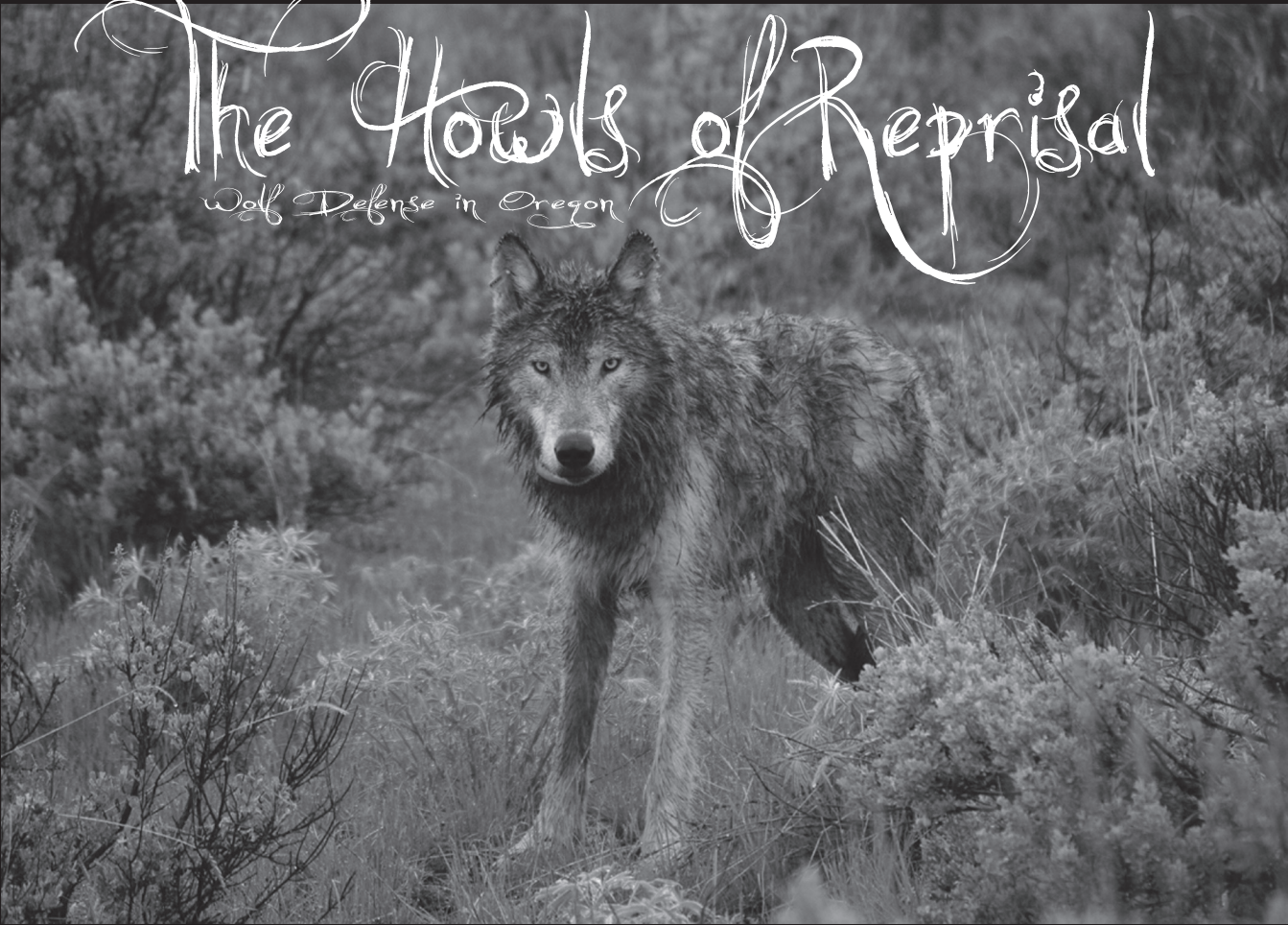


The Howls of Reprisal

Wolf Defense in Oregon



Yearling Wolf Killed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

BY JUSTIN OF THE ANIMAL DEFENSE LEAGUE

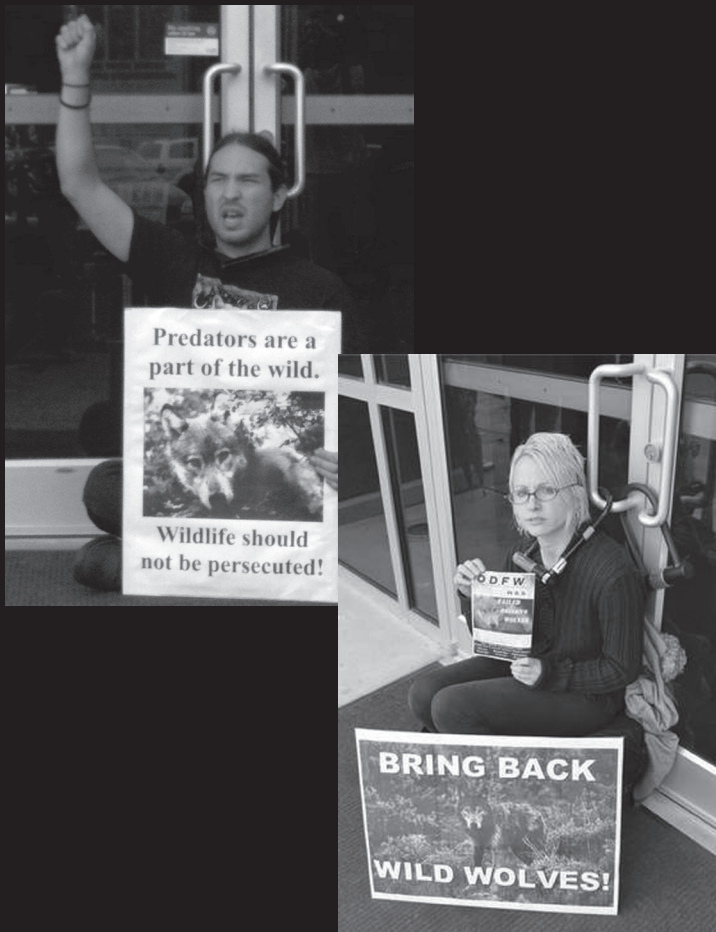
A haunting sound emanated from the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness of northeastern Oregon in July of 2008. Under the heavy moonlight, the sound of howling wolves surfaced, reaching the ears of the biologists who had been tracking them. It was not one or two lone wolves. According to the trained ears of the biologists, there were several adult and juveniles in what is now known to be the first wolf pack to return to Oregon.

It is not common knowledge that the state of Oregon was built on wolf extermination. But, like the abhorrent fur trade and decimation of indigenous peoples that created the modern Pacific West, it is just another piece of Oregon's history that has been buried under propaganda and misinformation.

As settlers of the new Oregon territory reared livestock, they encountered Oregon's native wolf population, which had been noted as abundant by early European explorers. By the mid-19th century, sporadic and scattered settlers began to meet to discuss the issue of wolf conflict. This group, the Oregon Wolf Organization, was one of the first to bring together the otherwise divided new community. The Oregon Department of Fish and

Wildlife's (ODFW) Wolf Conservation and Management Plan even notes, "with wolves and wolf eradication as the drawing card, meeting organizers were successful in assembling significant numbers of settlers to discuss formation of a civil government in the region." Within two months, these meetings led to the formation of Oregon's first provisional government. In 1843, Oregon established the first wolf bounty at an Oregon Wolf Association meeting in the Willamette Valley. The bounty for a large grey wolf was set at \$3.00. By 1913, the Oregon State Game Commission (OSGC) began offering an additional \$20 to the bounty for wolves. Supplemented with the 1915 formation of the federal Predator and Rodent Control division of the Bureau of Biological Survey (later to become Animal Damage Control), the fate of *Canis Lupus* had become sealed in Oregon and nationally. From 1913 to 1946, nearly 400 slain wolves were presented for payment in Oregon alone. By 1946, the last lone wolf in Oregon was murdered in the Umpqua National Forest, possibly the last in the entire lower 48.

