

State orders killing of wolves from 2 more packs

By Nicholas K. Geranios
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — Wolves from two packs that have been preying on cattle in the northeastern corner of the state will be killed, the state Department of Fish and Wildlife said Wednesday morning.

Hunters will kill members of the Smackout Pack in Stevens County and members of the Togo Pack in Ferry County, the agency said.

Wolves from the two packs have continued to prey on cattle despite efforts to get them to stop, agency director Kelly Susewind said.

“WDFW staff have confirmed that on five separate occasions since Aug. 20, one or more members of the Smackout pack injured one calf and killed four heifers on private pastures,” the agency said in a news release.

Meanwhile, the agency documented six depredations by members of the Togo Pack in the past 10 months, and the remaining three wolves in that pack will be killed.

The hunting of wolves can begin on Thursday, the agency said.

Last month the state decided to kill the remaining two wolves from the Old Profanity Peak Territory Pack, which has repeatedly preyed on cattle in Ferry County.

The Center for Biological Diversity and other conservation groups have criticized the killing of wolves to save cattle grazing on public lands.

Wolves were killed off in Washington state early in the past century. But they began moving back into the state early in this century from Idaho and Canada.

That has created intense conflicts with ranchers in the mountainous and sparsely-populated northeastern part of the state.

Wolves are listed as an endangered species throughout Washington. But a management plan allows the state to kill wolves if officials confirm a certain number of livestock attacks within a specific time period.

In the case of the Smackout Pack, Susewind authorized incremental removal of wolves from the pack. One or two wolves will be killed, and then there will be a halt to determine if that stops the depredations, the agency said.

The agency said it will use humane lethal removal methods consistent with state and federal laws. Likely options include shooting from a helicopter, trapping and shooting from the ground.

The department documented the existence of the pack in 2011. Recent surveys indicate the pack includes four or five adult wolves.

In the case of the Togo Pack, Susewind said a recent depredation was an indication that the pack behavior of preying on livestock has not changed.

Susewind decided to issue a permit to the livestock owner allowing him, his immediate family, or his employees to kill wolves if they are within his private fenced

pasture.

Susewind decided to issue a permit rather than having department staff conduct the hunts because of a lack of resources due to having three hunts underway at the same time.

The Center for Biological Diversity has tried unsuccessfully to block past wolf hunts in court, saying that killing wolves ignores science and goes against the wishes of many in the state.

“Washington residents have made it clear that they support wolf recovery,” Amaroq Weiss of the center said in a recent news release.

The state since 2012 has killed 21 wolves, 17 of them to benefit the same livestock owner, she said.

“Washington residents are fed up with wolf-management policies that reward livestock owners for irresponsible business practices,” Weiss said. “The wildlife department’s mission is to preserve and protect the state’s wildlife.”

Marine combat veteran kills 12 in rampage at California bar

By Krysta Fauria and Jonathan J. Cooper
Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — Terrified patrons hurled barstools through windows to escape or threw their bodies protectively on top of friends as a Marine combat veteran killed 12 people at a country music bar in an attack that added Thousand Oaks to the tragic roster of American cities traumatized by mass shootings.

Dressed all in black with his hood pulled up, the gunman apparently took his own life as scores of police converged on the Borderline Bar and Grill in Southern California.

The motive for the rampage late Wednesday night was under investigation.

The killer, Ian David Long, 28, was a former machine gunner and Afghanistan war veteran who was interviewed by police at his home last spring after an episode of agitated behavior that authorities were told might be post-traumatic stress disorder.

Opening fire with a handgun with an illegal, extra-capacity magazine, Long shot a security guard outside the bar and then went in and took aim at employees and customers, authorities said. He also used a smoke bomb, according to a law enforcement official who was not authorized to discuss the investigation publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

California wildfire nearly quadruples in size

PARADISE, Calif. (AP) — A wildfire that moved so fast that firefighters couldn’t hope to stop it quadrupled in size Friday after destroying several thousand buildings and leveling much of a Northern California town of nearly 30,000 people, authorities said.

Only a day after it began, the fire near the town of Paradise had grown to nearly 110 square miles (285 square kilometers).

“There was really no firefight involved,” said Capt. Scott McLean of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, explaining that crews gave up on attacking the flames and instead helped people evacuate. “These firefighters were in the rescue mode all day yesterday.”

The entire town was ordered evacuated, setting off a desperate exodus in

which many motorists got stuck in gridlocked traffic and abandoned their cars to flee foot. People in Paradise reported seeing much of the community go up in flames, including homes, supermarkets, businesses, restaurants, schools and a retirement center.

“We were surrounded by fire. We were driving through fire on each side of the road,” police officer Mark Bass said.

On Friday, the massive blaze spread north, prompting officials to order the evacuation of Stirling City and Inskip, two communities north of Paradise along the Sierra Nevada foothills.

The wind-driven blaze also spread to the west and reached the edge of Chico, a city of 90,000 people. Firefighters were able to stop the flames at the edge of the city, where evacuation orders remained in place Friday, said

Cal Fire Cpt. Bill Murphy said.

The winds calmed down in the valley, but they were

still shifting and erratic, with speeds of up to 45 mph (72 kph) along ridge tops, he said.



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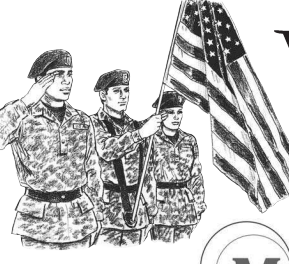
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