

Gray Wolves (*Canis lupus*) in California Timber Harvesting Plans May 6, 2015

Background

The gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) was listed as endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) by the California Fish and Game Commission on June 4, 2014. Although historical abundance and distribution of gray wolves in California is poorly understood and reliable records are rare, wolves are considered to have occurred in the Sierra Nevada, southern Cascades, Modoc Plateau, and Klamath Mountains. Gray wolves are large (usually >100 lbs, about 5 ft. long, and 2.5 ft. at shoulder height) and highly mobile (movements of up to 30 miles/day) habitat generalists and are most likely to occur in areas with a significant prey base (ungulates) and low densities of humans. Given that gray wolves have been reestablished in southern Oregon, public and private timberlands in northern California are the most likely areas in which wolves may begin to become reestablished in California.

Ecology

Gray wolves normally live in packs of 2 to 12 individuals that defend territories of approximately 20 to 215 square miles from other wolf packs. However, packs and territories can be significantly larger when prey availability is high and human population density is low. Males and females generally begin breeding at 2 years of age and each wolf pack typically contains only one breeding 'alpha' pair. Most litters average approximately 5 pups that are born in early to mid-spring in dens consisting of sheltered locations such as hollow logs, stumps, rock crevices, or holes in the ground.

Considerations for Timber Harvesting Plans

For purposes of timber harvesting plan (THP) preparation, the gray wolf listing under CESA should be acknowledged in the THP. Furthermore, it should be noted in the THP that wolves are habitat generalists and the historic distribution and abundance in the state are unknown. Sightings of wolves and detection of den/rendezvous sites should be reported to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and acknowledged in the THP. Protection measures for any sighted wolves and identified den and rendezvous sites should be included in Section II of a THP. Consultation with CDFW will be required due to presence of wolves or known wolf den and/or rendezvous sites and the results of that consultation shall be amended into any timber harvesting plan that is affected.

Information compiled from: Gray Wolves in California: An evaluation of historical information, current conditions, potential natural recolonization, and management implications. California Department of Fish and Game, December 2011 and sources cited therein.