

Periodic Status Review for the Gray Wolf Discussion June 22, 2024

Dr. Ben Maletzke, Statewide Wolf Specialist

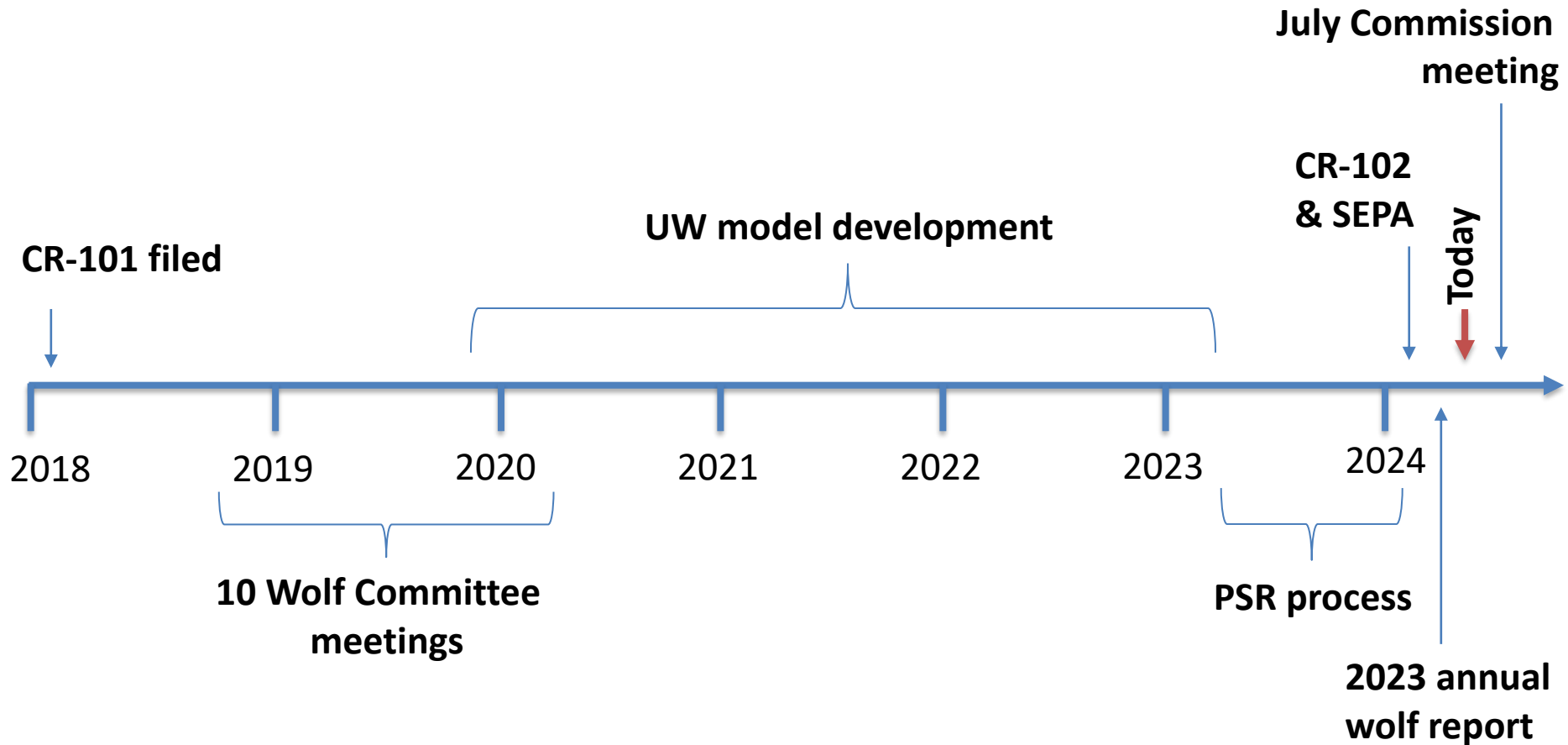
Dr. Donny Martorello, Chief Scientist

Julia Smith, Endangered Species Recovery Manager

Wildlife Program



Wolf status review – six years of investment





University of Washington (UW) Model Summary

- Petracca L. S., B. Gardner, B. T. Maletzke, and S. J. Converse. 2023. Forecasting dynamics of a recolonizing wolf population under different management strategies. bioRxiv doi: [10.1101/2023.03.23.534018](https://doi.org/10.1101/2023.03.23.534018).
- Petracca, L. S., B. Gardner, B. T. Maletzke, and S. J. Converse. 2024. Merging integrated population models and individual-based models to project population dynamics of recolonizing species. *Biological Conservation* 289:110340.

