

WOLVES: Meacham pack believed to have at least four pups this year

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wolves in Umatilla and Wallowa counties have been controversial on both sides of the debate, for very different reasons. Conservation groups criticize ODFW for signing off on kill orders while at the same time lacking transparency and dragging its feet on a long overdue update of the state's Wolf Management and Conservation Plan.

Ranchers, on the other hand, want to see ODFW kill entire packs that are causing them trouble on the range.

ODFW was asked to remove the entire Meacham pack, which had seven members at the end of 2016. Instead, the agency has opted for a more conservative, incremental approach.

"I am authorizing only incremental take in an effort to take as few wolves as possible while still addressing wolf-livestock conflict," Melcher said. "Following these actions, the situation will be reassessed to see if the goal of reducing depredations has been achieved."

The Meacham pack was first identified in 2014 and is believed to have at least four pups this year. No pups will be killed as part of this order.

ODFW staff may kill

Timeline of recent livestock attacks

East Oregonian

Two wolves from the Meacham pack will be killed after preying on livestock four times in the last eight days in Umatilla County. All attacks were confirmed on the same private timbered pasture near Meacham, located east of Pendleton along Interstate 84.

- Aug. 13 — The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife is called to investigate a dead 550-pound calf in the pasture, which is estimated to have died on or about the evening of Aug. 11. Wolf scat and tracks were found within 75 feet of the carcass. The number, location, size and spacing of bites and scrapes were also characteristic of wolf attacks.

- Aug. 16 — ODFW investigates an injured 550-pound calf in the pasture, with parallel scrapes on the backs of both rear legs and an open wound on the rear left leg. Wolf tracks were found nearby, along with muscle tissue lying on the ground, providing clear evidence of a wolf attack.

- Aug. 17 — The livestock producer finds another injured 6-month-old calf while rounding up cattle in the area. Bite marks and injuries were again consistent with a wolf attack. Wolf tracks were also found in the area.

- Aug. 19 — The most recent confirmed attack, with a 500-pound calf discovered mostly eaten except for the vertebrae with attached ribs, pelvis and tail. Wildlife managers identified a 150-foot chase scene, with wolf tracks also spotted.

the wolves, or the livestock producer has also been issued what's known as a "limited duration wolf kill permit." That permit allows the producer to kill two adult or sub-adult wolves without having to first catch the predators in the act of biting, wounding or killing cattle — in other words, they can be shot on sight.

The permit is limited to the 4,000-acre timbered

pasture where livestock predation has occurred. It still requires the producer to use non-lethal deterrents and remove all attractants such as bone piles.

Roblyn Brown, ODFW acting wolf coordinator, said the producer has already spent years implementing extensive non-lethal controls and working to deter wolves on the landscape.

"We believe lethal control is warranted in this situation, but this action will only be in place as long as cattle are still at risk. We will use incremental removal and lethal control activities will be stopped as soon as the cattle are removed from the pasture."

—Roblyn Brown, ODFW acting wolf coordinator

"Unfortunately, this year their increasing preventative efforts have not been successful in limiting wolf depredation," Brown said. "We believe lethal control is warranted in this situation, but this action will only be in place as long as cattle are still at risk. We will use incremental removal and lethal control activities will be stopped as soon as the cattle are removed from the pasture."

Normally, the pasture would be used until October. However, 90 percent of the cattle have already been moved, according to ODFW. The producer has also acted quickly to remove dead livestock or weak animals that could attract wolves, and employed a range rider five days a week to monitor the pasture.

Finally, for the past two years, the producer has chosen not to use their sheep grazing allotment on national forestland adjacent to the pasture to avoid potential wolf conflicts.

Todd Nash, wolf committee chairman for the Oregon Cattlemen's Association and a Wallowa County rancher, said ODFW is being disingenuous about resolving wolf attacks by only killing only a few wolves, and not the entire pack.

"In order to be effective, you have to take out at least half the pack population, and in most cases the entire pack will need to be taken out," Nash said.

Nash added that the increased density of wolves in northeast Oregon means that certain non-lethal tools are no longer effective, since ranchers cannot haze wolves away from one area without pushing them into another pack's territory where they are not welcome.

"There are places wolves are not going to be successful, and this is probably one of them," he said.

ODFW noted it has documented four new wolf pairs raising pups in northeast Oregon this summer,

including one new pair south of Interstate 84 in the Starkey and Ukiah wildlife management units.

However, conservation groups are quick to point out Oregon's overall wolf population of 112 known animals at the end of 2016, which was largely stagnant over the previous year.

Amaroq Weiss, West Coast wolf advocate for the Center for Biological Diversity, blasted ODFW's plan to kill wolves from the Meacham pack, even after most of the affected cattle have been moved off the pasture.

"That doesn't sound like a decision to conserve wolves or protect livestock," Weiss said. "That just sounds like revenge."

Sean Stevens, director of Oregon Wild, said ODFW has no business killing wolves while working under an outdated wolf plan. He also said the agency is lacking transparency and clarity when it comes to decisions on lethal take.

