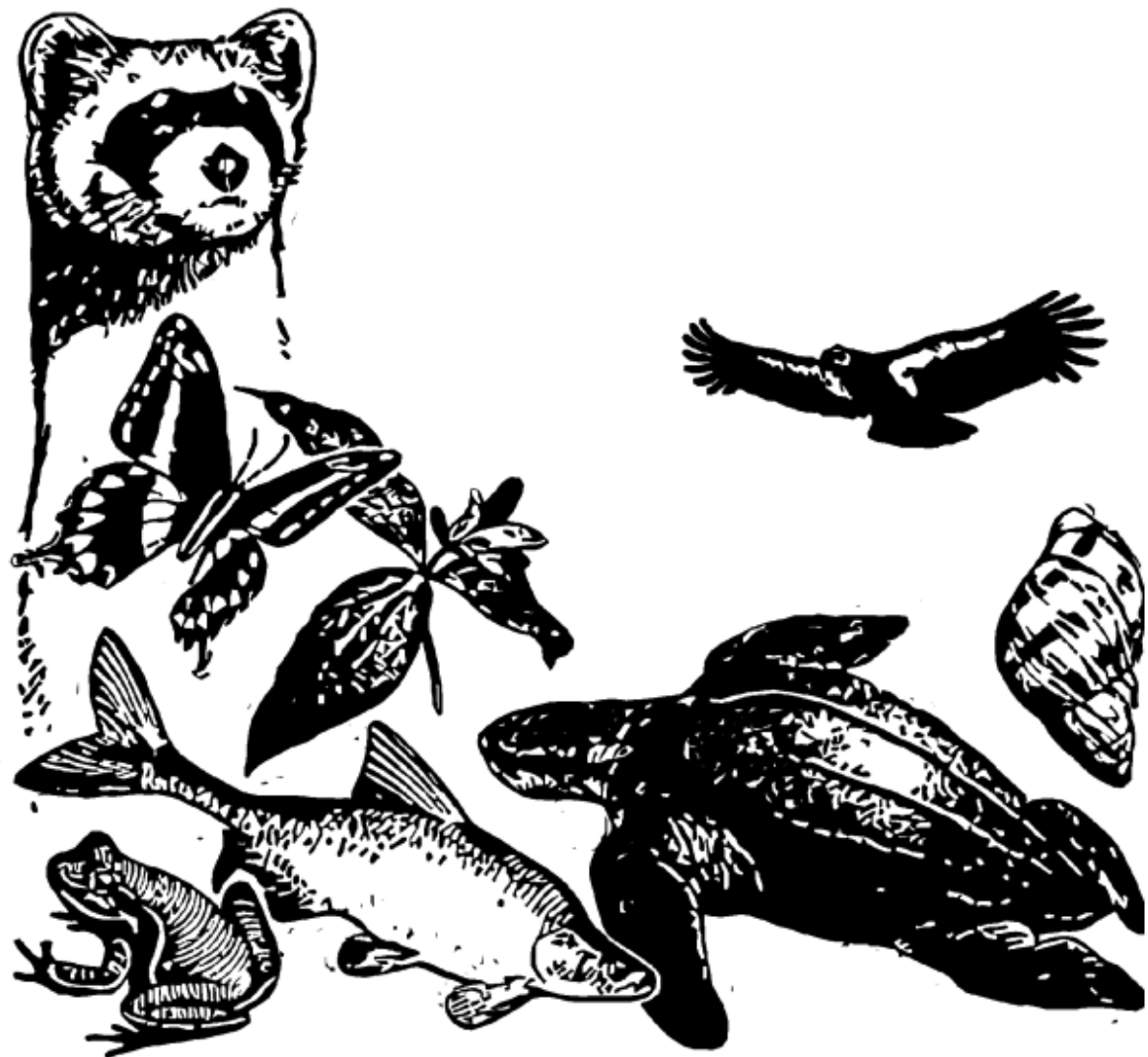


Gray Wolf Emergency Measures 12Aug2025

Gray wolf

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Gray Wolf Conservation Measures for Emergency Responses

August 8, 2025

The following conservation measures were developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Washington Ecological Services (WA ES) Office to help federal action agencies minimize and avoid adverse effects to listed species and designated critical habitat when responding to emergency situations in accordance with 50 CFR § 402.05. If you have any questions regarding these conservation measures or need additional technical assistance, please contact us at: washingtonfwo@fws.gov

The safety of first responders and the public are the highest priorities during emergency responses. Only those conservation measures that do not create a safety hazard should be employed. Federal action agencies should document how the recommended conservation measures were implemented and the results of the implementation in minimizing effects to listed species and their habitats; as well as the amount or extent of any incidental take that occurred because of the response activities. Section 7 consultation for emergency response actions should be initiated once the emergency response has been completed and human life and property are no longer at risk.

If your federal agency proposes to implement an action that is not part of an emergency response, as defined in 50 CFR § 402.05, and your proposed non-emergency action may affect a listed species or designated critical habitat, please contact WA ES (washingtonfwo@fws.gov) for technical assistance.

