



C. L. "BUTCH" OTTER
GOVERNOR

September 27, 2010

Idaho County Commissioners
320 West Main Street, Room 5
Grangeville, ID 83530

RE: Disaster Declaration No. 2010-130

Dear Commissioners,

I have received your request for a disaster declaration dated September 16, 2010. I understand and share your frustration about wolves. No one was more disappointed than I was with the federal judge's decision to end state management. Idaho proved during delisting that we are responsible stewards of our wildlife and very capable of managing wolves.

Even though I share your frustration and the frustration of many Idahoans, I cannot approve the use of state resources in support of your county declaration. Granting your request would not overturn federal protection for wolves under the ESA or change the status of the species. The State, through the Idaho Fish and Game Commission, can classify the species only upon delisting. However, you will see below that we already have or are in the process of attaining the authority you requested in order address wolves and the unacceptable impacts they are having on ungulates, livestock and people in Idaho County and across the state.

In your declaration you specifically reference concerns about public safety. Please be aware that you have always been able to kill a wolf in self defense or in the defense of other humans. That has not changed, nor is a disaster declaration necessary for you to protect yourselves and loved ones from wolves.

You also reference the need for state and federal resources under a disaster declaration to address livestock depredations. You should know that livestock owners already are allowed to kill wolves that are attacking (killing, wounding, or biting) or in the act of attacking (actively chasing, molesting, harassing) their livestock, stock animals and dogs. Additionally, livestock owners can get a "shoot-on-sight" permit for chronic depredations. In 2010, there were six confirmed livestock depredations, two probable and one possible depredation reported in Idaho County. All Idaho County livestock depredation claims which occurred before September 10, 2010, should have been submitted to Defenders of Wildlife and those after that date can be submitted for payment under the state compensation plan.

I remain committed to reducing livestock depredations through existing and expanded means. I have asked Cal Groen, director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), to make this an immediate priority and work with Wildlife Services to that end.

I also am committed to reducing depredations on our wildlife. I agree with you that the state needs additional flexibility to address the devastating impacts that wolves are having on our ungulate herds.

You should know that IDFG submitted an application on September 24, 2010 to kill wolves in the Lolo Elk Management Zone because of the unacceptable impacts they are having on elk. I also am seeking the same flexibility for all areas of Idaho through the Secretary of Interior.

Emotions and frustration are running high, but we cannot lose focus on our goal – restoring State management under our approved plan as quickly as possible. I want the people of Idaho County and our entire state to know that this is one of my top priorities. Until we reach our goal, I will continue focusing on increased flexibility for the State to address the unacceptable impacts that wolves are having on our ungulate herds, increased federal funding and providing clarity about the State's role in the interim until the species is rightfully delisted again.

As Always – Idaho, “Esto Perpetua”

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C.L. Butch Otter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "C.L." being more distinct than the last name "Otter".

C.L. “Butch” Otter
Governor of Idaho