

House natural resources committee:

My name is Sharon Beck. I am a past president of the old Oregon Cattlemen's Association. I represented the livestock industry on the original advisory committee to ODFW in developing the states plan to "Conserve and manage wolves". I am still on the OCA wolf committee and advisory to Oregon State University's wolf research.

Following a year of meetings and intense discussions the ODFW staff wrote the plan and all but 2 of the advisory committee voted to send it to the Fish and Wildlife Commission for adoption. I voted no, wrote a 21 page minority report which included appendices addressing category A issues, a compensation model and a concept for wolf management zoning. I also submitted a 7 page Legal Status Minority opinion that promotes the argument that the Plan is unnecessary and violates the Oregon Endangered Species Act. Neither the County Commissioner who wrote a minority report as well, nor I were successful in even convincing the agency to delay adoption of the plan until after the legislature approved the changes in law required to fully implement the plan. Consequently full and fair compensation for wolf predation on livestock has never happened and management to reduce conflict has been woefully inadequate.

Fast forward to today and we see wolf populations have increased exponentially just as we predicted, as has livestock predation, crashing deer and elk populations, and ODFW has huge shortfall in their budget of some 30 million. With lack of animals to hunt fewer tags are sold and the plans prediction that ungulate populations would not suffer and that wolf watching tourists would more than make up for any economic loss attributable to wolves failed to materialize.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife touted to the public that they had developed a wolf plan that is flexible, fair and balanced, that gives people who will be harmed by wolves', tools to deal with them in a way that also satisfies the desires of those who want Oregon repopulated with wolves. Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted the plan over the objections of those who will be most affected because it does **not** give choices...it takes them away, putting ranchers at

great risk of social, economic and physical loss. It is not fair, it is not balanced and any flexibility is biased toward preservation of wolves.

Private lands are home to 80% of the state's wildlife. While we have not always been willing hosts because they have taken income from us directly and through indirect costs, we have worked with wildlife managers to solve conflicts and when they weren't solved we have been forced to tolerate them. It is now very clear that livestock and wolves cannot coexist and that huntable wildlife cannot thrive without extreme control of wolf numbers.

So what can you do?

Idaho has been immediately removing wolves that attack livestock and thereby reducing predation by 40%. The added bonus is that surviving wolves learn to fear anything connected to humans and tend to stay away.

- A line item in the ODFW budget for that purpose only, taking the money from all the non-lethal methods that we now know are ineffective in controlling predation.
- Legislatively remove wolves from the Oregon endangered species list, saving ODFW all the costs of going through the delisting process and then being sued because of some technicality.
- Require ODFW to amend the plan to address wolf "management" now that they have been "conserved" and require full and fair compensation for wolf predations on livestock, including indirect loss, to come out of their budget.
- Require ODFW to restore our rights to protect our persons and property on our grazing lands to control wolves in the most effective, efficient way.

SUPPORTING ARTICLES

Wolf control board money helped decrease depredations

By SEAN ELLIS

Capital Press

BOISE — Wolf depredations in Idaho declined significantly last year and the money provided by a new wolf depredation control board was a major factor, according to several sources.

Idaho Wildlife Services, a USDA agency that solves conflicts between animals and humans, received \$225,000 from the board during the last five months of 2014 for lethal wolf control efforts.

The board, which was created by the Idaho Legislature last year to fund lethal wolf control efforts, has contracted with IWS for \$236,000 more for the first six months of 2015.

IWS had lost almost \$700,000 in funding, most of it federal, since 2009 and that impacted the agency's ability to control problem wolves, said IWS State Director Todd Grimm.

The money provided by the control board has allowed IWS to respond more aggressively to wolf attacks on livestock and fly its helicopter more often and that was a major factor in wolf depredations decreasing significantly in 2014, Grimm said.

"We were able to respond aggressively after the first depredation and ... that stopped the secondary and tertiary depredations from occurring in many cases," he said. "We were able to get the offending animals quicker...."

According to Grimm, cattle losses in Idaho from wolf attacks declined 40 percent and sheep losses declined by 67 percent in 2014.

The money provided by the board enabled the agency to kill 22 wolves last year and 20 so far this year.

Brad Compton, wildlife assistant bureau chief for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, said the money from the board as well as hunting and trapping seasons were both important factors in decreasing wolf depredations.

IWS "having that money to quickly respond to livestock depredations ... definitely contributed to depredations being down," he said.

The legislature allocated another \$400,000 to the board this year. The board can use the money as it sees fit for lethal control of problem wolves but has so far only chosen to provide funding to IWS.

However, the five-member wolf board told the Capital Press in a statement that it will keep its options open.

