# [***WASHINGTON'S WOLVES INCREASE, DESPITE RECOVERY OBSTACLES***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:62HG-2801-DYTH-G190-00000-00&context=1516831)

States News Service

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**Body**

The following information was ***released by Defenders of Wildlife***:

Washington hosts at least 132 wolves and 13 breeding pairs, according to the Washington Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan 2020 Annual Report, released today by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The population continues to increase each year and disperse across the state. In 2019, WDFW counted at least 108 wolves and 10 breeding pairs in Washington.

ZoÑ' Hanley, Northwest Representative for ***Defenders of Wildlife***, ***issued*** the following statement:

"The 2020 report illustrates wolves' ability to overcome multiple obstacles imposed by humans, whose resistance to sharing the landscape has created the largest impediment to wolf recovery in Washington. Defenders of Wildlife is encouraged that the number of breeding pairs increased in 2020. While wolves are slowly occupying new areas and the population is increasing, we must focus on long-term coexistence strategies that continue to allow wolves to disperse throughout their historic range. WDFW needs to ensure effective and proactive conflict prevention strategies are implemented well, and that accountability measures are in place to keep both wolves and livestock safe in chronic conflict areas. Defenders of Wildlife looks forward to working with agency staff and livestock producers to accomplish this goal."

Background

- According to the 2020 report, the minimum year-end wolf population increased by 22%, consisting of 24 known packs. A less certain estimate of 46 wolves in 5 packs was reported by the Confederated ***Tribes*** of the Colville Reservation.

- Four new packs formed in 2020, the Navarre, Vulcan, Onion Creek and Skookum packs.

- In 2019, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife confirmed 108 wolves, 10 breeding pairs and 21 packs on non-tribal lands. A less certain count of 37 wolves in 5 packs was reported on the Confederated ***Tribes*** of the Colville Reservation in 2019.

- Sixteen wolf mortalities in 2020 were the result of legal tribal harvest (8), wolf-livestock conflicts (3), vehicle collisions (1) , perceived threat to human safety (1), and natural causes (1). The cause of 1 death is unknown.

- Two new packs were counted in 2019, including the Diobsud Creek pack, was confirmed in the northwest part of the state. Additionally, the Kettle Pack established in the Old Profanity Peak pack territory.

- In response to wolf depredations during 2020, WDFW authorized lethal control for 3 packs. Of that, 3 wolves were killed by the agency, all known members of the Wedge Pack.

- After receiving a petition in late 2020 from several environmental groups that would necessitate the use of non-lethal tools for wolves, WDFW created recommendations for the usage of responsive tools to wolf-livestock conflict in Washington. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission is currently reviewing these recommendations and will begin a rule-making process to codify expectations and usage of non-lethal and lethal tools in the state. Final rules are expected to be in place by summer 2022.

- Recent legislation in Idaho and Montana aimed to significantly reduce wolf populations may impact wolf recovery in Washington by limiting the number of dispersing wolves to unoccupied suitable habitat. WDFW population recovery models include movement of wolves into our state from outside as a significant factor in the maintenance of the Washington wolf population.

Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. With nearly 2.2 million members and activists, Defenders of Wildlife is a leading advocate for innovative solutions to safeguard our wildlife heritage for generations to come.

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