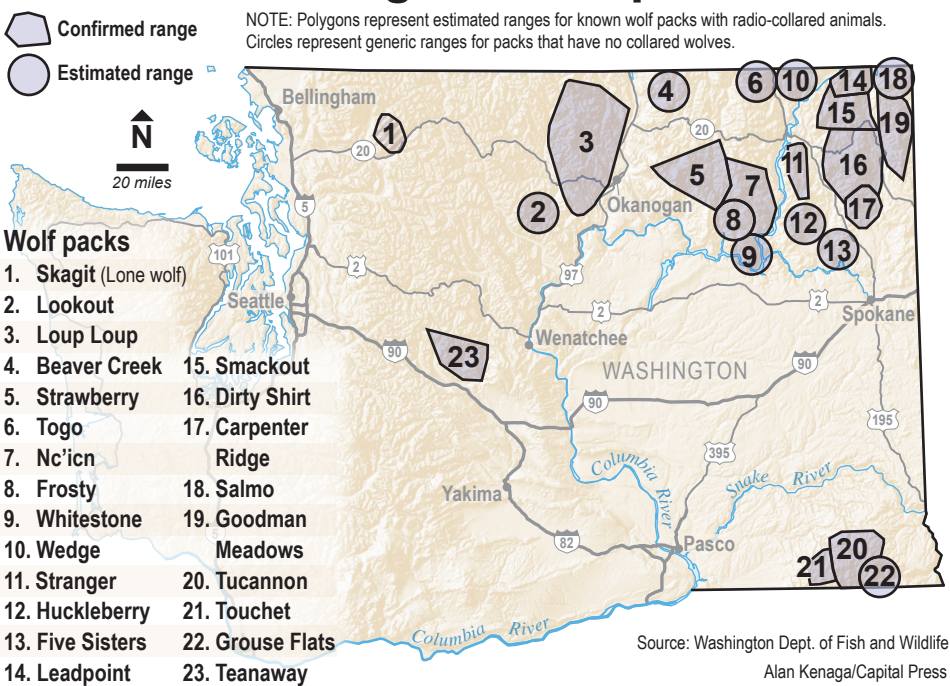


Known Washington wolf packs

(As of Dec. 31, 2017)



Wolves stick to northeast Washington

Rancher: 'Our worst nightmare' comes true

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

Washington's wolf population grew for a ninth straight year in 2017, but the predators were more concentrated than ever in four northeast counties, and the state actually lost ground by the standard it measures recovery.

Wildlife managers counted 14 breeding pairs at the end of 2017, compared to 10 the year before. But the geographical distribution of reproducing packs, the prime recovery goal, shrank.

While the number of breeding pairs increased to 13 from eight in Eastern Washington, it decreased to one from two in the North Cascades. There are no breeding pairs, or packs, in the South Cascades.

Wolves will remain a protected species statewide until all three recovery zones have at least four breeding pairs. Eastern Washington reached that threshold in 2011.

The new figures, presented Saturday to the Fish and Wildlife Commission, show that wolves aren't spreading out, and that northeast Washington is left with more and more wolves while statewide recovery is still years away, said Scott Nielsen, president of the Cattle Producers of Washington.

"It is our worst nightmare coming true," he said. "What we were concerned would happen is happening."

Fish and Wildlife counted 122 wolves, up from 115 at the end of 2016. About 80 percent of the wolves are in Ferry, Okanogan, Pend Oreille and Stevens counties.

"We are absolutely saturated up here," said Nielsen, a Stevens County rancher. "What's not fair is we're going to have to bear the brunt of this in northeast Washington while the wolves decide to disperse."

The 6 percent growth last year was low compared to recent years. Over the previous three years, the population grew by at least 27 percent.

The growth in 2017 occurred in Eastern Washington. The number of wolves in the North Cascades declined slightly.

Fish and Wildlife wolf specialist Ben Maletzke said Monday the department remains confident that wolves will spread out. Wolfpacks are running out of room in the northeast, he said.

"The territories are kind of filled in," Maletzke said. "We aren't going to see much more of a ramp-up in northeast Washington. I think there will be a leveling out, and we'll see more in the North Cascades."

Fish and Wildlife said it expects to have a complete annual report finished by March 30.

Maletzke said one year of single-digit growth doesn't indicate recovery has stalled.

"I don't consider it a step backward by any means," he said.

Maletzke noted that a male wolf has been roaming in eastern Skagit County, the state's first confirmed wolf in Western Washington in decades. Wildlife biologists trapped and put a radio collar on the animal last year. So far, biologists have not seen him with a mate, but he is staying in the area.

Maletzke also noted that the North Cascades had three wolfpacks, the same as in 2016. They could produce pups this year, he said.

Fish and Wildlife confirmed in 2017 that wolves attacked and killed at least eight cattle, one fewer than the year before.

Nielsen said the number downplays the effect wolves have had on ranchers. After a wolf attack, in some cases, too little remains of a cow or calf to positively identify the predator. An untallied number of cattle are never found, and some ranchers have left wolf territory, he said.

