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1 Appendix E. Summary of the Wolf Working Group's discussions related to the conservation/recovery  
2 objectives presented in this plan. Discussions by the Working Groups on other aspects of the plan can be  
3 found in the meeting summaries posted at  
4 [http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildlife/management/gray\\_wolf/working\\_group\\_meetings.html](http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildlife/management/gray_wolf/working_group_meetings.html).  
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6  
7 The Wolf Working Group provided input to WDFW on key elements of the conservation/recovery  
8 objectives appearing in Chapter 3 of this plan. A summary of the group's discussions on the  
9 numbers of successful breeding pairs needed to achieve downlisting and delisting of wolves, the  
10 designation of recovery regions, and the use of translocation as a conservation tool is given below.  
11

### 12 Numbers of Successful Breeding Pairs

13  
14 Throughout the Wolf Working Group deliberations, the issue of numbers of successful breeding  
15 pairs, as criteria for moving from one listing designation to another, was a point of significant  
16 discussion. Originally, WDFW suggested that specific numbers be excluded from the plan until  
17 after some wolf packs had settled in the state. Modeling of the habitat use and demographics of  
18 these animals and genetic considerations could then be used to derive scientifically based estimates  
19 of the wolf numbers needed for recovery, which would then be placed in a future version of the  
20 plan. All Working Group members rejected this approach and preferred the inclusion of specific  
21 numbers in the current plan, as done by other states and as needed to meet the criteria for  
22 Washington state recovery plans. Furthermore, specific numbers would give Working Group  
23 members a starting place for their deliberations. WDFW researched other state wolf plans and  
24 applied their understanding of wildlife biology to the question. It then proposed the numbers of 8  
25 successful breeding pairs for transitioning from endangered to threatened and 15 successful breeding  
26 pairs for transitioning from threatened to sensitive as a starting point for the Working Group's  
27 consideration.  
28

29 Eventually, the Working Group collectively settled on an approach that called for 6 successful  
30 breeding pairs for transitioning from endangered to threatened, 12 successful breeding pairs for  
31 transitioning from threatened to sensitive, and 15 successful breeding pairs for delisting from  
32 sensitive. [NOTE: the transition from one listing designation to another also requires that the  
33 minimum number of successful breeding pairs be in place for 3 years (though there are exceptions;  
34 see Section B of this chapter) and distribution across four regions as laid out in Section B.]  
35

36 The deliberation around numbers was a negotiation where each participant attempted to balance his  
37 or her own interests with everyone else's in the group. The final numbers included in this plan were  
38 not viewed as "ideal" by anyone on the Working Group; however, these numbers represented the  
39 balance point among the different interests around the table. It should be emphasized that these  
40 numbers represent only the criteria for downlisting and delisting, and do not represent a population  
41 cap or ceiling at which wolves will ultimately be managed.  
42

43 For Working Group members from the conservation community, the numbers were viewed as  
44 being close to ecologically defensible, though lower than they would have set if they were the only  
45 ones writing the plan. For the livestock community, wolves represent a threat to their livelihood,  
46 and the numbers were higher than they would have recommended if they were the only ones writing  
47 the plan. Working Group members ultimately recognized that having certainty around a set of  
48

