

Wolf advocate defends WDFW's plan to cull pack

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

An environmental group is sticking up for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, saying the decision to try to kill one or two wolves in the Togo pack serves the long-term interest of wolf recovery.

Conservation Northwest said it reviewed efforts to prevent the pack from attacking cattle in the Kettle River Range in northeast Washington. The group was convinced Fish and Wildlife followed guidance from the department's Wolf Advisory Group.

Conservation Northwest policy director Paula Swedeen helped shape the guidance, which calls for resorting to lethal control under certain circumstances, in part to maintain the cooperation of ranchers, who are being pressed to alter their operations to avoid conflicts with wolves.

"We came away with the impression that this is how the protocol is supposed to work," Swedeen said. "If we don't stand by our word in this situation, our word isn't any good."

Conservation Northwest's supportive statement contrasted with denunciations by other environmental groups. The Center for Biological Diversity called culling the pack a tragedy to appease livestock owners.

Fish and Wildlife Director Kelly Susewind issued the order Aug. 26 after the pack had attacked three calves in the previous 30 days, crossing the threshold for the department to consider lethal removal.

The pack has five adults and four pups, according to Fish and Wildlife. The department hopes that by killing one or two wolves, the rest of the pack will stop attacking cattle. The department has not yet reported removing any wolves.

This is the fifth time in the past four years Susewind has authorized killing Togo pack wolves. The department has removed one wolf.

Because of past conflicts, Swedeen and other wolf advocates on the department's advisory board pushed Fish and Wildlife to focus on preventing wolf-livestock conflicts in the Kettle River Range.

Range riders hired by Fish and Wildlife, the Cattle Producers of Washington and Northeast Washington Wolf-Cattle Collaborative have been patrolling the Togo pack territory this summer.

"They did what we wanted them to do regarding the range-riding effort," Swedeen said. "My understanding is the coordination was really good."

Fish and Wildlife worked with ranchers before the grazing season on deterring attacks, the department's wolf policy lead, Julia Smith, said in a statement.

The Togo pack has attacked calves belonging to three different ranches. None of the calves belonged to the Diamond M, the region's largest and best-known ranch.

All three producers who have had calves attacked employed range riders and other non-lethal measures, Fish and Wildlife said.

"Those communities and WDFW staff have worked diligently to protect their livestock and meet expectations," Smith said. "August and September are typically months in which wolf-livestock conflict peaks, so this is not unexpected."

Fish and Wildlife's lethal-control protocol may be discarded by next grazing season. At the behest of the Center for Biological Diversity, Gov. Jay Inslee last year ordered the department to write a lethal-control rule to replace the guidance developed by the Wolf Advisory Group.

Risk of large wildfires remains high in parts of West

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

BOISE — The risk of big wildfires will remain above normal in parts of Northern California, Oregon, Washington and the Northern Great Basin as fall unfolds, the National Interagency Fire Center predicts.

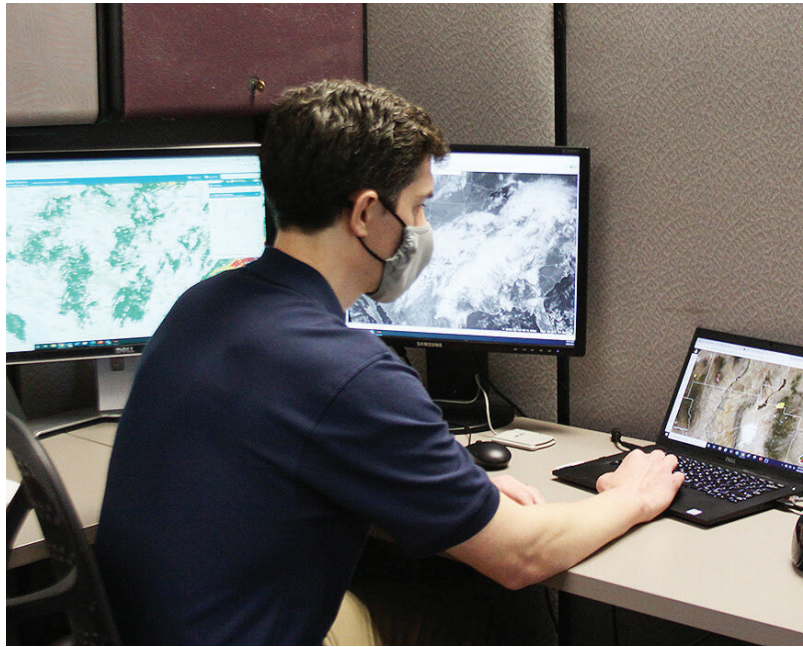
"We are expecting warmer and drier conditions across a good portion of the Western United States," Fire Meteorologist Nick Nauslar told Capital Press.



