

Sent Electronically

August 4, 2017

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RE: Transparency and Timeliness in WDFW Public Notifications of Wolf News

Dear Dr. Martorello:

We are writing to express concern regarding issues of transparency and timely notification of the public by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW/Department) on wolf news. We ask that the Department take immediate steps to ensure transparency and timeliness going forward.

Over the past several years, on behalf of our Washington members and supporters, our organizations have conveyed to WDFW staff the need for significant improvement in the Department's transparency in decision-making and actions taken with respect to wolf conservation and management in Washington. We have consistently emphasized especially the value of updates which give adequate information and which are timely. The failure to do so creates an

information vacuum conducive to rumors and misinformation, contributes to uncertainty and unease, and can undermine public trust in the Department.

- On June 1, the Department issued its newly-adopted wolf-livestock interaction protocol, which includes a commitment to provide monthly reports. By this time the Department was aware of wolf-related matters that were of significance to stakeholders in the WAG and other members of the public. This included the fact that four of Washington's wolves had died earlier this year, two by vehicle strikes and two from unknown causes now under investigation. Yet the Department issued no wolf update report concurrent with the release of the wolf-livestock interaction protocol, and the public remained unaware of the deaths of these four state-endangered wolves.
- Six weeks later, on July 14, when the Department finally did release a report, it failed to include much of the positive information regarding wolves in the state which the Department had agreed to share with the public – images of wolves, information on confirmed pups born in 2017, etc.
- On July 27, in keeping with the newly-adopted protocol, after one week of the lethal control operation, the Department released an update which informed only that one wolf has been killed. And on July 31, the Department released another brief update stating a second wolf had been killed and the evaluation period had begun. While we agree with the importance of protecting human safety, we are concerned that the Department has chosen to withhold basic information regarding the operation that would not compromise safety. We do not agree with the Department's interpretation of the 2017 revised protocol that it need only release the number of wolves killed each week. There were extensive discussions regarding transparency and public engagement at the February

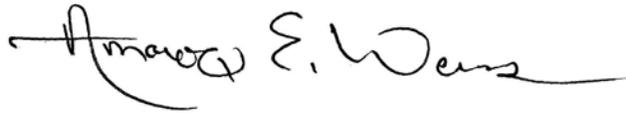
and March meetings of the Wolf Advisory Group; Department staff agreed that providing better and more timely information to the public is important. It is our perspective that the Department's decision to only release the number of wolves killed is an unnecessary and inappropriate retreat from the level of transparency in previous removal actions. The Department holds wolves in public trust for all members of the public, and a significant part of a trust relationship is openness and disclosure.

- As of July 31, much of the Department's website has not been updated to include the most current information regarding the status of individual wolf packs. The number of wolves in the pack, recent wolf-livestock conflict history, grazing allotments in the pack's home range, DPCA-L's and other conflict deterrence plans in place, and other important information about each known pack are nearly a year out of date. Additional promised revisions to the Department's website wolf pages such as pictures and videos of wolves or information on confirmed pups born in 2017 have yet to be completed.

We're aware of the challenges the Department encounters with communications around controversial issues and appreciate the need for sensitivity. But it's also clear that the Department can and should do much better, especially to increase the speed that key wolf conservation information is released. The ongoing delays are contrary to WDFW's commitment to provide monthly updates to the public. The Department needs to ensure timely release of information related to wolf deaths, and timely release of information pertaining to developing situations of wolf-livestock conflict.

We look forward to hearing from you about what remedial steps the Department intends to take and may have already instituted.

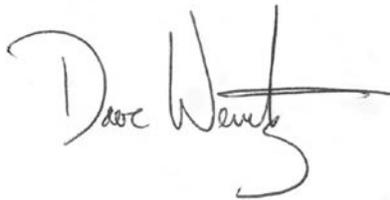
Sincerely,



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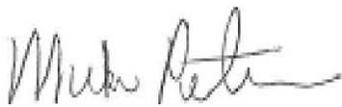
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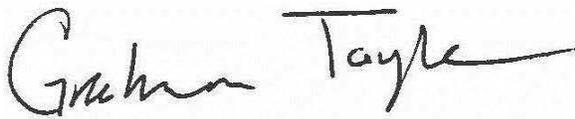
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