Updates on wolf conservation and management activities

WDFW provides periodic updates on wolf-management issues to Wolf Advisory Group members via email throughout the year. The public can sign up to receive these reports by emailing wildThing@dfw.wa.gov and requesting to be added to the Wolf Advisory Group and Interested Parties email distribution list.

September 7, 2016

WAG work session set Sept. 15 in Issaquah

I am writing to update you on four items:

The next Wolf Advisory Group meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Sept. 14, from 11:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Thursday, Sept. 15, from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The meeting will take place at the Holiday Inn in Issaquah, 1801 12th Ave. NW, 98027. Please see the attached meeting agenda.

The work session will be open to the public to observe and will follow the same format that we have used in the past, including public comment opportunities at the end of each day.

Members of the public wishing to provide input on the Profanity Peak lethal removal action will have the opportunity to provide verbal or written comments to the Fish and Wildlife Commission when it meets Nov. 4-5 in Olympia.

- A revised chronology of events document can be found on the Profanity Peak webpage at http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray_wolf/packs/7/. It includes the information I've emailed you since Aug. 19.
- As I've mentioned before, after the Department's lethal removal action has concluded, we will provide a full report to the public. It will include all of the items described in the protocol, including details of staff recommendations, the Director's decisions, and a complete timeline of events.
- One correction from my update on Sept. 2 the rally at the Department of Natural Resources building in Olympia on Sept.1 was initiated and coordinated jointly by the Center for Biological Diversity, Predator Defense, Western Watersheds Project, WildLands Defense, Northwest Animal Rights Network, and citizen activists.

As always, please contact me if you have questions or need more information.

One more calf killed; details of situation on the livestock producer's allotment

Since July 8, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has documented a total of 13 depredation events on livestock, including eight confirmed and five probable depredations. In the latest event, August 31, the Department documented a confirmed wolf depredation involving one dead calf.

The Department has lethally removed a total of six wolves, the same number reported in my August 25 update. These include two females removed Aug. 5, and two adult males, one adult female, and one female pup removed Aug. 21-22 (the carcass of the adult female taken during the latter period was recovered from the field since my last update).

I also want to make sure you are aware of two other recent developments:

- On August 25, the <u>Seattle Times ran a story</u> quoting Dr. Rob Wielgus, associate professor and director of the Large Carnivore Conservation Lab at Washington State University, as saying the livestock producer "elected to put his livestock directly on top" of the Profanity Peak wolf den. On August 31, WSU issued a news-release disavowing that and other statements made by Dr. Wielgus in the Times story.
- Yesterday (September 1), about 70 people gathered in front of the Department of Natural Resources building in Olympia to protest WDFW's action to remove the Profanity Peak pack. The protest, initiated by the Center for Biological Diversity, was peaceful and received some <u>news coverage</u>.

Here are some facts I hope will improve everyone's understanding about the situation in the Profanity Peak pack area.

- Based on field reports of the 13 wolf depredations on livestock since July 8, three
 were within about a mile of the pack's activity centers (den or rendezvous sites)
 and ten ranged from 2 to 10 miles away from wolf activity centers.
- The Profanity Peak pack overlaps almost entirely with federal grazing allotments administered through the U.S. Forest Service. On this range, wolves and livestock share the landscape.
- Four livestock producers operate on the allotments in the area and graze a total of about 1,500 cattle.

