

Recovery of the Timber Wolf - 1986-87

by Richard Thiel

SUMMARY

This report consists of two reports: 1) recovery activities from July 1986 to June 1987 and 2) status report October 1986 to September 1987.

In January 1986, the Wisconsin Timber Wolf Recovery Team was selected. During the first 6 months, the team focused on the development of a citizens participation activities schedule. Public forums were held in 9 Wisconsin cities in September 1986. Public opinions on the issues of wolf reintroduction were varied and conflicting.

Census information during this winter was limited to aerial locations of radioed wolves. A minimum of 18 to 20 individual wolves were thought to be present during winter 1986-87. Two wolves died during this period. Both of these were females and both were shot by deer hunters.

Litters were produced in the three North Central Study Area packs this year. A modest increase in the winter 1987-88 population is anticipated.

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October 1989



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WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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RECOVERY OF THE TIMBER WOLF IN WISCONSIN

PERFORMANCE REPORT

1 July, 1986 to 30 June, 1987

Prepared by Richard P. Thiel

- JOB: 104.1 Develop a Wisconsin Timber Wolf Recovery Plan
 104.2 Monitor Wolf Activity
 104.3 Implement a Recovery Plan

JOB 104.1: DEVELOP A WISCONSIN TIMBER WOLF RECOVERY PLAN

OBJECTIVE:

Develop a guideline to implement management strategies to recover the timber wolf population in Wisconsin.

A thirteen member Wisconsin Timber Wolf Recovery Team was selected to develop a wolf restoration management plan in Wisconsin in January 1986. Committee activities between January and July 1986 centered on the development of a citizen's participation activities schedule. Major Team activities during this reporting period include 2 individual periods of public input, and 3 major planning episodes. Six Team meetings were held between July 1986 and June 1987 (Table 1). Four major public news releases were produced during the period, and three

in house (i.e. DNR) information releases also appeared (Table 2). The Team adopted a 4 phase process structure to guide it in utilizing public input and the development of a state recovery plan (Table 3).

September Public Forums

Initial public participation forums were held at 9 Wisconsin cities between 22 and 25 September, 1986 (Table 4) to (1) inform citizens of the Team's intent, purpose, and legal obligations, and (2) to gather public concerns, suggestions, and comments on the announced intention of the Team to develop a wolf recovery plan. Two major news releases were prepared in advance, announcing the activities of the Team and publicizing the public forum events (Table 2, Appendix 1). An informational letter was also sent to approximately 3000 individuals or organizations to invite attendance at the public forums. In addition, a slide/tape program was produced for the forums to acquaint citizens of the Team's intent, goal, and legal obligations. A public input period through October 15 followed the forums, allowing citizens to voice their concerns in writing.

Team Analysis/ Response Preparations

Approximately 630 people attended the 9 forums and 153 issued comments. Nearly 130 letters were received during the comment period. Public comments were coded and entered into a computer for trend analyses. Comments fell into 4 main categories: (1) Concerns, (2) Questions, (3) Suggestions, and (4) Statements.

The most prevalent items within each of these categories are listed in Table 5. As expected, public comments were often conflicting; i.e., stock wolves - don't stock wolves; DNR moving too quickly on this issue - DNR not moving swiftly; etc. Comments were used to guide the Team in developing an Issues Report which consisted of 16 major issues confronting wolf restoration possibilities within the state. Where possible public input was meshed with the species' biological needs to construct the Issues Report (Appendix 1).

Solicitation of Public Comments on Issues Report

Based upon responses to public forums, the mail list was reduced to approximately 700 individuals/organizations and each was mailed a copy of the Issues Report in February and asked to make comments on it. A news release was prepared informing the public of what the Team learned from the public forums, appraising the public of the salient features of the Issues Report, and providing information on how to obtain copies for comment. In addition, 7 meetings were held in April 1987 with various groups and public agency officials to discuss the issues, appraise them of the Team's planning process, and further communications as the planning process continues.

Team Analysis of Public Comments of Issues Report

Major issues expressed by the public in response to the Issues Report are listed in Table 6. Once again, viewpoints were sometimes conflicting, specifically multiple use infractions, and

the manner and degree to which the wolf population may be manipulated to attain the Team goal.

The Team's anticipated activities and schedule for project completion are listed in Table 7. A final plan is expected to be available around December 31, 1987.

