

ODFW re-issues wolf kill permit in Wallowa County

Meeting set for Thursday to discuss state Wolf Plan

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

A northeast Oregon cattle rancher was reissued a permit to shoot one wolf on a forested grazing allotment near Joseph Creek in Wallowa County where four calves have been killed or injured since June.

The latest attack was confirmed by the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife on Aug. 20. A range rider found the dead 300-pound calf earlier that morning, and investigators later determined wolves were to blame.

The pasture is within an area of known wolf activity in the Chesnimnus Unit, where ODFW counted three wolves at the end of 2017. Chesnimnus wolves also injured three calves between June 12 and June 14, all belonging to RL

Cattle Company of Enterprise.

ODFW granted the original permit for RL Cattle to shoot one Chesnimnus wolf on June 21, but no wolves were killed before the permit expired July 10. The permit has been re-issued for 30 days and will expire Sept. 24.

Wildlife officials have documented wolves in the area over the past two months, but do not know whether the animals are remnants of the Chesnimnus pack or newcomers that moved into the territory. None are wearing GPS tracking collars.

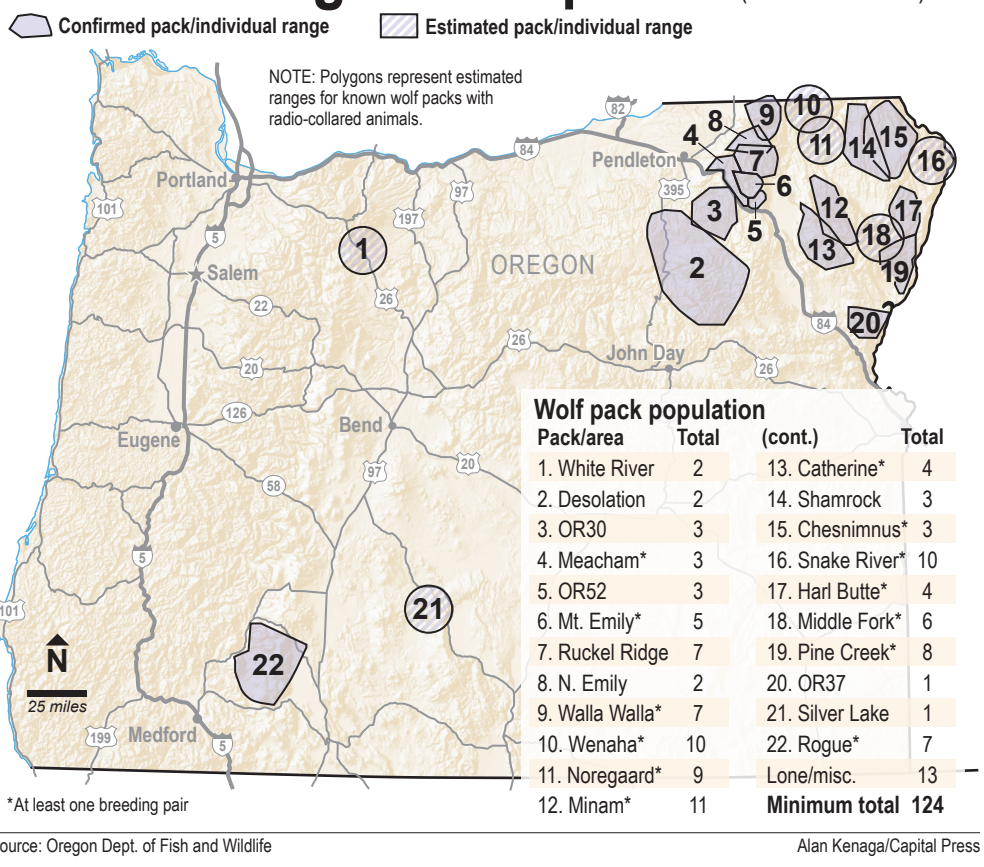
The incident underscores the debate between ranchers and conservationists about how best to manage wolves in Oregon. Groups were to gather this week for a meeting intended to find common ground on lingering issues in the state Wolf Plan, which is three years past due for its update. Deb Nudelmann, a mediator with Kearns & West in Portland was to moderate.

