

Addressing Human-Wildlife Conflicts with a Returning Wolf Population in Washington



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Reality



Photo by Joel Sartore

Perceptions



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History in Washington

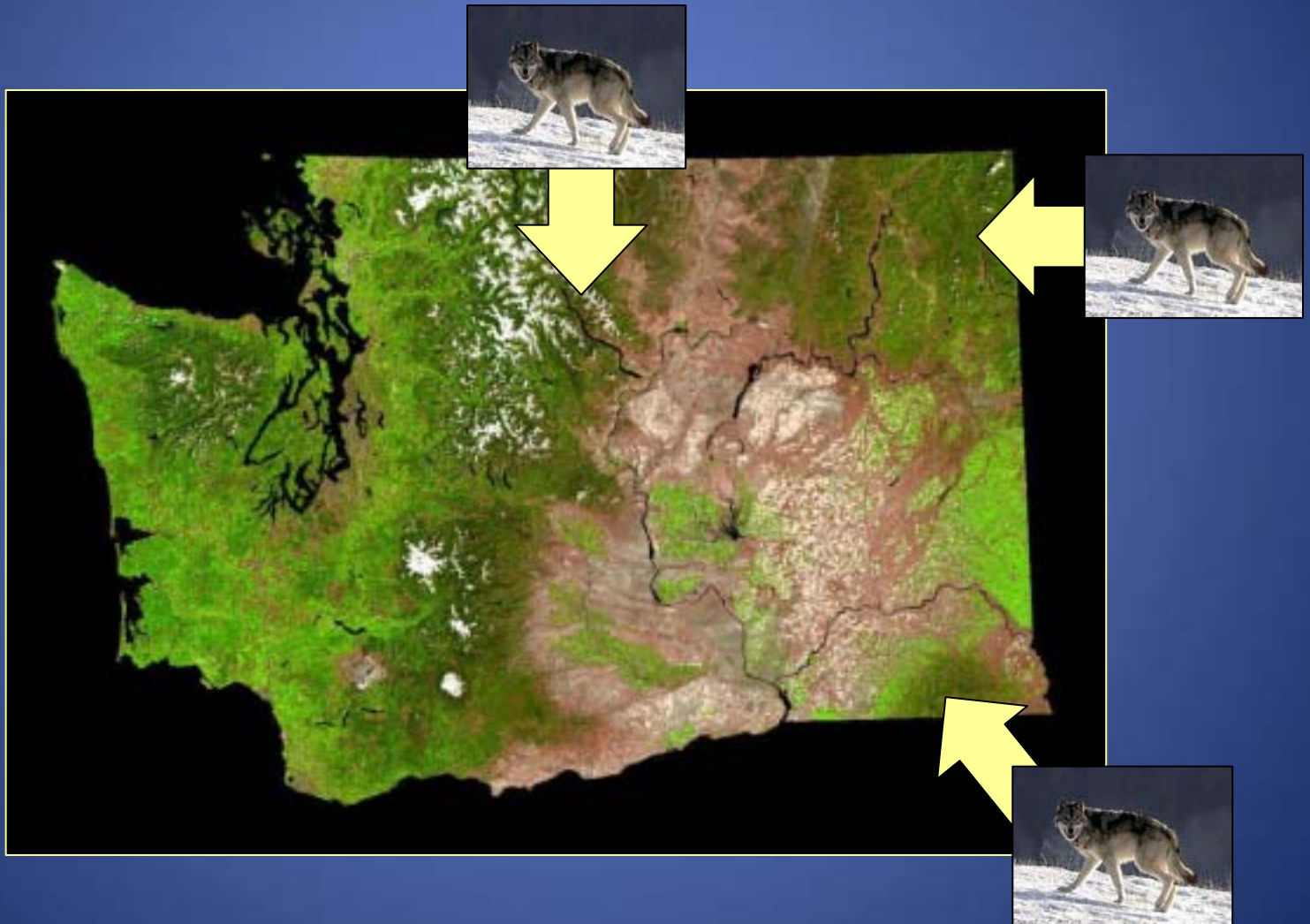
- Native, once common
- ~ 15,000 pelts traded at 4 WA posts 1827-1859
- Exterminated by 1930s (trapping, shooting, poisoning)



