

# Washington

## Ranchers plead guilty to gun charges

Couple and their two grown sons could face as much as a year in prison



Terry and Mary Hunt

By DAN WHEAT  
Capital Press

SPOKANE — A former master of the Washington State Grange and his wife, who is a former Douglas County commissioner, and their two sons have pleaded guilty to federal charges related to illegally buying and selling firearms.

Terry Hunt was Grange master for many years and his wife, Mary, was a Republican county commissioner from 1998 to 2010. Both are 72. They operate a wheat and cattle ranch with their sons, Rusty, 52, and Derek, 47, at Sims Corner, east of Mansfield in northern Douglas County.

All four pleaded guilty to three counts each of aiding and abetting a false entry by a firearms dealer in U.S. District Court in Spokane on Sept. 6 and are scheduled for sentencing Dec. 7.

Each could receive up to one year in prison and a fine of \$100,000 on each count.

In exchange for the pleas, U.S. attorneys will drop a 16-count grand jury indictment against the Hunts issued last December.

The indictment alleged conspiracy, dealing firearms without a license and numerous counts of making false statements in buying

firearms from June 2011 through December 2015. Five-year prison terms and \$250,000 fines were possible on the conspiracy charge.

Mary Hunt declined comment about the case to the Capital Press and said the family continues to operate its ranch.

According to the plea agreement, filed Sept. 6, the prosecution and defendants stipulate to the following facts:

The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives began investigating the Hunts in 2009, relative to the family's sales of guns at the Big Reno Gun Show in Reno, Nev.

The Hunts operated a vendor booth called "Hunt Family Farms" at the show three times a year.

Investigators discovered the Hunts falsely filled out federal firearms forms and sold approximately 465 firearms for \$273,954 between June 2012 and November 2015.

The Hunts filled out forms when buying the guns in Washington indicating that the guns were for themselves. However, the guns were sold in Reno.

On April 18, 2012, Special Agent Heidi Wallace with the U.S. Bureau of Al-

cohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives issued a Cease and Desist Warning Letter to Terry Hunt.

Hunt indicated it was the buyer's problem, not his. Wallace told Hunt she would help him obtain a federal firearms license.

In 2013, Hunt recruited a straw purchaser to buy guns and continued illegal actions.

On Aug. 14, 2015, two undercover ATF agents bought guns from Mary Hunt at the Big Reno show.

Hunt said the guns were transported to the show in the back of her Yukon SUV and that she would sell them without tax, transfer fees or paperwork.

Hunt never checked the agents' identification or eligibility to possess firearms when she sold them two firearms. The undercover buy was audio and video recorded.

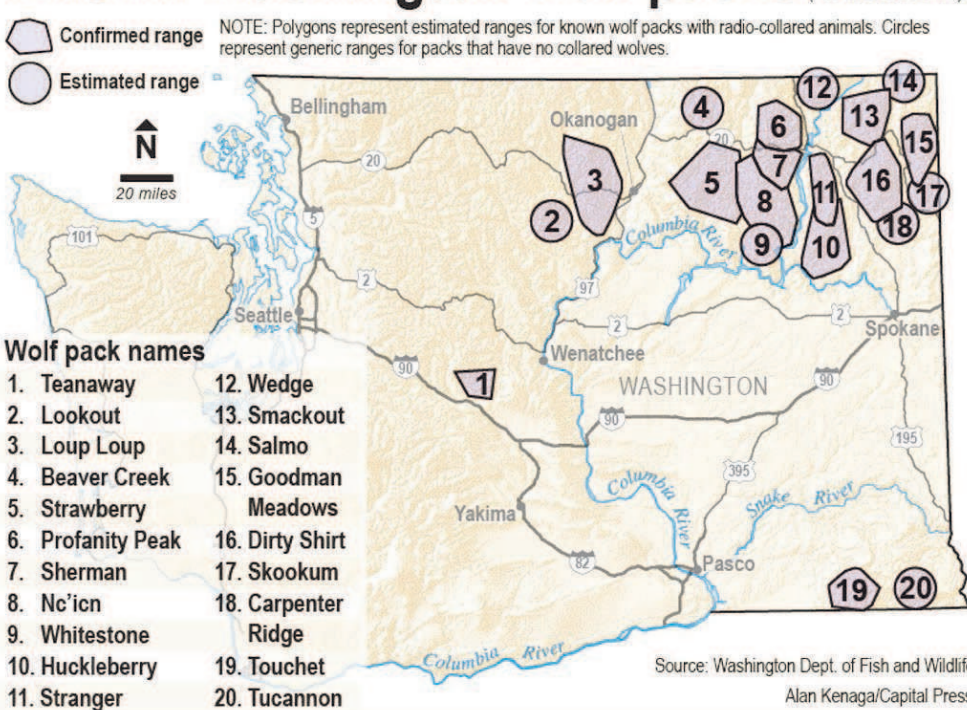
On Nov. 13, 2015, ATF served warrants at the Hunts' ranch and recovered spreadsheets of firearms purchases and sales.

