



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Director's Office
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Denver, CO 80216
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April 23, 2024

Middle Park Stockgrowers Association
PO Box 161
Granby, CO 80446

Middle Park Stockgrowers Board:

I have received your letter from April 18th that summarized the depredations that one of your members suffered on April 17th and 18th as well as the suspicions that your members have expressed on other attacks and kills.

In your letter you have made a request to lethally remove two depredating wolves.

I recognize that this has been a particularly challenging experience not only for you and your members but for CPW staff as well with long nights and a lack of quality sleep at a critical time for your operations. At the same time, the industry is dealing with additional stresses. Please know that CPW takes our responsibilities to and our relationships with ranchers and the industry very seriously. We cannot accomplish our mission to perpetuate wildlife without these strong partnerships. It's not lost on me that these very tense times are putting a great deal of strain on our relationships. We hope that no matter what, we can continue to work together to successfully avoid and minimize impacts on the agricultural industry while restoring wolves to Colorado.

The wolf that could be implicated in these depredations is the male of a pair that we believe to be denning. GPS points from the female's collar indicate that she is likely in a den. In early April, GPS points stopped uploading and very recently those points began to upload again. The points for this female's collar are showing a very localized position. The biological interpretation of this is that she was likely in a den during the time when connectivity with the collar was interrupted, which aligns with the expected timing of wolf reproduction. This would be the first den from wolves reintroduced to Colorado. We are working diligently to confirm the den, and hope to have information on this soon.

Removing the male breeder at this point would be irresponsible management and potentially cause the den to fail, possibly resulting in the death of the presumed pups. This is not a desirable result and I am therefore not going to take action at this time to lethally remove this animal.



Jeff Davis, Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Parks and Wildlife Commission: Dallas May, Chair • Richard Reading, Vice-Chair • Karen Bailey, Secretary • Jessica Beaulieu
Marie Haskett • Jack Murphy • Gabriel Otero • Duke Phillips, IV • James Jay Tutchtton • Eden Vardy

As per the Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan (page 12): *“In evaluating the use of lethal control on a context-specific basis, CPW will consider the trade-offs among many competing factors including: the ability to target depredating wolves, being efficient and effective with conflict minimization, financial cost, wolf reproductive and recruitment success, wolf population size and listing status, impacts to livestock owners, and social/stakeholder interests when considering lethal take options. As with all wolf management practices, lethal control will only be implemented when in compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations.”*

The wolf population in Colorado is far below any restoration goal. We have the legal duty to establish a self-sustaining population of wolves while minimizing conflict risk. Any consideration of lethal removal will be carefully deliberated to ensure it does not conflict with these legally mandated restoration goals. As the wolf population in Colorado grows, and as we get to points where we enter different management phases, the approach to lethal removals will likely become more liberal.

While some other states have quantitative metrics to define chronic depredation, it is important to understand that simply meeting that metric does not necessarily initiate lethal removal. An evaluation of the circumstances, including an evaluation of the status of the entire wolf population, informs decisions on wolf management. As you are aware, Colorado’s Wolf Restoration and Management Plan does not have a quantitative definition of what constitutes chronic depredation. This was intentional, and results directly from the recommendations of the Stakeholder Advisory Group. The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission will be considering whether it is advisable to modify the plan to quantitatively define chronic depredation, and if so what that definition should be, at the Commission meetings this summer.

CPW staff have been working with the landowner to do night patrols as well as to deploy some conflict minimization tools in this area. Since those tools have been deployed, depredation has ceased, at least for the time being. We are prioritizing this geography for deployment of more conflict minimization tools in the immediate future and expanding their availability to other willing landowners.

I need to clear another issue as well. Your letter states that a release on January 2, 2024 confirmed that the reintroduced animals came from depredating packs and that this violates the recommendation from the Technical Working Group (TWG) and the Wolf Restoration and Management Plan. We presume that you are referring to this [Colorado Outdoors](#) article. While the wolves that were selected for reintroduction may have come from packs that were *historically* chronically depredating packs, management action was taken in Oregon and in the months leading up to capture prior to translocation to Colorado, the packs were not implicated in depredation. To continue to state that we brought known problem wolves into the state is a falsehood. Where wolves and livestock share the landscape, there will be conflict. We will hold tight to the recommendations of the TWG and what is stated in our plan that we will not bring currently chronically depredating wolves into the state.



I appreciate that you have had, and continue to have cooperative and responsive interactions with local CPW staff. I take great pride in the Area 9 staff. Your letter also suggested that there are unreported, suspected depredations. If you or your members suspect that other depredations have occurred, please contact your local CPW officer so that an investigation can be completed.

I know that you will not be satisfied with the determination to not lethally remove wolves at this time, and I hope that you understand that we are working to implement the state's Wolf Restoration and Management Plan and to implement state statute, while also working diligently to address the conflicts that livestock producers experience. It has proven to be a tremendously difficult and challenging task for all involved.

Sincerely,



Jeff Davis
Director
Colorado Parks and Wildlife

