

**DECISION  
AND  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
FOR THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:**

**MANAGEMENT OF WOLF CONFLICTS AND DEPREDATING WOLVES IN  
WISCONSIN**

**July 11, 2013**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) program completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on alternatives for reducing gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) and wolf-dog hybrid depredation/injury to domestic animals, harassment/threats to domestic animals, and potential threats to human safety from habituated/bold wolves in May 2008 (USDA 2008). The EA provided information on the need for action and evaluated the relative effectiveness and environmental impacts of four alternatives for WS involvement in gray wolf and wolf/dog hybrid damage management when gray wolves were removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered species. In February 2013, WS issued a Supplement to the EA which updated the analysis in the 2008 EA and revised the analysis of cumulative impacts on the wolf population to include licensed harvest (Wydeven et al. 2012). Comments from the public involvement process for the Supplement have been reviewed for substantive issues and alternatives (Appendix A). This Decision document provides notification of WS' choice of a management alternative and determination regarding the environmental impacts of the chosen alternative. Based on analysis in the EA and response to public comments, WS is selecting Alternative 3 "*Revised Integrated Wolf Damage Management (RIWDM)*" in which WS provides technical assistance and direct control activities to alleviate gray wolf and wolf-dog hybrid damage and conflicts in Wisconsin.

Wildlife Services was the lead agency in the preparation of the 2008 EA and 2013 Supplement. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and USDA Forest Service (USFS) were cooperating agencies in the preparation of the EA and Supplement. The Wisconsin Ho-chunk Nation and Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) were consulting agencies in the preparation of the 2008 EA<sup>1</sup>. The GLIFWC, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Forest County Potawatomi Community and Bad River Band of Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians participated in the preparation of the Supplement.

Wildlife Services responds to requests for assistance from individuals, organizations and agencies experiencing damage caused by wildlife. WS is the federal program authorized by Congress and authorized by law to reduce damage caused by wildlife (Act of March 2, 1931, as amended (46 Stat. 1468; 7 U.S.C. 426-426b) and the Act of December 22, 1987 [101 Stat. 1329-

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<sup>1</sup> The Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians of the Lac du Flambeau Reservation of Wisconsin was a consulting agency in the production of a 2006 EA on wolf damage management in Wisconsin and comments and information provided by the tribe on the 2006 EA (USDA 2006) were included in the 2008 EA.



331, 7 U.S.C. 426c]). Wildlife damage management is the alleviation of damage or other problems caused by or related to the presence of wildlife, and is recognized as an integral part of wildlife management (The Wildlife Society 1992). The imminent threat of damage or loss of resources is often deemed sufficient for wildlife damage management actions to be initiated (U.S. District Court of Utah 1993). Ordinarily, according to APHIS procedures implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), individual wildlife damage management actions may be categorically excluded (7 CFR 372.5(c), 60 Fed. Reg. 6000-6003, 1995). However, WS decided to prepare the EA and Supplement to assist in planning wolf damage management (WDM) activities and to clearly communicate with the public the analysis of issues of concern relative to alternative means of meeting the need for action.

The EA and Supplement only evaluated alternatives for WS involvement in WDM and cannot change WDNR wolf management policy as established in the Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan (WWMP; WDNR 1999, 2007). The WDNR has stated that it will take action to resolve wolf damage problems, in accordance with their management plan and authority, even if WS is not involved in WDM. This means that the Federal WS program has limited ability to affect the environmental outcome (*status quo*) of WDM in the state, except that the WS program is likely to have lower risks to nontarget species and less impact on wildlife populations than some actions that may be taken by resource owners/managers. Despite the limitation to WS' influence on the environmental *status quo* and associated limit to federal decision-making, this EA process is valuable for informing the public and decision-makers of the substantive environmental issues and alternatives for management of wolf damage and conflicts in Wisconsin.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The supplement and 2008 EA and FONSI were made available for comment from February 12 to March 15, 2013. The documents were made available through a "Notice of Availability" (NOA) published in the *Wisconsin State Journal* and on the WS website [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/nepa.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/nepa.shtml), and through direct mailings of the NOA to interested parties. Wildlife Services received comments from three private individuals and a letter from the GLIFWC. Issues raised in the letters and agency responses to public comments are provided in Appendix B. All letters and comments are maintained at the Wildlife Services State Office, 732 Lois Dr., Sun Prairie, WI 53590. This decision document will be made available to the public using the same procedures as for the Supplement.

