does the federal government want to turn this mess over to the states? Is there any doubt that it is a mess? The feds have not "controlled" the wolves. The number of wolves has increased approximately 10 fold beyond the original delisting goal, and they continue to increase and expand as the elk herds go into free fall. The feds have done nothing but monitor – not control – the wolves. Any program to truly manage and control the wolves at this stage without the use of poison will be very expensive and most likely not successful. (The Idaho Fish and Game dithers, tries to limit hunting while requesting the construction of a new building headquarters in Boise.)

The fecundity of wolves renders hunting an inadequate tool and the enviros know this. Hunting could wipe out 30% of the wolves every year and those numbers would be easily replaced by the next crop of pups. The expense of exterminating a meaningful number of wolves without poison would be very costly, especially given Idaho's terrain. What kind of political outcry would attend the extermination of, say, 500 wolves? Why should Idaho pay for this cost and take the blame; not only from the wolf advocates for the slaughtering of wolves, but also from Idaho citizens for failing to be able to control the numbers and the immense cost? "Delisting" is nothing but a **label** attached to a federal program to shift the federally created problem to the states, get the states to foot the bill of trying to overcome a federal disaster AND to incur the blame for the consequences. Is there really any doubt but that federal funding will dry up, and that the states will end up footing the bill? Is there any doubt about the huge expense that will be involved in trying to control the wolves under the federally mandated limitations and bureaucratic conditions?

So what is wrong about telling the federal government to spend its own money and incur the blame for its own malfeasance? What is wrong with telling the feds to get this matter under control before shifting it off to the states?

The claim that we must delist or otherwise the wolves will continue to expand is to submit to federal blackmail on the belief that the federal government will actually allow this disaster to continue indefinitely. The feds know that something must be done - and soon. They want to hand the hot potato off to the states. The feds cannot do anything much longer. It is too late for the states to assume this now hugely expensive disaster and pay for it and get blamed for the results. The disaster should be clearly left on the feds' doorstep. Let the feds clean up the mess before considering delisting.

Another very important fact here: By not involving the states in this mess, the focus will clearly be on the feds. The more focus on the feds, the less ability to blame the states. The more focus on the feds, the greater pressure to use fed dollars for control. Let the feds find out how much it will REALLY take to control the wolves – THEN in any consideration of delisting, demand fully appropriated federal funding in that amount to the state before agreeing to any “delisting” proposal. Also, the actual cost and experience that the feds will have in their efforts to really control wolves might well cause a change in the methods available for control, possibly even allowing use of poison.

In summary, it is too late for “delisting” to even be considered by the State of Idaho. To accept “delisting” as it is now contemplated would be an unmitigated disaster. The feds must get this disaster under control before any delisting is considered by the states and then only on the condition of assured appropriated federal funding. Our job is to make our legislators knowledgeable and therefore responsible for their actions in this regard.