



IDFG report on Wolves Natural Resources Interim Committee

September 27, 2021

Ed Schriever

Director

Committee Report

- Population status and trend
- Population Management – Hunting and trapping (IDFG Commission)
- Conflict Management –
 - IDFG – control actions/kill permits
 - Wolf Depredation Board – Contracts and funding
 - APHIS Wildlife Services – Investigations and Removal
- Implementation of S1211

Population Management – Conflict Management

Wolf is classified as Big Game Animal

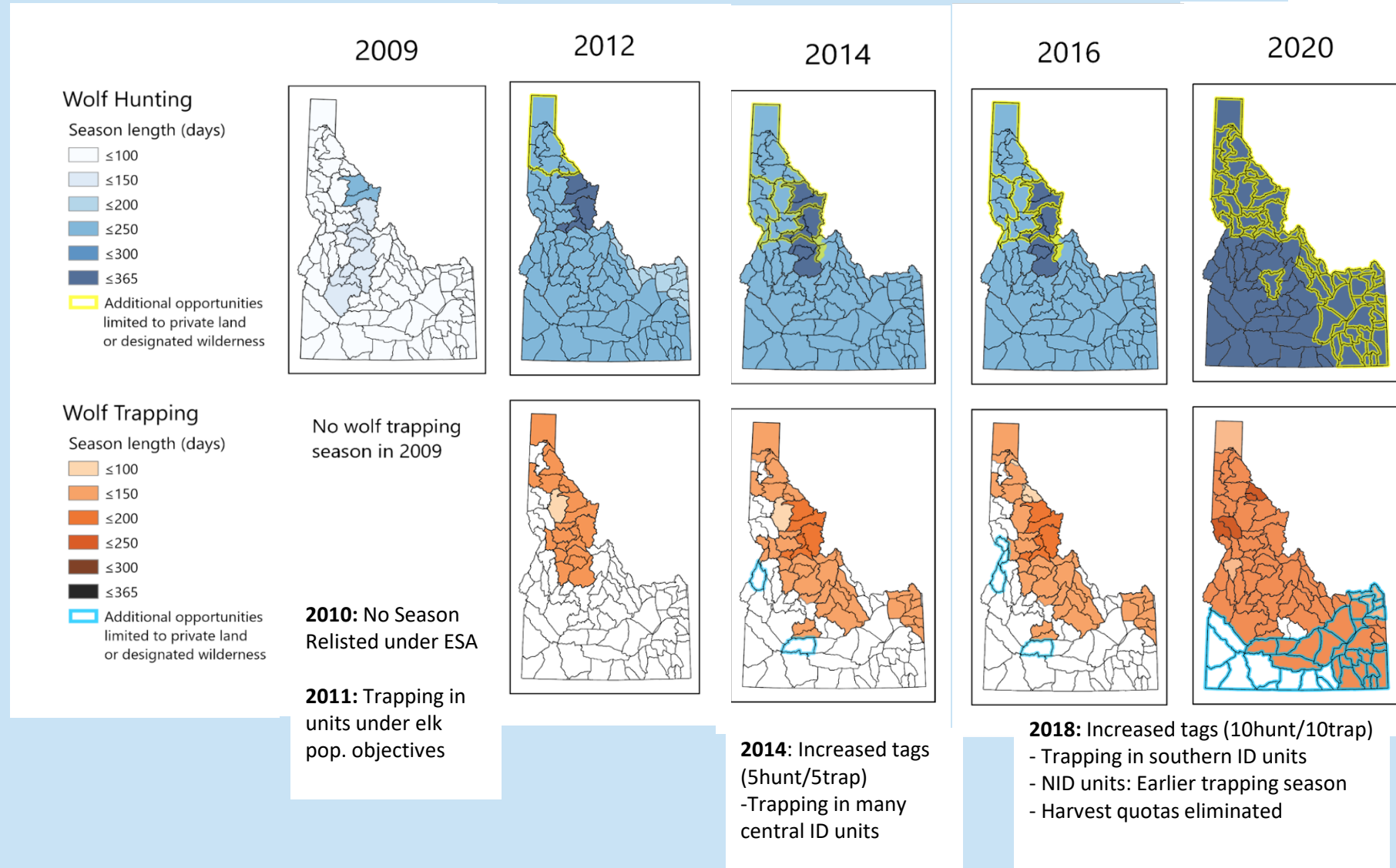
- Hunting and Trapping (F&G Commission)
- Conflict Management
 - WDCB
 - APHIS WS
 - F&G administrative authority)
 - Control Actions
 - Kill permits

Population management and conflict management are interrelated but the mechanisms for addressing them are different

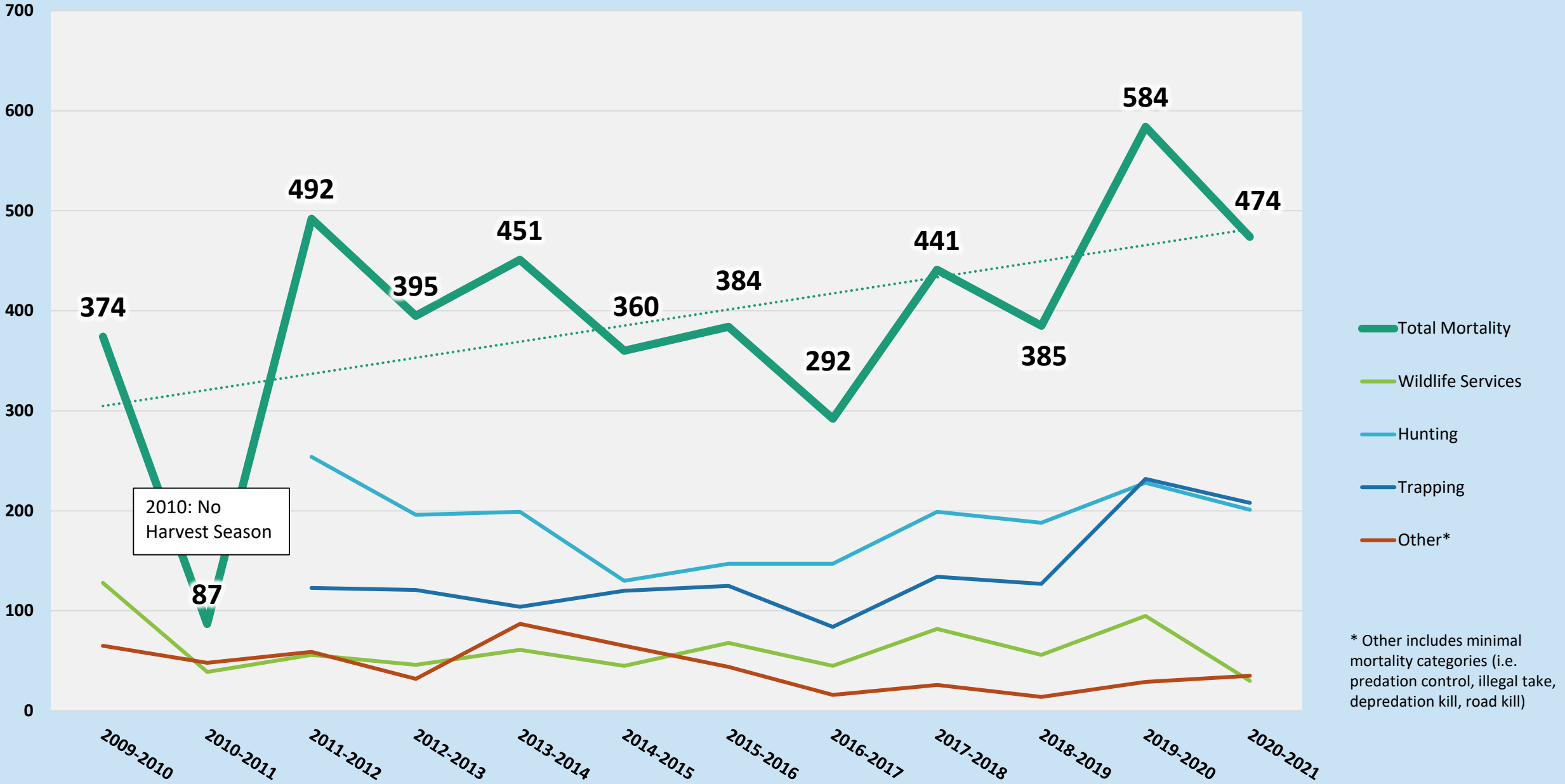
Department of Fish and Game

Incremental Changes in Wolf Hunting and Trapping Season Length

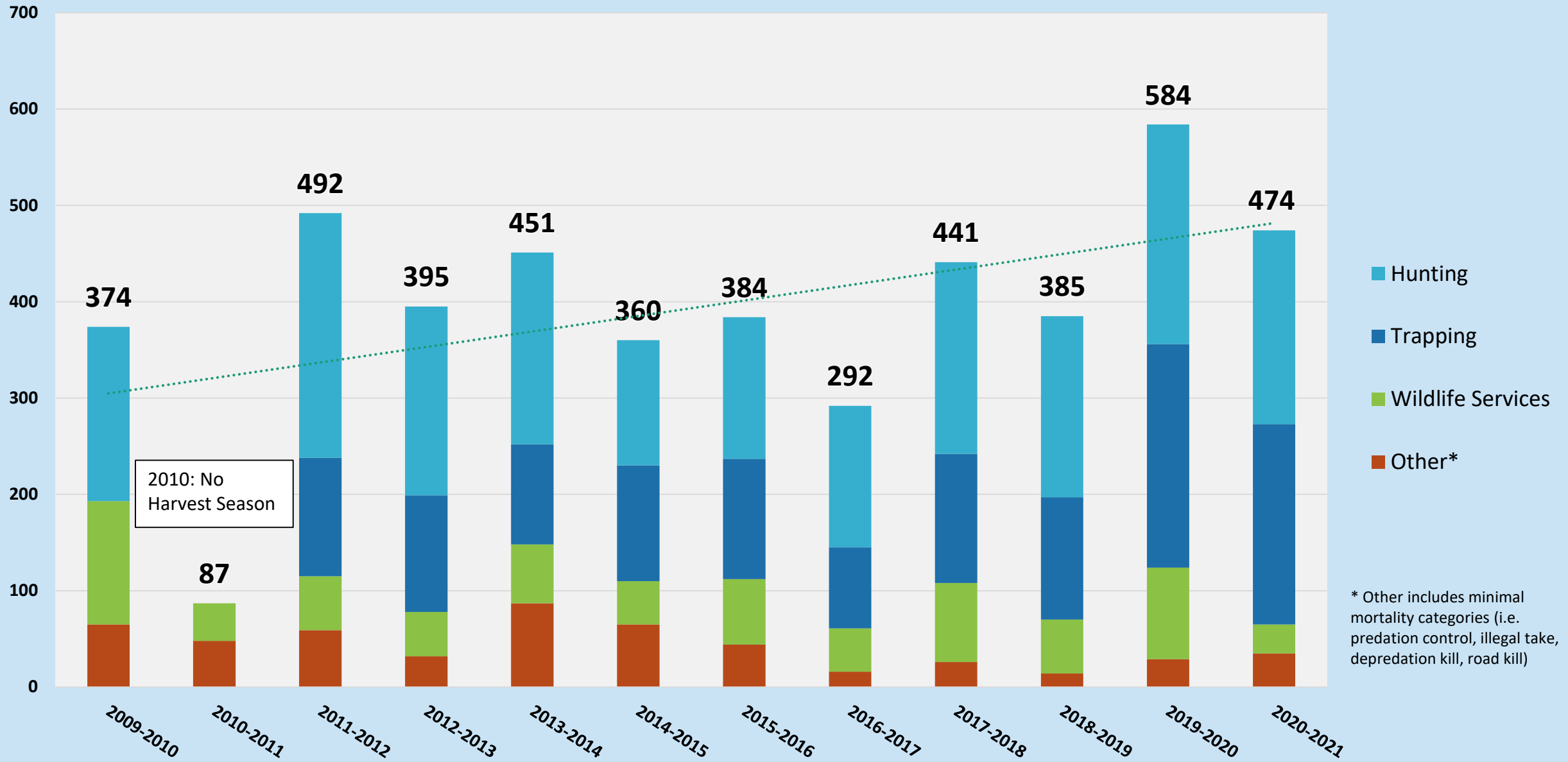
2020: Increased tags (15hunt /15trap)
 - Expanded # of trapping units and # of units with earlier trapping date
 - Year-round hunting season in many units