Endangered

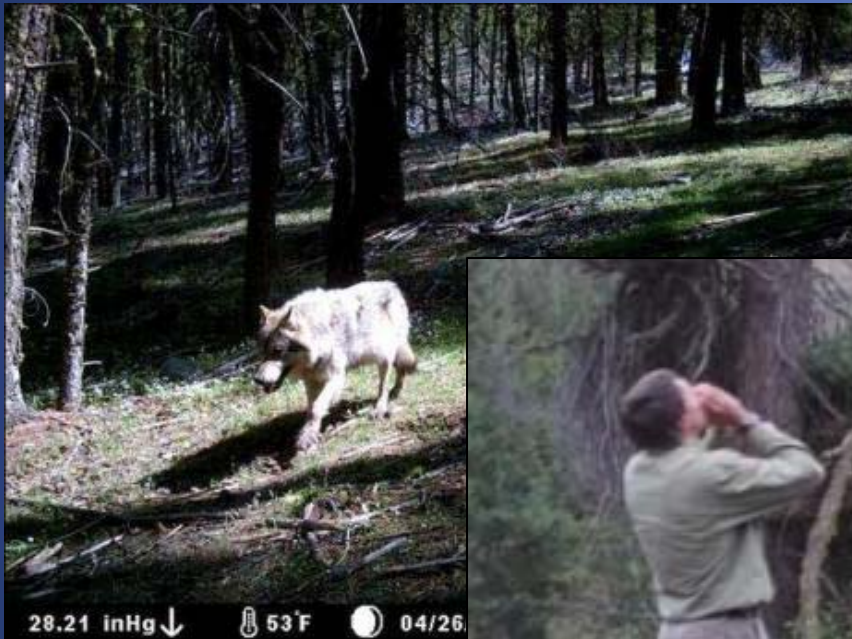


Returning to the State



Pack Discoveries & Confirmation

- Remote cameras, howling surveys
- First breeding pack in 2008