The plan was last revised in 2010. Since then, the minimum known wolf population has risen to 124 statewide, and Eastern Oregon wolves were removed from the state endangered species list in 2015. The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission was supposed to vote on the plan in January, but indefinitely postponed its decision to try and reach a broader consensus among stakeholders.

Jerome Rosa, executive director of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, said ranchers have three main concerns: fitting more wolves with GPS collars, creating management zones with population targets, and allowing local authorities to investigate suspected livestock depredations in a more timely manner.

GPS collars will help alert ranchers when wolves are approaching, Rosa said, and make sure they are doing non-lethal activities to haze wolves such as hiring range riders.

Known Oregon wolf packs (As of Dec. 2017)



A Ferry County, Wash., rancher says he took a shot at a wolf after it threatened him as he checked on cattle.

Washington rancher takes shot at wolf

Collar data shows wolf still alive

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

A rancher in northeast Washington reported Thursday that he shot in self-defense at a wolf matching the description of the wolf that state wildlife managers intended to kill this week before a judge intervened.

The rancher told the Department of Fish and Wildlife that the wolf was black and wearing a collar. The department received information this morning indicating that the collared wolf in the Togo pack was alive.

The incident occurred in the pack's territory, and Fish and Wildlife employees spent more than two hours investigating, but did not find evidence that the wolf had been shot, according to the department. It does appear to have an injured leg.

The rancher said he was responding to collar data that indicated the wolf was near his livestock, according to the department. The rancher

said he saw pups and heard barking and growling, and shot at the adult wolf as it barked and approached him.

The rancher reported the incident to the Ferry County Sheriff's Office, which notified Fish and Wildlife.

The department has attributed six attacks on cattle to the Togo pack since Nov. 2. Three of the attacks occurred between Aug. 8 and Aug. 18.

The rancher has tried to stop the attacks with non-lethal measures, according to the department. Fish and Wildlife determined that the attacks were likely to continue and planned to seek out and kill the pack's male adult beginning last Monday evening.

A Thurston County judge ordered the department to stand down Monday afternoon at the request of the Center for Biological Diversity and Cascadia Wildlands. The temporary restraining order will be in effect until at least Aug. 31.

On that date, the court was scheduled to hold a hearing on whether to extend the restraining order.

Forest Service worker describes wolf ordeal

Fish and Wildlife interview details July 12 incident

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

A Forest Service employee shot pepper spray and screamed to hold a growling wolf at bay last month in north-central Washington, according to a taped interview between the woman and a state Fish and Wildlife officer.

The 25-year-old woman distanced herself from the wolf by climbing a tree. Before that, the wolf weaved toward her and came within about 15 meters, she said. "He or she is kind of growling and barking and howling at me, and I'm kind of giving it back in return," she said. "It starts coming closer to me, and I'm backing up, and it comes closer to me, and I finally give it all I got with a big scream, and it starts to back off, and we just kind of back off of each other, and I put myself back up that tree."

The tape, obtained by the Capital Press in response to a records request, provides a first-hand description of the July 12 incident in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Encounters with wolves



A gray wolf forced a U.S. Forest Service researcher to retreat up a tree — twice — in north-central Washington state, according to a taped interview. She was rescued by a state Department of Natural Resources helicopter crew.

are rare in Washington, and ranchers and county commissioners in northeast Washington have said the growing number of wolves in their corner of the state raises public-safety concerns.

The Capital Press is not naming the woman, in step with a state law that shields the identities of ranchers who report wolf attacks or enter into agreements with the state to share the cost of hiring range-riders. An effort to obtain further comment from the woman was unsuccessful.