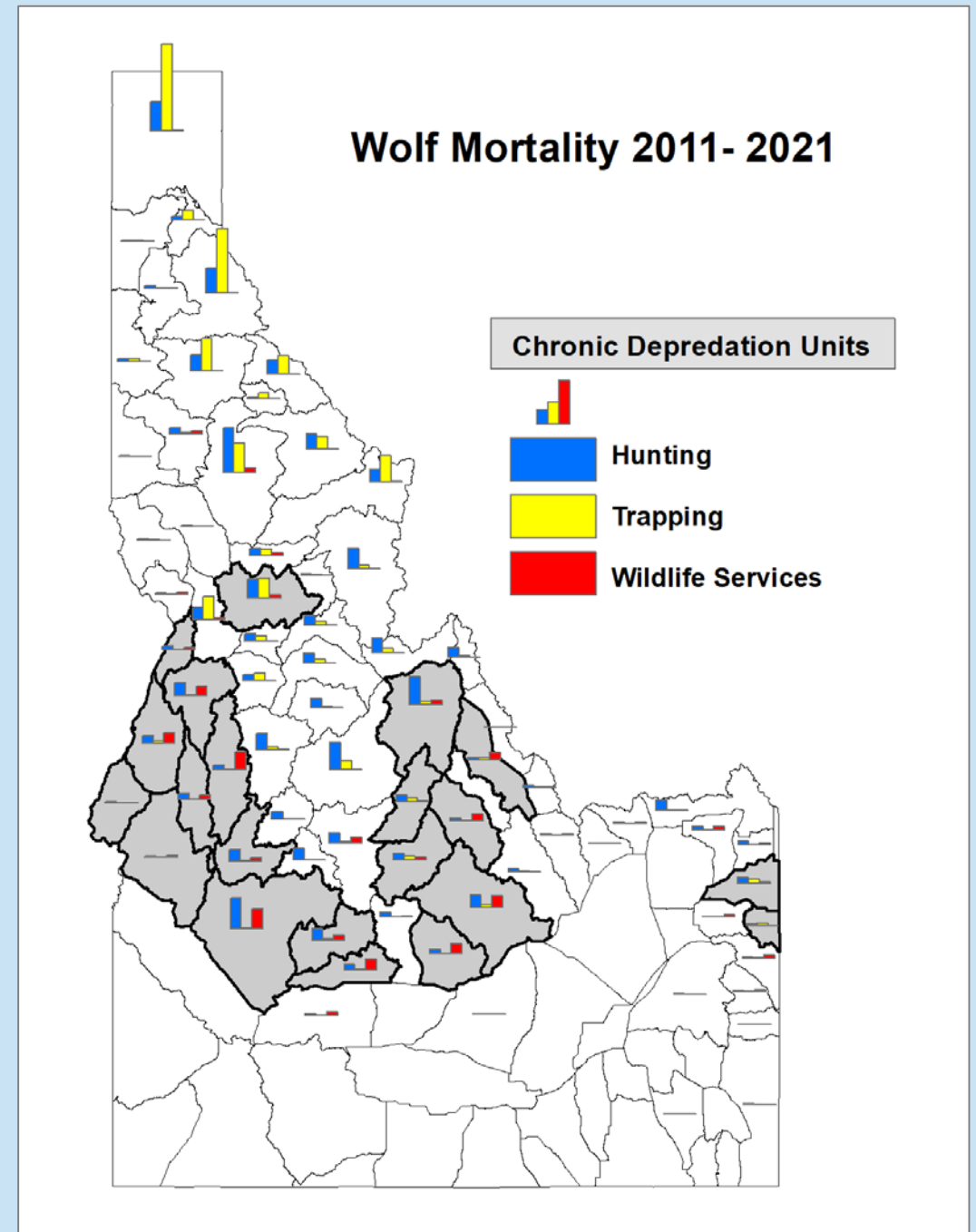
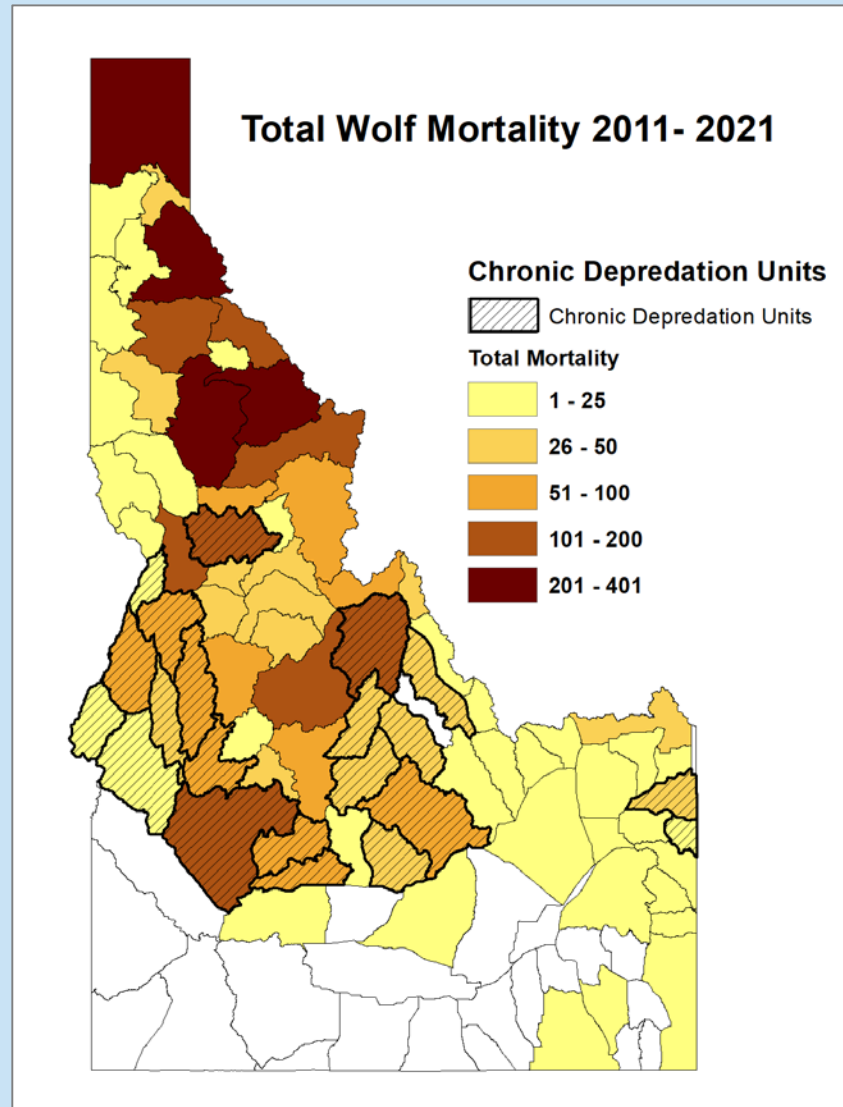
Total Wolf Mortality: Harvest Season: July 1 -June 30