The plea agreement calls upon the court to sentence the defendants to five years probation with no jail time and fines of \$5,000 to be paid at no less than \$1,000 per year.

The Hunts are to abandon all rights to more than 100 firearms seized from their home during the execution of a search warrant in December 2015.

If the court rejects the agreement, the Hunts may withdraw their guilty pleas and the U.S. may prosecute them for any and all crimes.

## Known Washington wolf packs (As of Dec. 2016)



## Groups say wolf kill notice allows time to take legal action

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

Conservation groups that sued the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife say they've reached an agreement with the agency to get enough advance notice about wolf kill orders to seek legal action to stop them.

A department official says the agency hasn't lost the ability to take action.

In a press release, the Center for Biological Diversity and Cascadia Wildlands said the department will provide the groups 48 hours notice, including one business day, before killing problem wolves.

According to the press release, the agreement allows "time for pursuit of a temporary restraining order to stop any killing."

Donny Martorello, wolf policy lead for WDFW, said attorneys for the agency and for the conservation groups essentially reached an agree-

ment on scheduling for potential preliminary injunctions if needed. They did not reach agreements on any merits of the case, he said.

Under the scheduling agreement, the groups are not seeking a preliminary injunction at this point, Martorello said.

If a wolfpack reaches the point where the department considers killing problem wolves under its management plan, WDFW already gives advance notice to the public, depending on the method used.

"If the plaintiffs then choose to take any kind of action to stop the agency, then that would be up to them," he said.

"There hasn't been any loss of department authority or ability to take action."

Martorello said the department will continue to work with ranchers to use nonlethal deterrents to reduce conflict and look at criteria in its protocols for when the agency

might consider killing problem wolves.

"We're going to continue to do all the things we have done in the past," he said.

Martorello said wolf conservation is a "very highly controversial" topic nationwide, with a history of litigation.

"We are disappointed that these two out-of-state groups have chosen to file a lawsuit, but the department is committed to continue working with our citizens, stakeholders, wolf advocates, hunters and livestock producers as we have in the past," he said. "We will deal with the litigation and lawsuit, and keep moving forward."

According to the conservation groups' press release, the parties also agreed to cooperate to expedite the pending lawsuit to allow for a full hearing before Thurston County Superior Court Judge Chris Lanese before the 2018 grazing season begins.

## Skagit County home to lone wolf

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

Genetic testing has confirmed that a lone animal roaming in eastern Skagit County is Western Washington's first known gray wolf in decades, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The USFWS laboratory in Ashland, Ore., verified the animal wasn't a hybrid, but was unable to link the wolf to the DNA taken from other wolves, USFWS spokeswoman Ann Froschauer said Monday.

"We have no specifics on where the animal came from," she said.

A wolf west of the Cascades may be a milestone in meeting Washington's goal



Courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Tests confirm this wolf, photographed in May, is Western Washington's first known gray wolf in decades, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

of having wolves widely dispersed. Wolves have recolonized northeast Washington, but will remain a state-protected species until they are established in the North and South Cascades, too.

The male wolf was photographed in May by a man who reported the animal was attacking his chickens. Three weeks later, federal and state biologists captured the wolf and fitted him with a GPS collar to transmit his location.

Froschauer said the wolf has remained in Western Washington.

The wolf has been roaming north and west of Marblemount, a small community about 50 miles east of Mount Vernon and Interstate 5.

So far, wildlife managers have not seen a mate or received any new reports from

residents, she said. Wolves are federally protected in Western and Central Washington. They are not a federally protected species in Eastern Washington.

According to a 2011 report by the state wildlife department, the last confirmed report of a wolf in Skagit County was 1927.

Wolf tracks were seen in Clallam County in Western Washington in 1946, according to the report.

In 2015, a female wolf was hit and killed by a vehicle on Interstate 90 within 30 miles of Seattle.

Wolves have been moving into Washington over the past decade. Most of the wolves are in northeast Washington near Idaho. Wildlife managers say they expect wolves to continue spreading west.

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