"While 2014 was a bit of an outlier in terms of less wolf activity statewide, long-term trends indicate that wolf activity can prick up significantly from one year to the next," the statement said. "We have and will continue to consider every viable option within the scope of our authority to make efficient and effective use of depredation control dollars in Idaho for fiscal year 2016."

Idaho Wool Growers Association Executive Director Stan Boyd said the 2014 depredation total was down to the 2008 level and he believes that was a direct result of the money provided by the board to IWS.

He said the board's creation sent a message that Idaho is not going to allow problem wolves to go unchecked.

"People who love wolves will still be able to hear them howl," he said. "But where they're doing damage to either wildlife populations or livestock, we're going to manage that."



Three researchers with OSU list economic impacts from wolves on Oregon's cattle producers.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF WOLVES IN NORTHEAST OREGON

Below is a “snap shot”, simplistic view of the economic impact of wolves on rural communities based upon a six year, ongoing study conducted by Dr. Doug Johnson, OSU, Dr. Larry Larson, OSU, and John Williams, OSU – Beef Extension specialist – Wallowa County. Specific details are available through these individuals.

Economic Impact on a 100 cow/calf pair operation in forested grazing areas:

1. 8-12 fewer calves come off of grazing due to wolf predation... \$13,000
2. Calves average 30-50 lbs. less at weaning due to harassment by wolves... \$7,000
3. All cows come off of the range thinner... \$5,000

It takes 5-10 lbs. of extra energy and protein per cow per day to restore her to adequate shape to calf properly, provide sufficient milk for the baby calf for the winter and breed back.

4. Fewer cows breed back while under harassment on the range... \$5,600

These un-bred cows must be sold in the fall and replaced with either young heifers from the herd, which reduces calves available to sell, or replacement cows purchased to maintain an effective herd size.

5. Management costs increase due to supervision and preventative measures while cattle are on large, forested range plot and in winter calving areas. (Range riders, vet treatment of injured calves, various preventative measures, etc.)... \$9,000

Total lost income on 100 cow/calf pairs based on January 2015 cattle prices: \$39,600

Related important data based on the 2013 State of Oregon Agriculture census:

Wallowa County Cows 38,500 Calves 21,500

Union County Cows 33,500 Calves 19,100

The above data is not meant to reflect \$39,600 for every 100 cows in each county, as the wolf density presently varies by area; however the potential exists if wolf numbers ever approach the density of the forested populations in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. Presently almost all of the forested range area in Wallowa and Union counties have identified packs. Harassment and depredation are greatest in the portions of Wallowa County nearest the Idaho border. Umatilla and Baker counties both have packs and two more known packs exist, one in the Desolation area and one in SW Oregon.

Agriculture economists fundamentally agree that it takes a herd of between 350 and 400 head to provide a middle income living for a family of four. The loss of about \$140,000 for such a family trickles down into all of the fabric

of these rural communities. Fewer dollars are available for local businesses and services, such as schools, health care and law enforcement. These losses in natural resource based counties further increase the economic disparities that exist between the rural and urban Oregon economies. Ranchers in northeast Oregon have proven over the last 5 years that they understand that the presence of wolves is a reality and have worked tirelessly within the law to survive, but further expansion of wolves beyond the minimum number listed in the Oregon wolf plan is not acceptable. While the State has made an honest attempt to help reduce the economic impact, the dollars available are so limited and the reimbursement areas so narrow (1 in 7 of the animals killed by wolves are ever found — 2003 study) that these, although well meaning, are not close to meeting the real economic impact of high wolf populations. Cattle populations are much larger in Malheur and Harney counties with similar range grazing operations on more open country. Presently we do not have sufficient data to predict if the impact of wolves in areas such as these will be greater or less than the more forested area. Ranchers in Wallowa, Union, Umatilla, and Baker counties are suffering from wolf harassment and predation in varying degrees and this problem will get worse as wolf numbers increase and expansion moves to far more rural counties.

Note: This analysis was originally published in “Oregon Beef Producer” magazine, published by the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association.

Bears, wolves go where people aren’t influential

Federal and state agencies are preparing to re-introduce grizzly bears and additional wolves into Washington’s rural counties. The lawless anarchist environmental groups like Earth First and Earth Liberation Front attempted to create the habitat for these animals in the 1980s by sabotaging logging companies equipment, tree spiking, cutting down electric utility towers, bombings and other illegal acts.

They have shifted tactics and graduated from colleges with master’s and Ph.D. degrees in environmental studies and law degrees. They are now state of Washington and federal government agency employees and some are elected to the state legislature.

They are not proposing reintroduction of grizzlies and wolves into King or Snohomish counties, which were once these animals’ native habitat. These counties have large populations and average household incomes exceeding \$70,000, which adds up to political impact.

