

Conservation groups offer reward in wolf shooting

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Conservation groups are offering a \$15,000 award for information about the shooting of a wolf in October in Kittitas

Conservation groups are offering a \$15,000 reward for information leading to a conviction in the killing last month of a gray wolf in Kittitas County.

The adult female was shot in the hindquarters and her carcass was found Oct. 28 on the north side of the Paris Creek drainage in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, according to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service spokesman Brent Lawrence.

The wolf, a member of the Teanaway pack, was wearing a telemetry collar. When the signal stopped moving, federal and state wildlife officials searched for the wolf, Lawrence said.



Photo courtesy of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. In this 2011 file photo taken by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, a Teanaway pack wolf recovers after being tranquilized and collared. Conservation groups are offering a reward for tips leading to the conviction of the person who shot and killed a pack member last month in Kittitas County.

Officials are focusing on the Oct. 17-28 time period in their investigation. Anyone with information can call USFWS at 425-883-8122.

First documented in 2011, Teanaway is the pack farthest west in Washington. Before the shoot-

ing, the pack had six members, according to the state Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The department did not link the pack to any livestock predations this year. In 2011, the pack injured a herd dog, according to WDFW. The department paid the veterinarian's bill.

“This wolf pack has essentially had no problems,” said Shawn Cantrell, director of Defenders of Wildlife, one of the groups offering the reward.

“It doesn’t make a lot of sense that somebody thought they needed to shoot this wolf.”

USFWS is leading the investigation because the killing occurred in the western two-thirds of Washington, where wolves are federally protected.

Lawrence said the person who killed the wolf could be charged with taking an endangered species. The maximum penalty is a \$100,000 fine and up to one year in jail. The crime is not a felony.

The animal is protected under the state endangered species list in all of Washington. The maximum state penalty for taking an endangered species is a \$5,000 fine and up to one year in jail.

The conservation groups say they are concerned that wolf killings, particularly of breeding females, will threaten the species’ recovery.

WDFW in August authorized shooting up to four wolves to stop the Huckleberry pack in Stevens County from preying on sheep. Only one

wolf was killed, but conservation groups were angered that it was a breeding female.

The WDFW absolved of any wrongdoing a Stevens County hunter who reported shooting at a wolf Oct. 30.

The hunter said he had fired a warning shot to scare away one wolf, but another one appeared 15 to 20 yards away and approached him, according to a WDFW description of the incident.

The hunter said he believed he hit the wolf, which ran away.

The WDFW is still awaiting DNA results to determine whether an animal shot last month by a farmer in Whitman County was a wolf or a hybrid, the department’s game program manager, Dave Ware, said today.

If the animal was a hybrid, WDFW will not file charges, he said. If it was a wolf, the department will pursue an investigation, he said.

Ware said the department doesn’t know how the wolf killings will affect recovery. The department will count wolves in December and January and hopes to have an updated census by February, he said.

The last count showed there were 52 wolves in Washington, all east of the Cascades.

The other conservation groups offering the reward are the Center for Biological Diversity, Conservation Northwest, Woodland Park Zoo, The Humane Society of the United States and The Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust.