

Death of OR-4 a sobering turn for Oregon's wolf plan

Shooting renews debate over managing predators

By Eric Mortenson
EO Media Group

They called him OR-4, and by some accounts he was Oregon's biggest and baddest wolf, 97 pounds of cunning in his prime and the longtime alpha male of Wallowa County's influential Imnaha Pack.

But OR-4 was nearly 10, old for a wolf in the wild. And his mate limped with a bad back leg. Accompanied by two yearlings, they apparently separated from the rest of the Imnaha Pack or were forced out. In March, they attacked and devoured or injured calves and sheep five times in private pastures.

So on March 31, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife staff boarded a helicopter, rose up and shot all four.

The decisive action by ODFW may have marked a somber turning point in the state's work to restore wolves to the landscape. It comes on the heels of the ODFW Commission's decision in November 2015 to take gray wolves off the state endangered species list, and just as the commission is beginning a review of the Oregon Wolf Plan, the



Courtesy of ODFW

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists place a new working GPS collar on OR-4, the Imnaha wolf pack's alpha male, after darting him from a helicopter on March 28, 2012.

document that governs wolf conservation and management.

Oregon Wild, the Portland-based conservation group with long involvement in the state's wolf issue, said shooting wolves should be an "absolute last resort."

"While the wolf plan is out of date and under review, we shouldn't be taking the most drastic action we can take in wolf management," Executive Director Sean Stevens said in an email.

The commission should not have taken wolves off the state endangered species list in the first place, but it isn't likely to revisit that decision, Stevens said.

The commission should call upon the department to

not shoot more wolves until the plan review is finished, he said.

"But, more importantly, they should recognize that de-listing does not mean that we should suddenly swing open the doors to more aggressive management," Stevens said.

The ongoing wolf plan review, which may take nine months, should include science that wasn't considered in the delisting decision, and the public's will, he said. It also should create more clarity on non-lethal measures to deter wolves, he said.

Publicly, at least, no one is celebrating the shootings.

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association, long on the opposite side of the argument from Oregon Wild, said ODFW's action was authorized by Phase II of the state's wolf plan.

"The problem needed ad-



Amaroq Weiss



Rob Klavins

dressed and ODFW handled it correctly," spokeswoman Kayli Hanley said in an email. "We acknowledge that while this decision was necessary for the sake of species coexistence, it was a difficult decision."

Michael Finley, chair of the ODFW Commission, said the department handled the situation properly.

"I feel that the department acted in total good faith," Finley said. "They followed the letter and the spirit of the wolf plan."

Another conservation group, Defenders of Wildlife, called the shootings "a very sad day for us" but also said it appeared ODFW followed the wolf plan.

"The final plan is a compromise, but it is among the best of all the state plans in that it emphasizes the value of wolves on the landscape, and requires landowners to try non-lethal methods of deterring wolves before killing them is ever considered," the group said in a prepared statement.

Amaroq Weiss, West Coast wolf organizer for the Center for Biological Diversity, said the Imnaha Pack shootings may lead to more poaching, because killing wolves decreases tolerance of them and leads to a belief that "you have to kill wolves

in order to preserve them."

Weiss agreed that coming across a calf or sheep that's been torn apart and consumed — the skull and hide was all that was left of one calf after the OR-4 group fed on it — must be gut-wrenching for producers. But she said those animals are raised to be killed and eaten. "They don't die any more a humane death in a slaughterhouse than being killed by a wild animal," she said. "It's a hard discussion to find a common place of agreement."

She said such losses are the reason Oregon established the compensation program: to pay for livestock losses and to help with the cost of defensive measures that scare wolves away.

Weiss said Oregon rushed to move to Phase II of its wolf conservation and management plan in the eastern part of the state, which was prompted by reaching a population goal of four breeding pairs for three consecutive years. That also prompted the ODFW Commission to take wolves off the state endangered species list in 2015, although they remain on the federal endangered list in the western two-thirds of the state.

Like others, Weiss believes the state should have held off on such changes until it finished the mandated review of the wolf plan.

"Under Phase I, Oregon was the state we could all point to" for successfully managing wolves, Weiss said. "I would hope they look at what parts of the wolf plan are working, and look at the

parts that are not working."

Politics and policy aside, the shooting of OR-4 gave people pause. He was a bigger-than-life character; he'd evaded a previous ODFW kill order and had to be re-collared a couple times as he somehow shook off the state's effort to track him.

OR-4's Imnaha Pack was the state's second oldest, designated in 2009, and it produced generations of successful dispersers. OR-4's many progeny included Oregon's best-known wanderer, OR-7, who left the Imnaha Pack in 2011 and zig-zagged his way southwest into California before settling in the Southern Oregon Cascades.

OR-25, which killed a calf in Klamath County and now is in Northern California, dispersed from the Imnaha Pack. The alpha female of the Shasta Pack, California's first, is from the Imnaha Pack as well.

Rob Klavins, who lives in Wallowa County and is Oregon Wild's field representative in the area, ran across OR-4's tracks a couple times and saw him once.

Despite his fearsome reputation, the wolf tucked his tail between his legs, ran behind a nearby tree and barked at Klavins and his hiking group until they left.

"Killing animals four or five times your size is a tough way to make a living," Klavins said. "Some people appreciate OR-4 as a symbol of the tenacity of wolves, even a lot of folks who dislike wolves have sort of a begrudging respect for him."