That fateful night of howling in July of 2008 marked the first time in over 60 years that a wolf pack was calling Oregon home again. That same day, a federal judge reinstated protection for the species under the Endangered Species Act. It seemed to be the dawn of a new era, one of respect and freedom for these wild creatures.



Activists locked down to doors of the odfw office



Imnaha pack alpha male, tagged and collared

Now, only three short years later, that pack is threatened with extinction.

The Imnaha pack was the first and, up until very recently, only known breeding pack in the state of Oregon. It has become the flagship wolf pack for the state and its activities were symbolic for wolf recovery as a whole. Pictures and video of its activities circulated news media, with the state of Oregon watching the pack's every move as new parents watch every move of their newborn child.

Now the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is issuing kill orders for "problem wolves" as if there is no other recourse of action, going as far as to issue one for the Imnaha pack's alpha male in late September of 2011. The ODFW had already killed three wolves in the state by this time. Blamed for livestock losses in Wallowa County, the pack's alpha male and a juvenile were slated to die. Once comprising a healthy 16 members, the pack was to be reduced to only two, the alpha female and her newborn pup, who will struggle to survive the harsh winters of the Wallowa Mountains. The state of Oregon is effectively destroying its first wolf pack in 60 years.

What went wrong?

Welfare Ranching

On a beautiful early summer day in Wallowa County,

endless rolling hills of native short grass prairie are set against the backdrop of the craggy and glaciated granite peaks of the Wallowa Mountains. Just to the east, the mixed conifer pine forests of the Wallowa Whitman-National Forest give way to the deep, carved valleys of Hells Canyon. The entire area is the definition of picturesque wilderness.

But upon closer inspection, this picture yields a much different story of the North American West. The Nature Conservancy owns part of the Zumwalt Prairie, the largest remaining native short grassland of its kind. In the spring, the hills seem to roll on forever, speckled endlessly with wildflowers and lush green. But as part of course, the Conservancy leases this rare land to private ranchers for cattle grazing. The same story is told in the National Forests of the Wallowa-Whitman, as cow pies litter the landscape, a landscape ravaged down to nothing but stubs of grass struggling to emerge from the harshly compacted soil.

It does not take long to see the signs of cattle on these public lands. The once rich and aerated soils have surrendered to desertification. The effects are so bad out here that the US Forest Service has had to go as far as creating Aspen enclosures that prevent any ungulates from grazing the saplings, lest the entire species be erased from these lands.

Livestock ranching rules this land. 300 million acres of public land are leased for livestock production. Ninety percent of all Bureau of Land Management holdings and 69 percent of all US Forest Service managed land is leased for livestock grazing. 184 million acres of private land are used for livestock production. Thirty-five million acres of Indian Reservation land in the West are used for livestock production. In total, 525 million acres of land are dedicated to livestock production in the western states alone (Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming). This is slightly more than one quarter of the land area of the lower 48 states. It is nearly three quarters of the land area of the West.

At the expense of native wildlife, livestock ranching expropriates the space, the plant forage, and the water of the land and leaves nothing but wreckage behind. Fifty percent of desirable plants have been eliminated, high rates of soil erosion have set in, non-native plants have invaded, and the land has been turned into a practical but not functional desert as record levels of drought have been recorded in areas used for livestock. Livestock production has contributed to the listing of 22% of federally threatened and endangered species. That is about as much as the effects of logging and mining combined. No other human institution is responsible for as much loss in biodiversity.

And the people are paying for it.

According to the Western Watersheds Project, "Direct government expenditures to administer public land grazing constitute an annual net loss to the taxpayers of at least \$123 million and more than \$500 million when indirect costs are accounted for. As much as 96 percent of these public dollars are spent to enhance livestock production in direct conflict with legal mandates to restore the health of public lands."

Ranchers and the industry in general are beneficiaries of an unofficial government welfare program. This takes its form in a variety of ways: incredibly low fees to graze public lands (\$1.35 per month for one cow and her calf), tax-funded research at western land grant universities, agricultural exemptions that lower property taxes, drought-relief programs, emergency livestock feed programs, low-interest agricultural loans, emergency grazing on Conservation Reserve Program lands, and things as minor as fencing and cattle-crossings.

For a local example, in Wallowa County in 2010, \$2.2 million was spent by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) in just a few farm subsidies.

