

Periodic Status Review for Gray Wolves in Washington – Background and Commission Engagement

October 1, 2018 – WDFW filed a [CR-101 \(WSR 18-20-084\)](#) to initiate the process for a periodic status review (PSR) of gray wolves in Washington. WDFW compiled and reviewed data collected from wolves in Washington from the previous decade to prepare for the assessment and analysis that would inform the PSR.

2019 – 2020 – Wolf Committee of the Fish and Wildlife Commission was formed in January 2019 and discussed PSR process and development in depth throughout 2019 and 2020 (>10 meetings).

August 22, 2019 – In an effort to ensure a scientifically defensible approach for the PSR, WDFW requested review and discussion with a panel of external experts. WDFW staff met with researchers with relevant experience from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University of Montana, and the University of Washington to review the original modeling approach used during the development of the 2011 Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. This group debated the efficacy of using the same model versus a different modeling approach to determine the status of Washington wolves for the PSR. The panel of scientists discussed whether updating the existing model parameters with empirical data collected from Washington wolves since recolonization would be the optimal approach or if alternative modeling techniques using those same Washington-specific data would be more appropriate.

The consensus recommendation from the panel was that WDFW develop a new model that uses data from Washington (rather than other states), and one in which the relative contribution of the various model parameters could be determined through sensitivity analysis. They further suggested that WDFW consider that the most efficient and effective way to achieve a defensible, objective product would be to assign the task to a dedicated, 9-12 month, university postdoctoral position.

Late 2019/early 2020 – WDFW contracted with the University of Washington (Drs. Sarah Converse and Beth Gardner) to hire a postdoctoral scientist to develop a spatially-explicit population model for Washington’s wolf population to inform the status review.

2020 – 2022 – Postdoctoral scientist Dr. Lisanne Petracca led the development of a model to estimate current and project future population dynamics of wolves in Washington. This modeling effort is the first of its kind developed using data from Washington’s wolf population rather than data from wolves in other states. Petracca et al. used data from 74 collared wolves and yearly pup and pack counts to parameterize the model, and then projected statewide dynamics over 50 years.

July 6, 2020 – [First UW model update to Wolf Committee](#) and [audio transcript](#)

December 7, 2020 – [Second UW model update to Wolf Committee](#) and [audio transcript](#)

July 16, 2021 – Third [UW model update to full Commission](#) and [audio transcript](#)

November 19, 2021 – [Draft wolf model scenarios for simulations in UW wolf model presented to Wolf Committee](#) and [audio transcript](#)

January 13, 2022 – [Discussion with UW team of metrics used to inform wolf recovery](#)

February 19, 2022 – UW scientists presented results of the population model and potential conservation and management scenarios that would inform the PSR to the Fish and Wildlife Commission. The meeting recording is available [here](#) (presentation starts at approximately 1:03:00) and the associated presentation is available [here](#). Results indicated “confidence that the wolf population is growing” and that Washington’s wolves would eventually recolonize all suitable habitat in Washington, including the South Cascades and Olympic Peninsula. Of management scenarios analyzed, cessation of out of state immigration and high additive harvest had the highest impacts on future wolf population abundance.

2022 – 2023 – UW scientists drafted manuscripts that would be internally peer-reviewed by USGS and that WDFW would reference in the draft PSR. UW scientists submitted these manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

March 28, 2023 – WDFW shared the final report from the University of Washington detailing the Washington wolf population model and scenarios with Commissioners via email along with a release date for the PSR and proposed timeline.

April 10, 2023 – WDFW shared the final report from the University of Washington detailing the Washington wolf population model and scenarios in the [March 2023 monthly wolf update](#).

April 12, 2023 – Update on PSR process and rollout provided at Wolf Advisory Group meeting

May 18, 2023 – [Public release](#) of Draft PSR and start of 90-day public comment period