JOB 104.2: MONITOR WOLF ACTIVITY

OBJECTIVE:

Monitor wolf activity by live-trapping, and radio-tracking wolves in northern Wisconsin.

Activities of 6 radioed wolves were monitored through spring 1987. Three wolves were members of two social groups within the Douglas County Study Area, two wolves were members of a social group in north-central Wisconsin, and one was a lone wolf that had earlier dispersed into upper peninsula Michigan. For more detailed information on wolf activity monitoring during this period please consult Section 6 Performance Report 101, **Status of the Timber Wolf in Wisconsin**, period 1 October 1985 to September 30 1986, and period 1 October 1986 to 30 September 1987 is presently being prepared.

JOB 104.3: IMPLEMENT RECOVERY PLAN

No tasks were performed under Job 104.3 and none are scheduled to commence until completion of job 104.1.

<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>
10 July, Spooner	6 January, Madison
10 Sept., Wausau	30 March, Wausau
3 November, Merrill	5-6 May, Park Falls

Table 1. Dates and locations of Recovery Team meetings, 1986-87

<u>Date</u>	<u>News Release</u>	<u>Entitled:</u>
	Major public news releases	
13 Aug.	WI. Outdoors & Conservation News	"Wolves in Wisconsin?"
10 Sep.	Outdoor Report	"Timber Wolf Public Forums"
7 Jan.	WI. Outdoors & Conservation News	"Wolves & Humans Can Co-exist"
12 Feb.		"Public Speaks Out on Wolf Recovery"
Sept.	Development of Slide/Tape Program for use in forums	
	Internal DNR Information	
Aug/Sep.	DNR Digest	
11 Sep.	Internal memo to all Forestry, Wildlife and Warden staff	

Table 2. Major public information releases on wolf restoration planning, 1986-87.

PHASE I.	Publicly announce purpose, intentions - Gather citizen input - Mesh citizen input with species needs - Identify Issues and Ideas for recovery -
PHASE II.	Gather citizen input on Ideas/Issues- Mesh input with species needs - Develop Draft Plan -
PHASE III.	Gather citizen input on Draft Plan - Mesh citizen input with species needs -
PHASE IV.	Develop Final Plan - Seek and obtain DNR administrative approval -

Table 3. 4 phase process in developing a state timber wolf recovery plan.

<u>DATES</u>	<u>LOCATIONS</u>
22nd	-Park Falls, Madison-
23rd	-Stevens Point, Florence, Rice Lake-
24th	-Rhineland, Superior-
25th	-Green Bay, Milwaukee

Table 4. Dates and locations of the September, 1986 public forums held in Wisconsin by the Recovery Team.

CONCERNS:

- (1) Impact(s) on multiple use (primarily logging, hunting, trapping, access) of forested lands.
- (2) Impact on deer population.
- (3) The planning and decision -making process.
- (4) Livestock losses.

QUESTIONS:

- (1) Specifics that don't yet exist.
- (2) How can I help?
- (3) Information desired on planning/decision-making process.

SUGGESTIONS:

- (1) Education.
- (2) Limit public access.
- (3) Restrict coyote hunting.
- (4) Stiffer enforcement.
- (5) Management of wolves through coordination/cooperation with other agencies, land owners.

STATEMENTS:

- (1) Positive 209 (75%)
- (2) Negative 69 (25%)

Table 5. Major responses voiced at September 1986 public forums on DNR's announcement to develop wolf restoration plan.

- (1) Education is a HIGH priority.
- (2) DO & Do NOT infringe on aspects of multiple use management.
- (3) Concern over deer resource.
- (4) Costs - how should restoration be funded.
- (5) Concern over the degree of artificially manipulating the wolf population (such as stocking, disease control measures, etc.) to attain goal.
- (6) Stress cooperation with land owners where wolf restoration would occur.

Table 6. Major public responses to Issues Report, February-April 1987.

Report mailed to R. Jurewicz 06/08/87

Wisconsin Bureau of Endangered Resources
Department of Natural Resources
Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707

STATUS OF THE TIMBER WOLF IN WISCONSIN
PERFORMANCE REPORT

October 1, 1986 to September 30, 1987

JOB 101.1: MONITOR WOLF ACTIVITY

OBJECTIVE

Monitor wolf activity in northwestern and north-central Wisconsin by telemetry and ground work.