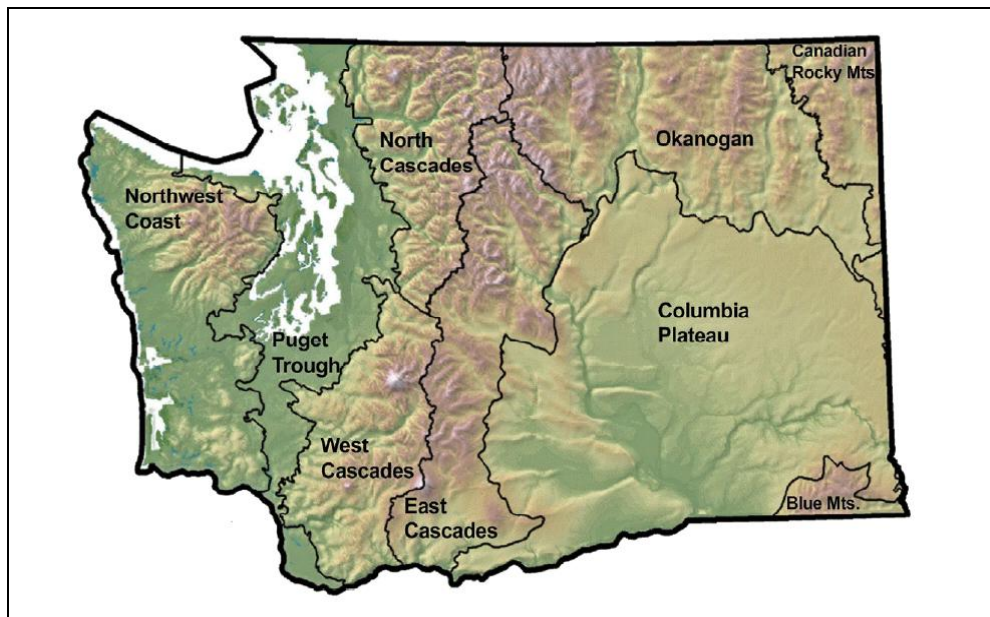
## 1 Appendix E. Continued.

2  
3 numbers they could live with, along with the other specific components of the package that each  
4 party viewed as desirable, made more sense than deferring the decision to others. The group further  
5 understood that to obtain the necessary external support (e.g., legislative) for funding and operation  
6 of the plan, their final product needed support by a cross section of interests.

7  
8 Throughout the process, some Working Group members representing the livestock/hunting  
9 community indicated they would be hard pressed to agree to the 6/12/15 numbers. At the end of  
10 the deliberations, while they were able to live with the rest of the package, six of the 17 members  
11 indicated they needed to submit a minority report on the numbers and proposed an alternative set of  
12 3/6/8 (see Appendix D for more detail). They further proposed that there be no 3-year time  
13 requirement, but did not address regional distribution. However, the package agreed to by the  
14 group is based on the 6/12/15 numbers and if those numbers are changed as a result of the peer  
15 review, public review, and other agency processes, then agreement around other components of the  
16 plan will not necessarily remain. In particular, consensus on management options for resolving  
17 wolf-livestock conflicts and compensation for wolf-caused losses of livestock may be jeopardized.

18  
19 Recovery Regions

20  
21 During the Working Group discussions, there was an evolution in the design and agreement of wolf  
22 recovery regions for the state. As one possibility, WDFW initially suggested that Washington's nine  
23 "ecoregions" (Figure 27) be considered for recovery regions. WDFW and other conservation  
24 organizations have adopted an ecoregional approach for landscape-level conservation planning in  
25 Washington, as described in the state's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (WDFW  
26 2005a). Ecoregions are relatively large areas of land and water that contain geographically discrete  
27 assemblages of natural plant and animal communities and have distinctive environmental conditions.



30  
31 Figure 27. Nine ecoregions recognized in Washington.

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1 Appendix E. Continued.

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3 Each ecoregion has unique strengths and weaknesses affecting wolf recovery, such as differing  
4 amounts of large contiguous forested public land blocks, varying abundance of ungulate prey and  
5 locations of winter range, human population density and distribution, distance from colonizing  
6 sources, and challenges to successful natural dispersal. Some ecoregions (or groupings of  
7 ecoregions) contain an abundance of higher quality habitats that could potentially support a growing  
8 wolf population with dispersing young (source populations), while others have lower habitat quality  
9 where resident packs would have difficulty sustaining themselves without immigration (sink  
10 populations).

11  
12 Some members of the Working Group felt that nine ecoregions were too many and too complex for  
13 addressing wolf distribution needs in the state. The group considered a number of variations on the  
14 ecoregional approach (including combinations of ecoregions, modifications of ecoregions, and an  
15 eastside-westside division of the state) and other factors before arriving at three consolidated regions  
16 chosen for use in the conservation/recovery objectives. [Note that the three recovery regions (these  
17 combined the Southern Cascades and Pacific Coast recovery regions into one region) recommended  
18 by the Working Group were subsequently expanded into four regions by WDFW (Figure 8).]

