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Groups launch program to help public better understand wolves

Effort urges wolf management based on science, not politics

(Bozeman, MT) Just the facts. That's what a new website about wolves aims to deliver to the general public. Today, the Western Wolf Coalition, comprised of seventeen conservation and wildlife organizations, launched WesternWolves.org, a website dedicated to providing science-based information and resources on wolves to people living in the West. The website features data and reports from wildlife agencies in the states of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, top wolf biologists, and news sources from around the region to dispel myths about wolves in the northern Rockies.

Visitors to the site can learn about the natural history, biology and pack structure of wolves. The site also provides data compiled about depredation rates on livestock, assesses the impacts of wolves on hunting in the region, and discusses methods available to livestock producers to reduce conflict with wolves.

The coalition of conservation groups behind WesternWolves.org has also launched a public information campaign, using newspaper, radio, and banner ads in select western communities. These ads began running in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming this week

"Wolves are perhaps the most misunderstood of all species in our region but their management needs to be based on science, not science fiction," said Suzanne Stone, Idaho-based Defenders of Wildlife representative. "We hope this new website resource will help westerners see past the fear-based politics shrouding wolf management."

"Learning to live with wolves begins by understanding them," said Melanie Stein, a Sierra Club representative in Wyoming. "We believe this website will be a valuable resource for westerners who want science-based information about wolves in order to make up their own minds about how the species should be managed."

"Contrary to popular assumptions, scientific data demonstrates that elk herds remain healthy throughout the northern Rockies," said Derek Goldman, Endangered Species Coalition Montana representative. "Wolves and elk have coexisted in the West for thousands of years."

"Everyone hears about livestock losses and other conflicts associated with wolves – few people know that those losses total less than one percent of livestock losses in our region," said Franz Camenzind, Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance executive director. "It's time to view wolf issues through a rational science-based perspective and manage wolves accordingly."

"Scientists are learning that wolves play an important role in maintaining healthy landscapes," said Jasmine Minbashian of Conservation Northwest, a coalition member from Washington State. "Understanding this role is critical to residents in states like Washington who are just beginning to see the return of wolves."

“Wolf politics seldom tread into reality, which has polarized the conflicts and confused the public,” said Anne Carlson, Western Wolf Coalition coordinator. “It’s time to start managing them rationally – using science and respect for wildlife as our common ground.”

So next time you’d like to find out the most up-to-date information about wolves in the West, go to WesternWolves.org

The Western Wolf Coalition organizations include Conservation Northwest, Defenders of Wildlife, Endangered Species Coalition, Friends of the Clearwater, Idaho Conservation League, Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance, Keystone Conservation, National Parks Conservation Association, Oregon Wild, Selkirk Conservation Alliance, Sierra Club, Western Watersheds Project, Western Wildlife Conservancy, Wolf Education and Research Center, Wolf Recovery Foundation and the Wyoming Outdoor Council.