

# COEXISTING WITH WOLVES IN WASHINGTON

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Conservation Northwest believes Washington can be the state where wolf recovery, conservation, and management work in the long run; for people, wolves and all the Northwest's wildlife. **We're committed to the goal of long-term recovery and public acceptance of wolves alongside thriving local communities.** But to achieve these goals it will take hard work, respect and collaboration from stakeholders on all sides.

Today, we're on-the-ground from Colville and Twisp to the Teanaway and Olympia, supporting gray wolf recovery and coexistence in Washington state.

We directly fund, train and implement non-lethal, wolf-livestock conflict avoidance methods. We're working with ranchers and hunters to help reduce conflict and increase social tolerance for wolves. With conservation partners, we're lobbying state and community leaders for wolf recovery and sustainable wolf management policies. And we're protecting critical habitat and working with law enforcement to fight poaching and natural resource abuse.

**GRAY WOLVES ARE NATIVE TO OUR REGION AND ARE RETURNING HERE NATURALLY.  
WE'RE HERE TO HELP THEM SUCCEED!**

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## WASHINGTON'S WOLVES TODAY



Craig Monette

As of the end of 2018, Washington was home to a minimum of 126 wolves, 27 wolf packs and 15 successful breeding pairs. It's important to keep in mind that these annual wolf reports from the state represent a minimum number. Individual wolves are incredibly hard to document as they expand to new areas, and our state's total wolf population is certainly higher than this baseline count. Given recent research by the University of Washington, we can be confident that in actuality more than 150 wolves roam Washington today.

Wolf recovery is progressing well in our state, particularly in northeast Washington. But as welcome as this good news is, Conservation Northwest remains concerned about the absence of confirmed wolf packs in the Southern Cascades and Northwest Coast Recovery Zone. There have been reports of wolves and documented tracks in the Cascade Mountains south of I-90 for several years, but packs have yet to be confirmed in this area of high-quality habitat.

**The state's annual wolf report summary also indicates that only four wolves, less than three percent of the state's total population, were killed by wildlife managers last year after chronic conflicts with livestock.** At 11 years into Washington's wolf recovery, this represents a much lower level of mortality from state lethal removal than what was seen in other Western states at similar points in wolf recovery.

In comparison, when the Northern Rocky Mountain States of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming were 11 years into wolf recovery, lethal control for livestock depredations amounted to 142 wolves or 12 percent of their total minimum wolf count.

**While the loss of wolves to persistent conflicts with livestock is always unfortunate and emotional, Washingtonians should be proud that our state's investments in collaboration and non-lethal conflict prevention are paying off, with wolf recovery continuing and very few wolves being killed as a result of conflicts.**

## PUBLIC RESOURCES SHARED BY ALL

Outside national parks, designated wilderness areas and certain wildlife refuges, America's public lands are managed under a multiple-use mandate—including for livestock grazing, sustainable natural resource use and outdoor recreation as well as wildlife habitat. Wolves and other wildlife also routinely roam across private lands, in some cases relying on it for habitat, particularly winter range.

We believe conservationists, animal advocates, hunters, recreationists, ranchers, Native American nations and other wildlife stakeholders are best served by seeking common ground and working together towards win-win solutions. To collaborate in this manner requires recognizing and accepting the diverse values our wildlife and wildlands provide for all parties.

# REDUCING CONFLICT BY WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

A collaborative effort between Conservation Northwest and local ranchers, the **Range Rider Pilot Project** seeks to demonstrate the effectiveness of non-lethal measures in deterring or reducing conflicts where wolves and livestock overlap in Washington state. We also coordinate with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), independent wolf experts, scientists and other partners to support range riding and other conflict avoidance measures.

This work is protecting wolves from incidents that can quickly become lethal for both predator and prey. The project season typically begins with trainings in April and a field season from May through October. We also offer workshops, ongoing training opportunities, and technical and field support.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM RECENT WOLF-LIVESTOCK RESEARCH

-  The science does not support general public wolf hunting as a solution for reducing cattle depredations in areas where wolves and livestock overlap.
-  Wolf-livestock conflict can be predictable in that it often recurs in areas where prior conflicts have taken place. Conflicts also predictably happen more frequently in forested areas further from towns and cities, and in areas where there is greater density and overlap of wolves and livestock.
-  The current body of science does not support the conclusion that lethal removal of wolves by wildlife agencies increases future conflict. Read more [online at \*conservationnw.org/science-wolf-livestock\*](https://conservationnw.org/science-wolf-livestock)
-  Targeted lethal removal can effectively stop chronic depredations on livestock, at least for a few years given the propensity for conflict to reoccur in a given area. This underscores the importance of using proactive non-lethal conflict deterrence methods to keep losses of wolves and livestock to a minimum, and validates the use of lethal removal as a tool for resolving persistent conflicts.

## RECOMMENDED TALKING POINTS ON WASHINGTON'S WOLVES

-  Wolves are a keystone predator that plays a valuable and important role in the health of our ecosystems. We strongly support wolf recovery, and value their place in our region and our environment.
-  Wildlife is a public resource and belongs to all the people of the state. Whether one supports or opposes wolf recovery in Washington, the poaching of any wildlife is an unacceptable abuse of our natural resources.
-  We understand the need to address and help resolve conflicts between wolves and the people who live and work in Washington's wolf country. We want to help them successfully coexist with predators back on the landscape. And we accept that at times lethal removal may be required for responsible wolf recovery.
-  It deeply hurts to see wolves killed, and especially to sanction it. But our goal has always been the sustainable recovery of wolves to their ecological role in the state, not to protect each individual wolf or to promote the species in some mythical way.
-  The loss of some wolves to conflict can be heart-wrenching, but it's an expected component of a balancing act between people, livestock and predators sharing the same space. And it won't halt the comeback of these iconic canines in our state.
-  It's the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife's responsibility to safeguard wolf recovery in Washington. We the public deserve clear, transparent and timely communications when it comes to wolf management. Especially before the lethal removal of wolves or other state endangered species.
-  Range riders, fladry, guard dogs and hazing can reduce risk of conflict if undertaken with diligence. Either independently or in partnership with the state or conservation organizations, ranchers must be thoroughly using these tools to avoid wildlife conflicts if they knowingly operate in wolf territory.
-  We also support efforts by state, federal and university researchers to better understand the impact wolves have or do not have on deer, elk, moose and other ungulate populations. Predator recovery and management needs to be successful for all wildlife, not just wolves and other predators. Solid scientific data helps make that possible.