Territory selection process

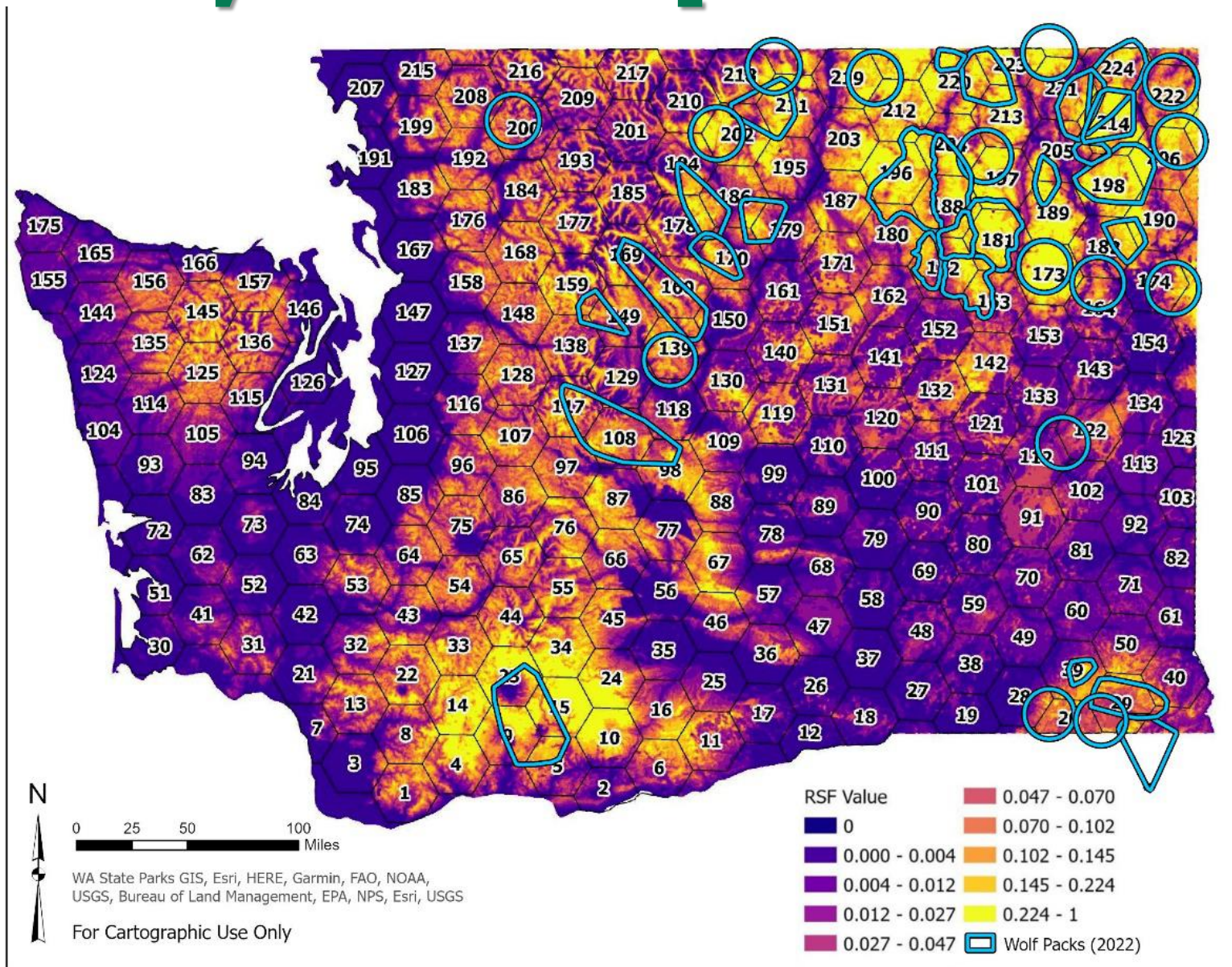
