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## Ore. and Wash. want to handle wolves on their own

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GRANTS PASS, Ore. —

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Both states have already taken over the hard part, riding herd on the conflict between wolves and cattle in the eastern part of each state, where almost all of the packs are located, and deciding when they need to shoot wolves for developing too much of a taste for beef.

“We don’t see a real need for continued federal protections when the state protections are there,” Dave Ware, Washington state game division manager, said Monday.

Tim L. Hiller, carnivore-furbearer coordinator for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, agreed.

“It seems very redundant to have a regulatory process at the state and federal level for that portion of Oregon,” he said.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife introduced wolves into the Northern Rockies in the 1990s after they had been wiped out by bounty hunters across the West. Since then, wolves have migrated into the Northwest from Idaho, Montana and Canada. Two of Washington’s dozen wolf packs have pushed as far west as the Cascades. None of Oregon’s five packs have left the Northeastern corner of the state, though single wolves have set out looking for new territory. Each state has one pack that has developed a taste for beef.

The Pacific Northwest and California are one focus of a nationwide evaluation of whether the federal Endangered Species Act protections given wolves back in 1978 should be lifted in view of new scientific information.

“We’ve learned a lot since then,” said Hilary Cooley, Pacific Northwest wolf coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “So we would like to fix it.”

The issue is whether the wolves in the Northwest amount to a distinct population that needs protection, whether by geography, genetics or behavior. One big factor in the decision will be just how much good wolf habitat is available.

The service has already lifted wolf protections in the Northern Rockies and Western Great Lakes, with Wyoming to follow this month. Federal biologists have already decided the current listing, which includes the Northeast, Southeast and Southwest, does not make scientific sense. The Southeast and Southwest each had a different species - the red wolf and Mexican wolf. The Northeast probably had a different one, the Eastern wolf. They hope to come up with a recommendation by the end of this year whether to keep or lift federal protection for wolves in areas where they are not currently established, but are likely to spread in the future.

Meanwhile, California has been forced to consider the issue now that a wandering wolf from Oregon, known as OR-7, has trekked down around the Lassen Volcanic National Park area, the southern end of the Cascade Range. California has not weighed in on a federal listing, but is considering whether to put wolves on the state Endangered Species List.

Ranchers in Oregon and Washington would like the states to gain full control, but environmentalists want the federal government to remain in charge.

Jack Field, executive vice president of the Washington Cattlemen's Association, said ranchers still don't trust the state when it comes to dealing with wolves, but feel they have more resources and better flexibility than the federal government.

"Dave (Ware) and his folks are doing everything they can to reach out and demonstrate a commitment to the livestock industry that they will follow through with what they promised," Field said. "There has got to be patience on both sides of the issue if we are going to come to a resolution that is going to work."

Environmentalists have fought state decisions to shoot wolves, arguing it is the ranchers who need to do a better job, not the wolves. They feel federal protection provides for greater scientific validity in recovery plans, better habitat protections, and higher penalties for poaching, a leading cause of wolf losses.

"Wolves do demand changes from the livestock industry," said Noah Greenwald of the Center for Biological Diversity. He said ranchers have operated for too long on the idea there should be no predators on the landscape.