## **REVIEW BY NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES AND TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS**

As noted in the EA (Section 1.3.5), wolves play an important role in tribal culture and beliefs. The exact nature of this relationship and role varies among tribes. All federally-recognized tribes in Wisconsin and the GLIFWC were invited to participate in the preparation of the 2008 EA and the 2013 Supplement. The GLIFWC, Forest County Potawatomi Community, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians and Bad River Band of Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians participated in the preparation of the Supplement. All tribes also received notice of the public comment period for the Supplement. The GLIFWC also submitted a letter

during the comment period for the Supplement. Issues raised in the letter from the GLIFWC are addressed in this section and in Appendix B.

The 1983 Voigt decision affirmed the ceded territory hunting, fishing and gathering rights of Ojibwe tribes involved in the 1836, 1837, 1842, and 1854 treaties with the U.S. government. The Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission is an agency of eleven Ojibwe nations in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, with off-reservation treaty rights to hunt, fish and gather in treaty-ceded lands and waters (EA Section 1.8.1.5). It exercises powers delegated by its member tribes and assists its member tribes in the implementation of off-reservation treaty seasons and in the protection of treaty rights and natural resources. The Tribes have authority for management of wolves within reservation boundaries and share management authority with the WDNR for wolves in the ceded territories.

Specific measures to address tribal concerns were developed during the preparation of a previous EA on management of wolf damage and conflicts while Wisconsin wolves were federally listed as an endangered species (USDA 2006). The WS program continues to implement the measures established in 2006 as adjusted in subsequent ongoing communication with the GLIFWC and individual tribes. The WS program recognizes that the GLIFWC has multiple concerns with the WDNR Wolf Management Plan and licensed harvest of wolves. Although WS is non-regulatory and does not have authority over management of state-regulated species, the WS program is mindful of its responsibilities to, and government-to-government relations with, the tribes. At the time of this Decision, GLIFWC has taken no action to alter its position with regard to lethal depredation activities as expressed in the March 2006 consultation. However, GLIFWC has requested additional consultation with WS in regards to WDM in context of ongoing changes in WDNR wolf management and licensed hunting. The Wisconsin WS program looks forward to working with GLIFWC to continue to incorporate tribal rights, perspectives, and considerations in WS WDM actions conducted in the ceded territory in Wisconsin.

## MAJOR ISSUES

The EA analyzed a range of management alternatives in context of issues relevant to the scope of the analysis including:

- Effects on wolf populations in Wisconsin
- Effects on non-target species populations, including threatened and endangered species
- Effects on public and pet health and safety
- Humaneness of methods to be used
- Sociological issues including impacts on aesthetic values

In addition to the issues that were analyzed in detail, Wisconsin WS and the consulting agencies developed three objectives to help evaluate the effectiveness of the RIWDM program:

- Respond to 100% of requests for WDM assistance within 48 hours (investigate complaints within 48 hours).



- No significant adverse effects on the statewide wolf population or non-target species populations.<sup>2</sup>
- Contribute to understanding, ecology, biology and health of the Wisconsin wolf population.

## **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

Under the Proposed Action, wolf management could be conducted on private, Federal, State, tribal<sup>3</sup>, county, and municipal lands in Wisconsin with the permission of the appropriate land owner/manager. Most WDM activities would be conducted on private land. Wolf damage management activities are only likely to be conducted on public land if that land is within the damage management perimeter around the site of a verified depredation event on private land, inside a designated Proactive Control Areas (does not include USFS Wilderness Areas), in the unlikely instance that a wolf preys on livestock legally present on public lands<sup>4</sup>, or in the rare instance that a wolf is exhibiting behavior that poses a threat to human safety. Consultation will occur among the WDNR, WS, GLIFWC (if in ceded territory), and the appropriate public land manager if WDM is going to be conducted on public land.

