



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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**INTERIOR DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES OPTIONS FOR
WOLF REINTRODUCTION IN YELLOWSTONE, CENTRAL IDAHO**

An experimental population of wolves would be introduced into Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho under the preferred alternative of a draft environmental impact statement to be released next week by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The draft document outlines a wide range of alternatives for wolf reintroduction in Yellowstone and central Idaho -- from a "no wolf" option, to one calling for management of these areas exclusively for wolves. The preferred alternative suggests that an experimental population be released into Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho if ongoing searches find no naturally occurring wolf packs.

Release of the draft environmental impact statement, prepared by the Service as directed by Congress, will be followed by a comment period and public hearings. Comments will be accepted by the Service until October 15, 1993, and hearings will be held in a number of locations throughout the country this summer and fall. The environmental impact statement is scheduled to be finalized in 1994.

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The Endangered Species Act provides special rules for experimental populations to allow flexibility in managing reintroduced animals and address concerns of local residents. In general, such rules do not impose additional restrictions on use of public land and allow federal and state wildlife managers, as well as local landowners, more options to control animals that may cause damage to livestock or property.

"No matter what their point of view is, people have very strong opinions about wolves, particularly when it comes to Yellowstone National Park," said Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. "I want to make it clear that ample opportunity will be provided for public comment on this draft document, so that anyone with an opinion on wolves will be heard. I am confident, given the flexibility of the Endangered Species Act, that the question of wolf recovery in the Yellowstone area can be resolved."

In preparing the draft environmental impact statement, the Service considered information gathered at 67 public meetings held during 1992, as well as nearly 9,000 written comments.

To review the draft environmental impact statement, submit comments, or receive information about the upcoming public hearings, contact: Gray Wolf EIS, P.O. Box 8017, Helena, Montana, 59601; telephone 406-449-5202. Persons already on the EIS mailing list will be receiving a summary of the draft and need not request a copy.