From Lemons To Lemonade: The State Of Gray Wolf Conservation And Management In Montana™ˢ

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This winter marks a milestone. Ten years have passed since gray wolves were reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park and the central Idaho wilderness. Whereas biological criteria for recovery in the northern Rockies have been met or exceeded since 2000, approved management plans are required from Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming in order for the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to propose delisting. Lack of an approved plan from Wyoming postpones delisting. Meanwhile, wolf numbers and distribution in Montana and across the northern Rockies have expanded since the early 1980s, both due to natural recolonization in northwest Montana and immigration from Yellowstone   National Park and central Idaho. The State of Montana has begun taking advantage of provisions in federal

regulations that make it possible for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) to become a designated agent of the USFWS. In finalizing cooperative agreements for the northwest Montana "threatened" area and the "experimental" area across southern Montana, FWP has begun implementing as much of the state's approved wolf conservation and management plan as allowed by federal regulations. Making lemonade symbolizes the beginning of the transition from a federal species recovery effort to long-term conservation and management led by FWP and eventual delisting.