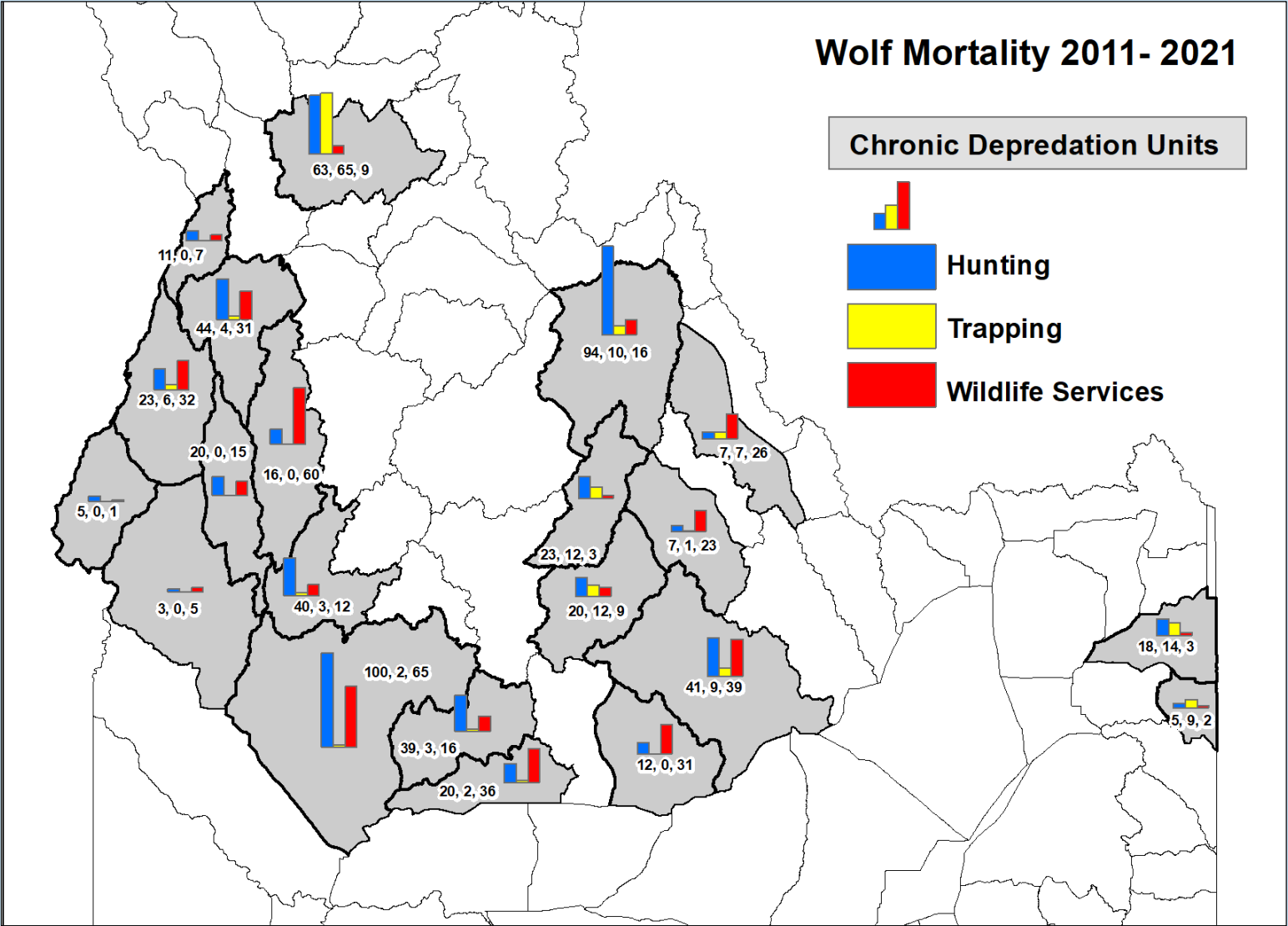
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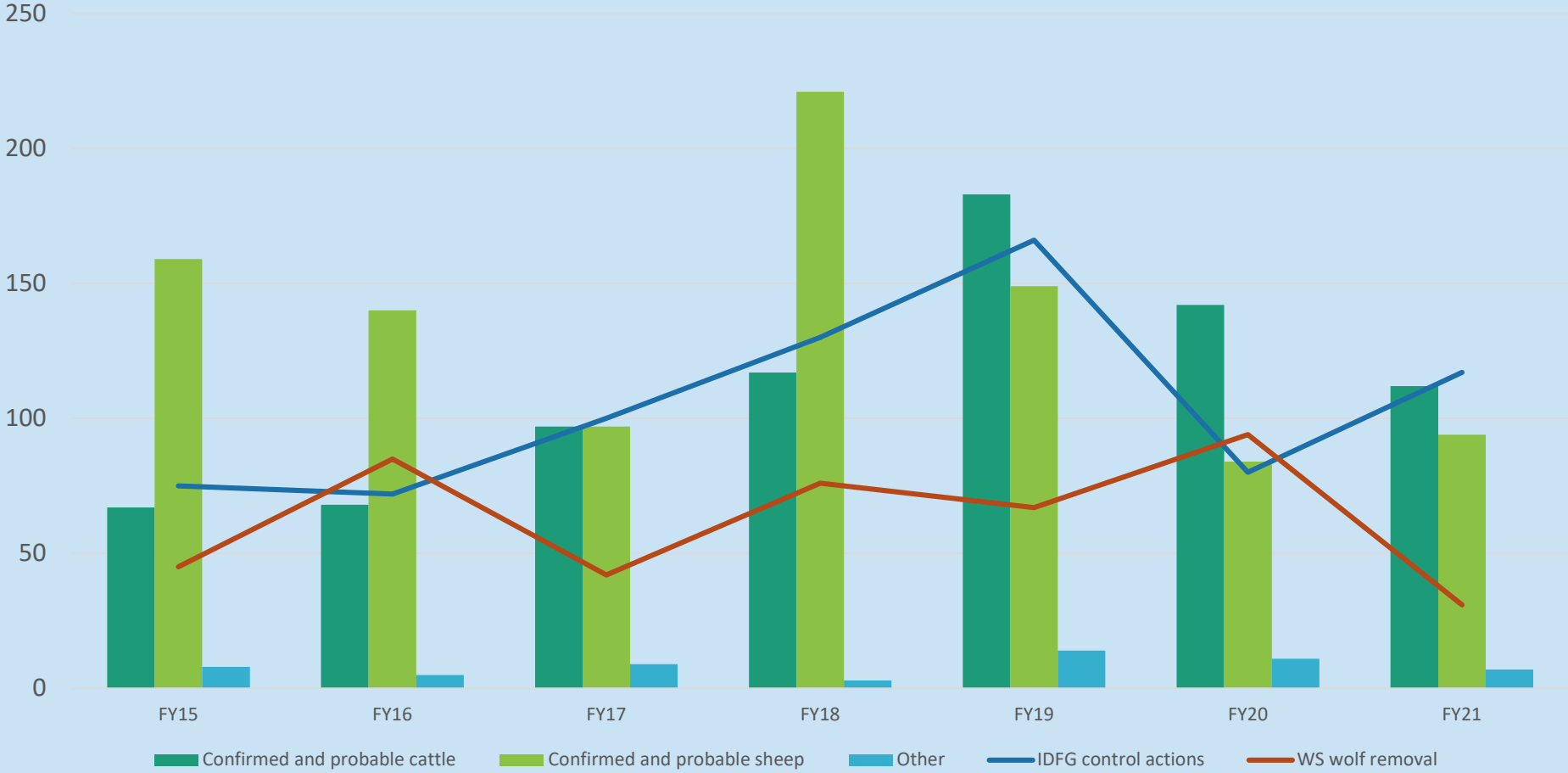
Wolf Mortality by GMU