The proposed introduction of wolves and grizzlies is into the Eastern Washington counties with low populations and low incomes. Many of the rural ranchers there have a daily struggle to survive by grazing cattle, sheep and raising hay. The record setting multimillion- acre Central Washington fire of 2014 has destroyed much of the rural land’s growing ability and even small towns.

Combined with the closure of numerous rural hospitals and nursing homes, these rural ranches and small towns are on the edge of survival.

The addition of grizzlies and wolves that prey not only on deer and elk, but also on the ranch raised sheep and cows, may well be the end of rural living in these counties.

Residents had better develop a strategy on how to survive and protect their way of life. It appears none will be forthcoming from state and federal agencies or their elected representatives.

William Riley Soap Lake, Wash.

By Mack Birkmaier

Wolf Attack...

Wolves attacked and stampeded 250 head of very pregnant cows (calving start date: March 1) on the Birkmaier ranch land on Crow Creek pass February 12. The cows were wintering on the open bunchgrass range, receiving one-half feed of alfalfa hay. This 1,700-acre piece of land is about 10 miles northeast of Joseph, Oregon. These cows were to be moved to the Birkmaier home ranch at the mouth of Crow Creek the last of February (the ranch is about 20 miles north). With no warning from agency people, who normally warn producers of wolves in the area, the wolves attacked in the night. The herd split into three groups. One group of about 70 cows went east, running in total panic, obliterating several barbwire fences. These cows ran about two miles to the Zumwalt road, then south and west about five miles down the OK Gulch Road to the Wallowa Valley, then north to the Birkmaier ranch land -- about three miles, and then reversed and ran about three miles south where they were stopped. These cattle were wet from the condensation of cold air on their overheated bodies. Their tongues were out, gasping for air. Another bunch went north through several fences to the Krebs ranch -- about four miles, then back, and were going in a large circle, still running when they were stopped. A third bunch stayed in the pasture, but was in a high state of panic. The cattle could not be fed for two days. They ran away from hay and the pickup trying to feed them. None were killed; no broken legs or stifled joints; some cuts from barbed wire, not serious. We thought we were lucky. The rest of the story we feared would be told at calving time and maybe before. By the way the attacking wolves, from the Umatilla Pack, were at Doug Bar on the Snake River the next day (32 air miles away and over a mile climbing and descending).

Fladry...

Now about fladry and why it wasn't used. Fladry was not an option under these conditions on a large area with cattle grazing out in the winter time. Fladry is an electric wire with strips of colored plastic attached. Wolf cheerleaders, both local and everywhere, claim this cure all is the answer to end all wolf depredations. Our experience: It may have a place on small acreages. It is hard to keep electrified as wet snow will take it to the ground, wind blows tumbleweeds and mustard plants into it, and if you use existing fences to put it on, wind blows it into the wires of that fence and shorts it out. To use it on larger acreages requires a separate fence and many electric fence controllers, and it's just impractical.

In the early days of the wolf debate, fladry was offered as a tool by the agencies and wolf advocates to suck stock producers into thinking they could use this to protect their animals. If it were practical it probably wouldn't be stacked up in the courthouse unused. Talking to other ranchers in other states confirms our belief that most ranchers know it doesn't work and so does the wolf.

Worst Fears...

As I write this on the 11th day of March, 50 cows have calved. Our worst fears are coming true: one aborted a few days after the attack; three backwards, hind feet first; one upside down and backwards (the hind leg of this calf penetrated both the vaginal and rectal walls); one more upside down and backwards; one tail first (breech); two with legs turned back; and one with head turned back. Several vaginal prolapsed probably caused by improperly positioned calves. Is this indirect loss or what? My son Tom and his wife Kelly have had to deal with this horrible task night and day, 31 miles from vet clinics and assistance.

Mad and bitter...

What kind of people support turning the terrorist of the animal kingdom loose on these defenseless animals and inflicting this kind of pain and loss? When I think of my family out in the barn trying their best to save these poor animals - it takes hours with good luck to straighten and get those calves out – I get damn mad. Who do I blame? After devoting about 10 years of my life to fighting this invasion of wolves from neighboring states through the political system, attending numerous ODFW hearings and workshops all over the state, participating in the largest “no wolf” hearing in the state of Oregon at Enterprise, and losing it all when we were slam-dunked by the ODFW commission in Troutdale (who, by the way, didn't have guts enough to attend the Enterprise hearing)... yeah, I'm bitter. We lost eight calves this summer; we were compensated for one. If we aren't compensated for indirect loss from wolves, our ranch and all others are in serious jeopardy.

Note: Mack Birkmaier, a past president of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, is a lifetime rancher on Crow Creek and Joseph Creek.