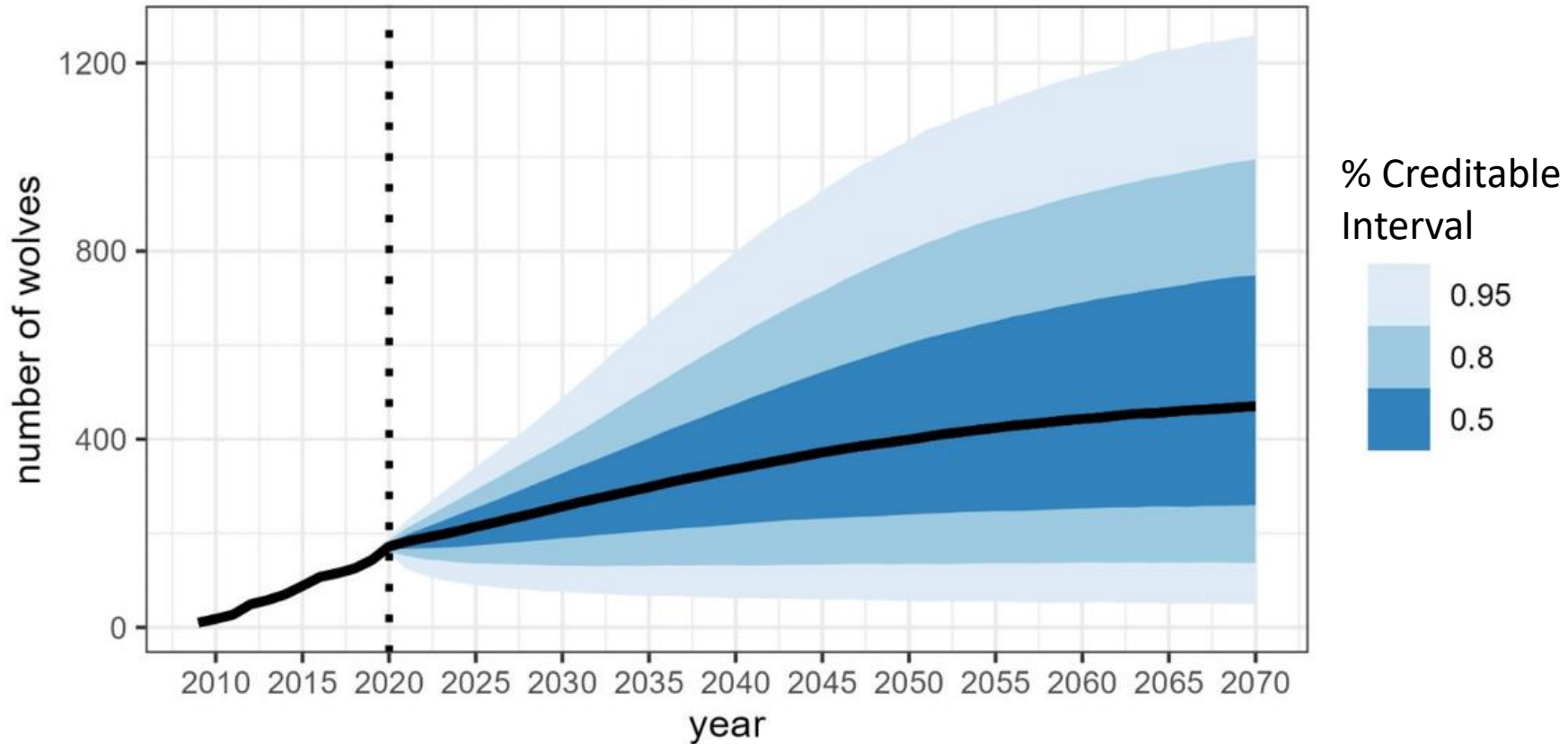