Your Rural Family Health Clinic

Grant County HEALTH Department
528 E. Main, St. E.
John Day

Monday - Friday
8am - 5pm

Karen Triplett, FNP

Appointments available

Call and schedule your appointment today!
TOLL FREE
888-443-9104
or 541-575-0429

Services Provided:

- Primary Care
- Acute Care
- Women's Health Exams
- Men and Children Exams
- Immunizations
- Family Planning
- Contraception
- Pregnancy Testing & Referrals
- HIV Testing & Referrals
- Cocoon
- WIC
- High Risk Infants
- Maternity Case Management

Grant County Health Department does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability or age in admission, treatment, or participation in its programs, services and activities, or in employment.

Brown delivers second state-of-the-state address

By Paris Achen
Capital Bureau

PORTLAND — Gov. Kate Brown used her state-of-the-state address Friday to claim a series of social, economic and environmental achievements during her first full year in office.

Calling it "a watershed year

for Oregon," she recounted to a crowd of about 500 at the City Club of Portland that the state had passed several first-in-the-nation laws. Those policies ban the sale of coal-powered electricity, automatically register people to vote, set a tiered minimum wage and allow the sale of birth control without a prescription.

She compared the new policies to the legacy of former Gov. Tom McCall, known for his leadership in passing landmark land-use planning laws in 1973.

"I think that these first-ever achievements over the past 14 months would have made Gov. McCall very proud," Brown said.

She also committed to proposing a transportation plan during the 2017 legislative session. That echoed a promise she made in her first state-of-the-state address in April 2015 to make transportation one of her top priorities, but she later delayed that plan.

She called her ascension from secretary of state to the state's highest office in February 2015 "unexpected." As secretary of state, she automatically succeeded Gov. John Kitzhaber when he resigned

that same month over an influence-peddling scandal involving his fiancée, Cylvia Hayes.

Brown said she has since strived to enhance government transparency.

She cited new policies that require lobbyists to disclose whom they represent within three days of hiring, and changes to ethics laws that increase penalties for knowingly using public office for private gain.

However, the Pamplin Media/EO Media Group Capital Bureau recently reported that meaningful public records reform, such as deadlines and fee limits for responding to public record, has failed to progress since Brown took office. She also failed to follow through on a plan to create a public records advocate to help the public with public record denials, but she repeated her plan to propose legislation to create that position in 2017.

Brown described other accomplishments as investing \$70 million in addressing the state's housing shortage, boosting funding for higher education and early childhood education and subsidizing college tuition with the Oregon Opportunity Grant.

She offered few specifics on policy proposals for the coming year. In addition to offering a transportation package, she repeated her commitment to improve the state's graduation rate — one of the worst in the nation. She recently created a new position of education innovation officer to develop a strategy to accomplish that goal and plans to hire for the position in the next couple of weeks.

Republicans respond

Senate Republican Leader Ted Ferrioli (R-John Day) released the following statement following Governor Kate Brown's second state-of-the-state address held at the Portland City Club:

"In February, Governor Brown and Democrat leadership failed to do the one thing Oregonians were counting on: take meaningful steps toward restoring transparency and accountability to state government. Governor Brown promised in her inaugural State of the State to overhaul Oregon's public records system and strengthen Oregon's ethics laws. She has failed, just like she failed to deliver a bipartisan transportation package in 2015. She and her Democrat colleagues failed to address critical missteps by state agencies resulting in high costs for taxpayers and the loss of trust in government services like our foster care system. Instead, the Governor is praising her Democrat colleagues for back room deals that resulted in a slew of new mandates costing small businesses and working families. How long will Oregon voters allow their leaders to say one thing and do another? Oregonians deserve more than lip service. The reign of one-party rule in Oregon needs to come to an end before the quality of life we all value disappears."

KEEPING YOU IN THE FIELD

I need to know that my work is going to pay off. That's why I use genuine AGCO Parts.

NO ONE KNOWS YOUR EQUIPMENT BETTER.
Your AGCO Parts Dealer has the parts you need when you need them. Hardware, chain, batteries, tillage, belts, cutting parts. We have the quality parts you need to keep your AGCO equipment running smoothly during the demanding harvest season.

Highly trained service personnel at AGCO Parts make it all come together, so you can rest easy. Visit your AGCO Parts Dealer and get the parts and services you need to "Keep you in the Field" this season. Find out more at agcoparts.com.

Robbins Farm Equipment - Baker City
3850 10th Street
541-523-6377

Robbins Farm Equipment - La Grande
10218 Wallowa Lake Hwy.
541-963-6577

Robbins Farm Equipment - Burns
1160 S. Egan,
541-573-6377

Robbins Farm Equipment - Christmas Valley
86812 Christmas Valley Hwy
541-576-2160

AGCO PARTS

NATIONAL Sexual Assault AWARENESS & PREVENTION MONTH

Help is available for victims of sexual assault in Grant County. If you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual assault, please call:

Heart of Grant County
541-620-1342

Grant County Victim Assistance Program
541-575-4026

Remember: sex without consent = sexual assault

This project was supported by Grant No. 2015-WR-AX-0008 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/pro grant exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

Designed by the Blue Mountain Eagle

Attend a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Dinner and Benefit Auction

Where fun and fund-raising combine for a memorable evening.

Date: Saturday, April 23
Time: 4:00—Doors open
5:30—Dinner
7:30—Auction

Place: Pavilion—Grant County Fairgrounds

Ticket Information: Gale Wall 541-575-2661

A great time for a great cause. Proceeds benefit elk and other wildlife.