The woman was interviewed by Fish and Wildlife officer Justin Troutman shortly after she was picked up in a meadow by a Department

of Natural Resources helicopter crew and flown to Omak. She said she had hiked into the forest alone to mark where a crew should take samples from a stream for a Forest Service survey of salmon habitat. "I hear the wolf kind of start barking and howl out. At that point, I kind of back away from the stream and get onto higher ground, so I can have a little better view of my surroundings," she said.

She called her supervisor on a satellite phone, and he told her to leave the area. A wolf, however, appeared and came toward her. "He's, like, you should get up a tree."

The woman said she stayed in the tree for 10 to 15 min-

utes and climbed down. "Pretty much immediately, I maybe walk 100 meters and get cut off by the same wolf, and it starts coming toward me, and at this point I have my bear spray out, and it's more or less a screaming match between me and the wolf," she told Troutman.

Another wolf was at the far end of the meadow, she said. "I could hear a few others in different areas."

"The other thing that was stressing me out was that I knew there was at least one more around me," she said. "They like to strategize, so I wasn't sure where that one was relative to where the interaction was going down."

She fired the pepper spray at the wolf in front of her. According to the can's label, the spray has a range of 10 meters. The wolf continued to weave.

"It was doing a lot of zig-zagging. It would come right at me, and then pop off a little bit, and come at me from the other angle and pop off on the other side," she said.

"I was just basically screaming at it the best that I could, and I'd say the interaction was probably fairly short. Maybe like 30 seconds to a minute. It wasn't a long interaction, but it was long enough to put me back up in that tree."

Rancher says wolves are driving him off range

Cougars a problem, too, cattleman says

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

A northeast Washington cattleman says he will pare down his herd and keep it off a Forest Service grazing allotment next year because of wolves.

Ferry County rancher Ron Eslick lost a calf to the Togo wolfpack in May. The pack has attacked at least three cattle belonging to another producer on a neighboring allotment this month. Eslick said Thursday he doesn't know

whether wolves have taken more of his cattle still out on the range, but the herd won't stay at higher elevations and are skittish.

"The wolves do something to those cows," he said. "I'm not even going to use the range (in 2019). I'm not going to pay to send cows out to be eaten. I'm not going to feed the wolves."

Wolves, which have surpassed state recovery goals in northeast Washington, are affecting livestock operations, according to ranchers. Wolves have attacked cattle on public lands and private pastures and in different seasons.

Wolves will remain a state protected species until at least four packs have produced pups in the South Cascades. No wolf has been confirmed in the South Cascades.

Eslick, 71, has a permit to graze 40 cow-calf pairs in the Colville National Forest. His father had the permit in the 1950s, Eslick said.

He said he planned to reduce the herd to about 30 head



Wolves killed this calf May 20 in Ferry County, Wash. The rancher who lost the calf says he won't use a Forest Service grazing allotment next year because of wolves.

and keep them closer to home. "I haven't got out of the business yet, but I'm going to cut back," he said.

In addition to wolves, cougars have become a problem, too, he said. Eslick said he recently sold his five sheep after a cougar killed two others.

Eslick said he believes predators are turning to livestock because other prey, such as deer, are becoming scarce. "It's going to get worse. It's not going to get better. The writing's on the wall," he said.

Wolves got additional protection this week when a Thurston County judge blocked the Department of Fish and Wildlife from killing a Togo pack wolf. The temporary restraining order, in effect until at least Aug. 31 and maybe indefinitely, shelves using lethal removal as a last resort to stop

depredations. The order applies to only the Togo pack. The arguments, however, against killing the pack's male would apply to any pack.

The Center for Biological Diversity and Cascadia Wildlands, which sought the restraining order, are suing Fish and Wildlife, contending its policy on culling wolfpacks didn't undergo proper review and violates the state's Environmental Policy Act and Administrative Procedure Act.

Fish and Wildlife consulted with its Wildlife Advisory Group in writing the lethal-removal protocol. Conservation Northwest, an environmental organization represented on the advisory group, criticized the lawsuit in a statement Thursday.

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