Figure reproduced from Petracca et al. 2024

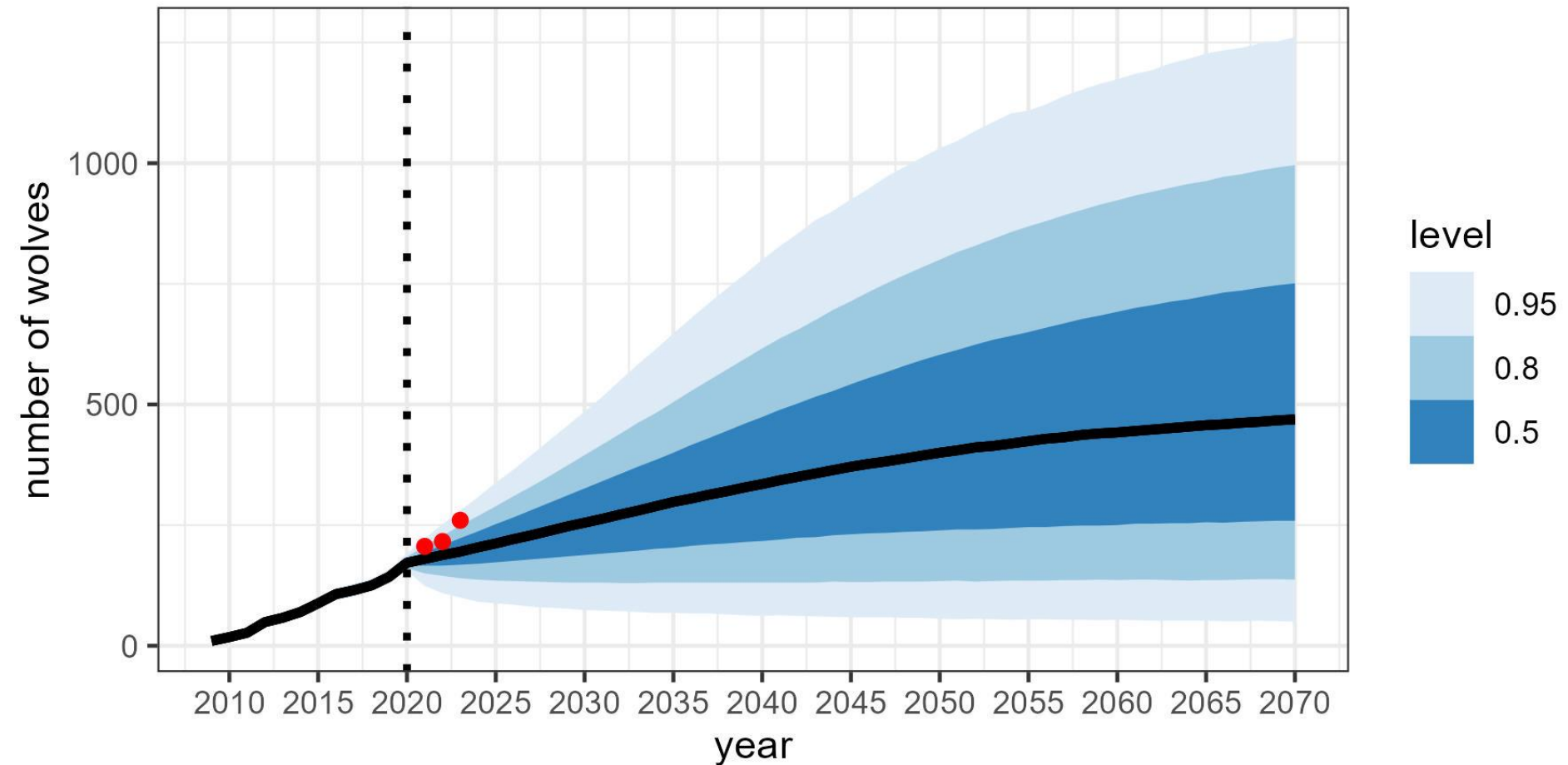
Estimated number of wolves



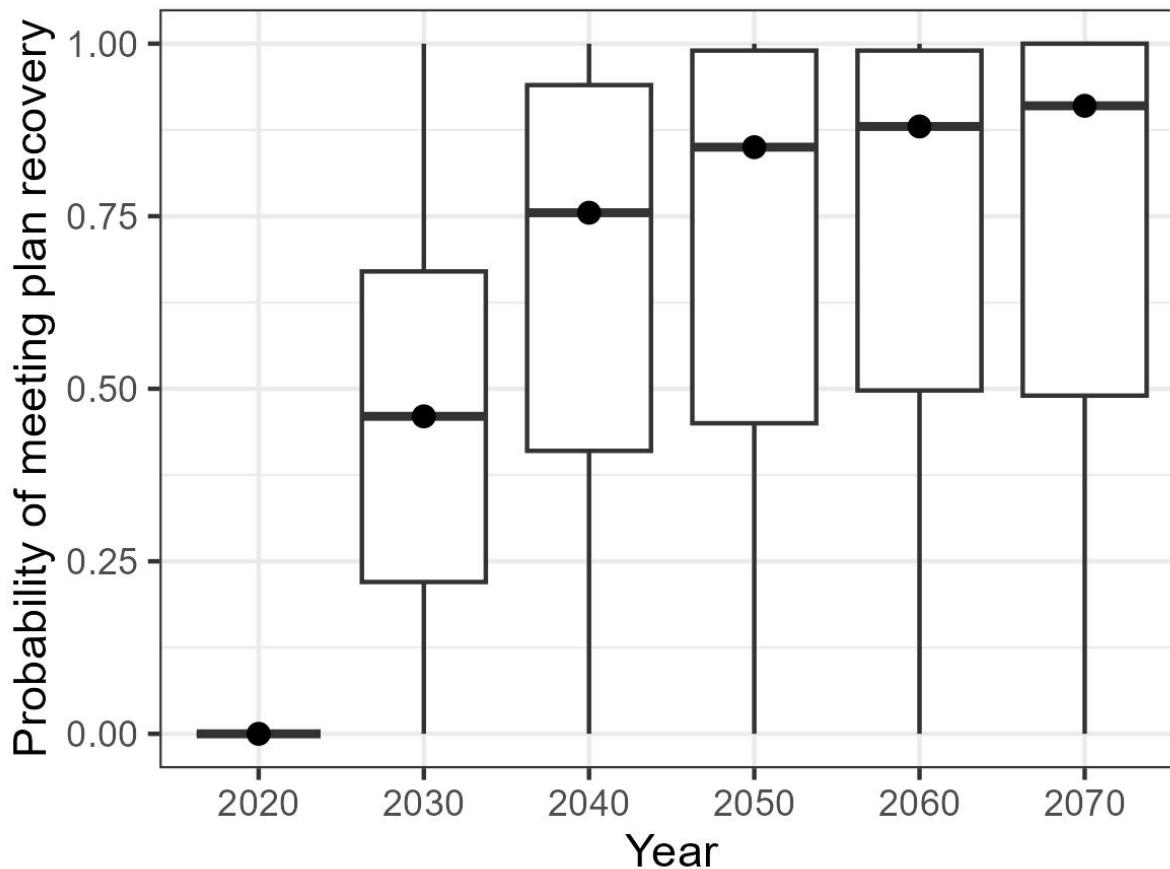
Petracca, L. S., B. Gardner, B. T. Maletzke, and S. J. Converse. 2024. Merging integrated population models and individual-based models to project population dynamics of recolonizing species. *Biological Conservation* 289:110340.



Estimated and actual number of wolves (2021 – 2023)



Probability of meeting plan recovery



- Probability of recovery increased over time, from 0% in 2020 to 91% in 2070
- Median probability of recovery 2021-2070 was 0.64

Petracca, L. S., B. Gardner, B. T. Maletzke, and S. J. Converse. 2024. Merging integrated population models and individual-based models to project population dynamics of recolonizing species. *Biological Conservation* 289:110340.