If that was not enough, the livestock industry also benefits from a special relationship with the corporate banking industry. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 allows for the issuance of permits to graze public land. These permits have a market value, recognized by the Internal Revenue Service, the real estate market and economists. This monetary value allows livestock ranchers to put their grazing permits up for collateral to be eligible for bank

loans, since livestock holdings, properties and ranch buildings are insufficient. Because the Forest Service authorizes all transfers of grazing permits, banks require the agency to enter into an escrow waiver. Throughout the West, billions of dollars have been loaned out on these permits through this process. In his essay, "Mortgaging Public Assets: How Ranchers Use Grazing Permits as Collateral", Mark Salvo points out the problems with this system:

"Escrow waivers help prolong an antiquated public lands grazing program by overlaying a financial system that requires high stocking rates and low grazing fees. Since banks have loaned billions of dollars on grazing permits, they use their considerable clout in Washington, DC to oppose grazing reforms that threaten their investment. The banks also become involved in agency decision making on individual allotments where the value of an escrowed grazing permit is in jeopardy."

Escrow waivers force the Forest Service to maintain destructive management practices because those same practices often maintain the value of the collateral.

The banking industry has lobbied to keep public grazing fees low. They opposed the Clinton Administration's proposal to raise the fees a few dollars, decrying the possibility that such changes in management could cause a collapse in the financial industry.

Yet with all of this institutional support, livestock industries contribute almost nothing to local economies. A study conducted by Thomas Power, Ph.D. titled, "Taking Stock of Public Lands Grazing: An Economic Analysis" indicates that the economic presence of ranching is negligible.

It should be immensely clear when juxtaposing the political and economic leverage of the livestock ranching industry with its contributions to society on even the smallest scale that it is highly institutionalized in American life. It is cemented as a cultural and political leviathan, to the lament of the land and wildlife.

"Wildlife Services" and Animal Damage Control

Perhaps the most obvious way, and certainly the most pertinent in the case of the wolf, that this institutionalization manifests itself in relation to wildlife can be traced in the history of the USDA's Wildlife Services.

Yet another form of major subsidies to the livestock industry, the agency known as "Wildlife Services" has only existed as such since 1997, when it was decided that it needed a more publicity-friendly facelift. Before that, it was known as Animal Damage Control, more aptly named for an organization that spends millions of public dollars every year to destroy millions of wild animals, primarily predators.



Male wolf of the Wenaha Pack

Beginning in 1886, then named the Branch of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy, the agency worked on the control of damaging birds. By 1914 under its new name, the Bureau of Biological Survey, it began its lethal predator control efforts for which it has become infamous, with a focus on wolves and coyotes. In 1931, President Hoover signed the Animal Damage Control Act of 1931, which authorizes direct and cooperative control programs. This is still the law under which Wildlife Services operates today. By the time that the name was officially changed to Animal Damage Control in 1974 the agency has made its mark as the leader in lethal control of wildlife for the sake of mitigating damage to the livestock industry.

According to Brooks Fahy and Cheri Briggs of Predator Defense in their article, "A War Against Predators: The Killing of Wildlife Funded by Taxpayers" around \$10 million is spent every fiscal year for killing predators in the name of "livestock protection." This figure does not include the money sourced from state and local taxes levied to prop up the livestock industry. Briggs and Fahy state that, "In the late 1990s, the cost of killing predators in the western states exceeded reported livestock losses to predators by a ratio of three to one."

This abundance of money certainly funds a very active agency. In 2010, USDA data indicates that Wildlife Services killed over 5 million animals, including 452 wolves. That same year in Oregon alone, the agency killed 260 thousand animals.

All of this killing requires a diversity of methods to ensure the results. Favorite among them are leghold traps, conibear traps, snares, cage traps, aerial gunning, shooting, hunting dogs, compound 1080 (an extremely poisonous compound, sodium fluoroacetate), and M-44's (spring-propelled sodium cyanide cartridges). The poison arsenal of Wildlife Services includes Alpha Chloralose, Aluminum Phosphide, Aminopyridine, Avitrol, 4-AP, Bone Tar Oil, Brodifacoum, Cholecalciferol (Quintox), DRC-1339, Fenthion, Immobilizing/ Euthanizing Agents, Mineral Oil: Petroleum Distillates, Glyphosate, Polybutene, Sodium Cyanide, Sodium Fluoroacetate, Sodium Nitrate, Strychnine, and Zinc Phosphide.