19  
20 Like the nine ecoregions, the consolidated wolf recovery regions (Figure 8) also have unique  
21 strengths and weaknesses affecting wolf recovery. For example, when comparing wolf recovery  
22 regions, the Southern Cascades and Pacific Coast recovery regions are the most distant from  
23 colonizing sources with greater hurdles to successful natural dispersal, yet these regions contain  
24 nearly 80% of the state's elk population.

25  
26 Translocation

27  
28 Translocation was discussed extensively by the Working Group and was largely supported for a  
29 variety of reasons. Translocation within Washington was proposed as a tool if wolves were not  
30 naturally dispersing into regions needed for recovery, or if it was desired to move wolves from  
31 regions that had already achieved conservation/recovery objectives to other regions that had not yet  
32 met their objectives. Conservation groups supported the concept to achieve conservation/recovery  
33 objectives and establish source populations within the state. County, hunting, and livestock interests  
34 also supported the concept, which would enable moving wolves out of areas after sufficient  
35 numbers of breeding pairs were reestablished to achieve recovery objectives, thereby speeding up  
36 the delisting process and access to more flexible management tools. Overall, there was broad  
37 support and recognition within the Working Group that translocation is a key management tool to  
38 ensure that both conservation and management goals are achieved. Translocation is considered an  
39 essential part of the “negotiated package” developed by the Working Group.

40  
41 The primary area suggested and discussed for translocation by the Working Group was the southern  
42 Cascade Mountain range based on insights gained from the experiences of wolf recovery in the  
43 northern Rocky Mountain states (USFWS 2009). These included the strong correlation between  
44 large contiguous blocks of public land and wolf recovery. This is due to large areas of public land  
45 generally experiencing lower levels of conflict between wolves and livestock, as well as supporting  
46 larger populations of elk.

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1 Appendix E. Continued.

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3 Discussions on translocation focused on the southern Cascade Mountains for the following reasons:

- 4  
5 • The southern Cascades have the potential to support a source population of wolves, a factor  
6 of importance for maintaining a sustainable viable population in Washington.  
7 • The southern Cascades contain about half of Washington's elk population and large  
8 contiguous blocks of public land. Consequently, there is abundant natural prey for wolves  
9 combined with potentially lower levels of conflict with livestock when compared to areas  
10 with extensive private landholdings.  
11 • The southern Cascades are distant from colonizing areas in Idaho and British Columbia, and  
12 there are more potential barriers to overcome for successful natural dispersal. However,  
13 once wolves are reestablished in the southern Cascades, extensive contiguous forested public  
14 lands will facilitate natural dispersal within this area.  
15 • Elk populations fluctuate in response to a number of environmental conditions, including  
16 forest succession. Portions of the Mount St. Helens elk herd, which is the largest herd in the  
17 state, are currently experiencing problems due to advanced forest succession. Wolf recovery  
18 in the southern Cascades could help restore and contribute to ecological balance and  
19 integrity in these types of situations.  
20

21 To date there have not been any discussions of translocations to other areas; the primary focus has  
22 been the southern Cascade Mountains.  
23

24 This package contains carefully balanced strategies and management tools to achieve key objectives.  
25 There are strong concerns among Working Group members that if translocation is precluded for  
26 any reason, then:  
27

- 28 • The carefully crafted "negotiated package" would become unbalanced in ways that adversely  
29 affect achieving primary goals.  
30 • Barriers to the natural dispersal of wolves into the southern Cascade Mountains may result in  
31 increasing conflict with livestock in eastern Washington and delayed recovery.  
32 • Eastern and northern Washington would unfairly bear the costs and challenges of wolf  
33 recovery.  
34

35 The Working Group therefore recommends that if translocation is removed from the management  
36 tools available to WDFW, the Fish and Wildlife Commission or WDFW shall immediately  
37 reconvene the Working Group (to the extent possible with the original membership) to advise  
38 WDFW on how to manage wolves without this critical tool to address these concerns.  
39