It is more likely that wolf trapping and radio-collaring for wolf population monitoring and research would be conducted on public land (state, county and national forest lands). The public lands where wolf trapping for the purpose of radio-collaring and population monitoring has been conducted include the Chequamegon–Nicolet National Forest, as well as county forest, WDNR and industrial forest lands open to public access.

In accordance with 2006 consultations, WS will continue to notify the GLIFWC if it plans to conduct lethal WDM activities in the ceded territories. Additionally, for tribes requesting notification, WS will contact the tribe if a wolf complaint is within six miles of tribal lands and will attempt to co-investigate. If a complaint is verified, WS will consult with the tribe on WDM activities.

## **ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL**

Four alternatives were developed by the multi-agency team to address the issues identified above (see “Major Issues” section). Eleven additional alternatives were considered but not analyzed in detail in the 2008 EA. Reasons for not considering the alternatives in detail remain as discussed in the EA. The following is a summary of the management alternatives considered in the EA.

<sup>2</sup> For purposes of the EA and Supplement, a significant impact on wildlife population would be an impact which jeopardizes the viability of the state wolf population as identified in the WDNR Wolf Management Plan approved by the USFWS.

<sup>3</sup> WS’ WDM actions would only be conducted on tribal lands with the Tribes request/consent and only after appropriate documents had been signed by WS and the respective Tribe.

<sup>4</sup> WS is aware of a limited number of instances where livestock is or has been allowed to graze on State and county land.

#### Alternative 1 - Nonlethal WDM Only

Under this alternative, WS would only provide materials and advice for nonlethal damage management. Nonlethal methods used and recommended by WS would include but are not limited to animal husbandry practices, installation of fencing, electronic guards, fladry, aversive conditioning, nonlethal projectiles, and use of livestock guarding animals. Wildlife Services would still investigate complaints to determine if complainants meet criteria for wolf damage compensation, and could assist the WDNR with radio-collaring wolves for monitoring the Wisconsin wolf population. WS could live-capture wolf-dog hybrids, but the animals would have to be taken to the WDNR which would probably euthanize the animals unless the animal had an identifying marker that enabled its return to an owner. The WDNR intends to implement all facets of its wolf management policy (WDNR 2007) and the WDNR or a designated agent would still have the authority to conduct lethal WDM similar to Alternative 3. The WDNR could also establish Proactive Control Areas (Appendix A) and issue landowners or other designated agents permits to trap and shoot wolves when depredation on domestic animals has been verified. However, the decision making process for the establishment of Proactive Control Areas would occur without involvement by WS.

#### Alternative 2 - Integrated WDM

In the 2008 EA, Alternative 2 was a continuation of the existing WDM program selected in WS' March 13, 2007 FONSI on Wolf Damage and Conflict Management in Wisconsin (USDA 2007) and was the "No Action Alternative" (i.e., no change from current conditions; CEQ 1981). Under this alternative WS would have continued to use an integrated WDM approach to reduce wolf conflicts and damage in accordance with the policies and procedures of the 1999 WWMP, and 2005 Wisconsin guidelines for conducting depredation control on wolves in Wisconsin while federally-listed as threatened or endangered (USDA 2006). However, this alternative was not selected in the 2007 Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact and no longer represents the ongoing WS WDM program. Additionally, the WDNR has updated the Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan (WDNR 2007) and guidelines for conducting depredation control on wolves (WDNR 2013a). Consequently, this alternative represents a series of conditions which no longer exist and will not be analyzed further in this Supplement

#### Alternative 3 – Revised Integrated WDM (No Action/Proposed Action)

This is the proposed alternative for implementing WDM in Wisconsin. This alternative is a continuation of the existing WDM program in Wisconsin. WS would use an integrated RIWDM strategy in accordance with the WDNR 2013 guidelines for conducting depredation control on wolves in Wisconsin (WDNR 2013a). The No Action alternative serves as the baseline against which the impacts of management alternatives can be compared and can be defined as being the continuation of current management practices (CEQ 1981).

