

Oregon to craft new proposal for managing wolves

By George Plaven
EO Media Group

A new framework for managing wolves that repeatedly prey on livestock may have the support of both Oregon ranchers and conservation groups, if the state can find enough money to pay for it.

The idea came as groups sat down for the second time with a mediator on Oct. 9 as part of the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife's effort to update the state's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan.

Participants include the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon Hunters Association and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, along with Oregon Wild, Cascadia Wildlands, Defenders of Wildlife and the Center for Biological Diversity.

The facilitated meetings are designed to find common ground within the contentious wolf plan.

The session revealed a possible breakthrough in how ranchers can peacefully coexist with wolves on the landscape while minimizing attacks on livestock. Though short on specifics, the strategy generally calls for more site-specific wolf protections with an upfront focus on non-lethal



EO Media Group/George Plaven

Derek Broman, state carnivore biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, leads a presentation during a wolf plan stakeholders meeting Oct. 9 in Salem.

deterrents, such as hiring range riders or stringing fladry along fences to haze the predators.

Under the proposal, a wildlife biologist would meet with individual ranchers to discuss which non-lethal tools would be most effective given their location and geography. ODFW already has conflict deterrence plans

where wolves are known to be active, but these new agreements would make it even clearer what a rancher ought to be doing to best protect their animals.

If wolves continue to attack livestock and meet the state's definition of "chronic depredation," then ranchers who follow the rules can request killing wolves to stop the damage, which is allowed in Phase III of the wolf plan in Eastern Oregon. Wolves remain a federally protected species west of highways 395, 78 and 95.

Todd Nash, a Wallowa County commissioner and member of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, said the proposal would provide much-needed clarity and directions for ranchers to follow when it comes to dealing with problem wolves.

"There should be no dispute whether you did enough non-lethal," Nash said.

Sean Stevens, executive director of Oregon Wild, said the concept also holds promise for the environmental community because it prioritizes non-lethal measures ahead of conflict.

"Done well and with a lot of goodwill, this could be effective," Stevens said. "It really does focus on

avoiding conflict."

It remains unclear how such a program would be paid for in the long-term. The group discussed possible funding sources, including the Wolf Depredation Compensation and Financial Assistance Grant Program, which receives money from the Legislature and is administered by the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

During the 2017 legislative session, Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, introduced a bill that would tie compensation directly to the increasing wolf population. That measure could surface again in 2019.

ODFW staff will write specific language for developing site-specific deterrence plans and present it to the work group Nov. 5 during a webinar and conference call. The next in-person meeting is scheduled for Nov. 27 in Pendleton.

Individual group members made it clear they still have lingering concerns over other parts of the Oregon plan. Stevens, with Oregon Wild, took issue with the state's definition of "chronic depredation" in Phase III of the plan, which is currently defined as two attacks on livestock over any period of time.

ODFW has proposed amending the rule to three attacks on livestock

in a 12-month period, but Stevens said even that is too broad.

"We really need to be thinking about an appropriate timeline," Stevens said.

The group also went back and forth on issues such as radio collars, and whether it is appropriate for local authorities, such as county sheriff's offices, to participate in wolf-livestock depredation investigations. Those topics will be up for further discussion moving forward.

For the wolf plan to work, Nash said ranchers and rural communities need to buy in. Right now, he said the current plan is broken.

"Producers don't call in depredations at this point. Most have chosen not to work within the context of the plan, because the context of the plan hasn't worked," Nash said. "You've lost the human tolerance condition among ranchers, in northeast Oregon especially."

Kevin Blakely, deputy administrator for the ODFW Wildlife Division, said he was encouraged by the progress, and believes it could be a foot in the door for more consensus.

"There's got to be something for everybody on the table," Blakely said. "I think that's how you start to get some movement."

Lake Creek Youth Camp board seeks volunteers

Local students enjoy 3-day outdoor school

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Lake Creek Youth Camp, with its lodge, cabins and grounds, is a breath

of fresh air for visitors and a treasure the camp's board hopes will continue for many years to come.

With a few longtime board members retiring, two last year and two this year, Lake Creek's leaders are seeking more assistance to keep the camp running smoothly.

Vicki and Carl Heckman retired from the board in

September — Vicki was the camp cook, and Carl was the groundskeeper and maintenance worker.

With Lake Creek's busy season coming to a close, the board is now looking to fill those positions as well as an assistant cook.

"If we can hire some experienced people, we'll be able to continue our reputa-

ble service," said Treasurer Aimee Rude.

The camp hosts various groups, mainly from June through September, including youth groups, weddings, retreats and family reunions.

Board president Amber Wright said that if a group is not already scheduled at the camp, visitors are welcome to stop by.

"A lot of people don't know that it's not private, and that it's a day use area," she said.

She said if someone would like to hold a birthday party there, they can call, or if they're in that neck of the woods, they can stop by for a tour.

They also offer ice and showers to hunters for purchase.

Lake Creek is a board-run camp, so the group is especially interested in having board members and other volunteers who can devote time on occasion to the grounds and facility.

Rude said when they have back-to-back groups of visitors, they may need assistance with changing linens at the cabins or, if there is a large group, making lunches.

Board member Darla Carpenter, who has been an assistant cook at the camp, said help in the kitchen with food prep or general assistance during the day is sometimes needed for groups with over 40-50 people.

"It really means a lot," she said.

Volunteers, not just board members, help with a beginning-of-the-season clean-up day to dust the cabins



Contributed photo/Laura Thomas

Monument School fifth- and sixth-graders enjoyed a three-day outdoor school in September held at Lake Creek Youth Camp.

and rake and sweep up the grounds as well as a clean-up day in October.

A three-day outdoor school, organized by OSU Extension's Didgette McCracken, was held in September for students, most in sixth grade, from Monument, Spray and Adrian school districts with 42 kids attending.

Monument teacher Laura Thomas said all 11 students in her fifth- through sixth-grade class enjoyed the camp. "It was fabulous," she said. "There was such a variety of subjects for the kids to learn about."

She said even those students who were a little nervous at first about camping overnight enjoyed the event.

The youths learned about astronomy from OMSI staff, which included a dome tent with the constellations shown — the students also viewed the stars in the night sky.

Andy Day, a 4-H leader,

gave archery lessons; Bob Parker, the OSU forester for Grant and Baker counties taught forestry and team building; and there were numerous other lessons and hikes.

"It was a really neat bonding experience," Thomas said.

Wright said she hopes they receive the help they're looking for, so Lake Creek Camp can be available to Grant County residents and others for years to come.

"It's the serenity, it's the outdoors, it's the peace and quiet, all there in Logan Valley," she said. "It's just breathtaking. There are creeks around there, and it's near Strawberry Mountain. It's a really peaceful place to be."

For more information about Lake Creek Camp, call Aimee Rude at 541-206-2421 or visit the website at lake-creekcamp.org.



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