- One of the livestock producers set out his cattle (198 pairs of cows-calves) around June 10 in a 30,000-acre allotment, which has only one road access point. The cattle turnout area was four to five miles from the Profanity Peak pack's den, but the den site wasn't known or confirmed at the time.
- During the first week of June, Department employees started trapping to place radio collars on Profanity Peak wolves to monitor the pack. There were no collars in this pack prior to that time. We captured and collared an adult male on June 10 and an adult female on June 12.
- As cattle dispersed through the grazing allotment from the release site, the
 Department employee conducting the trapping noticed cattle starting to come into
 that area around June 12. In the following weeks biologists began receiving data
 from those collars, and confirmed the den site by the end of June.
- As cattle continued to disperse through the allotment they inevitably crossed paths with the den site and later with rendezvous sites.
- The Department confirmed the first wolf depredation on July 8. By August 3, the
 Department had documented four confirmed depredations (and others classified
 as probable), and the situation met the terms of the lethal removal protocol
 developed earlier this year. The Director authorized wolf removal actions the
 same day.
- Following the first depredation July 8, the producer deployed a range rider. The producer also increased human presence on the allotment by hiring two additional people to patrol the area on foot.
- The livestock producers' U.S. Forest Service grazing permit for this allotment directs them to rotate cattle through multiple allotments over the course of the grazing season. During this time, the paths of wolves and cattle have put the two in close proximity a few times. When such situations occur, the Department works with producers to seek ways to reduce the risk of depredations.
- In one situation, the wolf rendezvous site overlapped with part of the normal grazing path, where livestock were concentrated with the use of salt blocks. Once that overlap was detected, the Department contacted the producer, who removed the salt blocks from the area.
- The Department will continue to communicate and work with the producers to reduce risks of depredations as the situation evolves.

The removal operation of the Profanity Peak pack is ongoing. I will provide another update next week.

- Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

August 25, 2016

WDFW removes four more members of Profanity Peak pack

I am writing to provide you with an update on the continuing Profanity Peak wolf pack lethal removal effort. As you know, the Department initiated a removal effort August 4 after documenting four confirmed wolf depredations on cattle in Ferry County. On August 5, Department staff, using aerial methods, lethally removed 2 adult females. Staff continued the removal operation without success until August 18. The Department ended the removal operation August 18 after a 13-day period without any documented livestock depredations.

On August 19, Department staff documented two more confirmed wolf depredations resulting to injuries to two calves, plus two probable wolf depredations resulting in calf mortalities. This prompted Department staff to recommend a second removal effort. Subsequently, on August 19, WDFW Director Jim Unsworth authorized a second effort to lethally remove up to all pack members.

On August 21, Department staff lethally removed one adult male. The next day, staff removed three wolves, including one female pup, an adult male, and a second adult. The sex of the second adult is unknown at this time, because Department staff have not yet retrieved this animal. Staff verified that the wolf was humanely killed from a helicopter, but was not found during in subsequent attempts to locate it. Department staff continue to search for the wolf, and I will notify you on the outcome in the next update.

This week's removals bring the total to six wolves removed since August 4.

The removal operation is ongoing and I will provide another update next week.

- Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

August 19, 2016

WDFW to restart Profanity Peak removals after finding dead, injured calves

I am writing to provide an update on the Profanity Peak pack in northeast Washington.

On August 18, 2016, WDFW ended the action to lethally remove wolves in the Profanity Peak pack. Today, the Department documented three additional wolf depredation events in the area. One, involving an injured calf, was classified as a confirmed wolf

depredation. The other two events, each involving a dead calf, were classified as probable wolf depredations.

Since July 8, the Department has documented 11 depredations by wolves; 6 classified as confirmed and 5 as probable.

Today, WDFW Director Jim Unsworth has again authorized the removal of wolves in the Profanity Peak pack. His decision was based on 1) the fact that the criteria in the protocol for lethal removal was met on Aug. 3 when he previously authorized partial pack removal, 2) two wolves were removed on Aug. 5 and 3) depredations have continued with the three recently documented.

With partial pack removal efforts occurring from August 4-18, the Director has now authorized up to full pack removal, with recognition that full pack removal may be extremely challenging given the rugged and heavy timbered landscape in the area.

I will be updating the Chronology of Events document on the Departments website early next week with this recent information.

Per the protocol, the Department will keep you and the public informed about this activity through weekly updates to the WAG and Interested Parties email distribution list. After the removal action is complete, WDFW will make a complete report to you and the public, including information about staff recommendations, details of the removal, and the Director's determination in approving, denying, or modifying the staff recommendation for lethal removal.

Please contact me at any time if you have questions or concerns.

Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

August 11, 2016

Removal of two wolves from Profanity Peak pack

I am writing to provide a status report about the continuing operation to remove wolves from the Profanity Peak pack in northeast Washington. WDFW Director Jim Unsworth authorized this effort on August 3, and we have had staff in the field every day since August 4.

On Friday, August 5, WDFW staff removed two adult female wolves from the pack by shooting them from a helicopter. One of the wolves was this year's breeding female. We were not targeting the breeding pair in this pack, but as we have discussed, there is no way to identify the breeding animals during a removal operation, so there is always a chance a breeding animal may be killed. Given the age of the pups, we know that they are weaned, so the removal of the breeding female is not likely to impact their

survival. Typically, at this time of year, all of the remaining adults will provide food for the pups.

In addition to our efforts, the livestock producers are continuing efforts to prevent wolf attacks on their cattle by using range riders to monitor activity around the herds. We have received no reports of wolf depredations since this operation began.

Because this effort is continuing, we are not releasing details that could jeopardize the safety of the public, producers, or our staff. I will provide another update no later than Thursday, August 18. In addition, we will post this information and earlier updates about the Profanity Peak pack on the wolf conservation page of the WDFW website as soon as possible at http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray_wolf/.

I am kindly requesting that folks not use the WAG update distribution lists for reply-to-all email discussions. These emails are to update you periodically, with a full report available to you after the operation has concluded. To preserve this method of communication, I ask that you please contact me directly with your questions or concerns.

- Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

August 4, 2016

Calf carcass marks fifth confirmed wolf depredation event

Late on August 3, Department staff investigated a second calf carcass (I reported to you on the first calf carcass in the email below) in the Profanity Peak wolf pack area. Based on the investigation, the calf was classified as a confirmed wolf depredation event.

The total wolf depredation events to date in the Profanity Peak pack area are three probable and five confirmed depredation events. More information on wolf-livestock conflicts in 2016 is available on the Department's website in a "Chronology of events" document on the webpage for each wolf pack, located at http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray_wolf/packs/. The document will be updated this week with information associated with the depredation event described above.

Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

August 3, 2016

Calf carcass marks fourth confirmed wolf depredation event

I am writing to provide an update on recent livestock depredations by wolves in the range of the Profanity Peak pack in northeast Washington, which has prompted WDFW

to initiate the provisions of the lethal removal protocol developed jointly by WAG and the Department earlier this year.

On August 3, 2016, Department staff investigated a calf carcass in the Profanity Peak wolf pack area of northern Ferry County. Based on the investigation, the calf's death was classified as a confirmed wolf depredation event.

This incident brought to four the total confirmed wolf depredations this year by the Profanity Peak pack. Three additional incidents in the area were classified as "probable" depredations. More information is available in the chronology of events document on the Department's website, which contains a web page for each wolf pack in the state. The Profanity Peak chronology is here (link to web page; note: you may need to refresh your web-browser to download the recent version).

As a result of these events, the Department is activating the recently adopted lethal removal protocol (web link to the document here). The criteria in the protocol for consideration and implementation of lethal removal have been reached for the wolves in the Profanity Peak pack, and WDFW Director Jim Unsworth authorized lethal removal of a portion of the pack. Consistent with protocol, the rationale for starting with partial pack removal and more details on the number of wolves to be removed will be included in a report after the removal is complete.

The purpose of lethal removal is to stop wolf depredations from continuing in the near future by disrupting the pack's pattern of activity and reducing its food requirements. Consistent with the terms of the protocol, the rationale for lethal removal in this case is as follows:

- 1. **WDFW** has documented four confirmed wolf depredation events in the Profanity Peak pack area during 2016, AND
- The requirement was met that at least one of the four confirmed depredation events resulted in livestock being killed (in this situation all four events involved livestock killed by wolves), AND
- 3. **Proactive deterrence measures were implemented but did not prevent depredations** (preventive steps included removing or securing livestock carcasses, turning out larger calves on the federal grazing allotment, and the use of a range rider. More information is available in the chronology document), AND
- 4. WDFW expects depredations to continue, AND
- 5. The Department has notified the public of the pack's activities and related management actions. We informed the WAG and interested parties by email when the pack was discovered in September 2014 and provided a map of the pack's range in August 2015. WDFW provided WAG updates on July 15, 19, and 26 with information on all confirmed wolf depredations on livestock in the area

and the producer's eligibility for compensation, and we described the preventive measures in updates to the chronology of events.

