

## NORTHWEST

# Idaho adjusts wolf-hunting rules

## Higher limits, trapping aim to cut population further

By Todd Dvorak  
Associated Press

BOISE – Idaho wildlife officials have agreed to boost bag limits, expand trapping and extend hunting seasons in some areas to help further reduce wolf populations in all corners of the state.

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission approved the adjustments Thursday to the 2012 wolf-hunting rules. The changes will go into effect when hunters set out for the backcountry later this year.

Idaho's wolf managers estimate there are now 500 to 600 wolves roaming the state, down from the more than 1,000 when the 2011 hunting season opened in August.

Hunters and trappers have killed 364 wolves since the season opened, while dozens more have died of natural causes or been killed for

preying on livestock or targeted as part of a strategy to lessen impacts on specific elk herds in the state.

"Our harvest focus is to be more aggressive in areas where we anticipate more conflicts ... and providing relief on big game animals," Jon Rachael, Idaho's wolf manager, told the commission.

Idaho is one of two states with authority from the federal government to manage wolf numbers using public hunts. Federal officials require Idaho to maintain a population of at least 150 wolves and 10 breeding pairs.

After protections were lifted last year, game managers in both states drafted rules for hunting and trapping. In Idaho's first season with trapping sanctioned by the state, trappers made a significant impact on the 2011 harvest, accounting for nearly one-third of all wolves killed during the 10-month season.

"Trapping has been a very effective tool," Rachael said.

In Montana, ranchers and some

sportsmen are growing more irritated with hunting rules that have not led to the population-control results shown so far in Idaho. The state's hunt that ended earlier this month netted just 75 percent of the quota of 220 animals set by game managers.

Some local leaders in Montana say that's insufficient to control wolf growth and have pushed to raise the quota or offer bounties.

Tweaks to Idaho's wolf hunting rules approved Thursday are aimed at boosting harvest numbers next year. The changes include:

- Increasing bag limits to five wolf tags for hunters and five for trappers in five northern hunting zones.
- Extending season length on private land in a North Idaho hunting zone and on public land in two zones in eastern Idaho.
- Expanding bag limits and adding trapping in central Idaho.

Rachael said it's too soon to measure the impact of Idaho's hunting and other management tools on the

## WASHINGTON PACKS

The state estimates that up to 10 wolf packs could be roaming in Washington, twice as many as last year.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife said most of the wolf activity is in northeastern Washington, but evidence of new packs is also showing up in the Blue Mountains and the North Cascades.

The state is trying to confirm the existence of the new packs.

*From staff reports*

goal of stabilizing wolf numbers and bringing the species' population in line with other wildlife. A more accurate picture will emerge next year after biologists can analyze the impact of two years of hunting and reproduction cycles.