Wolf Mortality by Chronic Depredation Units



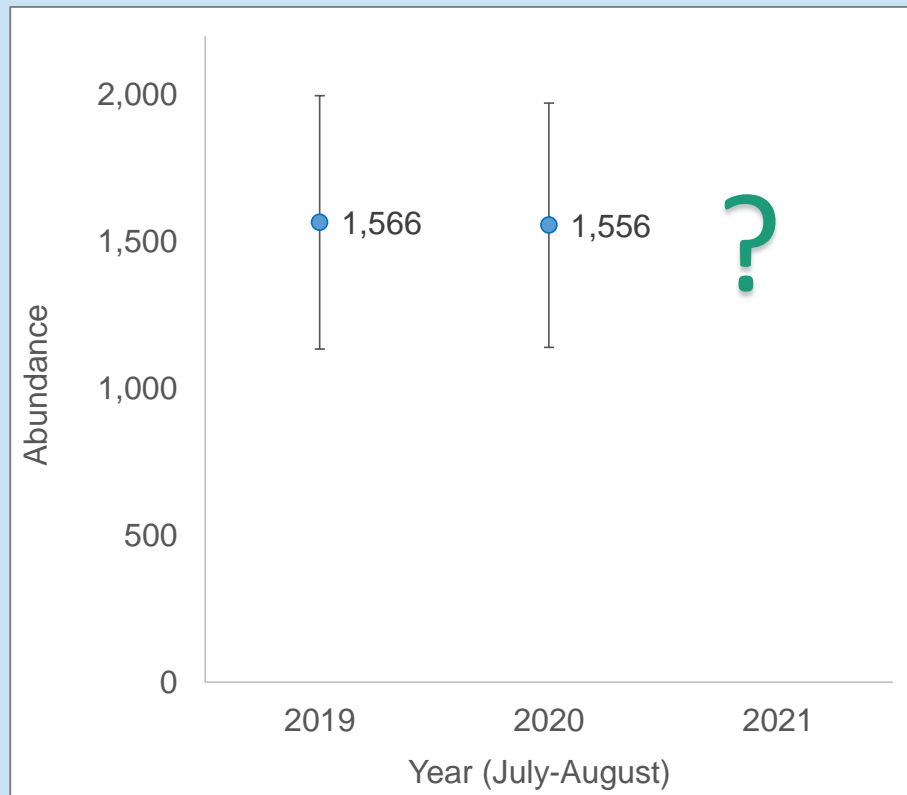
Idaho Wolf/Livestock Conflict & Control



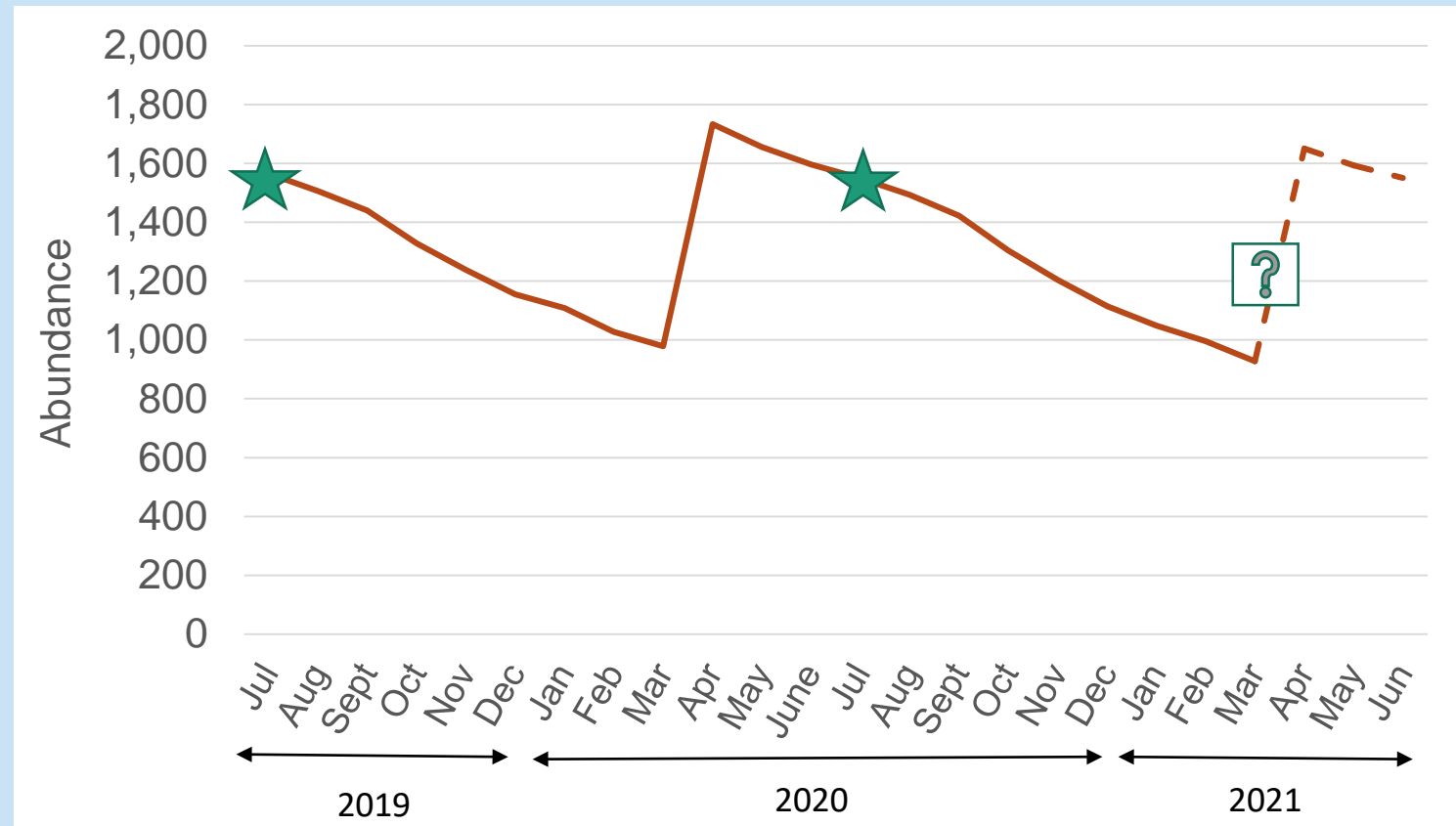
Statewide Wolf Abundance

2019 and 2020

Summer Abundance Estimate



Seasonal Changes in Abundance



Main provisions of S1211

- Wolf Depredation Control Board:
 - Establish Fish and Game contributions to Wolf Depredation Control Board (WDCB) at \$300,000 (increase of \$190,000)
 - Allow WDCB to enter agreements with private contractors (previously limited to other government agencies)
 - Extend the reporting time for wolves taken under a depredation kill permit from 10 days to 30 days (remains 10 days for general hunting and trapping)
 - WDCB is authorized to renew kill permits issued by the IDFG Director or transfer permit to a different contracting party
- Fish and Game Commission:
 - Allow “any method utilized for the take of any wild canine in Idaho shall be available for the taking of wolves”
 - Wolf trapping season shall be open year-round on all private property – subject to landowner permission
 - Only one type of wolf tag and it will be valid for hunting or trapping
 - No limit on the number of wolf tags that can be purchased (previously 15 trapping and 15 hunting, and hunting tags valid for trapping)
 - When wolves exceed the recovery goals of the Idaho wolf conservation and management plan the Director may issue kill permits for take of wolves in an effort to maintain a balance of all wildlife populations.

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Idaho State Senate

SENATOR STEVE VICK

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May 4, 2021

Mr. Brad Corkill
Chairman
Idaho Fish and Game Commission
2885 W Kathleen Ave
Coeur d'Alene Idaho 83815

Dear Chairman Corkill and members of the Fish and Game Commission,

After discussions with members of the cattle and sheep industry, sportsmen, and the bill sponsors, we would like to provide some clarity to the Idaho Fish and Game Commission regarding implementation of Senate Bill 1211. Should Governor Little sign the bill, we expect the Commission to maintain its discretion to differentiate between foothold traps and snares when setting trapping seasons for wolves across all land ownerships. In recent years, the Commission has closely monitored the timing and use of snares on both private and public land because of the potential impacts to non-target animals including hunting dogs and other pets, as well as ESA listed species. We expect this practice to continue.

Senate Bill 1211 recognizes the Commission's ability to set seasons on public land and amends Section 36-201(2) to state that any method of take available for wild canines (including snaring) "shall be available" for wolves. We intend this language to make available the utilization of both snares and foothold traps, but the Commission will retain the discretion to set trapping seasons for snares and foothold traps that are distinct from one another and from hunting seasons.

Additionally, as it relates to the amendments to Section 36-201(3), we similarly expect the Commission to have the necessary discretion to set shorter or different snaring seasons as long as the Commission maintains a year-round season for foothold traps on private property. Again, the independent management of wolf trapping seasons allows the Commission to appropriately manage risk to non-target animals, including dogs and ESA listed species (grizzly bears and lynx) in applicable game management units.

As Chairmen of the House and Senate Resource Committees, we will work with the Idaho Fish and Game Commission to ensure proper implementation of Senate Bill 1211 and consider potential clarifying amendments next legislative session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Vick".

Senator Steve Vick
Chair
Senate Resources and Environment Committee

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laurie Lickley".

Representative Laurie Lickley
Acting Chair
House Resources and Conservation Committee

cc:
Governor Brad Little
Ed Schriever, Director, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Temporary and proposed administrative rule changes necessary to implement “any method authorized for the take of wild canine in Idaho shall be available for wolf” in S1211

IDFG Chapter 8 – taking of big game animals (13.01.08.413) – we added 413.02 and 03 consistent with the take of coyote

413. EXCEPTIONS FOR METHODS OF TAKE AND SHOOTING HOURS FOR GRAY WOLF.

02. Exceptions for Methods of Take. The Commission may set seasons by proclamation for units in which the hunting or trapping of gray wolf is exempt from method of take restrictions for game animals contained in Section 36-1101, Idaho Code, or Sections 410 or 412 of these rules, where such restrictions do not apply to other wild canines. (7-1-21)T
03. Permits Involving Waiver of Official Shooting Hours. Where the Commission sets seasons pursuant to Section 413.02 of these rules, no person may hunt gray wolf by use of artificial light or otherwise outside of official shooting hours set by IDAPA 13.01.07.400, Rules Governing Taking of Wildlife, unless: (7-1-21)T
- a. On public land, that person has a valid permit from the Director and complies with any permit conditions. The Director may deny a person's application for such permit, limit the time or area for hunting, or impose other conditions for good cause, such as public safety or protection of other wildlife or property; or(7-1-21)T
 - b. On private land, that person is the owner of that land or has written authorization from the landowner or landowner's agent.

