

PACK

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The incident was reported and investigated Wednesday and comes on the heels of two other confirmed depredations in the same area involving heifer calves that were announced Monday. Wildlife officials determined that one calf was killed sometime Saturday night or Sunday morning, while the other likely was killed Monday morning and was still warm when an investigator arrived on scene.

Both heifer calves weighed approximately 700 lbs., according to ODFW incident reports, and each had signs of numerous bite wounds and scrapes. A third, live calf was found in the same pasture with “numerous bite wounds and severe tissue damage on both hind legs.”

Incident reports indicate fresh wolf tracks were discovered near the carcasses and GPS radio-collar data confirm two members of the Imnaha Pack — OR-4 and OR-39 — were in the area at the time.

ODFW investigators previously confirmed a separate wolf depredation involving a calf in the same pasture on March 9. Another depredation involving an adult male sheep was confirmed about 3 miles away on March 25.

All five March depredations have been attributed to the Imnaha Pack. On March 17 ODFW officials released an updated map of the Area of Known Wolf Activity for the Imnaha Pack, which roams primarily in Wallowa County. The newest AKWA map, last revised in December, now extends across much of the Zumwalt Prairie area north of Enterprise.

ODFW has not killed any wolves since May 2011, when two Imnaha Pack members were dispatched for livestock attacks. The agency sought to kill two more pack members in September 2011, but conservation groups won a stay of the order from the Oregon Court of Appeals.

Oregon Wild, a Portland based conservation group with long involvement in wolf issues, opposes lethal control.

“ODFW should not be killing members of the Imnaha Pack, or any wolves for that matter, while the wolf plan remains under review and out of date,” Executive Director Sean Stevens said in a prepared statement.

“Given ambiguity in the current wolf plan, increased poaching, premature (state en-

MORE ONLINE

For the most recent AKWA map, and previous maps, of the Imnaha Pack, visit tinyurl.com/j8xxjdz.

dangered species) delisting, and renewed calls from special interest groups for aggressive killing, the public has every reason to be concerned for Oregon’s recovering wolf population.”

Oregon Wild questioned whether the livestock producers involved have taken sufficient defensive measures against wolves.

Morgan said the sheep producer had three protection dogs with the sheep, checked the livestock three times a day, employed a range rider to haze the wolves and used midnight spot-lighting.

The cattle producer delayed pasture rotation to keep cattle closer to a public road, pastured yearlings with cows, frequently checked calving cattle and used range rider patrols as well, Morgan said in a news release.

The onset of lambing and calving season made more attacks a possibility, he said.

“Even more cattle and sheep will be on these private lands soon as calving and lambing season continues, increasing the risk for even more losses from this group of depredating wolves,” he said.

The Oregon Cattlemen’s Association supports the kill order, acknowledging it is a “difficult” decision.

“It’s an unfair situation for the livestock owners and the wolves themselves,” said OCA wolf committee chair Todd Nash, a Wallowa County rancher.

“Wolves are doing what they naturally do, but have been put in a situation in Oregon where they are going to be in constant conflict with livestock and hunter’s game,” Nash said in a prepared statement.

Eliminating specific, problem animals so that multiple species can live together is sometimes necessary, Nash said.

ODFW has filed official incident reports on 10 wolf depredation investigations so far in 2016. Six have been confirmed depredations, one was categorized as “possible/unknown” and three were determined not to be related to wolves. The only confirmed wolf depredation this year that didn’t occur in Wallowa County involved a heifer in Klamath County in late February.

The ODFW Commission this spring began review of the state’s wolf management plan, an effort that may take nine months.

Alternatives proposed for forest plan

By George Plaven
EO Media Group

The U.S. Forest Service is crafting two new alternatives for its revised Blue Mountains Forest Plan, based on a year’s worth of feedback from the public.

Details are sketchy, but supervisors on the Umatilla, Wallowa-Whitman and Malheur national forests say these alternatives will emphasize restoration in order to keep the woods healthy and lower the risk of potentially devastating wildfires.

Each alternative will be fully analyzed in the agency’s final Environmental Impact Statement, due out later this fall. A draft EIS for the Forest Plan was released in 2014, which was so thoroughly criticized that the feds spent all of 2015 re-engaging with local communities on how to improve the documents.

Tom Montoya, Wallowa-Whitman forest supervisor, said a recurring theme in those meetings was to adopt a more “hands-on” approach to land management that would make the forests safer, more resilient and productive.

“These alternatives really try to do that, and they try to do it at a different pace and scale,” Montoya said.

Comments made at the public meetings also emphasized the need to protect watersheds and the environment, Montoya said. Any new restoration proposals would still have to comply with existing laws, making forest management an exercise in compromise.

Forest plans are the guiding script for achieving goals and desired conditions in each national forest. Though the Blue Mountains Forest Plan is being authored under one umbrella, each forest will have its own individual plan. All together, the Blue Mountain forests comprise 4.9 million acres across Eastern Oregon and southeast Washington.

The plan has three stated goals: to promote ecological integrity, social well-being and economic benefits. While it does not approve any specific management projects, it does set numerous desired conditions for things like fire protection, recreation, access,

scenery and timber harvest.

The Forest Service typically updates forest plans every 10-15 years to account for new science. However, the current Blue Mountains plan hasn’t been revised since 1990. In its draft EIS, the three forests came up with six total alternatives that try different ways to bring the myriad of forest uses into balance.

It didn’t go well. Of the 1,100 written comments that were submitted, most were overwhelmingly negative. At that point, the forest supervisors decided to hold a series of 24 meetings with more than 700 people from around the region who aired their concerns. Montoya said it was a valuable experience that helped them evaluate possible changes.

Two new alternatives are now being developed, building upon the preferred alternative and their draft analysis. Montoya said these alternatives aim to increase the pace and scale of restoration — especially the second of the two, which would attempt to treat all “suitable acres” over the life of the plan. “Suitable acres” refer to general forest that isn’t protected by wilderness, riparian or other special designations.

In order to do that, the forests estimate they would have to treat 114,666 acres per year for 15 years or 86,000 acres per year for 20 years. Montoya said they would not be able to work at that aggressive a pace with their current staff and budgets, and would need outside help to get the job done.

“We’re trying to move the desired conditions to where they need to be on the landscape,” Montoya said.

Increasing timber production alone won’t be enough, Montoya said. The forests will need to find other creative ways to deal with its backlog of overstocked vegetation. Prescribed burning, biomass production, livestock grazing and non-commercial thinning could also be part of the treatment.

Nick Smith, executive director of Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities, said it is important to see that the Forest Service is taking its re-engagement with the public seriously. But as of right now, Smith is unsure if the new alternatives will actually bring any new solutions to the table.

“It always comes down to the details,” Smith said. “If you’re able to increase the land base for management, you can develop projects that are responsible but also support the economic needs of the local communities.”

County commissioners from Eastern Oregon have previously rejected every alternative for the revised Forest Plan, saying they fell well short of management goals.

Mark Davidson, Union County commissioner and chairman of the executive committee for the Eastern Oregon Counties Association, said the group will take a close look at the final EIS after its release and will carefully consider whether their constituents’ concerns have been addressed.

“Our counties in north-east Oregon are intermingled and dependent on each other. When one of our economies is damaged, it has a ripple effect throughout the region,” Davidson said. “We don’t want to see further erosion of our communities.”

Once the final EIS is released, there will be an objection period through the winter. A final Record of Decision could be done by as early as spring 2017.

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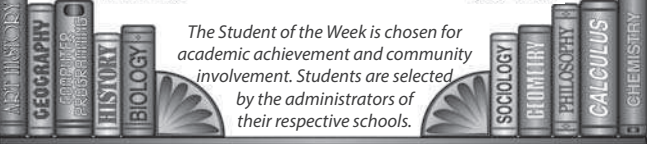
Wyatt Hunt Prince is a freshman at Wallowa High School. He is the son on Angie and Heath Prince. Wyatt is an extremely hard worker both academically and athletically. He currently has a 3.7 GPA and has been on the honor roll for each quarter this year. As a freshman Wyatt made a strong contribution to the Wallowa football program as an offensive and defensive lineman. He is also an active member of the FFA program. Wyatt contributes to the positive school climate of Wallowa High School with his great attitude and his sense of humor. WHS is proud to name him student of the month.

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APRIL 2016

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