The RIWDM strategy would encompass the range of legal, practical and effective methods to prevent or reduce damage and conserve the wolf population while minimizing harmful effects of damage management measures on humans, wolves, other wildlife species, domestic animals, and the environment. Under this action, WS would provide technical assistance and operational wolf damage management using nonlethal and lethal management methods selected after applying the WS Decision Model (Slate et al. 1992). Wildlife Services would be able to assist with wolf research, wolf population monitoring and removal of wolf dog hybrids. Lethal methods would



be used to reduce damage after practical and appropriate nonlethal methods have been considered and determined to be ineffective or inappropriate in reducing damage to acceptable levels. In some instances, the most appropriate initial response to a wolf damage problem could involve concurrent use of a combination of nonlethal and lethal methods, or there could be instances where application of lethal methods alone would be the most appropriate strategy (e.g., some instances of risk to human safety from aggressive wolves or situations where the landowner has already implemented practical and effective nonlethal methods prior to contacting WS and is still experiencing damage problems). Lethal methods could include shooting, calling and shooting, cable restraints, and euthanasia of wolves live-captured in foot-hold traps, cable restraints or other live-capture devices. Lethal methods would only be used if the wolf population outside Native American reservations remains above 250 individuals.

The WWMP (WDNR 1999, 2007) requires the producer/owner to sign a depredation management plan (farm plan) for the property which includes damage abatement recommendations prior to the use of lethal RIWDM methods to resolve livestock depredation complaints. The cooperator is also required to agree to (sign) the plan prior to receiving financial assistance with supplies for nonlethal RIWDM and before any operational RIWDM can be conducted. Individuals and agencies with wolf damage and/or concerns about wolves would receive technical assistance in the form of instructional sessions, demonstrations, loaning of equipment, and information on the availability and use of nonlethal and lethal methods. In determining the damage management strategy, preference would be given to nonlethal methods when they are deemed practical and effective. Nonlethal methods used by landowners could include, but would not be limited to, changes in farm management practices and pet care/supervision, proper carcass disposal, frightening devices, exclusion, guarding animals, habitat modification, and behavior modification of problem wolves. Nonlethal methods used operationally by WS may include foot-hold traps and cable restraints with “stops” (used to live capture wolves for attaching radio collars, and collars used to activate frightening devices; Olson & Tischaeyer 2004), frightening devices and aversive conditioning (e.g., with modified dog training collars) and nonlethal projectiles. Aversive conditioning, nonlethal projectiles and other experimental damage management techniques would only be used by WS after consultation with the WDNR and tribes as appropriate.

Under this alternative, the distance from wolf depredation sites where RIWDM could be conducted would vary depending on the Wolf Management Zone. The WDNR, in consultation with the tribes, land owners/managers, WS and the GLIFWC, as appropriate, could also alter the area where RIWDM may be conducted on a case-by-case basis if there is evidence available that delineates the pack’s territory and available information indicated that members of non-depredating packs would not be impacted.

The WDNR would implement RIWDM practices in addition to WS actions, consistent with the WDM guidelines (WDNR 2013a; Appendix A). For example, the WDNR may issue Reactive WDM (RWDM) and Pro-active WDM (PWDM) permits to trap or shoot wolves to landowners (or their designated agents) that have domestic animals at risk of wolf depredation. Reactive Depredation controls are intended to remove specific individual wolves that have depredated on domestic animals on private land shortly after depredations have occurred. Permittees may only trap and shoot wolves on their own property. Permits for RWDM would be limited to



landowners 1 mile from the depredations site. Pro-active depredation controls are intended to reduce abundance of wolves in pack areas with historical or previous verified depredations on livestock or pets near homes on private land. PWDM would include control actions conducted a year or two after verified depredations on a farm when the depredating pack continues to occur nearby, and control actions in response to imminent threats of depredation to domestic animals. Permits for PWDM could be issued to any landowner within the Proactive Control Area (See Appendix A for details). WS would also be involved in the decision making process for the establishment of Proactive Control Areas.

Most RIWDM conducted by WS would be on private lands; however, some RIWDM could also be conducted on public lands. The RIWDM on public land would primarily be in areas where the damage management area around a wolf damage site on private lands includes public land. Trapping would usually be limited to 1 mile from depredation sites in Zones 1 and 2, 5 miles from depredation sites in Zone 3, and there are no distance restrictions in Zone 4. However, if information exists for the home range of the depredating pack, the trapping distance may be extended in Zones 1 and 2 to encompass more of the wolf packs territory. Wolf trapping and radio-collaring for wolf population monitoring and research would usually be conducted on public land. WS RIWDM would only be conducted on public lands after notification of the land manager and consult. Signs would be posted at public access points to areas where foot-hold traps or cable restraints are to be used.