Recommended Conservation Measures for Emergency Responses

General Avoidance Measures

1. Wolf Den and Rendezvous Buffer Zones:
 - a. All activities, including noise and smoke-generating activities, should be restricted within a 1-mile buffer zone around known den or rendezvous sites (i.e. homesites) from April 1 through July 15 (the denning and rendezvous period). This is intended to avoid disturbances that could disrupt wolf pup-rearing activities and reproductive success. Coordination with the Service may result in modification of the buffer zone or its duration when the risk of disturbance can be effectively minimized. Relevant considerations include topographic features that would isolate project activities from the homesite, or wolf data (i.e., pack dynamics and movements) indicating that pup-rearing activities are not occurring at the homesite. Modifications to the buffer zone may also be considered for routine activities occurring on existing developed infrastructure (e.g., paved roads and resorts). Any modifications to the spatial extent or timing of the buffer zones would require coordination with the Service in advance of implementation through the pre-project consistency review process.

- b. Longstanding homesites (i.e., den or rendezvous sites used in multiple years but not every year) may also need restrictions outside of the denning and rendezvous period if the Agency biologist, state biologist, and/or the Service determine additional measures are needed to limit activities that would prevent future pup-rearing at the site. Any recommended measures should be discussed with the Service.
 - c. If a wolf homesite is discovered within a project area during implementation between April 1 and July 15 (the denning and rendezvous period), then all project activities within 1 mile of the homesite should cease immediately (as practicable without endangering human safety, etc.) and the Agency should immediately notify the Service by the end of the next business day. The Agency should then coordinate with the Service and state biologists to implement an effective buffer zone (consistent with measure 1a, above) to avoid repeated disturbances before project activities can resume.
- 2. When projects occur within a known wolf territory, the homesite (i.e., rendezvous or den site) is unknown, and project activities will occur during the denning and rendezvous period (April 1 through July 15), the following measures should be applied:
 - a. Avoid activities within 1 mile of the wolf territory during breeding season when possible (April 1 through July 15).
 - b. If avoiding the breeding season is not possible, work with the Service to identify an appropriate pre-project and project-concurrent wolf monitoring plan specific to the project area to inform the implementation of an avoidance buffer zone (measure 1a). Monitoring tools may include, but are not limited to trail cameras, ARUs (autonomous recording units), and training of project staff and marking crews on how to identify and report incidental wolf sign (e.g., tracks, scat, and evidence suggestive of a den site).
 - c. Project pre-implementation review:
 - i. Before project implementation within a known wolf territory, the Agency should communicate the results of any pre-project monitoring to the Service.
 - ii. If the best available data indicates the den/rendezvous site(s) occurs at least 1 mile from all proposed project activities and project activities are unlikely to disturb the activities of those wolves, the project may be implemented without the buffer zone. Project staff should be trained in the identification of wolf signs and be instructed to report wolf observations to the Agency.
 - iii. If pre-project monitoring data supports the existence of a wolf den within 1 mile of project activities, the Agency should implement measure 1a.
 - d. Project area monitoring through the denning and rendezvous period (April 1 through July 15)
 - i. If monitoring data is inconclusive (i.e., wolf or wolves detected, but best available information cannot corroborate the presence or absence of a den/rendezvous site):
 - 1. Implement the buffer zone until the best available information suggests that wolves are denning at least 1 mile from project activities and would not be affected by those activities; or

2. Implement project activities with monitoring through the duration of the denning period as described below:
 - a. For the first 30 days of project activities, the Agency should check monitoring equipment within the project area every 7 to 10 days. Those data will be processed within the same time frame, and wolf observations will be communicated to the Service by the end of the next business day. After 30 days, if recurring wolf observations continue, the Agency should continue to monitor and work with the Service to determine whether the buffer zone should be implemented and if so, how to best avoid or minimize effects to wolves.
 - b. If wolves are not detected within 1 mile of the project over the 30-day monitoring period, monitoring of cameras and ARUs may decrease to a monthly basis for the remainder of the denning period unless new wolf observations are detected. If new wolf observations are detected, the Forests will return to a weekly monitoring frequency.

General Minimization Measures

1. To provide security for wolves and their prey from chronic disturbance, the Agency should maintain core habitat areas away from roads and trails. New road (e.g., Forest Service Operational Maintenance Level 2 or above) construction inside and outside known wolf territories should:
 - a. Be included as part of a travel or recreation management plan or a project that results in either no change (i.e., no-net-loss) or an overall (net) increase in the core habitat area (defragmentation of habitat).
 - b. Not result in an overall (net) increase in impacts to sensitive ungulate (prey) habitats including, but not limited to, winter range, hiding cover, and migratory corridors.
 - c. Be coordinated with the Service to determine appropriate site-specific strategies to avoid disturbance to existing wolf den and rendezvous sites.
2. Site Rehabilitation:
 - a. All temporary roads created to facilitate project work should be decommissioned immediately after completion of project activities, which includes removing stream crossings, de-compacting the road surface, and preventing unauthorized vehicle access.
3. Public Education:
 - a. Personnel including but not limited to action agency staff and contractors who will be working in areas of known wolf activity, such as wolf territories, should complete training in how to identify wolf sign, den and rendezvous sites, and behaviors. Training should cover potential wolf behaviors during an encounter, how personnel should respond, and how to report sightings.
4. Worksite Sanitation:

- a. Wildlife should be prevented from accessing food or food waste on site or in the vicinity of project operations. All food should be securely stored, and food waste should be properly disposed of daily, to prevent animal access.