

Ranchers, environmentalists voice objections to Oregon Wolf Plan update

By Mateusz Perkowski
Capital Bureau

SALEM — It seems no one is pleased with the redraft of the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. Fish and Wildlife commissioners decided Friday to delay a vote until January or February on the updates.

Environmental groups are alarmed by a proposal that would authorize lethal control of wolves in Eastern Oregon after only two livestock kills under “extreme circumstances.”

The regular threshold would be three livestock kills in 12 months, but the current draft of the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan would reduce it to two kills if non-lethal methods proved ineffective or couldn't be implemented.

“It moves too quickly to lethal control,” said Noah Greenwald, endangered species director for the Center of Biological Diversity, during a Dec. 8 hearing in Salem, Ore.

Wolves in Eastern Oregon have been delisted under the federal Endangered Species Act, but they're still regulated by the state government.

Representatives of livestock and hunting groups also found plenty they didn't like about the plan, which the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is updating.

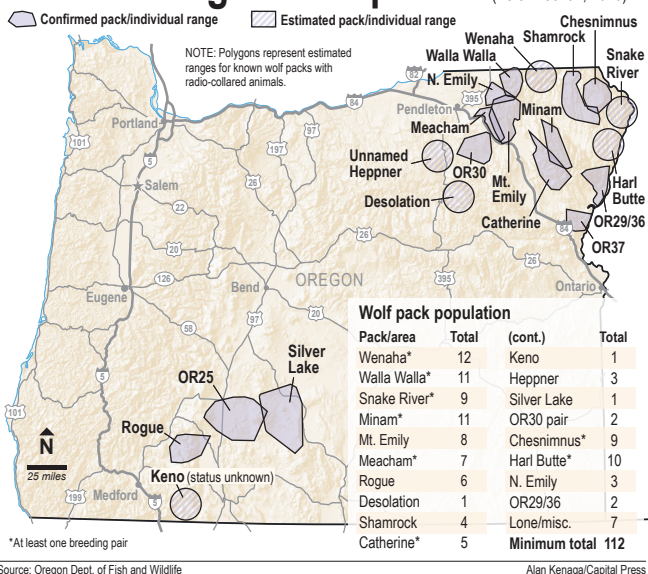
For example, the plan sets a minimum population threshold of 300 wolves through 2022 but it doesn't ensure that any particular zone doesn't become overpopulated with the predators, said Todd Nash, wolf committee chairman of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association.

“Nowhere does it address a maximum number,” Nash said.

Ranchers would like to see the agency create management units with caps on wolf numbers, but these suggestions have been largely disregarded, he said.

Currently, Oregon is estimated to have more than 100 wolves.

Known Oregon wolf packs (As of Dec. 31, 2016)



Based on trends seen in Idaho and Montana, however, that number can be expected to climb steeply in the coming years, for which the current draft plan fails to account, said Jim Akenson, conservation director for the Oregon Hunters Association.

“I don't know why in the world we would not look to our neighbors to see what will happen here,” Akenson said.

The Oregon Farm Bureau would like to see the plan provide a greater allowance for lethal wolf control when they're near homes or if they threaten livestock, pets and people, said Kevin Johnson, the organization's representative.

The agency should also increase its focus on collaring wolves as their population increases, so their movements and potential livestock interactions would continue to be monitored, he said.

Ranchers feel the plan is overly prescriptive in its wolf management policies despite expectations of a surging population, Johnson said. “They don't feel like their positions are being heard.”

Environmental groups, on the other hand, claim the plan is overly reliant on lethal wolf control, which they say is often ineffective.

“Lethal control has often

not stopped depredations,” said Nick Cady, legal director for Cascadia Wildlands.

The loss of a top pack member can cause the remaining wolves to become increasingly desperate and more likely to attack domesticated livestock, said Greenwald of the Center for Biological Diversity.

“There's increasing science that it creates more problems than it fixes,” he said.