"In this instance, the livestock owner could be doing everything possible, but we just don't know," Stevens said. "I think it's a bad omen for Oregon wolf recovery."

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DOWNTOWN: Revitalizing downtown has been a top goal of the city for years

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Hermiston Avenue sits Julissa's Meat Market, which is just down the street from Feelingstone Gifts, a block from the Maxwell Siding Event Center — all of which opened their doors within the last six months.

Traner recently purchased the re-purposed house that holds Veg Out and Creations with Santana, and said there is still a room available in the building to lease for office space. Traner said she envisions the whole building as a place where entrepreneurs can get their start and build up a clientele before risking a lease on a larger, more visible space.

"I feel really sad when I see other small businesses close their doors," she said. "I just think, what does that say to our young people who want to be entrepreneurs? Dream your dream, but not in Hermiston?"

Santana Layton, who opened Creations with Santana on Third Street three weeks ago, said she has wanted to open her own store for years but startup money was always an issue. After she decided to start going after her goal in earnest she saw a post on Facebook by Traner advertising the space next to Veg Out and responded.

"It's hard to find something affordable when you're starting out and don't really have money," she said.

Her boutique sells makeup, skincare products and clothing for women. Although her official hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., she's a single mother of three working two jobs, so she said it's always a good idea to check the Creations with Santana Facebook



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Veg Out co-owner Jaclyn Crowder cuts lettuce during the lunch rush Wednesday at her restaurant in Hermiston.

page before coming in for unscheduled closures.

Layton said she hopes that people will start realizing that the neighborhood around Bi-Mart is a good place to get out and do some shopping.

"I like the location," she said. "I wish there was more traffic, obviously, and I'm hoping people will find out about the area, because it is growing."

Traner is doing her part to help the area grow. She has taken it upon herself to help market the commercially zoned house next to the mercantile and an old bank building on Third Street, both of which are up for sale. She said she hopes both spaces are used for something like a bistro, wedding supply store or bakery.

"Growth is good, but you still want to hold onto those smalltown, mom and pop businesses with that smalltown customer service," she said.

The growth the neighbor-

hood is experiencing does help fuel a larger cycle. On Tuesday a couple of people came into C and R Mercantile and remarked that they were waiting on salads at Veg Out and had decided to come across the street and check out Traner's business.

Traner plans to start a side business called History Reclaimed using another space on Third Street to store antique doors, light fixtures and other items that local contractors have removed from homes during remodels but would be of interest to others going for a more vintage feel.

Revitalizing downtown has been a top goal of the city for years now, and the city did include parts of Hermiston Avenue and Third Street west of the tracks when it drew the boundaries for the urban renewal district four years ago. Economic development and increased property values in those areas leads to more money available for the

whole district, as illustrated by the boom provided by the opening of the Holiday Inn Express in late 2016.

Some of the district's planned projects, like a festival street next to city hall, focus on the east side of Highway 395, but assistant city manager Mark Morgan pointed out that several of the district's façade grants have gone west of the tracks, including grants for the Holiday Inn Express, Julissa's Meat Market and attorney John Ballard's office on Third Street. The city also provided developer Mitch Meyers with a \$10,000 grant out of its community enhancement fund for the landscaping and parking improvements next to the Maxwell Siding Event Center, and Morgan said the city would like to continue collaborating with developers on projects in that area.

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Julissa's Meat Market is a recent addition to the West Third Street business boom in Hermiston.

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LIFEWAYS: Oregon has 8.7 psychiatric beds per 100K people

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proposed in Wilsonville, and Unity Center for Behavioral Health in Portland faced legal issues or opposition to certification that pushed back Lifeways' application. NEWCO's application was denied in February.

A press release from the Oregon Health Authority notes that the review will evaluate whether the project is effective to the area it proposes to serve, and whether it's financially viable.

When it was first announced, the project was estimated at a construction cost of about \$4.3 million, with an annual operating cost of \$2.8 million. George said those numbers should remain roughly the same, despite the delay.



Staff photo by Jayati Ramakrishnan

The partially constructed Springs Hospital is located at 1212 W. Linda Ave. The hospital will be reviewed by the Oregon Health Authority by November of this year.

He said the public hearing will take place in late September or early October in Hermiston, and will allow them to finalize

their application.

If the application is approved, George said, there are several other steps Lifeways has to take in order

to open the hospital, such as getting a Medicare license.

"The final opening date is still being worked out," he said.

He said construction on the facility should be completed by Nov. 1.

Currently, Hermiston is home to McNary Place, which provides mental health care and hospital-level crisis care. But a psychiatric hospital would take care a step further.

As of 2014, Oregon had 8.7 psychiatric beds per 100,000 people — the fourth fewest in the United States. Eastern Oregonians are often sent across the state for treatment because there are inadequate beds nearby. The aim of a hospital like Aspen Springs would be to treat more people closer to where they live.



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