

TO: OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION

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**EDUCATION NEEDED TO REFLECT REALITIES OF LIVING WITH
WOLVES**

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The last time I testified before you I spoke of the need to see wolf introduction with a new perspective. However, without education, a new perspective is impossible to attain.

I commend the wolf advocates for their very successful campaign to educate the American public about the wolf. It is very difficult to find a non-rural citizen with a negative impression of a wild wolf. Listening to the wolf advocates one gets the impression they are warm and cuddly families, noble and extremely intelligent. A fact, as evidenced by testimony from a woman last session, where wolves have attained skills a veterinarian would be jealous of, in that they only kill sick or diseased animals, even when the owners don't realize they are sick. This is not reality, proven by numerous studies and first person accounts of wolves killing healthy animals and more animals in a single episode than they could ever eat in one feeding. But reality doesn't matter, perception matters, and if you can educate people to perceive something as true then it is reality.

Wolf advocates say that wolf attacks on humans are extremely rare or nonexistent. This is contrary to official reports of attacks in Canada, Alaska, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and is another example of if you say something loud enough, long enough, and to enough people, it becomes the truth regardless of the facts.

Wolf advocates are hailing this latest study of streamside vegetation re-growth due to an ecology of fear as proof positive that wolves are the missing link in the ecosystem. How about the fact that that the reduction of the elk population in Yellowstone by 50% might have accounted for some vegetation growth Why don't the numerous studies of dual use grazing benefits on public land get as much coverage or attention?

Wolf advocates minimize the statistics of livestock depredations. How about the latest wolf kill numbers from Montana, Wyoming and Idaho which show predations more than doubled in 2004 from 2003 and are more than three times what was predicted by the federal government ten years ago when they were selling their idea to the public. At this rate, imagine what depredations will be in 5 years. Even Ed Bangs, the most outspoken pro-wolf biologist accepts studies which point out that actual depredations are 4 to 8 additional losses for every 1 that is proven and despite Sharon Beck's insistence that this be acknowledged in the Plan, to my knowledge it has not been. We ranchers are in the business of raising fat cattle and are paid by the pound. We are not in the business of raising stressed cattle that are lean and in good shape due to running for their lives. Cow buyers don't reward us for skinny cattle. The wolf advocates say we should gather our cattle in a corral at night to prevent attacks. That is the most asinine idea I can imagine. They want us to spend hours every day to gather hundreds of cows and their calves into a corral, off feed, creating a disease prone environment, and all without compensation, when profit margins are such that we can barely make a profit without these added expenses. Imagine these demands being made of any other industry. Compensation for these losses are left up to the discretion of an organization that would like to see our businesses disappear and no provision is made for other compensation except to say that the State of Oregon will try to find the money when the legislature convenes. Just what do you think our chances are of receiving state money when competing with education and health and welfare programs across the state.

The promise of de-listing is offered up as some kind of reward for allowing wolf populations to grow. I'm sure all of us in this room know that environmental lawsuits will prevent de-listing from occurring anytime in the near future. That is the preferred weapon of environmentalists and why not? It has worked extremely well. They can lay siege to our livelihoods with lawsuits and watch us slowly wither away while they watch from Eugene and Portland suffering no consequences whatsoever. If they lose, they don't get to hear the wolves howl during their camping trip. If we lose, we're pumping gas at Cenex and trying to figure out how to support our family. Or, we develop our land into 5 acre ranchettes and let the new owners try and protect their pets from the wolves.

Wolf advocates have long pointed out the cruel and aggressive manner in which wolves were removed from the west. I have no argument there. It was a concerted effort by federal agencies, state agencies, commercial organizations and private citizens funded by millions, if not billions of dollars in today's terms, over a span of almost 100 years. The wolves were shot, trapped, and poisoned relentlessly. Most wolf kills were by poisoning because of the rarity of seeing them during daylight hours or, if seen, the difficulty in getting close enough to get off a shot. That is a brutal scene by anyone's standards, but while many wolf advocates are quick to point out man's brutality in killing wolves, how about the wolves' brutality as they are eating the hindquarters of an elk or a heifer while the animal is still alive, and then go on to kill another while leaving the disabled animal to die a slow death.

The wolf has proven that he is not only a brutal animal but an intelligent and elusive one as well. With all this in mind, to think that, given the wolves history, they cannot recover if ranchers and outfitters are allowed to shoot those that are harassing their animals is ignorant at best and deceitful at worst. If every rancher in Northeast Oregon hired a cowboy to sit on the banks of the Snake River with a rifle the wolves would still enter and establish themselves in Oregon. The wolf is here. The wolf will spread. All we are asking for is the ability to protect our property and our businesses.

We are told of the economic benefits of wolf viewing. Can you imagine how many wolves must be in an area to ensure sightings? Can you imagine the havoc created by that many wolves, habituated to humans by wolf tours and left to their own devices to feed themselves?

When wolf advocates speak of the glorious sound of a wolf howling in the wilderness I would like them to imagine the sound of a pure bred calf bawling as it is drug down and eaten by a wolf, or the sound of the family cow dog or hunting dog as it is chased down and neck snapped by a wolf, or the sound of a man and wife talking late into the night

about how they are going to keep the ranch going now that they've lost their grazing allotment or can no longer absorb the number of livestock losses from wolf kills.

People need to be educated on the realities of wolves in our modern day society. The day-to-day realities not the "I went camping" reality or the "I took a wolf viewing vacation" reality or the "I read a wonderful story in my Sierra Club newsletter" reality. We, the people who will actually live with the wolves, can only create this appreciation of the day-to-day reality by educating people.

This education can begin with the commission's rejection of this plan and a new debate started which more accurately reflects the realities of local people living with wolves in the regions in which it will occur.

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