The current draft plan doesn't benefit anyone “whether they're wearing cowboy hats or driving Priuses,” said Rob Klavins, Northeast Oregon field coordinator for Oregon Wild.

“This irresponsible and unscientific plan should be shelved,” he said.

Scientists who the agency found credible enough to cite in the plan have objected to how their research was applied, Klavins said. “Those scientists deserve a direct response.”

LIBRARY

Continued from Page A1

believes it makes sense for the district to pay rent as well. It made no sense for the city to provide money for utilities and maintain the building when citizens are already paying out of their pocket for a district, Pritchard said.

Christman agreed.

“I don't think the city needs to chip in anything on that,” said Christman. “We don't even have to let the district have the building. I think they need to be aware of what it costs to have it, and that needs to be part of their plan and if they don't have enough money, that's their problem and it's not the city's problem.”

Rautenstrauch pointed out that the whole point of the library district is to improve services and any small savings (such as rent) would mean more money to spend to increase hours, pro-

grams and outreach.

Council members seemed unclear on what they would lose if the county library closed, believing that programming would remain the same for Enterprise even after the county library closed. Hours would remain the same, they said.

“Until they (the Wallowa Valley Library Foundation) give us a list of the things they're going to provide that we're not providing now, I'm dragging my feet,” said Christman.

Rautenstrauch replied with a partial list of the “more” without discussing what would be lost when the county library closed and took the grant writer and program director out of the equation.

Mayor Karvoski said that Enterprise was in a unique position in that they already provided good library hours.

“The citizens, if this passes, will be paying extra money for hardly any other

services,” she said.

Rautenstrauch pointed out that the open hours would be significantly extended under the district plan. She did not mention the many programs that would disappear when the county library closed.

Christman was also under the impression that, if the library district were approved, the city could lose all control of its building.

“The city could line out whatever they want (in a proposal) and the new (library district board) could tell the city where to do with it. They don't have to listen to us,” Christman said.

Karvoski pointed out that making sure the city had a voice in how the library was used was the purpose of having a formal proposal “lined out” in advance.

The council decided to have the Library committee come up with several proposals and present them at the next meeting.

PAC

Continued from Page A1

Another common misunderstanding is that grant dollars to support the many programs would continue to come in, and programs would continue to be offered. Polumsky writes the bulk of the grants and oversees the programs. If Polumsky's position is erased, there will be no one available to write and oversee grants.

The PAC will present more facts and figures to the community in an effort to clarify the situation in the coming months.

Many of the attendees at the December PAC meeting signed on to be part of committees to work on budgeting, media and advertising, networking, endorsement relationships, fundraising and organization. More volunteers are needed. Contact volunteer coordinator Bombaci 541-778-0055.

SAY GOOD-BYE

Programs Wallowa County will lose without a district to support the county library.

- Troy and Imnaha library branches, serving residents and both school locations
- Classroom and homeschool curriculum support
- “Deliver-me-a-book” for seniors and homebound
- Community Clubs (cribbage, puzzle exchange, exercise class)
- Community Service worker site
- Training Wheels program
- Leap into Literacy storytimes

- Free children's books
- Rotation book bags
- Newborn Baby book bags
- Up & Away after-school programs
- Literacy packets
- Parent education resources
- Read Early, Read Often campaign
- Read 1,000 books before kindergarten challenge
- Preschool Science programs
- Kindergarten Readiness activities
- Social Media Services (early Literacy and Learning; gardening; travel Pinterest boards; Facebook).

Student of the Week

Despite being new to Alt Ed and Wallowa County, Mackenzie Scott has impressed us from the beginning. His amazing attendance, positive attitude and willingness to give 100% on all assignments have resulted in a 3.7 GPA for the first quarter. His grades continue to improve, as does his participation and leadership in the classroom. We are so glad to have Mackenzie in our Alt Ed Classroom.

Mackenzie Scott
ALT ED

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