Nick Nauslar

La Nina is expected to return to the Equatorial Pacific. He said this usually brings slightly cooler, wetter conditions to parts of the Pacific Northwest and into the Northern Rockies. But since areas to the south will be warmer and drier, rain relief on those large fires "is forecast to be delayed until later in the fall."

Fall brings increased chances of offshore winds along the West Coast, Nauslar said. These winds originate on land and blow toward



Brad Carlson/Capital Press file

La Nina is expected to return to the Equatorial Pacific.

the ocean. Southern California's Santa Ana winds, for example, are strong downslope winds that usually coincide with low relative humidity.

While offshore winds are expected to be normal this fall, they "still could be an issue given

the amount of fire we have on the ground, and dry fuels," he said.

Also this fall, "the jet stream starts to meander farther south, and with that comes better chances of stronger winds across the Western United States," Nauslar said. "But it also comes with a better chance

of cooler temperatures and precipitation. This usually results in relatively short-lived dry and windy conditions."

NIFC Predictive Services said in its outlook through year's end that the potential for large fires in Northern California is above normal through November for areas west of the Cascade-Sierra Crest, except for the north coast area.

The potential for big fires is expected to remain above normal through September at higher elevations of the Sierra Front and over portions of southern and western Idaho, which remain dry. Significant drought remains in these areas, where fuel moisture is below average.

Above-normal risk will continue through September in central and southwestern Oregon as well as central Washington, NIFC reported.

The large-wildfire risk in Southern California is expected to be around normal through December.

Drought remains across more than 95% of the West, the report said. Conditions are expected to be warmer than normal through fall in much of the continental U.S.

Port of Coos Bay to construct new container terminal

By SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press

COOS BAY, Ore. — Oregon International Port of Coos Bay, on the state's southern coast, announced Sept. 1 it will construct a multimodal container facility to relieve congestion and broaden trade opportunities, including for agricultural goods.

For the project, the Port of Coos Bay has partnered with NorthPoint Development, a Missouri-based firm. The port and NorthPoint have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding. The parties intend to finalize negotiations and sign a contract by the end of 2021.

The new facility will sit on the North Spit, a finger of land separating the bay from the Pacific Ocean. Once constructed, the facility will move more than 1 million 40-foot containers annually through the port.

The new terminal, port officials say, could have a significant impact on shipment of farm goods.

"Development of a container terminal here in Coos Bay will truly be transformational for Coos Bay, as well as for shippers looking to get their goods and commodities to market in an efficient manner," said Margaret Barber, the port's director of external affairs and business development.

Most of Oregon's export agricultural commodities, Barber said, are currently being shipped to ports in Seattle, Tacoma and the San Francisco Bay. Those ports, she said, are "experiencing all-time levels of congestion," adding "crippling delays," costs and emissions.

COVID-19 has further exacerbated bottlenecks. Aug. 29, the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach had 47 vessels anchored offshore waiting to dock in the harbor.

A new terminal in Coos Bay, port leaders say, could help relieve congestion on the West Coast.

Chad Meyer, president and

founding partner of NorthPoint, said the new facility should improve logistics, expedite turn-around time and eliminate anchoring-out for ships.

"This project will create a new gateway that will offer quick turn-around because we don't have the same levels of congestion here," agreed Barber of the port.

Barber said she believes the terminal will also create "tremendous" benefits for inland U.S. producers who rely too heavily on the Mississippi River for barge and ship transportation. The new terminal, she said, will allow Midwest producers to ship products westward.

John Burns, the port's CEO, said he anticipates the new facility will also boost the regional economy.

"This project has the potential to diversify the region's economy and create employment opportunities both for the existing workforce and for future generations," said Burns.

Some critics, however, say turn-

ing Coos Bay into a major West Coast port is a pipe dream because Coos Bay is surrounded by narrow, winding roads, has limited access to trade corridors and must rely on its rail line.

Recent Coos Bay Rail Line improvements have cost taxpayers millions of dollars, according to legislative records. Some Oregonians say the investment is worth the payoff; others disagree.

Jeff Reimer, an Oregon State University professor of international trade and agricultural economics, said railroad developments have spawned a "huge amount of controversy."

"Is it a good use of taxpayer money? Some say it is, some think it isn't," Reimer told the Capital Press.

The port is also moving forward with its Channel Modification Project, intended to deepen and widen the channel so larger ships can pass through.

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