Wildlife Services states that, "We will support the most humane, selective, and effective control techniques." Yet this is simply not the case. Take the case of the coyote, the most hated of all targets of Wildlife Services. Every year, around 90,000 coyotes are killed, which is vastly more than are reported by ranchers as problematic.

In fact, nonlethal methods of predator control have been found to be more effective in protecting livestock. Yet, a 1995 US General Accounting Office report revealed that Wildlife Services almost never uses nonlethal methods. According to Briggs and Fahy, "WS routinely launches lethal predator control programs before there are any confirmed livestock losses."

Former Animal Damage Control District Supervisor Carter Niemeyer recalls his former agency's obsession with killing in his book, *Wolfer*. Those who work for ADC (or

Wildlife Services) are trappers, and killing is what they are trained to do. Niemeyer recalls the priorities of ADC, "This (killing) was the entire reason for Animal Damage Control's existence; the state director wanted to see big numbers, particularly of target varmints like coyotes and fox." He also recalls specifically the relationship that the agency had with the livestock industry, "There was a general mindset at Animal Damage Control that, as government trappers, we should hate whatever killed livestock." He refers to Animal Damage Control as the "hired guns of the livestock industry" and states that many officials in the agency "really believed it was their job to go around killing as many wolves as Ed Bangs (then USFWS Wolf Recovery Coordinator) would allow."

Wildlife Services has set a precedent with the ranching

of the 20,000 public comments wanted stronger protection for Oregon's wolves. Yet after the plan's revisions were completed, it became slightly easier to kill wolves.

In April of 2011, congress passed an emergency budget bill with a piece of Rider legislation attached. Now infamously called the Wolf Rider, this piece of legislation is the first time in history that congress delisted a species from Endangered Species Act protection.

Rod Childers of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association and Todd Nash, rancher at Marr Flat Cattle Co. (who has a few confirmed wolf predations and who also receives thousands every year in government subsidies) have become the leading voices in the new anti-wolf movement that has swept the rural west. Men like them are at the forefront, advocating for the entire removal of wolves;

Livestock production has contributed to the listing of 22% of federal threatened and endangered species. That is about as much as the effects of logging and mining combined.

community that the government takes care of all pests, nuisances and liabilities to the livestock industry. It has done so for the last 100 years and continues to do so to this day.

Predators & the Culture of Fear

In the mid-1990s, the US Fish and Wildlife Service began a program of reintroduction of grey wolves. Thirty-one wolves were released into Yellowstone National Park. Thirty-five were released into the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness in central Idaho. It was in 1999 when wolves made efforts to return to Oregon. At first they were relocated, hit by cars, or shot. But the state couldn't resist the facts—wolves were calling Oregon home again after six decades of being gone.

It was in this climate of inevitability that the state began the creation of the WCMP in 2005. Created through a compromise of various stakeholders including the Hells Canyon Preservation Council, Defenders of Wildlife, Oregon Wild, Center for Biological Diversity, and Oregon Cattlemen's Association, the WCMP allowed too much room for lethal removal and set low recovery goals. The plan lets the state kill wolves after two "depredations," within an ill-defined "area" whether or not the wolves in question are the wolves responsible. Nevertheless, many groups settled on having some kind of protection rather than no protection at all.

In 2010, the plan was reviewed and revised. Polling at the time indicated that an overwhelming 90 percent

total extermination once again.

With all of the commotion surrounding wolf return to the region, all of the fiery debate and emotional battle cries from the ranchers, one would expect wolves to have had a tremendous impact on the livestock community. Nothing could be further from the truth. In 2006, there were approximately 65,000 cattle and calf deaths in Oregon. 61,000 were determined to be from non-predator causes. Of the 4,500 deaths attributed to predators, 2,300 were coyotes, 1,500 were mountain lions, and the rest are unknown. Since wolves returned to Oregon they have killed 29 lambs, 22 calves, and 1 goat. By comparison, in 2005 alone, 700 sheep were killed by domestic dogs and 200 were killed by eagles in Oregon. In 2005, human thieves took five times as many livestock as wolves in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. In Minnesota, where there are 300 times as many wolves as Oregon, they were responsible for 0.65% of cattle losses in 2005.

