

Ranchers say wolf attacks resume in Washington state

No confirmation from WDFW

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

Two Washington cattlemen said Tuesday that wolves have resumed attacking cattle grazing in the northeast corner of the state, where depredations last summer led state wildlife managers to cull a wolfpack.

Ferry County, Wash., rancher Arron Scotten said he found the remains of a calf Monday evening that had apparently been killed by wolves. He said he found bones nearby of a second calf, but too little of it may remain for a state Department of Fish and Wildlife investigator to attribute the attack to wolves.

The calves belonged to the Diamond M Ranch and were grazing near the boundary between private and Bureau of



Courtesy of WDFW

A wolf leaves after being captured and collared by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in northeast Washington. A range rider found two dead calves Monday in an area that is known for wolf attacks.

Land Management lands.

They are also near the location where WDFW last year shot seven wolves from the Profanity Peak pack to stop depredations. Four pack members survived.

Efforts to reach WDFW officials were not immediately successful Tuesday.

WDFW has said it will issue monthly reports on wolf activities and provide other updates on depredations, but

has not committed to reporting depredations within a certain time frame.

The attack, if confirmed by WDFW, would be the first official depredation this year, though Diamond M co-owner Justin Hedrick said he believes wolves already have killed four of his cattle, including two on private land a couple of weeks ago.

Hedrick said the depredations continue a pattern of attacks that began several years ago, though the attacks are beginning earlier than in previous grazing seasons.

"I honestly thought we were going to have a little bit of a reprieve this year," Hedrick said. "As soon as the cattle came back, boom, they were hit."

Hedrick said he believes the wolves have become too numerous and too habituated to eating cattle and have too little prey to be deterred by non-lethal measures.

Scotten, who is also a range

rider, said he was checking Monday evening on cattle grazing in the Lambert Creek area of Ferry County because radio-collar data showed a male wolf was near the livestock. WSDA traps and fits wolves with tracking collars and shares the information with ranchers.

"The cattle were acting really strange. They were pretty fidgety," Scotten said.

Scotten said he found the calf bones, walked the area and found the carcass of the second calf nearby. "There was actually quite a bit left that showed lacerations and punctures," he said.

Scotten said he camped out overnight to keep scavengers from eating the evidence. WDFW investigators place high importance on finding flesh damage to confirm that an animal was killed by wolves.

A WDFW investigator arrived early in the morning. According to WDFW policy, investigators will deter-

mine whether the calves were killed by wolves. Scotten and Hedrick said the department should allow investigators to tell ranchers at the scene about their conclusions to bolster confidence in the investigations.

It's unclear which pack may have attacked the calves found dead Monday. Scotten said he was checking on radio collar data from a male wolf in the Sherman pack.

The pack's territory, however, adjoins the Profanity Peak pack's territory.

The Sherman pack was formed last year when a female from the Profanity Peak pack began traveling with a male wolf, according to WDFW.

According to WDFW, the state shoots wolves to stop pack behavior. WDFW will consider lethal control after three depredations within 30 days or four within 10 months by a wolfpack.

Farmers, foresters seek urban allies in Oregon's Lane County

Group hosts events, tours aimed at bridging urban-rural divide

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**
Capital Press

With roughly 60 percent of its population living on 1 percent of its land base, Lane County typifies the disconnect between Oregon's urban and rural areas.

However, residents of the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area can hardly be blamed for misconceptions they may have about agriculture and forestry, said farmer Marie Bowers.

"We can't expect people to learn if we're not willing to share," she said.

Bowers and others hope to demystify the county's natural resources industry through Lane Families for Farms and Forests, a nonprofit aimed at creating allies across the urban-rural divide.

The group organizes events where farmers and foresters can share a meal with members of community organizations and other Lane



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Forestland manager Gordon Culbertson speaks about logging operations with farmer Marie Bowers. The two are leaders of Lane Families for Farms and Forests, a nonprofit group aimed at building connections with urban allies.

County residents, with the objective of building goodwill over the long term.

To add some entertainment value to education, participants compete in a natural resource-related trivia contest.

"I was skeptical about how many people would enjoy it, but it was a hit," said Bowers, the group's chairwoman.

By establishing trust, organizers believe Lane Families for Farms and Forests can be more effective in

dispelling misapprehensions than by simply reacting to controversies and emergencies.

"Our goal is to be a resource for people," Bowers said.

"A go-to group where if people have a question about an issue, they know to call us," added Gordon Culbertson, a forestland manager and the group's vice chairman.

