



The future of sage-grouse depends on the continued stewardship of working lands.

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Voluntary agreements protect sage-grouse and landowners

ONCE ABUNDANT THROUGHOUT THE AMERICAN WEST, greater sage-grouse have long been in decline in Washington state and throughout their historic range. Since 80 percent of the state's current sage-grouse population occupies private property in the Columbia Basin, the future of the species depends on the continued stewardship of those working lands.

To support these efforts, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has been working with a variety of stakeholders on a strategy that would conserve sage-grouse while protecting landowners' livelihoods. Under a federal program called Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAA), landowners who agree to preserve sage-grouse can secure their operations against potential legal impacts if the species is listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

As early as October 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is expected to decide whether to list sage-grouse as a "threatened" or "endangered" species, which may result in new restrictions on the use of private and public property. This is a concern for many farmers, ranchers, and others who share the land with these native birds.

How a CCAA works

A CCAA is a voluntary agreement whereby landowners agree to manage their lands to conserve a species that may become listed under the ESA. In return, landowners receive assurances against additional regulatory requirements should that species ever be listed for protection under federal law.

Terms of these agreements are tailored to address the needs of the specific property in order to keep working lands working.

Wildlife species also benefit from these agreements, because conservation measures outlined in a CCAA are implemented before a species is listed for protection. In 2013, actions taken by landowners under these agreements have been credited with helping to recover – and avert listings for – three species (the greater and lesser Adams Cave beetle, and the dunes sagebrush lizard).

This CCAA is intended to be compatible with the federal Sage Grouse Initiative and related conservation programs funded through the federal Farm Bill.

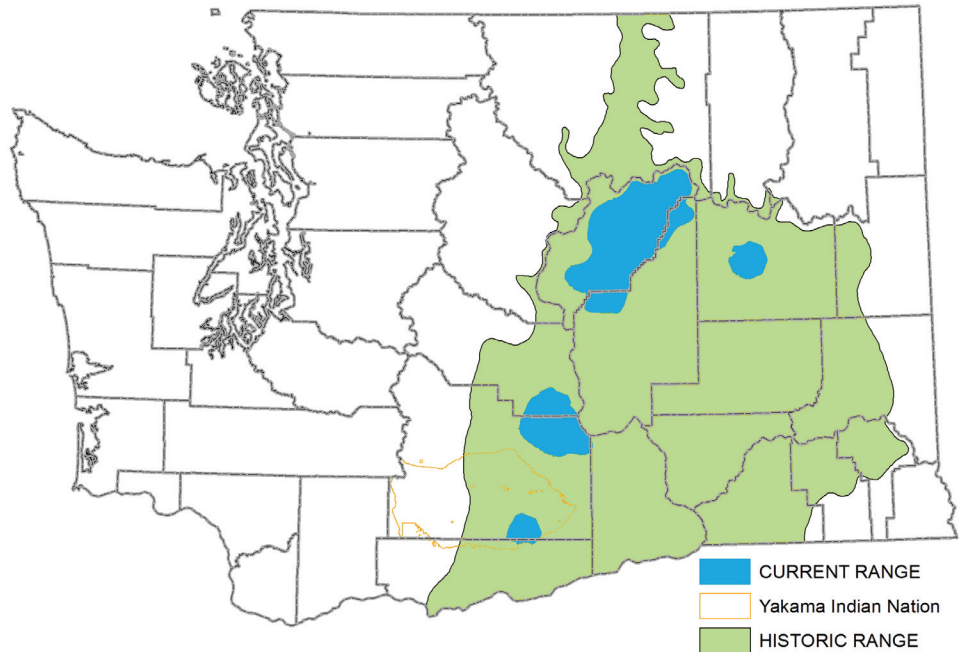
Developing a CCAA template

WDFW is working to make it easier for landowners to obtain a CCAA. To do so, the department has been working with the USFWS, the Washington Department of Natural Resources, organized agricultural groups and others to create a template for these agreements. Once approved, the template can be tailored by any private, tribal, local, or state entity to meet the needs of their lands.

The draft template currently includes a set of conservation measures that focus on:

- Avoiding fragmentation or degradation of shrub-steppe habitat, including losses from wildfires.
- Preventing the introduction or spread of non-native plants.
- Minimizing harm to sage-grouse from fences, pets, and predators.
- Avoiding disturbance to breeding or nesting grounds during critical time periods.

The template will be released for public comment in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act in mid-2015. Once approved, the template can be customized by any private, tribal, local, or state entity to meet the needs of their lands.



Sage-grouse in decline

Washington is one of 11 western states with populations of greater sage-grouse, all of which have declined due to habitat loss in recent decades. Once common throughout the shrub-steppe areas of eastern Washington, the species now occupies about 8 percent of its historical range.