The removal of wolf-dog hybrids that appear to be living in the wild and are unmarked could be conducted in any Wolf Management Zone regardless of depredation history. Wolf-dog hybrids that are marked will be held in captivity until the owner can be identified or euthanized after 14 days if no owner can be located.

#### Alternative 4 - No Federal WDM in Wisconsin

If this alternative is selected, WS would not provide any assistance with wolf damage and conflict management in Wisconsin. All requests for WDM would be referred to the WDNR or the tribes as appropriate. The WDNR has stated that it intends to implement the WWMP (WDNR 1999, 2007) and Wisconsin Wolf Damage Management Guidelines (WDNR 2013a) in a manner similar to Alternative 3 with or without assistance from WS. If permitted by the USFS, WDNR could work within the expanded damage management perimeters on National Forest lands adjacent to depredation sites.

## **CONSISTENCY**

Wildlife damage management activities conducted in Wisconsin are consistent with Work Plans, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and policies of WS, the tribes, WDNR, Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and USFS. In addition, WS has completed ESA Section 7 Consultations with the USFWS for WDM activities. WS has also consulted with the WDNR regarding risks to state-listed threatened and endangered species. Wildlife Services has determined that the proposed action would not affect coastal resources and would, by default, be consistent with the State's

Coastal Zone Management Program. Wisconsin Coastal Management Program has concurred with this determination.

## **MONITORING**

The Wisconsin WS program annually gives the WDNR data on the take of wolves and non-target animals to help ensure the cumulative impact of WS actions do not adversely impact the viability of state wolf or non-target species populations. WS is also a contributing member of the WDNR wolf science advisory committee. WS monitors program activities to determine if the analyses and determinations in the EA adequately address current and anticipated future program activities.

## **DECISION AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

I have carefully reviewed the EA and Supplement prepared for this proposal and the input from the GLIFWC and the public involvement process. I believe that the issues identified in the EA are best addressed by selecting Alternative 3 - Revised Integrated WDM (Proposed Action) and applying the associated Standard Operating Procedures discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA. Alternative 3 is selected because (1) it best enables the management agencies to provide prompt, professional assistance with wolf conflicts and will help maintain local public tolerance of wolf recovery in Wisconsin; (2) it offers the greatest chance at maximizing effectiveness and benefits to resource owners and managers while minimizing cumulative impacts on the quality of the human environment that might result from the program's effect on target and non-target species populations; (3) it presents the greatest chance of maximizing net benefits while minimizing adverse impacts to public health and safety; and (4) it offers a balanced approach to the issues of humaneness and aesthetics when all facets of these issues are considered. WS decision to adhere to the Standard Operating Procedures and limits to activities proposed in the EA and annual monitoring insures that environmental impacts including WS take of wolves and impacts on the wolf population, risks to non-target species, impacts on public and pet health and safety, humaneness of methods to be used and sociological issues will remain as described in the EA.

The analysis indicates that there will not be a significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment as a result of this proposed action. I agree with this conclusion and therefore find that an EIS need not be prepared. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. Wolf damage management as proposed in the EA is not regional or national in scope.
2. Analysis of the cumulative impacts for this or other anticipated actions within the State and other Mid-west states indicates that the proposed action would not threaten the continued existence of the wolf population. Based on Federal and State wolf management plans, the wolf population is large enough and healthy enough that even while the proposed action and all other mortality factors have adverse affects on individuals, they are not likely to adversely impact the viability of state wolf population.



