

protection for the gray wolf. However, the GLIFWC's Voigt Task Force, representing the off-reservation treaty-reserved fish, wildlife, and gathering rights of 11 tribes in the Midwest, supports the reclassification to threatened status and the accompanying increased flexibility provided by the special regulation that will now apply to the growing wolf populations in Michigan and Wisconsin. Although few if any tribes are likely to take depredating wolves under the new regulations, they appreciate being granted these authorities (Schlender *in litt.* 2000).

The lands of national forests, and the prey species found in their various habitats, are important to wolf conservation and recovery in the western Great Lakes States. There are six national forests in that area that have resident wolves. Their wolf populations range from 3 on the Nicolet National Forest in northeastern Wisconsin to an estimated 300–400 on the Superior National Forest in northeastern Minnesota. The land base of the Chequamegon National Forest currently is used by nearly half of the wolves in Wisconsin. All of these national forests are operated in conformance with standards and guidelines in their management plans that follow the recommendations of the 1992 Recovery Plan for the Eastern Timber Wolf (Service 1992a). Reclassification to threatened status is not expected to change these standards and guidelines; in fact, the gray wolf is expected to remain classified as a sensitive species by the Regional Forester for U.S. Forest Service Region 9 at least for 5 years even after Federal delisting (Steve Mighton, U.S. Forest Service, pers. comm. 1998). This continuation of current national forest management practices will be an important factor in ensuring the long-term viability of gray wolf populations in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

Gray wolves regularly use four units of the National Park System in the western Great Lakes States and may occasionally use three or four other units. Although the National Park Service (NPS) has participated in the development of some of the State wolf management plans in this area, NPS is not bound by those plans. Instead, the NPS Organic Act and the NPS Management Policy on Wildlife give the agency a separate responsibility to conserve natural and cultural resources and the wildlife present within the parks. National Park Service management policies require that native species be protected against harvest, removal, destruction, harassment, or harm through human action, so

management emphasis will continue to minimize the human impacts on wolf populations. Thus, because of their responsibility to preserve all wildlife, units of the National Park System can be more protective of wildlife than are State plans and regulations. In the case of the gray wolf, the NPS Organic Act and NPS policies will continue to provide protection to the wolf even after Federal delisting has occurred.

Voyageurs National Park, along Minnesota's northern border, has a land base of nearly 882 sq km (340 sq mi). Unpublished data from a 4-year wolf study indicate that there are a minimum of 6 to 9 packs that have at least a portion of their territory within the park. Management and protection of wolves within the park is not expected to change significantly after they are reclassified to threatened or even if delisted. Temporary closures around wolf denning and rendezvous sites will be enacted whenever they are discovered in Voyageurs National Park to reduce human disturbance. Sport harvest of wolves within the park will be prohibited, regardless of what may be allowed beyond park boundaries in future years. If there is a need to control depredating wolves (unlikely due to the current absence of agricultural activities adjacent to the park) the park will work with the State to conduct control activities outside the park to resolve the problem (Barbara West, Voyageurs National Park, *in litt.* 1999).

The wolf population in Isle Royale National Park is described above (see the *Recovery Progress of the Eastern Gray Wolf* section above). The NPS has indicated that it will continue to closely monitor and study these wolves, but at this time it does not plan to take any special measures to ensure their continued existence, regardless of their status under the Act. This wolf population is very small and isolated from the remainder of the western Great Lakes population; it is not considered to be significant to the recovery or long-term viability of the gray wolf (Service 1992a).

Two other units of the National Park System—Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore and St. Croix National Scenic Riverway—are regularly used by wolf packs. Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore is a narrow strip of land along Michigan's Lake Superior Shoreline; it contains wolves during the nonwinter months when deer populations are high. The Lakeshore intends to protect denning and rendezvous sites at least as strictly as the MI DNR Plan recommends (Brian Kenner, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, *in litt.* 1998). The St. Croix

National Scenic Riverway, in Wisconsin and Minnesota, is also a mostly linear ownership, and it makes up portions of the territories of 3 to 5 packs of 10 to 40 wolves. The Riverway is likely to limit public access to denning and rendezvous sites, and to follow other management and protective practices outlined in the respective State wolf management plans (Robin Maercklein, St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, *in litt.* 1998).

In the western Great Lakes area, we currently manage seven units within the National Wildlife Refuge System with wolf activity. Primary among these are Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and Tamarac NWR in Minnesota, as well as Seney NWR in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Agassiz NWR has had as many as 20 wolves in 2 or 3 packs in recent years. Mange and illegal shootings reduced them to 5 wolves in a single pack and a separate single wolf in 1999, but in 2001, 2 packs with an estimated 11 members were using the refuge. Tamarac NWR has 2 packs, with approximately 18 wolves, using that refuge. Seney NWR currently has two packs, with a total of 4 wolves in the packs, plus several lone wolves also frequenting the refuge. Rice Lake NWR, in Minnesota, had 1 or 2 packs using the refuge in 2001. Late in the winter of 1998–99 a pair of gray wolves were located on Necedah NWR. By winter 2001–2002, there were 2 packs on the Refuge, with a total of at least 7 wolves in the packs. Sherburne NWR and Crane Meadows NWR, also in Minnesota, each have several individual wolves, but probably lack established wolf packs.

Gray wolves occurring on National Wildlife Refuges in the western Great Lakes States will be monitored, and refuge habitat management actions will maintain the current prey base for them while they are listed as threatened, and for a minimum of 5 years following any future delisting. Trapping or hunting by government trappers in response to depredation complaints will not be authorized on these refuges. However, because of the relatively small size of these NWRs, most, perhaps all, of these packs and individual wolves spend significant amounts of time off of these NWRs.

The extra protection afforded to resident and transient wolves, their den and rendezvous sites, and their prey by six national forests, two National Parks, and numerous National Wildlife Refuges in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan will further ensure the continuing recovery of wolves in the three States.