

## The Pacific Northwest



COURTESY OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

This trio of wolf pups belongs to Oregon's Wenaha pack, one of several packs established as a result of wolves dispersing from the Northern Rockies.

Gray wolves are beginning to make a comeback in the Pacific Northwest. Wolves were once found throughout much of the region. But by the early 1900s they were gone, eliminated by shooting, poisoning and trapping. Now wolves from Canada, Idaho and Montana are moving into the area. Washington and Oregon have small populations of breeding wolves, largely in their eastern reaches. In 2011, a lone male wolf known as OR-7 dispersed from northeastern Oregon and traveled down through the central part of the state, eventually crossing into northern California, the first wolf documented there in nearly 90 years.

### The Potential

Although currently limited to the northern Cascades, eastern Washington and the northeastern corner of Oregon, wolves could disperse to and recolonize other areas of the Pacific Northwest. Possible sites with good wolf habitat include the coastal Olympic Range in northwestern Washington, the Siskiyou Mountains of southern Oregon and northern California, the northern Sierra Nevada in eastern California, the Modoc Plateau and the Oregon Cascades (Carroll et al. 2001; Carroll 2006; Larson and Ripple 2006).

### The Challenges

There is much to celebrate about the return of wolves to the Pacific Northwest, but we are still far from achieving full wolf recovery. Although most welcome their return, some still demonize wolves. This intolerance and conflicts with hunters and livestock producers pose serious threats to the population's ability to grow and further disperse into suitable habitat.

Fortunately, both Washington and Oregon have sound wolf

management plans that incorporate the use of nonlethal deterrent strategies to protect livestock and wolves. The Oregon state legislature unanimously passed an innovative wolf compensation and coexistence bill in 2001—the first of its kind in the nation. The state also established a \$100,000 grant program for promoting nonlethal management strategies to avoid livestock losses in counties where wolves are present and for compensating livestock owners who implement these measures for any losses. However, in some areas, the practical application of these strategies by livestock producers and wildlife managers is still the exception rather than the norm.

Inadequate connectivity with adjacent populations in the Northern Rockies and Canada is another challenge. With wolves no longer federally protected in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming and aggressive state management significantly reducing wolf populations, there are fewer wolves to disperse westward to expand populations in Washington, Oregon and California. This makes protection of existing wolves in the Northern Rockies and connectivity with Canadian wolf populations even more crucial. No documented packs

exist in central or western Oregon, the region most likely to facilitate dispersal to California. And without a mate OR-7, the lone wolf that crosses back and forth between from Oregon to California, will not be able to establish a pack.

Wolves are protected as endangered under state law in Washington and Oregon, and California granted wolves state protection as a candidate for listing as endangered in 2012 pending a 12-month

review process. As of September 2013, wolves in western Washington and Oregon and in California are also protected under the federal Endangered Species Act. With continued adequate protection and sound management that includes nonlethal deterrent strategies to protect livestock, wolves in eastern Oregon and Washington can continue to recolonize appropriate and suitable habitat and help secure the recovery of wolves in the Pacific Northwest.

## Suitable Wolf Habitat and Potential Dispersal Corridors in the Pacific Northwest



Defenders advocates the restoration of wolf populations in appropriate suitable habitat throughout their historical range in the Pacific Northwest at densities sufficient to ensure the long-term survival of wolves and maintenance of the critical role they play in the ecosystem.

In addition to areas where wolves are now present (solid red line on map), suitable habitat (dashed red lines) still exists for gray wolves, primarily on protected lands in western Washington and Oregon, and in northern California.

Note: The suitable habitat for wolves designated on the map is an approximation based on peer-reviewed studies, expert opinion of our staff and habitat modeling, a complex science that involves superimposing multiple factors such as wolf range and dispersal routes, road density and usage, vegetation types, prey density, presence of livestock, development, slope and elevation.

## References

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: [www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/wolf/annualrpt1/figures/021012\\_FINAL\\_Fig1\\_NRM.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/wolf/annualrpt1/figures/021012_FINAL_Fig1_NRM.pdf)

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife: [wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray\\_wolf/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray_wolf/)