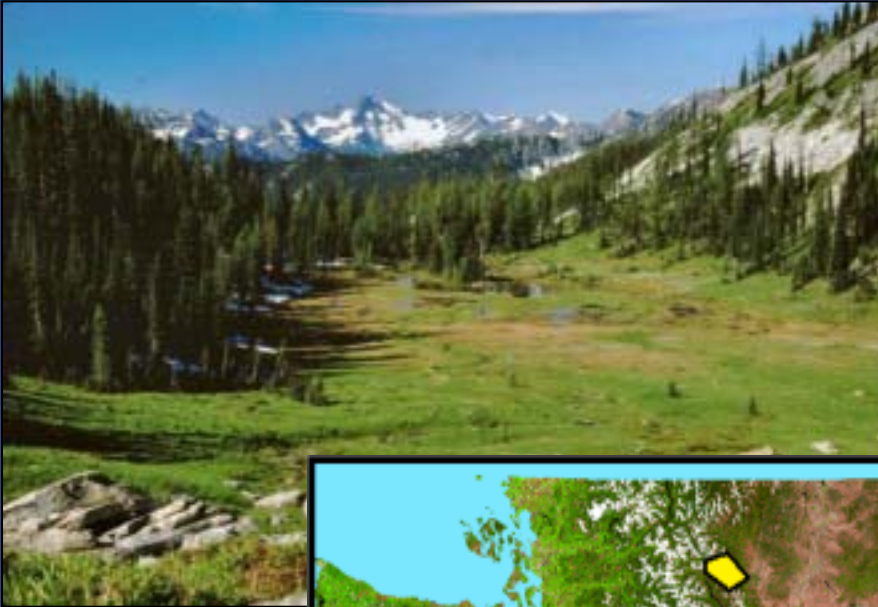


Trapping, radio-collaring



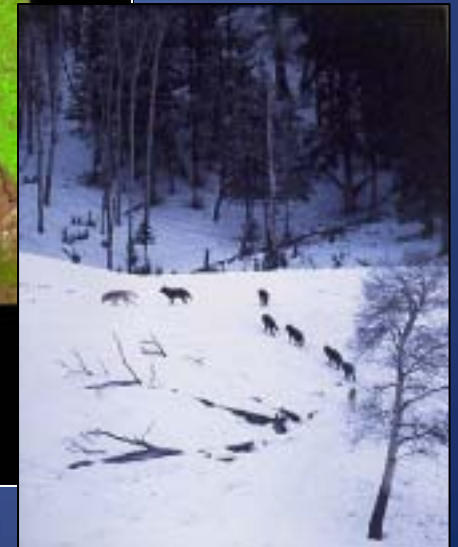
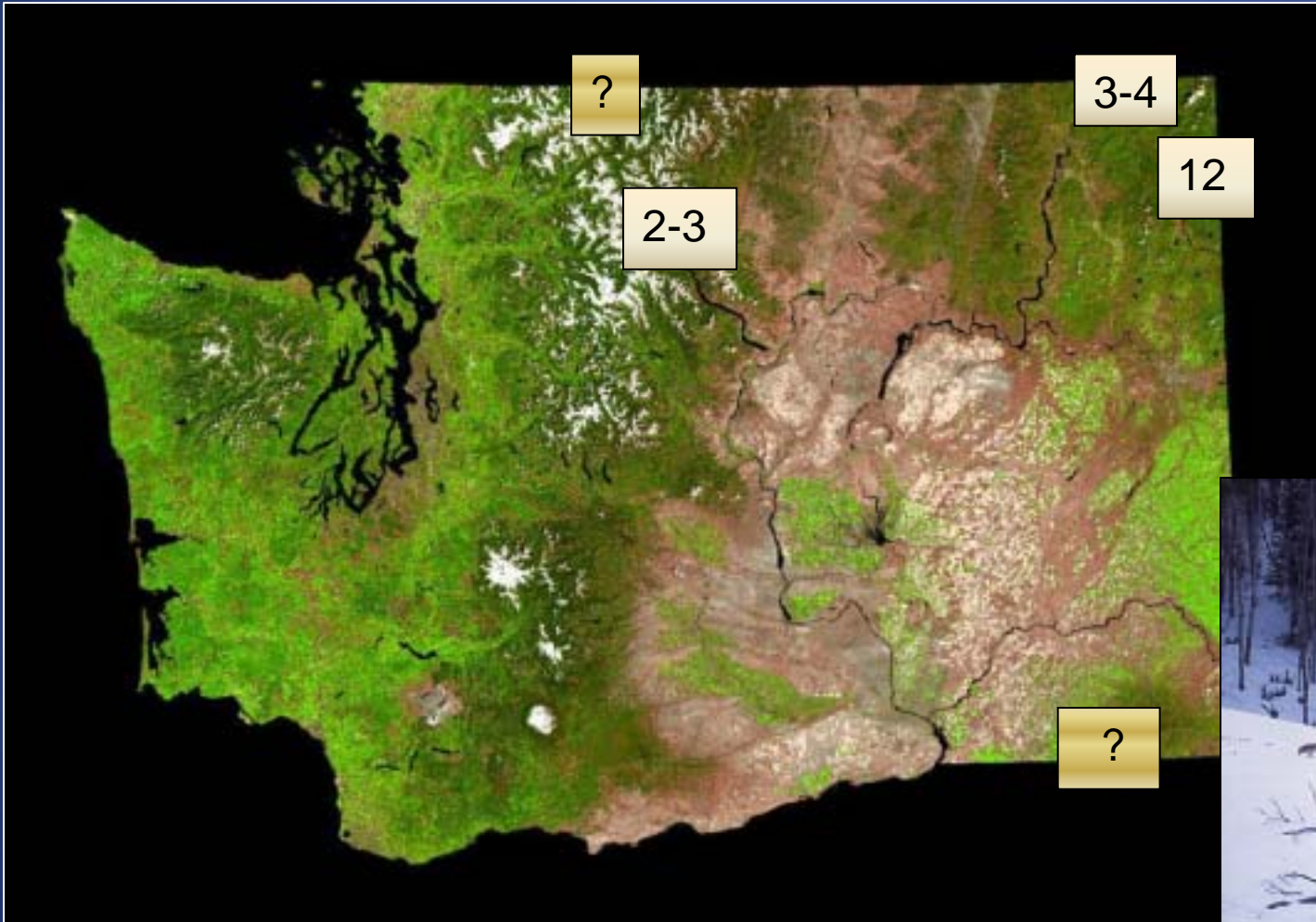
Monitoring