As mentioned earlier, Director Unsworth has authorized removal of a portion of the Profanity Peak pack, which is estimated to include a minimum of 11 wolves. We expect to begin the effort very soon, depending on weather and related environmental factors. We will use the best removal method available to emphasize human safety, humaneness to the wolves, and timely completion of the removal. Removal options include shooting from a helicopter, trapping, and shooting from the ground.

Per the protocol, the Department will keep you and the public informed about this activity through regular (at least weekly) updates to the WAG and Interested Parties email distribution list. After the removal action is complete, WDFW will make a complete report to you and the public, including information about staff recommendations, details of the removal, and the Director's determination in approving, denying, or modifying the staff recommendation for lethal removal.

Please contact me at any time if you have questions or concerns. Bruce Botka, the Department's Public Affairs Director, and I will coordinate our responses to news media inquiries during this time. Bruce's contact information is below.

Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

July 25, 2016

Update on calf carcasses and legal tribal harvest

I am writing to update you on three items:

- On July 21, Department staff investigated a calf carcass in the Profanity Peak wolf pack area. Based on the investigation, the calf was classified as a probable wolf depredation event.
- On July 23, Department staff investigated a calf carcass in the Profanity Peak wolf pack area. Based on the investigation, the calf was classified as a confirmed wolf depredation event.

The total wolf depredation events to date in the Profanity Peak pack area are three probable and three confirmed depredations. More information on wolf-livestock conflicts in 2016 is available on the Department's website in a "Chronology of events" document on the webpage for each wolf pack, located at http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray_wolf/packs/. The document will be updated this week with information associated with the depredation events described above.

- One wolf was legally harvested recently on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Please contact the Spokane Tribe of Indians for more information.
- Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

July 15, 2016

Second confirmed wolf depredation in Profanity Peak area

I am writing to update you on a recent wolf depredation in the Profanity Peak wolf pack area. Department staff investigated one cow carcass in the Profanity Peak wolf pack area. Based on the investigation, the cow was classified as a confirmed wolf depredation event. The total wolf depredation events to date (in 2016) in the Profanity Peak pack area are 2 confirmed wolf depredation events and 2 probable wolf depredation events.

More information on wolf-livestock conflicts in 2016 is available on the Department's website in a "Chronology of events" document on the webpage for each wolf pack, located at http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray_wolf/packs/. The document will be updated next week with information associated with the depredation event described above.

Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

July 13, 2016

Two carcasses deemed probable wolf depredation

I am writing to update you on recent wolf depredations in the Profanity Peak wolf pack area. Yesterday, July 12, Department staff investigated two calf carcasses in the Profanity Peak wolf pack area. Based on the investigation, both were classified as probable wolf. The total wolf depredation events to date (in 2016) in Profanity Peak pack area are 1 confirmed (see below) and 2 probable.

Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

July 11, 2016

Confirmed calf depredation in Profanity Peak area

I am writing to update you on a recent wolf depredation in the Profanity Peak wolf pack area. On July 8, Department staff investigated and confirmed a calf was killed by one or more wolves from the Profanity Peak wolf pack. Department staff are communicating

with the producer on the ground measures that may prevent further losses or find losses that do occur. The calf carcass was removed from the area. I will keep you posted on any new information.

This week I will be updating the "chronology of events" for all wolf packs on the Department's website.

Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

July 5, 2016

WAG meeting schedule

Please see the attached agenda for the WAG meeting on July 6-7 in Spokane Valley.

Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

June 20, 2016

Wolf from Smackout pack gets radio-collar

On June 19, Washington State University researchers captured and radio-collared a grey yearling male (065m) wolf in the Smackout pack.

Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

June 14, 2016

Profanity Peak wolves get radio-collars, other form new pack

I want to update you on two items:

- Department staff recently captured and collared two wolves in the Profanity Peak pack. On June 9, Department staff captured a 2-year-old black male (063m) and on June 12 staff captured a black yearling female (064f).
- The wolves that staff captured and collared in the Profanity Peak pack last summer and winter have established a separate territory immediately to the south, named the Sherman Pack. The Department will be updating the statewide pack map on the Agency's website.
- Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

Deterrence measures employed in Stevens County, Goodman Meadows wolf collared

I am writing to update you on two items:

 On May 31, I shared with you that Department staff investigated and documented a confirmed wolf depredation (on May 30) on an 8-9 month old Holstein heifer on private property in southern Stevens County. I want to share some additional information.

Department staff and/or contract range rider assisted the producer with human presence this past week and deployed eight fox lights. Education on wolf behavior and appropriate deterrence measures also has taken place with the producer. The wolf pack associated with the depredation has not been determined yet, as it is between the Huckleberry and Stranger packs. The pack associated with the depredation will be determined after more information on wolf movement patterns is gathered.

- On June 5th, researchers at Washington State University captured and collared a
 yearling male (062M) wolf in the Goodman Meadows pack. There are now two
 active collars in the Goodman Meadows pack.
- Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

May 31, 2016

A confirmed wolf depredation and the revised lethal removal protocol

I am writing to update you on two items:

- On May 30th, Department staff investigated and documented a confirmed wolf depredation of a 8-9 month old Holstein heifer on private property in southern Stevens County. The wolf pack associated with the depredation has not been determined. I will keep you posted on any new information.
- I want to share with you the revised WDFW protocol for lethal removal of wolves to stop wolf depredations on livestock. I also want to take a moment to share with you the process that led to this protocol.

The department's past protocol for lethal removal of wolves was not well-understood or supported by the public, and even generated differences of opinion within WDFW. Lacking support for such an important aspect of wolf

management and recognizing the long-term polarization of public values on wolves, the Department sought external expertise in addressing social conflict.

Last May, the Department doubled the membership of the Wolf Advisory Group and began a process to bring the WAG stakeholders and Department staff together to re-engage on key issues and to reach a sufficient consensus on recommendations to the Department on wolf management policies.

One year ago, the expanded WAG had its first meeting with Francine Madden, a consultant with Human Wildlife Conflict Collaboration, who was retained to help reduce the conflict that had surrounded wolf management in Washington state. Since then, the WAG members and a diversity of Department staff, from field biologists to managers, met six times, and along the way reconciled relationships, learned about each other's values and needs, and worked hard toward positive outcomes.

The attached protocol reflects a wide range of values and extensive participation from livestock producers, environmental groups, and hunting advocates. It also reflects the Department of Fish and Wildlife's commitment to do everything we can to understand and respond to public values and community concerns regarding wolf recovery.

This protocol wasn't created in two days. It required a year-long process that emphasized positive stakeholder relationships, a respectful approach to resolving differences, and a willingness to tackle serious, challenging issues. Through that process, the WAG members and Department staff unanimously agreed to the attached protocol. The Department has accepted this approach and will operate under the protocol for the remainder of this year's grazing season.

As always, please feel free to contact me anytime if you have any questions or concerns.

Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

May 19, 2016

Three Loup Loup wolves fit with radio-collars

I am writing to update you on three recent wolf captures in the Loup Loup pack. On May 17, staff caught and collared a yearling female (059f). On May 18, they caught and collared the breeding female (060f). Then today, May 19, caught and collared an adult male (061m).

Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

Three items for your attention

I am writing to update you on three items:

- Please see the attached agenda for the May 10-11 WAG meeting in Ellensburg.
- Recently I reported that we had captured a female wolf in Tucannon pack. Unfortunately, the wolf (058f), captured on May 1, was found dead five days later by WDFW personnel. WSU veterinarians performed a necropsy, but we have not yet received detailed results. Indications are that she died from an infection caused at the time of capture.

This is an unfortunate incident, but the risks of capture related mortalities are a reality in wildlife management. WDFW personnel used the same protocols designed to ensure the safe capture, handling, and recovery of the animal that we have used in 74 previous, successful captures. However, we will review those protocols to determine if we can make improvements to minimize the potential for this to happen in the future.

