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FWP SEEKS CONSERVATION WOLF HUNT PERMIT BY NOVEMBER

Montana wildlife officials have applied for a permit to allow a conservation hunt for wolves and requested that federal authorities deliver the permit by early November.

In a letter to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Dave Risley, administrator of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' fish and wildlife division, states that FWP requests an expedited process to have the permit in hand by early November to enable hunting this year. Such requests usually take 90 days or more for processing.

FWP joined in a federal lawsuit in defense of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2009 decision to delist wolves in Montana and Idaho, but not in Wyoming. U.S. District Judge Donald Molloy in Missoula, however, reinstated federal protections of wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains on Aug. 5.

At least 525 wolves live in Montana and FWP had hoped to reduce the state's year end wolf population to about 450 this year by using a combination of management tools, including hunting.

Risley said the 28-page application is allowed under specific sections of the Endangered Species Act. "FWP seeks authorization to create a conservation hunt to relieve population pressures and associated biological, social, and political pressures that currently jeopardize support of wolf recovery in Montana," he said.

The conservation hunt would be modeled on Montana's planned for 2010 hunting season that had a statewide quota of 186 wolves across a total of 13 wolf management units. In 2009 a total of 72 wolves were harvested by Montana hunters.

The recovery of the wolf in the northern Rockies is one of the most successful and rapid endangered species comebacks on record. In the mid-1990s, to hasten the overall pace of wolf recovery in the Northern Rockies, more than 60 wolves were released into Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho.

The minimum recovery goal for wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains was set at a minimum of 30 breeding pairs—successfully reproducing wolf packs—and a minimum of 300



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individual wolves for at least three consecutive years. This goal was achieved in 2002, and the wolf population has increased every year since.

The wolf population in the Northern Rocky Mountain Recovery Area, which comprises parts of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming, was estimated to be at least 1,706, with 242 packs, and 115 breeding pairs at the end of last year. About 525 wolves were estimated to inhabit Montana, in 100 packs and 34 breeding pairs.

To learn more about Montana's wolf population, visit FWP online at fwp.mt.gov, Click [Montana Wolves](#).

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