Studies have even indicated that wolves may actually decrease livestock losses by keeping smaller predator populations down, particularly coyotes, who have seen huge population surges since the eradication of the wolf and who are by far the most responsible for predation. An article recently published in the journal of *Ecological Economics* found that wolf depredations account for less than 0.01% of the annual gross income of ranchers in Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana.

The ranching old guard condemns wolves as out of

control, invasive beasts that will devour all livestock and native prey in sight. Yet, a recent peer reviewed a study in the *Journal of Conservation Planning* estimated the state has enough suitable habitat and prey base to support 1,450 wolves. In Oregon, the population hasn't even peaked at 30.

Why then, is there is so much controversy surrounding the return of the grey wolf to the habitat that it once roamed?

Possibly one of greatest environmental catastrophes of the United States was the state-sanctioned and state-funded eradication of the wolf. Yet it was a major part in the development of the west and played a role in securing the identity of rural America as a priority of the federal government. Over the last few decades and since the Endangered Species Act, government agencies have been forced to focus on environmental recovery (as much as it seems that they don't) even as it begins to conflict with the industries that they support. What seems to be the case is that the culture of fear has taken root in the west. Irrational fears of wolf attacks on humans, on children and on pets, irrational fears of never-ending wolf predations on native ungulates, and irrational fears of the destruction of the livestock industry have taken hold of communities that have begun to feel forgotten by the modern world and by their own governments (however inaccurate all of that is). Wolves have become a symbol of fear, the scapegoat of a dying way of life, one that is being replaced by another malignant form of livestock production—factory farming.

It is in this environment that the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife must make its decisions. Pressured by the still culturally powerful, institutionalized, subsidized and furious livestock industry, they have little recourse but to yield to their desires. The industry has been conditioned to expect killing after wildlife conflicts and understands little else.

So when the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife was called out in early September of 2011 to investigate a likely wolf predation, they had their hands tied...

Urgency into Action

It was very late on Friday, September 23 when the Animal Defense League was notified of the ODFW issued kill order for the Imnaha pack. The agency had waited until Friday to announce its plans, hoping that the media wouldn't pick it up and that the news would be thrown into the "Friday Trash." This particular wolf predation occurred on land leased to Todd Nash, the state's most vocal anti-wolf activist and the wolves' greatest threat. It could not have occurred anywhere more politically charged. For years, Nash has been calling for the eradication of the Imnaha pack. With this predation occurring on the land that he ranches, it looked like he might have gotten his wish. He called the ODFW to make an official request for a kill order.

Within hours, the ODFW complied.

Nash was already going to be compensated for the lost calf. In June, Oregon passed a Livestock Compensation and Wolf Coexistence Bill that will compensate ranchers for confirmed wolf depredations. Now Nash was about to have his cake and eat it too. The ODFW issued a kill order for Imnaha pack alpha male and a juvenile male (who wasn't even confirmed to be at the predation site), leaving only the alpha female, B-300, and her newborn spring pup. You can't have a wolf pack with only half of the breeding pair. You can't have a wolf pack with only a struggling mother and her pup, trying to survive the harsh winters of the Wallowa Mountains. It would be a nightmare for the state's wolf recovery efforts. But for Todd Nash and the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, it was a dream come true.

Activists from all over the region responded with coordinated call-ins and emails to ODFW directors and Governor Kitzhaber. Both the Portland and Seattle ADL attempted to coordinate these efforts as well as the Northern Idaho Wolf Alliance (NIWA), Friends of the Clearwater, Wolf Warriors, Howling for Justice, Howls Across America, Cascadia Wildlands, Oregon Wild, Northeast Oregon Ecosystems, and the Center for Biological Diversity.

