

# WOLF PLAN AT A GLANCE

## BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) published the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the *Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (WCMP)* on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Seventeen citizens were selected to participate in the Wolf Working Group which assisted the WDFW in putting together this document; the members came from various backgrounds and locations around the state and included ranchers, biologists, and conservation group representatives among others. The first draft was released in August 2008 and underwent scientific peer review which ultimately resulted in the current draft.

Though grey wolves were once prevalent in Washington, they had largely disappeared by the 1930s due to trapping, hunting and poisoning. They have been classified as endangered in Washington on the Federal level since 1973 and on the state level since 1980. While individual wolves have been seen in Washington since then, the “Lookout Pack” in Okanogan county, verified as pure wolf in July 2008, is the first confirmed breeding pair in the state in over 70 years. Another breeding pair was found in Pend Oreille County in 2009. The Eastern third of Washington was delisted in 2009 under federal law, but remains listed under state law.

## GOALS AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to develop a comprehensive plan for the management of wolves in Washington. While the current population of wolves is small, it is expected to increase as a result of wolves from Idaho, Montana and British Columbia migrating into the state.

The four primary goals of the WCMP are to:

- Re-establish a self-sustaining and geographically diverse wolf population
- Manage the conflicts between wolves, livestock and domestic animals
- Manage ungulate populations to allow for continued hunting opportunities while ensuring adequate prey for the wolves
- Foster social tolerance for wolves through education on conservation and management.

The WCMP considers a viable population of wolves one that is able to sustain its size, geographic distribution, and genetic variation for more than 100 years without human interference. In addition, the WCMP will outline the necessary population and dispersion of wolves for downlisting and delisting. Public comments will be accepted on the WCMP through January 8, 2010.

## PROPOSED PLANS AND ALTERNATIVES

Four alternatives were developed, they differ primarily in the geographic distribution that is necessary, the number of recovery areas, compensation for livestock killed by wolves, and management options for addressing conflicts between wolves, livestock and domestic dogs. The second alternative has been identified as the preferred option. All alternatives require 15 breeding pairs in the state before delisting could occur and all provide translocation as a management tool.

### ALTERNATIVE ONE

*This alternative has lower protection, restoration, and geographic distribution requirements, more aggressive control strategies and a smaller compensation package relative to the other options.*

#### Population and Distribution

- This alternative sets the lowest standard for statewide distribution, with a reduced emphasis on the South Cascades. Only 2 breeding pairs would be required in the South Cascades/Northwest Coast region before delisting, as compared to 5 breeding pairs in the preferred alternative.
- There are no separate recovery objectives for the coast region in this alternative.

#### Control Strategy

- This alternative would allow non-lethal harassment during all status levels and lethal control by livestock owners when wolves reach threatened status.
- Wolves in the act of attacking livestock could be killed during any status. If the wolf is attacking a domestic dog on private land it can be killed once in threatened status and on public or private land when they are delisted.

#### Compensation

- This alternative has the smallest compensation package and would only apply to livestock killed on private lands. Deaths confirmed to be caused by wolves would receive full value, and half value would be offered for probable deaths.

#### Ungulate Management

- Harvest sizes wouldn't be altered to benefit the wolves, and ungulates would be managed by improving their habitat and reducing illegal hunting.
- After wolves are classified as sensitive, and if research shows that wolves are a limiting factor for ungulate populations that are below the optimum herd objectives, then control measures including relocation and lethal control could be used.

### ALTERNATIVE TWO (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)

*This alternative looks for moderate geographic distribution, includes lethal and non-lethal control strategies and has a large compensation package.*

#### Population and Distribution

- 3 Recovery Regions: Eastern Washington, Northern Cascades, and Southern Cascades/Northwest Coast
- Requires 6 successful breeding pairs to be downlisted to threatened.
  - 2 in each of the 3 recovery regions
- Requires 12 successful breeding pairs to be downlisted to sensitive.
  - 2 in Eastern Washington, 2 in Northern Cascades, 5 in Southern Cascades/Northwest Coast, and 3 more anywhere in the state
- Requires 15 successful breeding pairs to be delisted and allows translocation of wolves from one region to another.
  - 2 in Eastern Washington, 2 in Northern Cascades, 5 in Southern Cascades/ Northwest Coast and 6 more anywhere in the state.

#### Lethal and Non-lethal Control

- Non-lethal control will be allowed with permit/training during all statuses
- Lethal control will be permitted by state/federal agents during all statuses and by livestock owners with a permit on private lands and public grazing allotments after wolves reach sensitive status.
- Lethal take is allowed when wolves are attacking livestock once they reach threatened status. When the attack is on domestic dogs, lethal action is allowed on private land once wolves are classified as sensitive and on both private and public land when wolves are delisted.

#### Compensation (public and private land)

- For livestock that is confirmed to have been killed by wolves the owner would receive twice the full value of the animal on grazing sites of 100 acres or more, and full value on sites less than 100 acres.
- Livestock deaths that are suspected to be caused by wolves would receive full value on grazing sites of 100 acres or more, and half the value on sites less than 100 acres.

#### Preventive Measures for Livestock Protection

- Wolf specialists hired by the WDFW would provide training to livestock owners to implement wolf deterrents

#### Ungulate Management

- Habitat improvement, harvest management, and efforts to reduce illegal hunting would be used to protect ungulate populations
- After wolves are delisted, if it is determined that wolves are a limiting factor for at-risk ungulate populations then management of the problem could include moving the wolves, lethal control, or other control techniques

- If research shows wolves aren't reaching their recovery potential due to lack of prey, then harvest levels will be managed in such a way as to benefit the wolves.

#### ALTERNATIVE THREE

*This option provides has a “higher probability of achieving and maintaining a long-term viable wolf population in Washington compared to the other alternatives.” It includes a fourth recovery region in the Pacific Coast, is the most conservative in managing conflicts with livestock, and offers the largest compensation package. Conservation Northwest supports this alternative with the addition that a higher number of breeding pairs should be achieved before delisting.*

#### Population and Distribution

- This alternative would require that there are three breeding pairs in the Willapa Hills and/or the Olympic Peninsula before a delisting could occur.
- Total number of breeding pairs required to be distributed across the state before delisting could occur are the same as other alternatives (fifteen).

#### Control Strategy

- This alternative would only allow non-lethal harassment and lethal control once wolves reached sensitive status.
- Wolves attacking livestock could be killed when classified as sensitive. When attacking domestic dogs on either public or private land they could be killed once delisted.

#### Compensation

- This alternative has the most generous compensation package and would offer twice the full value of any confirmed livestock kills, regardless of parcel size on both private and public lands. The full value would be offered for livestock kills that are probably caused by wolves.

#### Ungulate Management

- Harvest sizes would be managed until wolves in the area reached their recovery goals. Habitat improvement and reduction of illegal hunting would also take place.
- After wolves are delisted, non-lethal control or relocation could take place if wolves are considered a limiting factor for at-risk ungulate populations.

#### ALTERNATIVE FOUR

*This alternative would continue with the current management by using the restoration programs that are already in place and wouldn't involve developing a conservation and management plan at the present time.*