

By George Wuerthner 1 October 1999

The wolf B-45, which was removed from Oregon by the Fish and Wildlife Service, was relocated to the Lolo Pass area of Idaho just west of Missoula, Montana. She did not, however, remain there. Within a week she was moving southward. Her exact route is unknown, but we do know that she traveled through the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness, across the Salmon River through the Frank Church/River of No Return Wilderness to the Sawtooth area near Stanley Idaho. She then moved westward to an area north of McCall, Idaho. She is now less than 40 air miles east of the Idaho-Oregon border. She is known to be in an area where there are several other uncollared wolves (lacking radio collars), but has not been observed with them. Whether she will move back into Oregon later on in the year remains to be seen.

Meanwhile the Fish and Wildlife Service has reconsidered its policies, perhaps due the large public outpouring of support for keeping B-45 in Oregon, and will not automatically remove dispersing wolves in the future. Thus if B-45 or any other wolf manages to reach Oregon, they will be allowed to stay in the state.

According to Curt Mack, FWS biologist in charge of the Idaho wolf recovery program, approximately 67% of the Idaho wolves will be reaching dispersal age this coming winter, so we can expect more animals to wander into Oregon.

The FWS is also revising the status for all wolves in the lower 48 states and wants to downlist the species from endangered to threatened. This would reduce the protection for the animals. As part of this downlisting proposal, the FWS has added Oregon and Washington to its list of recovery areas. This means that a wolf that shows up in Oregon would be counted as part of the northern Rockies population.

In the Idaho, Yellowstone and Northwest Montana wolf recovery areas, conflicts with livestock producers continues to be the number one source for mortality for adult wolves. There were killings of wolves by the FWS in retribution for livestock depredation in all three areas. In a number of instances, the animals being grazed were on public lands.