With only days for the wolves to remain alive, and with the urgency of saving Oregon's most symbolic wolf pack, activists with the Portland ADL scrambled to organize a rally at the ODFW Headquarters in Salem the following Tuesday Morning, September 27. Only about a dozen activists arrived, given the very short notice. Nevertheless, a lockdown ensued and two ADL activists used bike locks to lock the entrances of the building to their necks. For two hours, the ODFW was forced to listen to public outcry and reason. Media and law enforcement of all types swarmed the otherwise nondescript office building.

After arrests were made, media had turned the small, last minute action into a major controversy. News of the ODFW's plan to eradicate the majestic Imnaha pack spread as far as the east coast and onto national outlets such as NPR. The agency was forced to make a statement to attempt to reconcile their public image as little more than pawns of the rapacious livestock industry.

The issue had finally made it into the public spotlight outside of Eastern Oregon. High tension was set and the public was mournfully waiting for the inevitable deaths of Imnaha pack wolves.

One week later the wolves had not yet been killed. The time was right for the Center for Biological Diversity, Oregon Wild, and Cascadia Wildlands to file a lawsuit against the agency. On October 5, the trio of environmental groups did just that. The legal challenge argues that in allowing the killing of two of Oregon's 14 surviving gray wolves, the state's wolf management plan is inconsistent with the state's Endangered Species Act, which specifically prohibits such action.

Only hours later, the Oregon Court of Appeals issued an injunction that would halt the ODFW's wolf hunt until both parties made their case. At the time of this writing, the Imnaha pack in the Wallowa Mountains has been offered temporary reprieve. And, as of November 1, 2011, the ODFW confirmed that a collared two-year old male from the Imnaha pack has traveled in the Umpqua River drainage. He is the first wolf to return to western Oregon since 1946, when the last Oregon wolf was taken for bounty, ironically, in the same drainage.

But this is no time to be celebrating. The Imnaha pack's future is still tied up in the courts and that is no place to rely on justice.

The time is now for the people of this region to recognize that wildlands are being strangled by industry and government. The institutionalized degradation and exploitation of the grasslands, the soil, the forests, the mountains, the rivers, the institutionalized extermination of the songbirds, the raptors, the rodents, the predators, the bears, the mountain lions, the coyotes and the wolves, and the capture, imprisonment and enslavement of those who weren't lucky to escape the casualties of war are symptoms and circumstances of our history of human imperialism. These mechanisms are part of a self-perpetuating system of domination responsible for the state of things on Earth. Also to blame are the irrational myths that are ingrained and

institutionalized in our psyches, which leads to our complacency. This story is only a sliver of truth that reflects the larger struggle for ecological freedom and dignity. If it is not the wolves it is the bears. If not the bears, the coyotes. If not the coyotes, the fox. If not the predators, the prey. If not the prey, their habitat. Every stretch of livable environment on this planet is laid to waste by the externalities of our empire. This is a call to action. Destroy your empire, destroy your concentration camps, clean up your slums, free your prisoners and your slaves. It is imperative if there is even a chance to hear the silence of the wilderness punctuated by the haunting howls of the wolves' reprisal.

The Animal Defense League is a bioregional grassroots organization. It is focused on bringing about the dissolution of human imperialism in all of its diverse manifestations. ADL endeavors to create broad networks and coalitions with other organizations and movements across the continent, in an attempt to reconcile our contradictions, strengthen our commonalities and mature as a unified movement against the consolidation of power.

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Top Wolf Stories of 2011



- Obama's Signature to Remove Wolves from Endangered Species List (Apr. 20)
- Emergency Order Sought to Halt Wolf Hunts in Idaho and Montana (Aug. 16)
- Pressure from EU halts Wolf Hunts in Sweden (Aug. 22)
- Portland ADL Locks Down to Protect Wolves (Sep 28)
- First Ever Aerial Wolf Hunt Proposed on Kenai Peninsula, Alaska (Oct. 6)
- Killing Wolves: A Product of Alberta's Big Oil and Gas Boom (Oct. 31)
- State Wolf-hunting Season Extended (Dec. 9)
- Montana Using Unmanned Drones Against Wolves (Dec. 11)
- Gray Wolves Delisted in Midwest, Wolf Kills to Begin Soon (Dec. 22)
- Lone Grey Wolf Wanders into California, First Since 1924 (Jan. 3)