

Washington draft wolf management plan - meeting Thursday night in Aberdeen

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : October 29, 2009 at 8:30 am

A three-month public comment period on a draft state wolf conservation and management plan has begun, and will include a dozen public meetings held by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

The meetings will take place from Oct. 20 through Nov. 10 at locations around the state. An earlier schedule of meetings, posted on WDFW's website, has been revised to allow more time for public review of the draft plan.

The draft plan is the preferred alternative among four presented in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), as required by the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The DEIS and draft wolf plan are available on the WDFW website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildlife/management/gray_wolf/. Desk copies of the DEIS will be available at WDFW regional offices and public libraries by Oct. 9. Those unable to view or download the DEIS on the website can request paper or compact disc copies by calling (360) 902-2515.

Comments can be submitted through Jan. 8 electronically at http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildlife/management/gray_wolf/mgmt_plan.html, by FAX to (360) 902-2946, or by U.S. Mail to: WDFW SEPA Desk, 600 Capitol Way N. Olympia, WA 98501-1091.

The draft plan has been under development by WDFW staff since early 2007, with the help of a 17-member citizen advisory group. The draft plan has been reviewed by wolf experts and other scientists and will also undergo a blind academic peer review.

"As wolves naturally re-establish in our state we need to conserve them and consider management strategies that will result in them being a part of Washington's wildlife ecosystem," said WDFW Director Phil Anderson.

"Citizens on the Wolf Working Group have provided a wide range of perspectives in developing this plan, including how potential wolf-livestock conflicts should be resolved and how many wolves should be present in Washington before the species is removed from state endangered-species protection," Anderson said. "Now we want to hear from the public at large before we present a plan to the Fish and Wildlife Commission for consideration."

A final EIS will be prepared following the public comment period, and will be presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission for consideration. The commission is expected to consider next year whether to adopt the state wolf plan.

The gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) is listed as endangered and protected under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the western two-thirds of Washington and throughout Washington under state law (RCW77.15.120).

There are no federal or state plans to reintroduce wolves into Washington.

Washington's first breeding wolf pack in at least 70 years was confirmed in western Okanogan County in July 2008, and a second was confirmed in Pend Oreille County in July 2009.

"Individual wolves have been moving in and out of Washington in recent years as their populations recover in nearby states," said Harriet Allen, WDFW's manager for threatened and endangered species. "We knew it was just a matter of time before wolves returned to Washington

and the plan will help us be ready to manage them."

The 12 meetings, all conducted from 6:30 to 9 p.m., will include information about wolves in Washington, the DEIS and preferred alternative draft wolf conservation and management plan, and an opportunity for public comments and questions. Participants will be encouraged to submit input through Jan. 8. The meetings will be held in the following locations:

Clarkston, Tuesday, Oct. 20, Walla Walla Community College lecture hall, 1470 Bridge St.

Richland, Wednesday, Oct. 21, Pacific NW National Laboratory auditorium, 904 Battelle Blvd.

Yakima, Thursday, Oct. 22, Red Lion Hotel Yakima Center, 607 E. Yakima Ave.

Colville, Monday, Oct. 26, N.E.WA Fairgrounds Ag-Trade Center, 317 West Astor Ave.

Spokane, Tuesday, Oct. 27, Spokane Valley Center Place, 2426 N. Discovery Place.

Vancouver, Wednesday, Oct. 28, Water Resources Education Center, 4600 SE Columbia Way.

Aberdeen, Thursday, Oct. 29, Rotary Log Pavilion, east of Aberdeen, off Highway 12.

Seattle, Monday, Nov. 2, REI store, 222 Yale Ave. N.

Mount Vernon, Wednesday, Nov. 4, Cottontree Inn Convention Center, 2300 Market St.

Sequim, Thursday, Nov. 5, Guy Cole Convention Center at Carrie Blake Park, 212 Blake Ave.

Omak, Monday, Nov. 9, Okanogan County Fairgrounds Agriplex, Highway 97 South.

Wenatchee, Tuesday, Nov. 10, Chelan County PUD Auditorium, 327 N. Wenatchee Ave.