Winter Population Census: The annual mid-winter population census was not as complete this year as in previous years because funds were not allocated in a timely fashion and they were insufficient to cover expenditures for all aspects of the present study.

Census information this winter was limited to aerial locations of radioed wolves. Radioed wolves were present in 3 of the 6 active wolf packs in Wisconsin. Reports were also received from areas with packs where no radioed wolves were present. A minimum of 18 to 20 individual wolves were thought to be present during winter 1986-87. No information was available on lone wolf distribution this year.

Telemetry Activities: Five wolves were captured in 838 trapnights (TN) effort in 1987 (1 wolf/168 TN). Four of the five were radio-collared (Table 1). Spring trapping is consistently better than trapping efforts at any other time of year. Table 2 yields comparative trapnight data for spring and summer.

Activities of 5 other wolves, radioed in previous years, were also monitored (Table 3).

Significant Population Events, 1986-87:

Douglas County Study Area (DCSA): The DCSA population continues to suffer from a lack of adequate reproductive success. During this period 3 social groups were known to exist and a fourth group was suspected present. None of the groups were known to produce litters this year.

Apparently the alpha female of the Moose Lake pack (MLP) remains within that territory with her radioed two year old daughter, 081F. No males were known to be present and breeding was not anticipated there.

In spring 1986, Tripod II pack's (TP II) alpha female 059 apparently denned but by June she had lost her pups. In early August she vacated TP II territory and until February she moved widely throughout south-central DCSA. By mid February 059 met yearling MLP male 063. These two wolves have been together in all of their subsequent locations. Unfortunately no denning behavior was noted. They have confined their movements in an area roughly west of Highway 35 between MLP and TP II, and have been named the "Highway Duo".

Pack activity was noted within TP II during early winter. In May wolf 129F was collared and her movements circumscribed the TP II territory. Occasional sign of a pair of adult-sized wolves was noted within TP II throughout summer. No searches were conducted to determine whether pups were produced.

No work was conducted within the Bear Lake Area. Sign of a pair of wolves had been noted there in previous years. It is not known if this activity was from a new social group.

Northwestern Wisconsin (NWWI): A new wolf pack was confirmed in west-central Bayfield County in winter 1986-87. Reports indicate a pair may have been present there since spring 1985. The pack consisted of 4 to 6 wolves throughout winter 1986-87. In May, wolf 107, believed to be the alpha male, was radioed there. A litter was produced by RLP and pups were present until at least mid-September.

North Central Study Area: Seven wolves were observed in the Averill Creek pack (ACP) in October, 1986. Four of these were pups. On 22 November 1986 a 55 pound female wolf pup was killed by a deer hunter within ACP. Six wolves were observed throughout winter 1986-87. In May, wolf 069M was recaptured in ACP and collared. Based on his initial locations and the movements of alpha female 085, a summer homesite with 2 or more pups was located in June. Pups were present until at least mid-September. Unfortunately wolf 085's collar malfunctioned in June.

Sign of a pair of wolves was reported from the Bootjack pack area during winter 1986-87. On 6 August a male pup, wolf 109, was captured, but it was too small to collar. On 8 August the BLP alpha female, wolf 099, was recaptured and collared. This wolf was originally caught in summer 1982 as a pup within BJP and her movements were monitored in the 110 square mile BJP territory until October, 1984 when her collar expired. Pups were present in BJP until at least August.

Sign of a single wolf was reported by wildlife managers Bill Meier and Carl McIlquham near Enterprize Lake in Langlade County in mid December, 1986.

Northeastern Wisconsin (NEW): No work was conducted in this region.

Mid-Winter 1986-87 Wolf Population Characteristics: Table 4 summarizes the mid-winter pack population status. Pack size averaged 3.3 wolves based on 3 packs that were radioed.

Table 5 yields data on fluctuations of annual DCSA wolf densities. The DCSA wolf densities have varied between years, in part due to fluctuations in the number of social units.

Based on 2 DCSA and 1 NCSA radioed packs, a mid-winter 1986-87 density of 1 wolf per 19 mi² (2.0 wolves per 100 km²) in occupied Wisconsin range was observed.

Pup Productivity - 1987: Litters were produced in 3 packs this year: ACP, BJP and RLP. For the first time since 1982, some pups survived in each of our known litters throughout the summer months. More importantly, these litters were from the three "easternmost" of Wisconsin's wolf packs in a region with the most frail wolf population (Map 1). Apparently no litters were produced in DCSA in 1986 or 1987. However its proximity to the main Minnesota wolf range, and the potential for reproduction amongst the 3 or 4 social groups lessens any immediate concern over the status of this small population.

