

MANAGING MONTANA'S RECOVERED GREY WOLF POPULATION: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, AND HOW™

Carolyn A. Sime and Glenn Erickson
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Kalispell, MT 59901

The Montana Wolf Management Advisory Council was appointed in April 2000 by former Gov. Marc Racicot to advise Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (FWP) as it prepares a management plan for the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) upon federal delisting. The Council was a diverse group, representing the interests of conservationists, hunters, landowners, livestock producers, outfitters, educators, and others. The Council completed their deliberations and presented their *Report to the Governor* to newly-elected Gov. Judy Martz early in 2001. Gov. Martz directed FWP to draft a planning document based on the Council's recommendations. The *Montana Wolf Conservation and Management Planning Document*, now available to the public, follows the Council's goal to develop a management approach and framework that is biologically possible, socially acceptable, and economically feasible. Major issues identified in the planning document address wolf conservation and management, human safety, livestock predation, compensation for livestock losses, funding,

and maintaining Montana's deer, elk and moose populations. The overall approach recognizes the gray wolf as a native species in Montana and as a valuable part of our wildlife heritage. It further seeks to integrate and sustain wolves in suitable habitats within a complex management setting and to responsively address conflicts where and when they develop. The Council's *Report to the Governor and the Montana Wolf Conservation and Management Planning Document* may be downloaded from FWP's website (www.fwp.state.mt.us). In March 2002, FWP begins a nine-month process to formally prepare an environmental impact statement for a final Montana wolf management plan. Comments may be submitted by mail, on-line, or in person at one of the upcoming public open houses. The deadline for comment during the scoping phase of the EIS process is April 30th 2002.