ISDA Chapter 3– Airborne Control of Unprotected or Predatory Animals Rules (02.01.03)

010. DEFINITIONS.

03. Predatory Animal. For the purpose of administering Section 22-102A, Idaho Code, predatory animals include (1) coyotes; (2) **wolves**; and (3) red fox. Red fox may be controlled in the areas where the Idaho Department of Fish and Game has established a year-round hunting season for red fox, and, in consultation with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, in specific areas, outside the areas where a year-round hunting season has been established, where red fox are causing predation problems

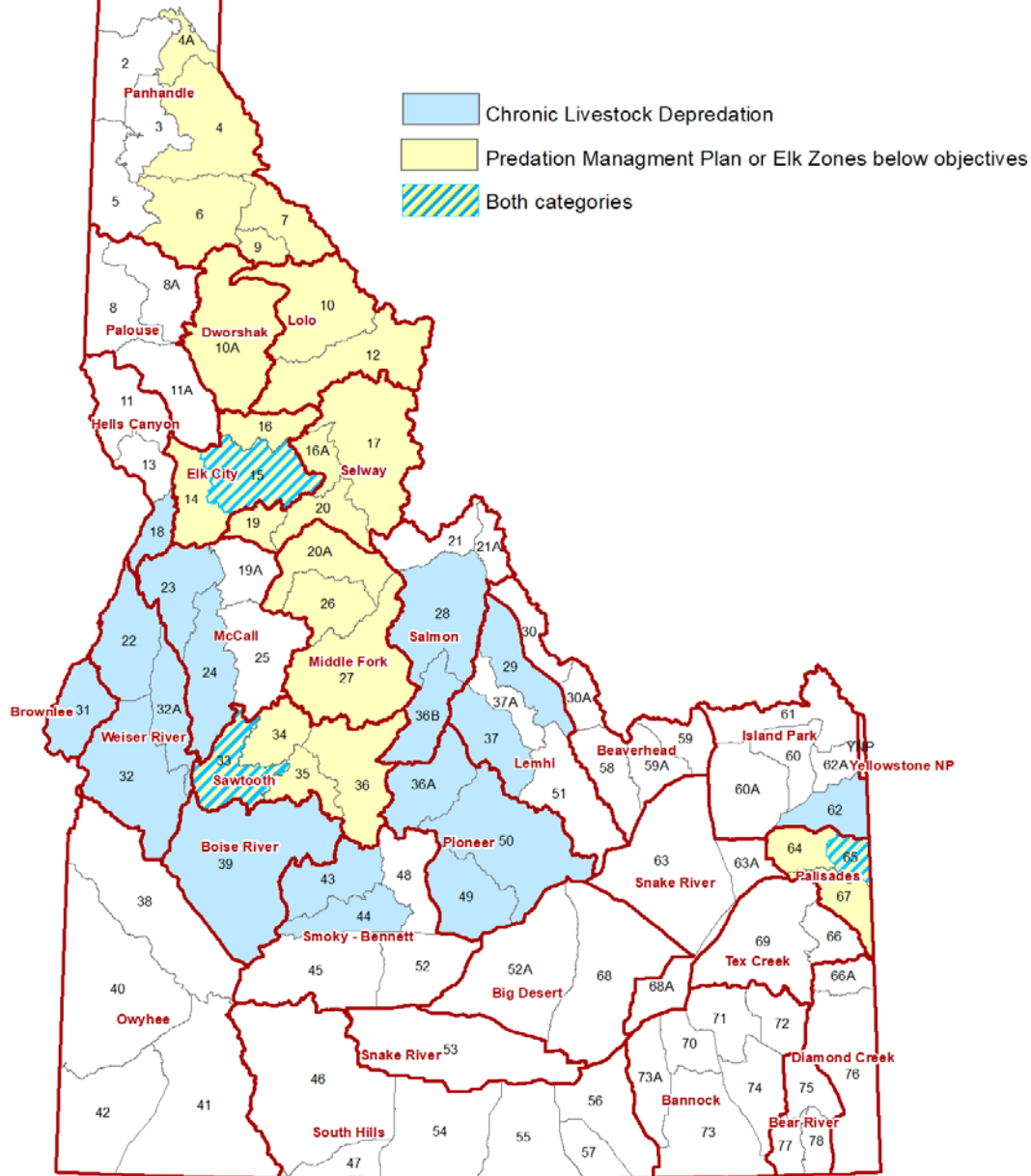
“methods available for other wild canids” described as “Expanded Methods of Take”

- No Fish and Game restrictions on hunting hours
 - Permit required on public land for after hours, including night vision/spotlight
- No Fish and Game restrictions associated with hunting from motor vehicles
- No Fish and game restrictions for hunting over bait
- No restrictions on the use of hunting dogs

Hunting and trapping framework

- Private Land - statewide
 - Hunting with “expanded methods of take” year-round
 - Foothold trapping year-round
 - Snaring remain as previously established by F&G Commission
- Public Land
 - Hunting
 - Seasons remain year-round in 82 game management units
 - “Expanded methods of take” seasons established in 43 of these units where elk populations are below objective, there is documented chronic livestock depredation, or both - from November 15 – March 31
 - Seasons remain 11 months long in 17 Game Management units
 - Trapping
 - Seasons remain as previously established by F&G Commission

Wolf Depredation and Predation Units



Underperforming Elk Populations

Below Elk Zone Population Objectives or
Predation Management Plan

Chronic Livestock Depredations

Units that have had at least 1 livestock
depredation 4 out of the last 5 years (confirmed or
probable)