- 350-400 sq miles





2010: 3 Packs, 17-19 animals



State Wolf Plan

They're returning to the state – how are we going to recover and manage them???



Dual Goals - Conservation

- Ensure a self-sustaining population of wolves



Dual Goals - Management

- Address conflicts with livestock
- Maintain healthy elk and deer populations



To Date

- Started in 2007
- Public scoping meetings
- Have been working with 17-member citizen group



Review

- Peer review
- Department review
- Public review
- 12 public meetings
- Blind peer review



Response

- Nearly 65,000 people from all over the world responded via email, letters, website, public meetings



What we heard....

- Diverse WA public, ~ 7M people
- Majority urban, west side; rural east side



- *Support wolf recovery*
- *Don't support recovery*
- *The conservation objectives of 15 are too low, not scientifically credible*
- *The conservation objectives are too high, want lower numbers to delist sooner*



- *Wolves are a threat to human safety*
- *Hikers feel safe hiking and backpacking in wolf habitat*
- *What if wolves kill dogs; is there compensation?*
- *WDFW needs to provide education about living with wolves*
- *Afraid wolves are a threat to children*



- *Wolves will decimate livestock, elk & deer populations*
- *Wolves are killing machines – they eat elk, deer, livestock alive – they kill for fun*
- *Wolves are a predator that has a rightful place in WA*
- *Wolves maintain healthy deer and elk herds and should be welcomed back*
- *Lethal control - when, where , by whom*



- *Politics, not science, will drive the plan*
- *Proud we're basing the plan on science*
- *WDFW is reintroducing wolves*
- *Appreciative that WA is a state that has the habitat to support wolves*



- *The wolf is an important missing component of WA ecosystems, it was here first and belongs in our state*
- *We should not protect predators – the wolf should be treated as an invasive species*
- *Forefathers were right to eradicate wolves*
- *We want our children and grandchildren to have the opportunity to see and hear wolves in WA*



How do we address conflicts, both real and perceived?

