

Wyoming's twisting road of wolf recovery

Wyoming epitomizes the roller coaster ride of wolf recovery in the lower United States. In the past two decades, wolves have been absent from the state; reintroduced; protected under the federal Endangered Species Act; removed from such protections, leading to state management with liberal hunting and trapping regulations; protected once again as an endangered species under the ESA; and finally in April, no longer protected, and now managed once again under Wyoming's state wolf plan.

Wyoming's current wolf management plan is unique in that wolves in only ten percent of the state are actually managed under state regulation, leaving wolves in ninety-percent of the state completely unregulated and unprotected. Wyoming's wolf plan designates three wolf management zones outside of Yellowstone National Park and the Wind River Reservation; a Wolf Trophy Game Management Area, where the majority of wolves in Wyoming outside of Yellowstone live; a Seasonal Wolf Trophy Game Management Area; and an area where wolves are designated as predatory animals without any regulation. The plan allows for the killing of wolves in this predator zone without a hunting license, at any time of year, and in any legal manner. Wolves that would use the predator zone for dispersal through Wyoming and into adjacent states such as Colorado may be hindered by such liberal eradication in such a large portion of Wyoming. Whether or not designating such a large predator zone with no regulation in the state's wolf plan can provide the necessary assurance that Wyoming's wolves are sustainable, is controversial and



continues to be heavily debated by the conservation community.

When wolves were being managed by the state prior to recent federal protection, wolves in the Trophy Game Management Area and Seasonal Wolf Trophy Game Management Areas were hunted and trapped. At the present

Wyoming's wolf management plan includes three zones: a protected zone within Yellowstone National Park, a trophy zone in Northwestern Wyoming and a predatory zone encompassing the remainder of the state. *Graphic based on Wyoming Department of Game & Fish graphic.*

time, wolf hunting is not allowed in the Trophy Game Management Area, but wolf hunting and trapping quotas have been proposed by the state and are currently being presented to the public around the state for comment. The current proposed gray wolf season opens October 1 and closes December 31, except in hunting area 12, which opens October 15. The state is recommending a hunting quota of 42 wolves for 2017. The Wyoming Fish and Wildlife Commission will review and approve hunting and trapping regulations this summer and wolves will be hunted and trapped starting October 1.

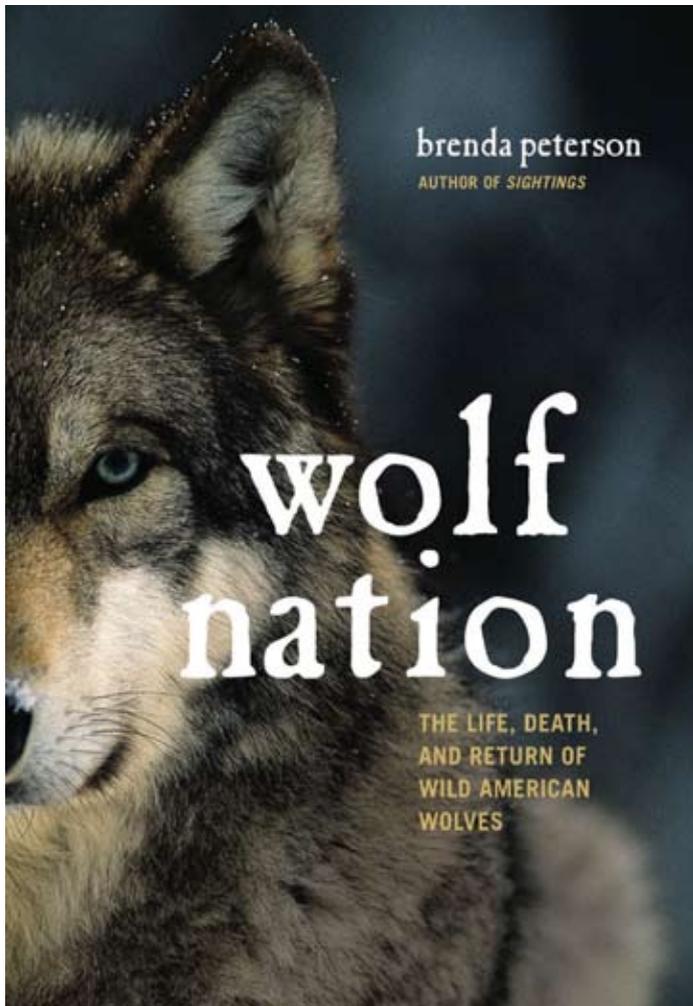
Wolves in Wyoming are part of the Northern Rocky Mountain Distinct

Population Segment (DPS), which also includes wolves in Montana, Idaho, eastern Washington and eastern Oregon. Federal protection for wolves in Montana, Idaho, eastern Washington and eastern Oregon was removed by Congress in 2011, and wolves in these areas have remained without federal protection since that time.

The court's April decision is based upon wolf population numbers meeting the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolf recovery plan minimum thresholds of a minimum of 100 wolves and ten breeding pairs, and their belief that Wyoming's wolf management plan provides adequate regulatory mechanisms for conserving wolves

under its authority. The USFWS will continue to monitor the population for the next five years to ensure recovery criteria are met. The USFWS currently estimates that there are approximately 377 wolves in 52 packs with 25 breeding pairs in Wyoming. Taking annual mortalities into account, biologists in Wyoming believe that a population of at least 160 wolves and 14 breeding pairs is necessary to meet USFWS standards that will prevent wolves in Wyoming needing federal protection once again under the Endangered Species Act. 

– Linda Saunders,
Director of Conservation



Thursday, August 31

Author Brenda Peterson will read from her latest book, *Wolf Nation*, at the Olympia Timberland Library, 313 8th Ave SE, Olympia, WA. She will be joined by Suzanne Stone, Senior Northwest Representative for Defenders of Wildlife. Wolf Haven will host a table at the event, with opening remarks by Wolf Haven International's executive director, Diane Gallegos. The program begins at 7:30 p.m. and is free to the public. For more information, contact Sara Peté at Olympia Timberland Library: spete@trl.org (360) 352-0595.



Brenda Peterson's newest book "Wolf Nation: The Life, Death, and Return of Wild American Wolves", includes a section that follows the transfer of a family of endangered Mexican wolves from Wolf Haven to New Mexico (and ultimately the wild in Mexico).

Also by Brenda Peterson with photography by Annie Musselman: *Wolf Haven and the Future of Wolves in North America* is available for purchase online at wolfhaven.org or amazon.com. Also available in our gift shop. A portion of the proceeds from every book sold will be donated to Wolf Haven.