Mortality: Two wolves were known to have died during this period. One, a non-radioed female pup from Lincoln County's Averill Creek pack, was shot by a deer hunter on 22 November, 1986. Another, female wolf 035, who dispersed into western Upper Peninsula, Michigan during spring/summer 1986 before her radio expired, was shot by a deer hunter in November, 1986 in northwestern Iron County, Michigan.

JOB 101.2 : DETERMINE WOLF HABITAT

OBJECTIVE: Determine suitable wolf habitat in northern Wisconsin.

No work was conducted on this job because of inadequate funding.

JOB 101.3: MONITOR WOLF ACTIVITY ALONG THE WISCONSIN - UPPER
MICHIGAN BORDER

OBJECTIVE: Monitor wolf activity in the Wisconsin- Upper Michigan border area by telemetry and ground work.

Ground tracking was conducted on only one day during this period in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Tracks of a pair of wolves were found in the Cedar River drainage of Menominee County on 9 January, 1987.

Wisconsin Wolf Population Summary, 1986-87: Average winter 1986-87 pack size for the 3 radioed packs was 3.3 wolves per pack. A mid-winter density of one wolf per 19 square miles (2 wolves per 100 km²) was obtained from telemetry data. The density within DC&A was one wolf per 26.25 square miles (1.5 wolves per 100 km²). Litter productivity in summer 1987 was much improved over previous years. Three litters were located, and pups survived in all 3 through the end of the period. A modest increase in the winter 1987-88 population is anticipated.

Prepared by Richard P. Thiel
4 November, 1987

Table 1. Capture data of 5 wolves caught in 1987.

<u>Study Area/Pack</u>	<u>Wolf #</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Capture Date</u>
DCSA MN border	129	F	?	68	05-14-87
NWWI Rainbow Lake	107	M	A	75	05-22-87
NCSA Averill Creek	069	M	Y	84	05-11-87*
Bootjack	109	M	P	13	08-06-87
	099	F	A	47	08-08-87*

*recaptures: 069 was caught as a pup on 07-23-86
099 was caught as a pup on 07-20-82

Table 2. Trapnights effort, Spring and Summer, 1987.

<u>Season</u>	<u>Total Trapnights {TN}</u>	<u>Total Wolves Caught</u>	<u>TN/Wolf</u>
Spring	242	3	80.7
Summer	522	2	261.0
Total	838	5	167

Table 3. Socio-spatial dynamics of radioed wolves, 1986-87.

<u>Wolf #</u>	<u>Capture Date</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>No.</u> <u>Locations</u>	<u>Territory</u> <u>Size (mi²)</u>	<u>Pack</u>	<u>No.</u> <u>wolves</u>
DCSA						
059	05-13-85	F	141	est. 45	Hwy duo	
063	05-20-86	M	90	"	" "	
081	10-13-85	F	129	est. 60	MLP	2
129	05-14-87	F	28	no est.	TP II?	?
NWWI						
107	05-22-87	M	29	no est.	RLP	2+
NCSA						
085	05-16-86	F	74	85	ACP	6
071	07-25-86	F	73		"	
099	08-08-87	F	11	no est.	BJP	2+?

Table 4. 1986-87 Mid-Winter Wisconsin Wolf Pack Population.

<u>DCSA</u>			<u>NWWI</u>	<u>NCSA</u>		<u>State</u>
<u>MLP*</u>	<u>TP II</u>	<u>Hwy Duo*</u>	<u>RLP</u>	<u>ACP*</u>	<u>BJP</u>	<u>Total</u>
2	2+?	2	4-6	6	2	18-20

*radioed wolves present

Table 5. Annual fluctuations in DCSA wolf densities based on radioed packs.

<u>Winter</u>	<u>Cummulative Territory Size (mi²)</u>	<u>No. of Wolves</u>	<u>W o l f mi²/wolf</u>	<u>D e n s i t y # wolves/100 km²</u>
1980-81	344	12	28.6	1.35
1981-82	326	13	25.1	1.54
1982-83	378	10	37.8	1.02
1983-84	275	12-13	22.0	1.75
1984-85				
1985-86	193	6	32.2	1.20
1986-87	105	4	26.3	1.50