3. The proposed action would pose minimal risk to public health and safety. Risks to the public from WS' WDM methods were determined to be low in a formal risk assessment (USDA 1997 Revised, Appendix P).
4. There are no unique characteristics such as park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic areas, or ecologically critical areas that would be significantly affected. Built-in mitigation measures that are part of the action agencies' Standard Operating Procedures and adherence to laws and regulations will further ensure that the agencies' activities do not harm the environment.
5. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial. Although there is opposition to WDM proposed in the preferred alternative, this action is not highly controversial in terms of size, nature, or effect. Public controversy over wolf management has been acknowledged and addressed in the EA.
6. Based on the analysis documented in the EA and the accompanying administrative file, the effects of the proposed damage management program on the human environment would not be significant. The effects of the proposed activities are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.
7. The proposed action would not establish a precedent for any future action with significant effects. Authorization for wolf damage management activities would be issued by the WDNR and would have to be reviewed and renewed annually. Any similar and appropriate authorizations involving wolf conflict management which could be issued by the tribes would be subject to similar review.
8. No significant cumulative effects were identified through this assessment. The EA discussed cumulative effects on non-target species populations and concluded that such impacts were not significant for this or other anticipated actions to be implemented or planned within the State.
9. The proposed activities would not affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor would they likely cause any loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. If an individual activity with the potential to affect historic resources is planned under the selected alternative, then site-specific consultation as required by Section 106 of the NHPA would be conducted as necessary (EA Section 1.8.2.3).
10. The USFWS has determined that the proposed program would have no effect on or is not likely to adversely affect any Federal listed threatened or endangered species. This determination is based upon an Intra-Service Section 7 consultation completed by the USFWS for activities described in the EA and an August 23, 2006, consultation with the USFWS regarding the impacts of statewide WS program activities, including possible WDM activities on lynx. In addition WS and the WDNR have determined that the

proposed program will not adversely affect any State-listed threatened or endangered species.

11. The proposed action will be in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws. The proposed action is consistent with the Wisconsin Coastal Zone Management Program.

Therefore, it is my decision to implement the proposed action (Alternative 3) as described in the Final EA. Copies of the Final EA are available upon request from the Wisconsin Wildlife Services State Office, 732 Lois Dr, Sun Prairie WI 53590, (608) 837-2727, on the WS website at: [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/nepa.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/nepa.shtml).



Charles S. Brown, Regional Director  
USDA-APHIS-WS, Eastern Region

Date

7/11/13



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## APPENDIX B RESPONSES TO COMMENTS

This Appendix contains issues raised by the public during the comment period for the 2013 Supplement to the 2008 Wisconsin wolf damage management EA and the WS response to each of the issues. Wildlife Services received 4 comment letters regarding the EA. Comments from the public are numbered and are written in bold text. The WS response follows each comment and is written in standard text.

**1. The EA and Supplement should consider that wolves play an important role in Native American Culture – tribes will also find this action morally unacceptable.** The lead and cooperating agencies are aware of the importance of wolves in Native American culture (EA Section 1.3.5). The WS program understands and respects the rights of the tribes in wolf management on tribal lands and within the ceded territories (EA Sections 1.3.5, 1.4.2, 1.5, 1.8.1.5, 1.8.1.6) and continues to work with the tribes and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission to address concerns regarding wolf damage management. The WS program also invited the WI tribes and the GLIFWC to be cooperating agencies in the preparation of the EA and Supplement. The GLIFWC, Ho-Chunk nation, Bad River Band of Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Forest County Potawatomi Community, and Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa consulted in the preparation of the EA, Supplement or both documents.

**2. Wildlife Services should not kill wolves that kill dogs. Wolves naturally perceive dogs as an intruder to their territory and are just behaving normally for wolves.** The WDNR sets the policy for response to wolf-dog interactions. In accordance with WDNR policy, the Standard Operating Procedures in EA Section 3.5 state that lethal methods would not be used when wolves kill dogs that are free-roaming, hunting, or training on public lands. Additional details on this issue are in EA Section 2.2.3

**3. Hunters who use dogs should stay away from wolves and areas used by wolf packs.** The WDNR published guidance for hunters and pet owners to help reduce risk of conflicts with wolves (<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/wolf/guidance.html>). Avoidance of wolves is presented as the best way to minimize conflict but because wolves are so wide spread, total avoidance may not be possible. Other suggestions for reducing conflict include using WDNR information posted on the net on dog depredations (<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/wolf/dogdeps.html>) or from local wildlife biologists identify and avoid areas of highest risk; staying as close to dogs as possible; moving 2-3 miles from any rendezvous site, if possible, before releasing dogs; avoiding releasing dogs at bear baits recently visited by wolves; avoiding areas with high concentrations of wolf tracks, scat and remains of wolf kills, and using bells or beepers on dogs.