Because this wolf was the pack's breeding female, we are concerned about the fate of the pack's pups and are attempting to maximize the likelihood of their survival.

We considered sending biologists to last year's den site to investigate the fate of the pups and assess our options. However, it is unlikely the pack was using last year's den, because the capture took place about 20 miles away, and the location of this years' den site is unknown.

We believe the pups are about 5 to 6 weeks old, the age when pups often are weaned. Experience from elsewhere indicates that when a reproductive female dies shortly after giving birth, other pack members provide for the pups. Given these circumstances, we believe minimizing human disturbance near the pack is the best way to increase the likelihood of pup survival, so we are not attempting to locate the den and assess the fate of the pups at this time. WDFW personnel will continue to monitor the pack and will be able to determine its status through normal monitoring efforts.

• In late April, a couple on horseback near Mazama, accompanied by their off-leash dog, encountered what they and our staff suspect was a wolf. The couple were trail-riding when they spotted an animal in the woods. Their 25-pound mixed breed dog chased the suspected wolf, which turned and bit the dog on the left hindquarters. One of the dog's owners fired a handgun into the air, which startled the wolf and allowed the dog to run to safety. A local veterinarian later

examined the dog and noted bruising and a puncture wound on the left hip. The vet administered antibiotics and other medication, but the dog did not need stiches.

Afterward, a WDFW conflict specialist and enforcement officers, with a deputy from the Okanogan County Sheriff's Office, investigated the incident. They found no blood or signs of a struggle, but found a possible wolf track about three-tenths of a mile south of the site of the incident. Based on the witness reports and that evidence, we classified this as a probable wolf incident.

Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

May 2, 2016

Upcoming WAG meeting and a collared Tucannon pack wolf

I am writing to update you on two items:

Please save the date for a Wolf Advisory Group (WAG) meeting on July 6-7, 2016 in the Spokane area. More details on the meeting and an agenda will be coming in a later email. All WAG events are open to the public.

On May 1, 2016, Department staff captured the breeding female wolf from the Tucannon pack. The wolf was fitted with a GPS radio-collar.

Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

April 21, 2016

Conference call, WAG meeting and poaching incident

I am writing to update you on three items:

- I have scheduled a conference call (based on your availability from the Doodle poll) for next Wednesday, April 27, from noon to 1:30 p.m. The conference call is for information sharing and to answer questions related to the flipchart notes and narrative from the Department's brainstorming session on a path to lethal control of wolves. The call-in number is 360-407-3780. I will send the Pin Code for WAG members and Department staff in a separate email. All WAG events are open to the public the public may listen to the call from a muted line using the same call-in number, with Pin Code 508957#.
- Our next WAG meeting is scheduled for May 10-11 at the Days Inn (901 Berry Rd, Ellensburg, WA 98926) in Ellensburg. The meeting times will be the same

as our March meeting, from 11:45AM to 6:30PM on May 10 and 7:30AM to 2:30PM on May 11. Lunch will be provided both days to WAG members and Department staff, and we have reservations for a non-working dinner on Tuesday evening. An agenda will be circulated in a later email. All WAG events are open to the public.

• WDFW Enforcement Police are investigating a suspected wolf poaching incident in Pend Oreille County, involving a member of Idaho's Diamond wolf pack.

As always, please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead

April 19, 2016

Confirmed wolf depredation in Asotin County

I am writing to inform you of a confirmed wolf depredation on a 4-day-old calf in Asotin County. The Department's investigation determined that the calf was killed by one or more wolves yesterday (April 18) in a 90-acre fenced calving area on the livestock producer's property about 10 miles southwest of Asotin, within the eastern portion of the Tucannon pack territory.

Department staff are working with the producer to expand conflict prevention measures and are notifying other livestock producers in the area. The producer whose calf was attacked has a range rider checking cattle daily and maintains sanitation by burying carcasses.

I will keep you posted on any further incidents.

Donny Martorello, WDFW Wolf Policy Lead