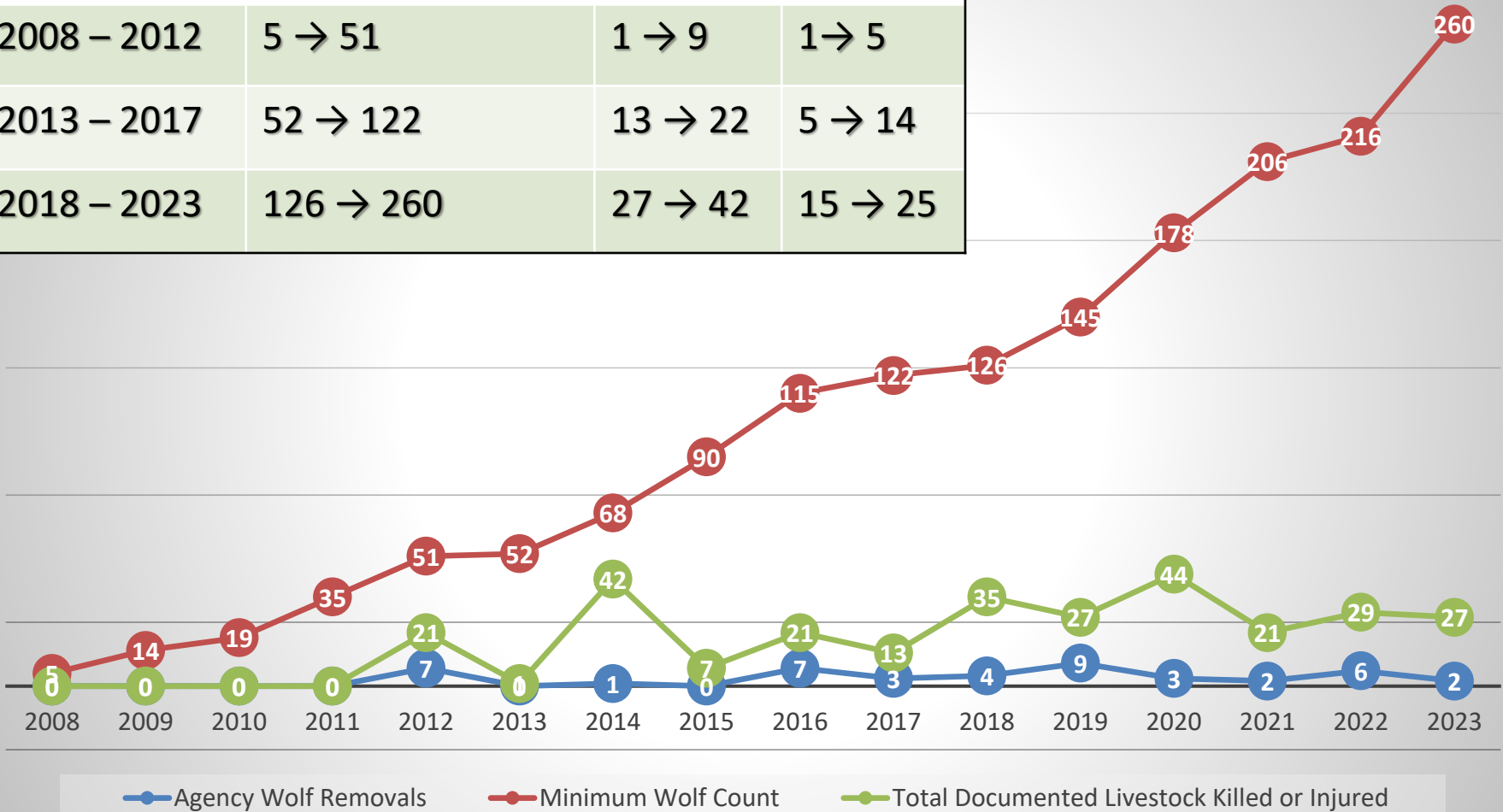




2023 Annual Report Summary

Wolf population growth, 2008 - 2023

Years	Individual wolves	Packs	SBP
2008 – 2012	5 → 51	1 → 9	1 → 5
2013 – 2017	52 → 122	13 → 22	5 → 14
2018 – 2023	126 → 260	27 → 42	15 → 25



Year	Minimum count	# of packs	# of SBP	Annual growth rate	Known wolf mortality
2008	5	1	1	--	0
2009	14	2	2	--	0
2010	19	3	1	36%	2 (11%)
2011	35	7	5	84%	0
2012	51	9	5	46%	9 (18%)
2013	52	13	5	2%	5 (10%)
2014	68	16	5	31%	10 (15%)
2015	90	18	8	32%	7 (8%)
2016	115	20	10	28%	14 (12%)
2017	122	22	14	6%	14 (12%)
2018	126	27	15	3%	12 (10%)
2019	145*	26	10*	14%	21 (15%)
2020	178*	29	16*	24%	16 (9%)
2021	206	33	19	16%	30 (15%)
2022	216	37	26	5%	37 (17%)
2023	260	42	25	20%	36 (14%)
Avg				23%	



Periodic status review recommendation

Definitions in WAC 220-610-110

- "Endangered" means any wildlife species native to the state of Washington that is **seriously threatened with extinction** throughout all or a significant portion of its range within the state.
- "Threatened" means any wildlife species native to the state of Washington that is **likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future** throughout a significant portion of its range within the state without cooperative management or removal of threats.
- "Sensitive" means any wildlife species native to the state of Washington that is **vulnerable or declining and is likely to become endangered or threatened** in a significant portion of its range within the state without cooperative management or removal of threats.