"The more wolves we have, the more conflicts we have," Nielsen said. "I believe it is worse than ever."

Conservation Northwest



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

The state's wolf population grew for a ninth straight year in 2017, but the geographical distribution of breeding pairs shrank.

Executive Director Mitch Friedman said in a statement that he was happy to see the population continue to grow and that the number of breeding pairs increased.

"We are disappointed that more wolfpacks have not yet become established in Washington's North and South Cascades, despite quality habitat available in those areas," he said. "It's our hope that in 2018 we'll see further expansion of wolves into the South Cascades and Western Washington, and the progress towards state recovery goals such confirmations would bring."

Washington lawmakers this month directed Fish and Wildlife to study moving wolves from northeast Washington to unoccupied territories to the west. The study could take more than a year. Legislators have rejected proposals to take wolves in northeast Washington off the state-protected species list, giving wildlife managers more flexibility to limit the population in the region while leaving the recovery plan in place elsewhere. Wolves are not federally protected in the eastern one-third of the state, but are in the western two-thirds.

Oregon agency may be awash in red ink from water litigation

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press



Capital Press File

Oregon's water regulators are rapidly spending the \$835,000 they have available for litigation and may go nearly \$1.3 million over budget in the 2017-2019 biennium.

A request for more litigation funds was recently turned down by Oregon lawmakers, which means the Oregon Water Resources Department will probably ask the Legislature's Emergency Board for money later this year.

If OWRD can't get additional litigation funds, the agency will have to delay replacing employees who have left, though it has yet to determine how many positions would remain unfilled, said Racquel Rancier, the department's senior policy coordinator.

About \$600,000 was spent on litigation within the first seven months of the biennium, which was roughly two-thirds of the money allocated for two full years of legal battles, Rancier said March 15 during a meeting of the Oregon Water Resources Commission, which oversees the agency.

Litigation costs have averaged about \$86,000 a month, so funds are expected to run out soon — particularly since several cases may go to trial, increasing the expense, she said.

Irrigation-related lawsuits filed against the Oregon Water Resources Department are causing the agency to spend a projected \$1.3 million more than originally budgeted for the current biennium.

At the current rate, OWRD is projected to spend about \$2.1 million on litigation in the current biennium.

The agency has a legislatively adopted budget of \$98.6 million for 2017-2019, down from \$107.4 million for the previous biennium.

Litigation over water has increased mostly due to more regulatory calls cutting off water to junior irrigators in the Klamath Basin, where an "adjudication" over the validity of water rights was completed in 2013, Rancier said.

Since the lawsuits are generally initiated against OWRD, the agency doesn't have control over the costs. The problem is also growing worse: 25 new cases were filed against OWRD in 2015-2017, up from 13 new

cases in 2013-2015 and 5 new cases in 2011-2013.

OWRD plans to continue discussing the issue with lawmakers to convey what services the agency can't perform as a result of delayed hiring, Rancier said.

The agency plays a key role in Oregon irrigation by administering the state's water rights system, such as approving wells, diversions, leases and transfers.

When the agency issues a water call, a junior irrigator can stay enforcement of that regulation by filing a lawsuit, said Tom Byler, OWRD's director.

OWRD can lift such an enforcement stay — as it did last year — but the process can take several weeks, during which a senior water user's rights are infringed, he said.

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-Located in Harrisburg

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2005
Deluxe cab, PS transmission, 4 remotes, 3pt hitch, no PTO, 620-42 duals, 5,177-hrs, #E0107240
-Located in Salem

\$95,000



Case IH 435HD
2008
Deluxe Cab, PS transmission, 5 remotes, bareback, 710-38 duals, 4,734-hrs, #7F108048
-Located in Hillsboro

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2009
Sm Grain, Hillco 28% leveler, 635F flex platform and cart, 2,421-hrs, #0S730647
-Located in Moscow

\$275,000



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2004
Sm Grain, Bullet Rotor, JD 615P belt pickup platform, 3,479-hrs, #0S706470
-Located in Tangent

\$115,000



JD S660
2013
Premium Cab, Small wire concave, vari stream rotor, JD 615P BPU platform, 1,263-hrs, #D0755808
-Located in Tangent

\$275,000



JD 9670
2008
Premium Cab, Small wire concave, JD 615P BPU platform, 3,006-hrs, #0S726053
-Located in Tangent

\$150,500



JD S680
2013
Hilco 27% leveler, duals, 4WD, 635Flex platform and cart, 1,003-hrs, #755718
-Located in Colfax

\$362,000



JD S680
2013
Hilco 27% leveler, duals, 4WD, Straw chopper, MacDon header harness, 1,116-hrs, #D0756086
-Located in Tekoa

\$365,000



JD 9870
2009
Rahco 35% leveler, duals, 4WD, straw chopper, 635F platform and cart, 2,335-hrs, #0S730229
-Located in Colfax

\$262,000



JD S680
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