The group plans to host tours of farming and timber operations to explain com-

mon practices and outline the regulations, such as the Oregon Forest Practices Act, they must follow.

The fear of pesticides is common among urbanites, who often don't understand that farmers and foresters

want to save money by reducing chemical usage, Bowers said.

"Immediately they think 'poison,'" she said. "It's the dose that makes the poison."

Likewise, major timber companies are often viewed less sympathetically than small woodland owners, but in reality, the larger outfits own sawmills and other necessary infrastructure, said Culbertson.

"Those big companies are tremendously important to small woodland owners," he said.

While it was once common for Oregon residents to have friends and family involved in natural resource industries, they're now remote for many people, said Scott Dahlman, policy director for the Oregonians for Food and Shelter agribusiness group.

"We've gotten to a situation where more Oregon citizens don't have that con-

nection to agriculture and forestry," he said.

Lane Families for Farms and Forests will help rekindle those relationships, Dahlman said.

Those connections may turn out to be significant in looming political battles, such as a proposed ballot initiative to ban aerial herbicide spraying in Lane County. Supporters are currently gathering signatures to get the measure before voters in 2018.

Such proposals tend to stir up negative emotions over natural resource industries, said Bowers. "Hopefully, we can change the narrative of what's happening."

People should realize that violations are rare and most farmers and foresters support Oregon's regulatory oversight of spray applications, said Culbertson.

"We live out in the country where we use these things," said Bowers.

Idaho rivers declining, but flood concerns persist

By **JOHN O'CONNELL**
Capital Press

BOISE — Idaho water managers say low- and mid-elevation mountain snowpack has melted throughout the state and many rivers are receding from their peak levels, but flooding concerns still remain.

For irrigators, this summer's outlook promises prolonged availability of natural-flow water, which officials say should also lead to strong reservoir carryover into the next season.

May was only the second month of the water year — in addition to November — to bring below-normal precipitation, ranging from 45 percent of normal in the Upper Snake to 90 percent of normal in the Big Wood.

The dry May — coupled with cool spells that followed any periods of hot weather — eased pressure from high flows in communities coping with flooding, according to USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Nonetheless, flood-control releases damaged property along the Boise River, and recent storms have water levels temporarily on the rise again.

Gina Baltrusch, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers district based in Walla Walla, Wash., said releases from Lucky Peak Reservoir were reduced by 1,250 cubic feet per second over a 48-hour period through the morning of June 13.

She explained a recent shift toward cooler weather slowed the snowmelt enough to accommodate reservoir inflows, and with heavy rains arriving on June 12-13, the Corps was concerned about further flooding in downstream communities. Even with the reduction



John O'Connell/Capital Press

The Big Wood River spills over its banks near Hailey, Idaho, on June 7. Officials say the Big Wood's peak flows have passed, though there's been considerable flood damage to property.

in flows, the Boise River was still at 8,250 cfs, compared to a flood-stage level of 7,000 cfs. The three reservoirs in the Boise system were 96 percent full on June 13.

Baltrusch said emergency managers will soon send letters to levee owners informing them of a July 31 deadline to apply with the Corps for assistance toward repairs. The levees must be enrolled in the Corps' levee safety management program to be eligible.

Extreme flooding also damaged basements and canal infrastructure and forced road closures along the Big Wood River near Hailey. According to the National Weather Service, the Big Wood recently dropped slightly below flood stage but was predicted to rise again to slightly above flood stage by June 15, due to the rainfall.

The National Weather Service also predicted the Payette River near Emmett would rise just above flood stage following the rains.

Ron Abramovich, Idaho's NRCS water supply specialist, said snowpacks are still well above average in the high country, with the Snake

River Basin snowpack above Palisades Reservoir at 285 percent of normal.

Abramovich said several streams are setting daily records for high flows, with streamflows ranging from average to 125 percent of average in Northern Idaho and 150 to 300 percent of average elsewhere in the state.

In the Upper Snake, flows into Palisades Reservoir peaked at 43,600 cfs on June 6 and have begun diminishing, dropping to 31,500 cfs by June 13.

Tony Olenichak, program manager for the Upper Snake water district, said flood-control releases from Palisades were increased by 2,000 cfs to 24,000 cfs on June 13 because of the storms.

With the Upper Snake reservoir system at 92.4 percent full, he said water managers should be able to top off the system without any flooding risk.

Olenichak added that water has been spilling past Milner Dam, where it can't be put to beneficial use, since June 8, bringing a water right for Upper Snake aquifer recharge back into priority.



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