

Via Electronic mail

Phil Anderson
Director, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
600 Capitol Way North
Olympia, WA 98501

August 21, 2014

RE: Conflict-Prevention Methods and the Kill Order for the Huckleberry Pack

Dear Director Anderson:

We express the views of many of the organizations that comprise the Washington Wolf Collaborative on issues important to the recovery and conservation of wolves in Washington. Together, we represent hundreds of thousands of Washington citizens. We are writing to request that you rescind the lethal control order on members of the Huckleberry Pack and that the Washington Fish and Wildlife Department (“Department”) continue to ramp up and focus on implementing conflict-deterrence measures that are nonlethal.

Last week, on August 15, 2014, we were made aware that a livestock operator had experienced wolf-caused losses in his band of sheep in south Stevens County, and that the Department was involved in assessing the situation and providing assistance with nonlethal conflict-prevention tools and strategies. This information was made public by the Department in a briefing to the Fish and Wildlife Commission (“Commission”) during the Commission’s August 15, 2014 telephonic meeting.

Since that time, members of the conservation community, including several of the undersigned, have had direct communication with representatives of the Department, including you and Dave Ware. Our communications have been made either to seek information, offer assistance, express concerns or a combination of these. We find that we are receiving inconsistent information from the Department. We also find that the information we are receiving strongly demonstrates that the Department should not yet be resorting to lethal removal of wolves at this time:

- The Department indicates the livestock operator, Mr. Dave Dashiell, is being very cooperative. However the Department has also informed us that Mr. Dashiell’s shepherd quit a month ago and that he has tried to fill in himself. It is not clear whether Mr. Dashiell or any other employees or family members have in fact been present with the sheep at all times or for how much of the time since the shepherd left. If the sheep have been left only with guard dogs for much of this time, this likely contributed to a delayed realization that any sheep deaths had occurred; if there had been constant human presence with the sheep, many of the initial and ensuing depredations may have been preventable. This factor must be considered by the Department prior to ordering lethal control of wolves.

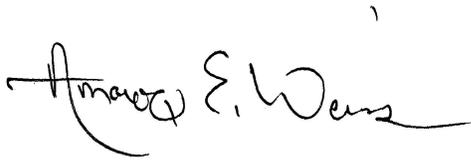
- The Department informed several of us last week, as well as the Commission, that the sheep band was being moved away from the wolves. We were informed this process would take about a week. One week has passed but we learned today the sheep haven't been moved due to difficulties in locating and preparing an alternate grazing location for them. Regardless of the difficulty, moving the sheep is a key nonlethal strategy. If it has not been implemented, wolves should not pay with their lives. If the sheep have had to stay put for logistical reasons, it is all the more important that there is sufficient staff, nonlethal tools and vigilance. However, that seems not to have been the case.
- Department staff informed some of us last Friday that there have been Department personnel with the sheep band since the depredations came to light last week. Yesterday, we were informed that on one or two nights staff went home to sleep. Subsequently more depredations took place which may have been prevented had there been sufficient human presence.
- Last Friday, several of us were informed that a range rider had been immediately dispatched to the location. Today we learned that the range rider may have arrived at the site only yesterday. If this is so, the additional depredations that occurred over the weekend may have been prevented had the rider been present.
- We've been advised that staff on-site were equipped with rubber bullets and paintballs to be used as a nonlethal but injurious form of harassment to haze wolves away, but that these measures have not been used because no one has yet seen a wolf. Clearly this argues for using these nonlethal methods if a wolf is in fact seen, rather than using deadly bullets.
- We are aware that the Department has been offered by Defenders of Wildlife a loan of foxlights, a type of light that constantly flashes at night and in dim light, that has been shown effective elsewhere in preventing wolf-livestock interactions at night when most depredations occur. The Department has not yet accepted this offer despite the fact it should be accepting all offers of conflict-deterrence measures that are feasible to implement, as these lights are. Defenders has shipped these devices to Department personnel to use with this situation and others to prevent further livestock and wolf losses.

The bottom line is that the Department is providing conflicting information about what measures are being taken; offers of feasible nonlethal methods that could be helpful are not being accepted; there have been lapses in sufficient staffing and vigilance; and an order for lethal control has been issued even though there hasn't been a wolf seen yet to try some nonlethal, injurious harassment tools already available on-site.

We therefore request that the Department immediately rescind the kill order it has issued allowing its staff or the livestock operator to kill any wolves seen in the vicinity of the sheep band, and address the other concerns we have raised by ensuring sufficient staffing, vigilance and the use of all feasible nonlethal conflict prevention strategies and tools. This is necessary for

the stewardship of Washington's small, recovering wolf population and to ensure the spirit and intent of the Washington Wolf Conservation and Management Plan be followed.

Sincerely,



Amaroq Weiss
West Coast Wolf Organizer
Center for Biological Diversity



Nick Cady
Legal Director
Cascadia Wildlands



Dan Paul
Washington State Director
The Humane Society of the United States



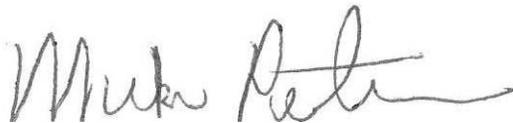
John Mellgren
Staff Attorney
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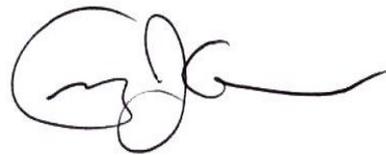
Diane Gallegos
Executive Director
Wolf Haven, International



Shawn Cantrell
Director, Northwest Office
Defenders of Wildlife



Mike Petersen
Executive Director
The Lands Council



Tim J. Coleman
Executive Director
Kettle Range Conservation Group