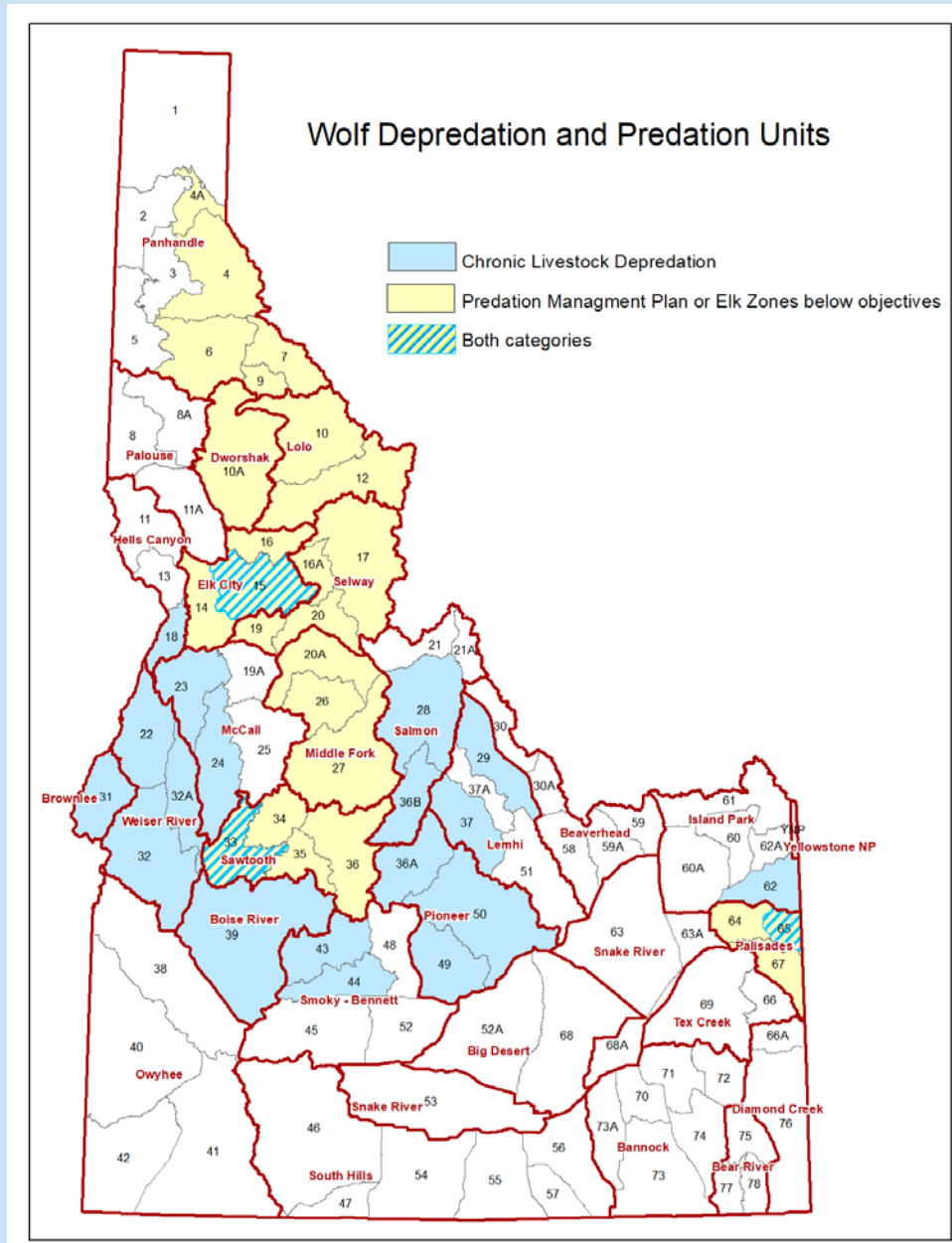
Changes related to wolf/livestock conflict management

- Department authorized “kill permits” allow livestock operator and their designated agents to utilize “expanded methods of take”, foothold traps and people authorized by ISDA under the Aerial Hunting Act.
- WDCB approved IDFG to develop a Cooperative Agreement for reimbursement of costs associated with harvesting wolves during open trapping and hunting seasons. The agreement prioritizes reimbursements in game management units with a history of chronic livestock depredations and secondary priority where elk populations are below management objectives. CA utilizes the additional revenue S1211 required F&G to contribute to WDCB activities.

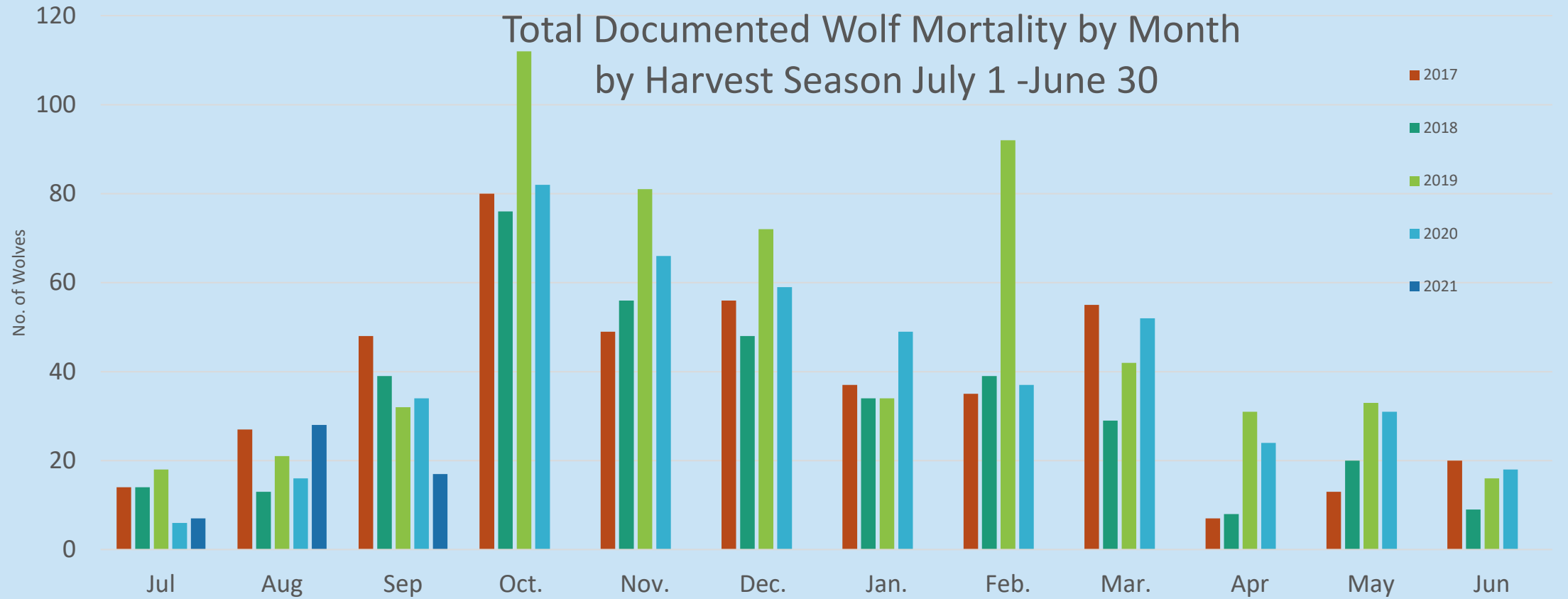
COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE FOUNDATION FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AND THE IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME (Approved by the Wolf Depredation Control Board)

THIS AGREEMENT (“Agreement”) is entered into by and between the Foundation for Wildlife Management, Inc. (“F4WM”), a nonprofit corporation, and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (“IDFG”). RECITALS WHEREAS, IDFG desires to achieve state wildlife management objectives through the use of legal wolf harvest to address areas of chronic livestock depredation by wolves and reduce wolf predation in units where it plays a role in elk populations not meeting objectives; WHEREAS, the Idaho Fish and Game Commission has identified up to \$200,000 of fish and game funding provided to the Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board as appropriate for expenditure via IDFG cooperative agreement for nonprofit organization reimbursement of hunters and trappers for expenses incurred during the legal harvest of wolves supporting wildlife management objectives in these areas; WHEREAS, F4WM is a nonprofit corporation that operates a program to reimburse expenses incurred during the legal harvest of wolves to promote effective participation of hunters and trappers in wolf management, subject to monetary limits established by F4WM based on wildlife management priorities and participation levels; NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the above-mentioned premises, IDFG and the F4WM hereby agree as follows: AGREEMENT A. IDFG agrees to: 1. Pay F4WM up to \$200,000 in state fiscal year 2022 (year ending June 30, 2022) to reimburse F4WM for its payments reimbursing hunters and trappers for expenses incurred in legal wolf harvest occurring from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 by licensed hunters and trappers in game management units, as specified on Attachment A, in compliance with the terms of this Agreement. The tiered priorities identified on Attachment A are units for which IDFG management emphasizes reducing predation on elk populations to meet management objectives and in where landowner/wolf conflicts are occurring

