

Predator Defense's Position on Wolves

Gray wolves were once widespread in Oregon. As an important part of the native fauna, Predator Defense believes wolves should once again roam the state.

Reasons for Wolf Recovery

Predator Defense believes there are several reasons-biological, ethical, and legal for fostering wolf recovery in Oregon.

Biological

The first, and perhaps most important, reason is to restore ecosystem processes and function. As a major predator, wolves have shaped prey populations for thousands of years. Wolf predation differs from human hunting mortality, primarily taking the young and old, rather than the largest and healthiest animals. In addition, wolf predation helps to balance prey numbers with available habitat, ensuring that plant communities get periodic rest from heavy browsing or grazing influences of herbivores. Wolves can also affect habitat use-for instance in Yellowstone there is evidence that wolf presence has shifted elk use from valley bottom riparian areas to uplands, benefiting riparian vegetation. Finally the presence of wolves can also affect the population and distribution of other smaller predators like coyotes, foxes and skunks. Changes in the population and distribution of these species can have cascading effects on other species from ground-nesting birds to small mammals.

Second is an ethical consideration. Wolves were once an important ecological component of Oregon. We believe there is an ethical obligation to restore extirpated species, whenever practical. There is no practical reason not to restore the species and Oregon should embark on a restoration program immediately.

Third, there is a legal requirement by the state of Oregon to protect state listed endangered species, which the wolf is one.

We believe there are sufficient prey, space, and habitat in Oregon to support viable wolf populations.

Geographical Locations

Based upon several criteria including human population density, prey availability and core protected habitat areas; there are three primary Oregon wolf recovery areas, and several other secondary areas that could support viable wolf populations. The three main areas are the Blue/Wallowa Mountains /Hells Canyon region of eastern Oregon, Cascades and the Siskiyou/Klamath region of southwest Oregon and northern California.

In addition, we believe that wolves could potentially be reestablished in portions of the Coast Range and isolated mountain ranges of southeastern Oregon like Steens Mountain, Hart Mountain, Trout Creek and Warner Mountains.

Population Visibility

Based upon prey Oregon could easily support several thousand wolves. This would include protection from persecution from livestock interests of the three major Oregon recovery areas-Blue Mountains, Cascades and Siskiyou.

Management Considerations

Predator Defense recommends the following management to enhance recovery for wolves. Management actions should favor wolves, not human commercial enterprises.

1. No lethal controls of wolves. (See above for recommendations). Even after minimum viable population objectives are reached, no lethal control should ever occur on public lands.
2. Livestock operations should adopt animal husbandry practices that minimize predator opportunity. This includes use of guard animals, calving and lambing sheds, avoidance of active predator den and rendezvous sites.
3. Where conflicts exist between livestock producers and wolves, the state should always mandate that wolves be favored. For instance if predation occurs on a grazing allotment, the livestock should be removed, not the wolves.
4. In order to ensure the success of wolf recovery efforts, all lethal predator control in occupied wolf territories should be discontinued.
5. Hunting of prey populations should be managed to "share" prey with wolves. Thus in years of reduced prey availability, hunter take of prey species should be reduced so as not to harm wolf prey base.