**4. Is WS proposing to increase damage management efforts?** No, the supplement was prepared to evaluate the cumulative impacts of WS actions and the newly established wolf hunting season in Wisconsin. Wildlife Services actually reduced its prediction of maximum annual wolf take because the increase in management options available to landowners and the WDNR is expected to result in a decrease in requests for WS assistance.



**5. The WDNR state wolf population management objective of 350 wolves is anthropocentric, arbitrary, and inappropriate. There is no biology to support the belief that this size of wolf population can sustain itself. The WDNR needs a new survey to determine the number of wolves the public in the state will tolerate.** The Scope of this EA is limited to WS actions and cannot dictate actions which must be taken by the WDNR (e.g., require the state to conduct surveys). In accordance with NEPA, WS should and has review the cumulative impact of the proposed action on the wolf population. The USFWS is required to develop recovery plans for all listed species. The federal gray wolf recovery plan required that at least two viable wolf populations must exist within the eastern United States. Furthermore, these two populations must satisfy the following conditions. First, the survival of the wolf in Minnesota must be stable or growing, and its continued survival must be assured. Second, another population must be reestablished outside of Minnesota and Isle Royale. The Plan provides two alternatives for reestablishing this second viable wolf population. If the population is beyond 100 miles from Minnesota population, it must contain 200 wolves for at least 5 consecutive years (USFWS 1992, 2003). If the population is within 100 miles of the Minnesota population, it must contain at least 100 wolves for at least 5 consecutive years (USFWS 1992). While the Plan identifies no numerical recovery criterion for Minnesota, the Plan does identify State subgoals for use by land managers and planners (Minnesota: 1,251 to 1,400 wolves; Wisconsin and Michigan: 80 and 80 – 90 wolves, respectively). The WDNR management objective of 350 wolves is well above federal recovery criterion. Furthermore, the WDNR wolf management plan which established the management of 350 wolves was also subject to USFWS review and approval prior to the delisting of wolves.

**6. Will the WDNR policy that allows licensed individuals to train dogs to hunt wolves significantly increase wolf mortality and jeopardize the wolf population? Wolves chased by dogs are likely to fight back with dogs and it may be virtually impossible for the owner to call off the dogs. In these situations, dog owners may be likely to kill the wolves, especially since there isn't any compensation for damage to dogs.** There is no data to indicate that this will be the case. The WDNR closely monitors the wolf population and all known forms of wolf take including WS' take for damage management to ensure the viability and wellbeing of the wolf population. The WDNR uses an adaptive management approach to adjust harvest levels and other forms of permitted wolf take are also adjusted to ensure that take does not exceed levels that can be sustained by the population.

**7. The WS program must undertake consultation with GLIFWC and member tribes to ensure that WS actions are consistent with tribal management objectives for wolves in the ceded territories.** The WS program strives to maintain ongoing communications with GLIFWC and Native American Tribes. Results of consultations with GLIFWC and tribes will be reviewed and the EA and Supplement updated as needed pursuant to NEPA. Please see Section "Review by Native American Tribes and Tribal Organizations" in Decision/FONSI above.

**8. The Supplement should consider the impact of the first wolf harvest season on the wolf population.** In 2012, 117 wolves were taken by licensed hunters and trappers. The level of wolf harvest in each of the management zones is presented in the Supplement section, "Development of the Wolf Harvest Season Framework". The 2012-2013 late winter wolf population estimate was 809 - 834 wolves, similar to the estimate of 815 – 880 wolves in the 2011-2012 estimate (Wydeven et al. 2012, WDNR 2013). The WDNR uses an adaptive management approach and



data on wolf take and wolf biology to assign and adjust harvest and maintain a sustainable wolf population in the state.

**9. The Supplement incorrectly states that the tribes “declared” 85 wolves as part of the 2012-2013 quota setting process with the state of Wisconsin. The tribes claimed all wolves in the Wisconsin ceded territory, in a living condition, as a necessary prerequisite to a population that would fully effectuate the tribes’ rights. Noted. Supplement has been adjusted accordingly.**