- Attachment A
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game Priorities for Expense Reimbursements
 - 1. (Highest Priority) Units with chronic wolf-caused livestock depredations: 15, 18, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 31, 32, 32A, 33, 36A, 36B, 37, 39, 43, 44, 49, 50, 62*, 65
 - 2. (Secondary Priority) Units with underperforming elk populations: 4, 4A, 6, 7, 9, 10, 10A, 12, 14, 15, 16, 16A, 17, 19, 20, 20A, 26, 27, 33, 34, 35, 36, 64, 65, 67
 - *In unit 62, IDFG will pay F4WM for expense reimbursement only for lawful harvest occurring via trapping from November 15 to March 31; in Unit 62 IDFG will pay F4WM for expense reimbursement for lawful harvest via hunting during any open hunting season



Total Documented Wolf Mortality by Month by Harvest Season July 1 -June 30



2021 updated through September 9

Month

Conflict management - July 1 – to Sept 9

45 cattle – confirmed or probable

36 sheep – confirmed or probable

1 “other” - confirmed or probable

49 control actions/kill permits authorized by IDFG

21 wolves removed by Wildlife Services

Legal/Administrative Challenges

- Two petitions to U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to relist wolves under the ESA
- USFWS made a “90-day” finding that the petitions presented “substantial scientific or commercial information” that re-listing of wolves may be warranted based on 2021 legislative changes to Idaho and Montana state regulatory mechanisms
 - IDFG disagrees with this conclusion, but it’s not a determination that can be challenged in court since there’s no final federal action
- USFWS will conduct 12-month status review to determine whether or not listing of wolves as a Northern Rocky Mountain distinct population segment or a more expansive Western U.S. DPS (CA, CO, ID, MT, OR, WA, WY and northern Arizona) is warranted
- USFWS will also review threats to wolves from habitat modification, disease, and loss of genetic diversity
- If USFWS determines listing is warranted, USFWS may proceed with a proposed rule to re-list wolves)

U.S. Fish & Wildlife 9/10/2021 Determination:

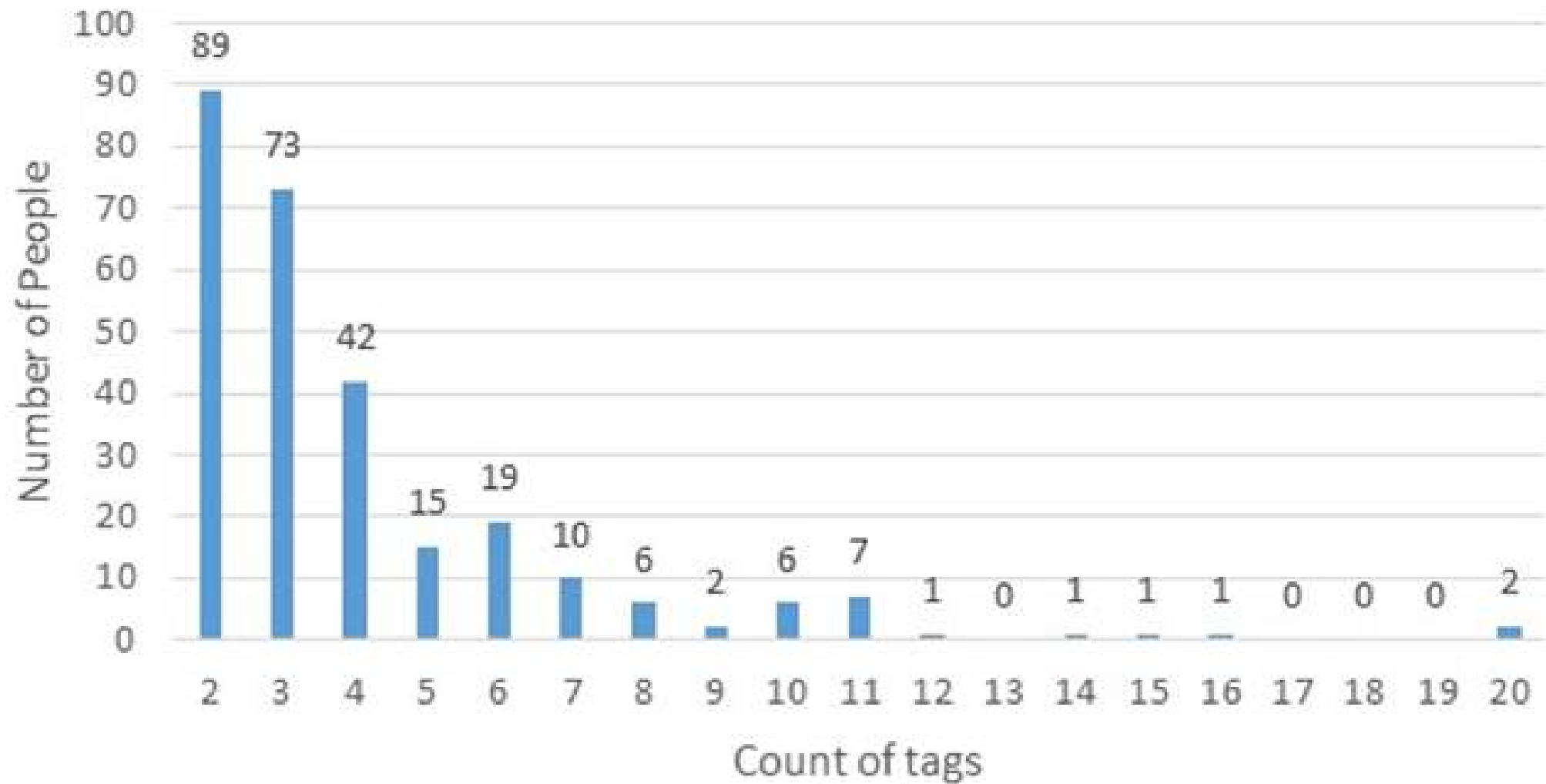
“The petitioners present credible and substantial information that human-caused mortality (Factor B) may be a potential threat to the species in Idaho and Montana. These two States currently include approximately 75 percent of gray wolves that would be included in a Northern Rocky Mountains or Western DPS. The petitioners also provide credible information that new regulations in these two States may be inadequate to address this potential threat (Factor D). Therefore, the petitions present substantial information indicating that one or more of the petitioned entities may warrant listing. We will evaluate these and all other potential threats in detail based on the best scientific and commercial data available when we conduct the status assessment and make the 12-month finding.”

Legal/Administrative Challenges

- **Earthjustice 60-day Notice for ESA Citizen Suit** against state of Idaho officials, alleging ESA violations for incidental take of grizzly bear and lynx resulting from passage of S.B. 1211 (IDFG sent response on 9/22 explaining why such suit would be speculative and inappropriate)
- **Earthjustice Petition to Forest Service** to issue administrative restrictions / closures for wilderness in Montana and Idaho based on 2021 legislation (no set timeframe for Forest Service response)
- **Center for Biological Diversity Requested Review of Idaho's Eligibility for receipt of federal Pittman-Robertson/Dingell-Johnson excise tax funds** (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined enactment of S1211 did not effect PR/DJ eligibility)

Questions?

of wolf tags (Hunt & Trap) in 2020



Harvest Season 2020: Wolf harvest per individual

