

Study Confirms 27 Wolves, 3 Breeding Pair in Washington

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) year-end survey of the state's five confirmed wolf packs has found three successful breeding pairs totaling at least 27 wolves. The tally, conducted through field work and aerial monitoring, found two of the successful breeding pairs in the Eastern Washington wolf-recovery region and one in the North Cascades recovery region. A successful wolf breeding pair is defined as an adult male and female with at least two pups that survive until the end of the calendar year. There also is evidence of unconfirmed packs in the Blue Mountains of southeastern Washington and at Hozomeen in the North Cascades, as well as transient single wolves, according to Rocky Beach, WDFW's wildlife diversity program manager. "We will continue to follow up on all reports of possible wolf sightings," Beach said. "We will be working again this spring and summer to confirm new packs and pups and to capture and fit additional wolves with radio collars for monitoring." The radio collars use Global Positioning System (GPS) and Very High Frequency (VHF) technology. Under the recently adopted Washington wolf conservation and management plan, wolves will be removed from the state's endangered species list once 15 successful breeding pairs are documented for three consecutive years among three wolf-recovery regions (four pairs in Eastern Washington, four pairs in North Cascades, four pairs in South Cascades/Northwest Coast, and three pairs in any recovery region). The gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) currently is protected by the state as an endangered species throughout Washington and is federally listed as endangered in the western two-thirds of the state.

Last month's survey work yielded these details about Washington's five confirmed wolf packs: **Diamond Pack**, in Pend Oreille County and Idaho, numbers 10 wolves, including a breeding pair with at least two pups. A 2-year-old, radio-collared, female wolf was legally trapped and killed in Idaho in December before the count was made. Another radio-collared female from the pack was last located in November in Idaho and is currently missing; a third radio-collared female remains with the pack. **Smackout Pack**, in Stevens and Pend Oreille counties, numbers five wolves, including a successful breeding pair with three pups. None have radio collars. **Salmo Pack**, in Pend Oreille County and British Columbia, includes three wolves. One wolf with a VHF radio collar is still being monitored. **Teanaway Pack**, in Kittitas County, numbers seven wolves, including a successful breeding pair with at least two pups. The breeding female is equipped with a GPS radio collar and still is being monitored. **Lookout Pack**, in Okanogan County includes two wolves with no pups; neither has a functioning radio collar. More information on the packs and summaries of the 2011 count is available at: http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray_wolf/. WDFW also will provide state totals in a 2011 annual report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service later this month. Beach noted that any news of additional wolves confirmed through field work later this year will also be posted on the WDFW wolf webpage. Reports of possible wolf sightings can be made to WDFW's wildlife reporting line by calling 1 (877) 933-9847.