Internet

Values

Fear

Emotion

Blog Sites

Logic



Rumors

Issues & Solutions

Reality

- *Accurate information*
- *Real Conflicts*

Perceptions

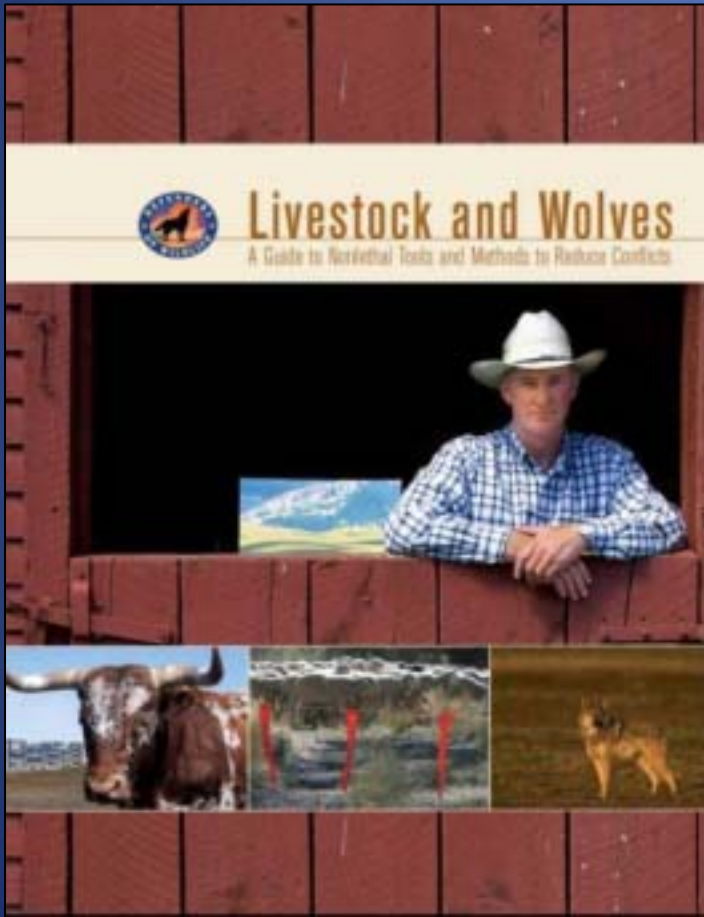
- *Fears*
- *Rhetoric*
- *Inaccurate information*

Issues & Solutions

Reality

- *Accurate information*
- *Real Conflicts*

Livestock Producers

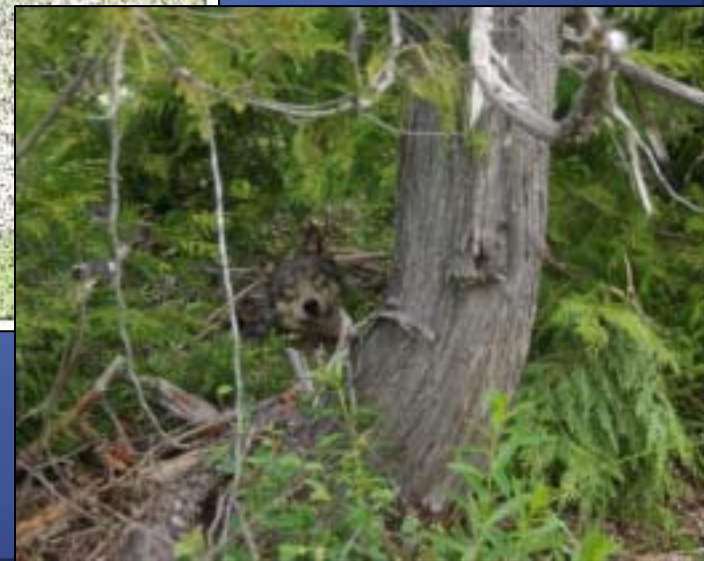
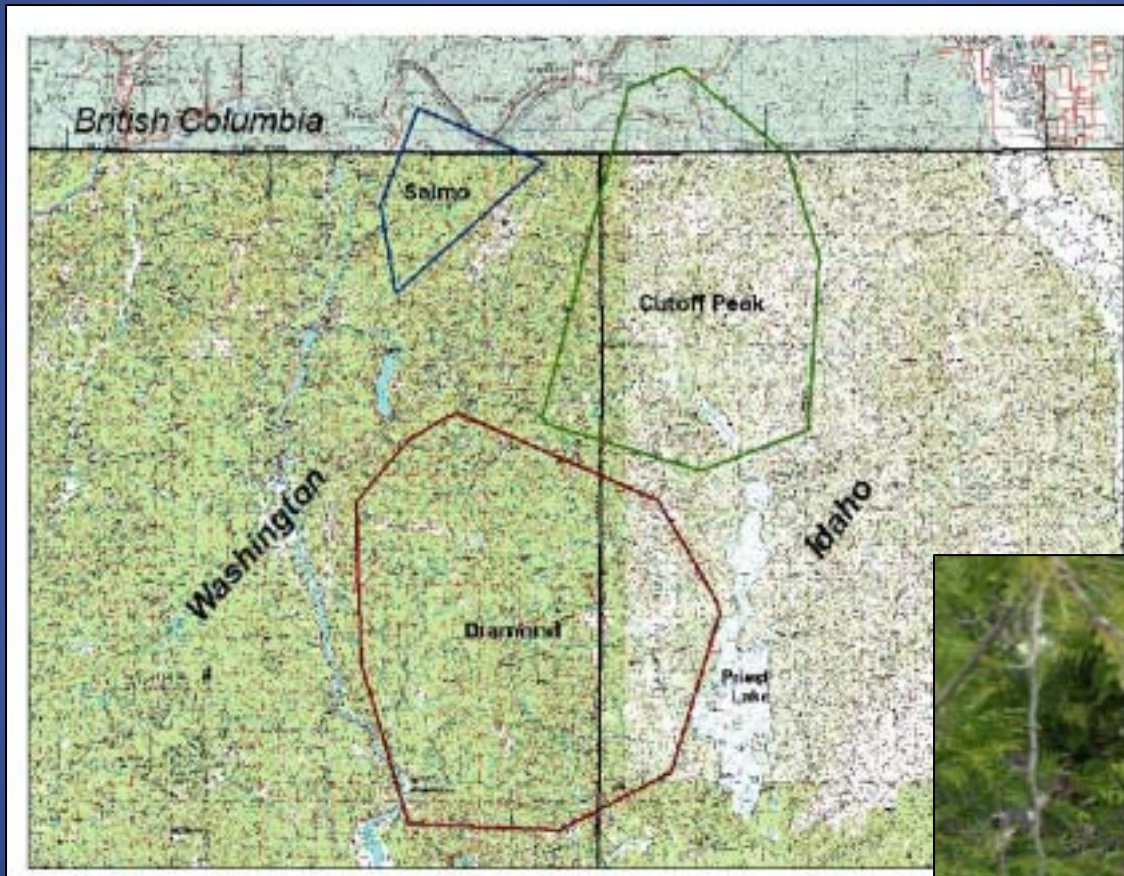