Staff Recommendation

Based on this review, WDFW is proposing to reclassify wolves from endangered to sensitive status.

This recommendation is based on the biological status of the species and progress toward recovery, including consideration of data from the 2021-2023 annual reports.

Questions and discussion



Only the mountain has lived long enough
to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf.
—Aldo Leopold, 1949

Release of Draft PSR, 90-day public comment period - **May 18 – Aug. 16, 2023**

Release of Final PSR, CR-102, and SEPA determination - **Feb. 7, 2024**

Public comment period on CR-102 and SEPA determination - **Feb. 7 – May 6, 2024**

Briefing and public hearing on CR-102 (rule making proposal) - **March 16, 2024**

Presentation of 2023 annual wolf report – **April 20, 2024**

Commission discussion - **June 22, 2024**

Commission decision on CR-102 (rule making proposal) - **July 2024**



Conservation/management action (source)	Endangered	Threatened	Sensitive
Criminal enforcement penalty for illegal take (RCW 77.15.120, RCW 77.15.130)	RCW 77.15.120 protects endangered species from hunting, possession, malicious harassment, and killing; penalties for illegally killing a state endangered species range up to \$5,000 and/or one year in jail.	RCW 77.15.130(1)(c) prohibits the hunting, possession or malicious harassment of threatened or sensitive wildlife unless authorized by rule of the commission, a WDFW permit, or a federal permit; the maximum penalty for violations is 90 days in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine.	
WDFW permits for lethal control by livestock owners (including family members and authorized employees) of wolves to resolve repeated wolf-livestock conflicts (2011 Wolf Plan)	Typically not issued, except WDFW may consider issuing a permit to a livestock owner (including family members and authorized employees) to conduct lethal control if WDFW does not have the resources to address control.	May be issued to livestock owners (including family members and authorized employees) with an issued permit on private lands and public grazing allotments they own or lease.	
WDFW authorization for livestock owners and grazing allotment holders (and their agents) to use non-lethal injurious harassment (2011 Wolf Plan)	May grant authorization to strike wolves with non-lethal projectiles if WDFW required training is completed. Under the endangered classification, an authorization would be reconsidered if used inappropriately or a mortality occurs.	Allowed with a permit and training from WDFW.	
Title 222 WAC (Forest Practices Board): Critical habitats (state) of threatened and endangered species (WAC 222-16-080)	Harvesting, road construction, or site preparation within 1 mile of a known active den site, documented by the department of fish and wildlife, between the dates of March 15 and July 30 or 0.25 mile from the den site at other times of the year.	Does not apply	

Under sensitive status...

- Wolves remain protected (RCW 77.15.130)
- Wolves managed for recovery (i.e., increasing population/range expansion)
- Goal of minimizing both livestock losses and wolf removals and commitment to proactive nonlethal conflict mitigation strategies
 - Proactive nonlethal deterrents required in development of conflict mitigation guidelines regardless of listing status (RCW 77.12.395)
- Process of considering/authorizing lethal removal to mitigate livestock depredation
- Law enforcement investigations/investment in illegally killed wolves
- No WDFW-authorized hunting (tribal hunting rights not affected)
- Continue to follow Wolf Plan goals for delisting
- Priority Habitat and Species List – no change
 - (All sensitive, threatened, endangered, and candidates are PHS species and reflected in recommendations for GMA and CAO)



References

- [Annual wolf reports 2011 – 2023](#)
- [Wolf Conservation and Management Plan \(2011\)](#)
- [Periodic Status Review for the Gray Wolf \(2024\)](#)
- Petracca, L. S., B. Gardner, B. T. Maletzke, and S. J. Converse. 2024. Merging integrated population models and individual-based models to project population dynamics of recolonizing species. *Biological Conservation* 289:110340. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2023.110340>
- Petracca L.S., B. Gardner, B.T. Maletzke, and S.J. Converse. 2023. Forecasting dynamics of a recolonizing wolf population under different management strategies. *bioRxiv* doi: 10.1101/2023.03.23.534018. Available at: <https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/2023.03.23.534018v1>