- Rapid response to any problems
- Compensation
- Communication; keeping them informed, building trust
- Local meetings; one on one
- Partnering on proactive non-lethal techniques

Locate and Monitor New Packs



Keep the Public Informed



Concerned Hunters



- Anticipate low impacts to deer, elk, moose populations
- Outreach through hunting groups
- Help from other hunters
- Accurate information

Issues & Solutions

Perceptions

- *Fears*
- *Rhetoric*
- *Inaccurate
information*

Struggling with ways to address fears



- Elk & deer populations will be decimated
- Hunting opportunities will decline or end
- Livestock industry will be severely impacted
- Disease will be spread by tapeworms
- People, animals will be attacked

Websites, emails, blogs.....

*.... a Siberian town of 1,400 people has been **terrorized** for the past three weeks by **a pack of 400 wolves**. Residents are describing the siege as an "**animal apocalypse**". In the Verkhoyansk region, "everyone who can hold a rifle is mobilized to fight wolves".*

*....During the past 15 years, they have reproduced and migrated to populate Montana, Wyoming, Idaho and parts of Utah with several thousand of these **vicious, imported predators**. In those states they have **decimated the elk, deer and moose populations** as well as causing **extensive mortality and other related losses to their livestock industry**.*

Outreach, Outreach, Outreach



- Surveys to determine outreach needs
- Talks, attending meetings
- One on one meetings
- WDFW website
- Partner with zoos & others to message accurate information

In summary.....



- Endangered animal
- Public has a range of values
- Biologically, can be recovered
 - Adequate prey
 - Reduce human-caused mortality
- Means to address livestock conflicts
- Perceptions, fears more difficult to address

Questions???