In 2014, WDFW estimated the state population of greater sage-grouse at less than a thousand birds.

The sage-grouse was state-listed as a threatened species in 1998. WDFW completed a recovery plan in 2004 and has since worked with landowners to enroll thousands of acres in federal conservation programs. The department has also restored sage-grouse habitat on WDFW-owned Wildlife Areas, led an effort to reintroduce sage-grouse in Lincoln County, and worked to minimize predation on recovering populations.

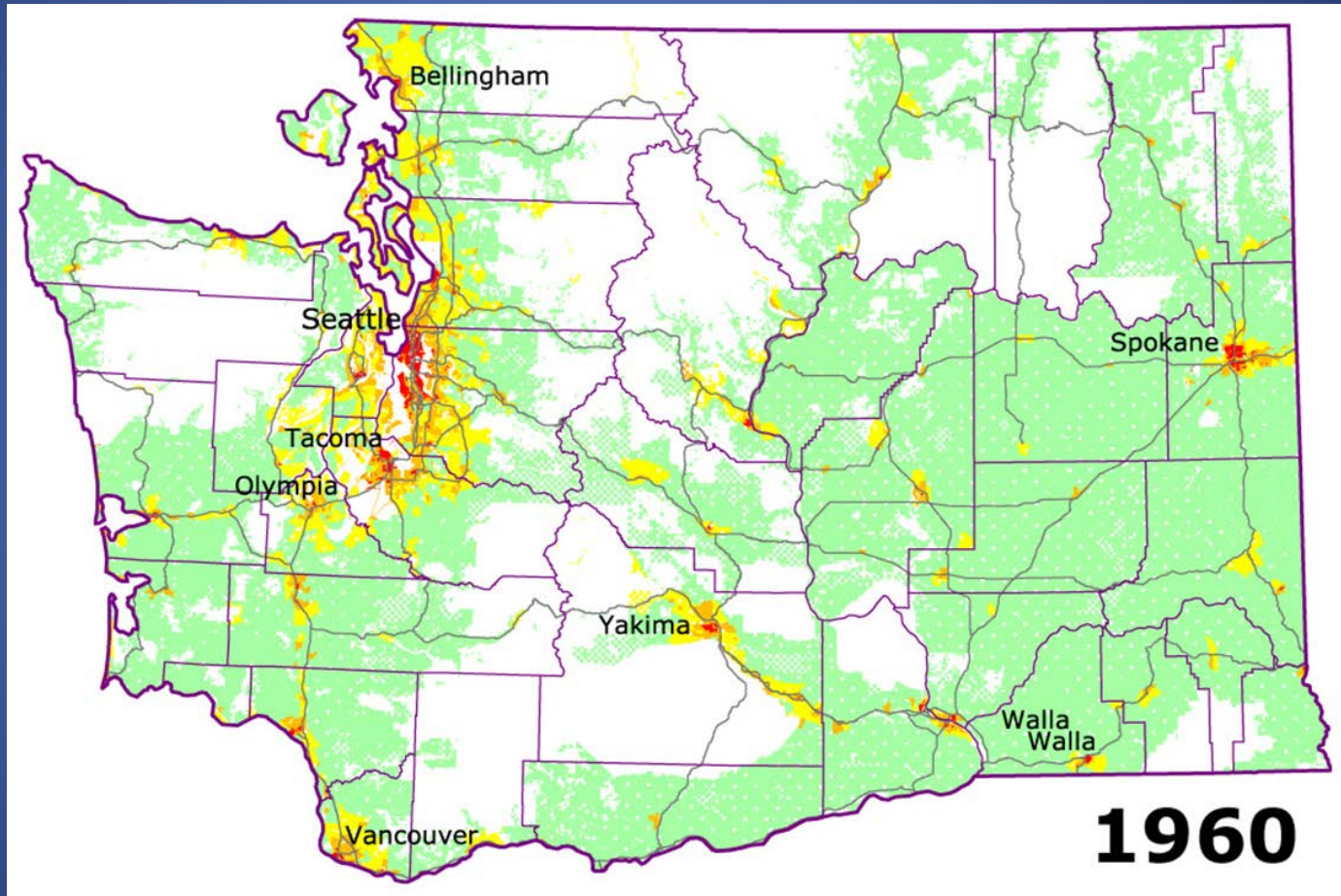
In 2001, USFWS designated greater sage-grouse in the Columbia Basin as a candidate for listing under the ESA. In 2015, the agency is expected to determine whether to move forward with that listing in that area, list the species throughout its multi-state range, or determine the listing is not needed.



Wildlife Interaction Rules



Overview



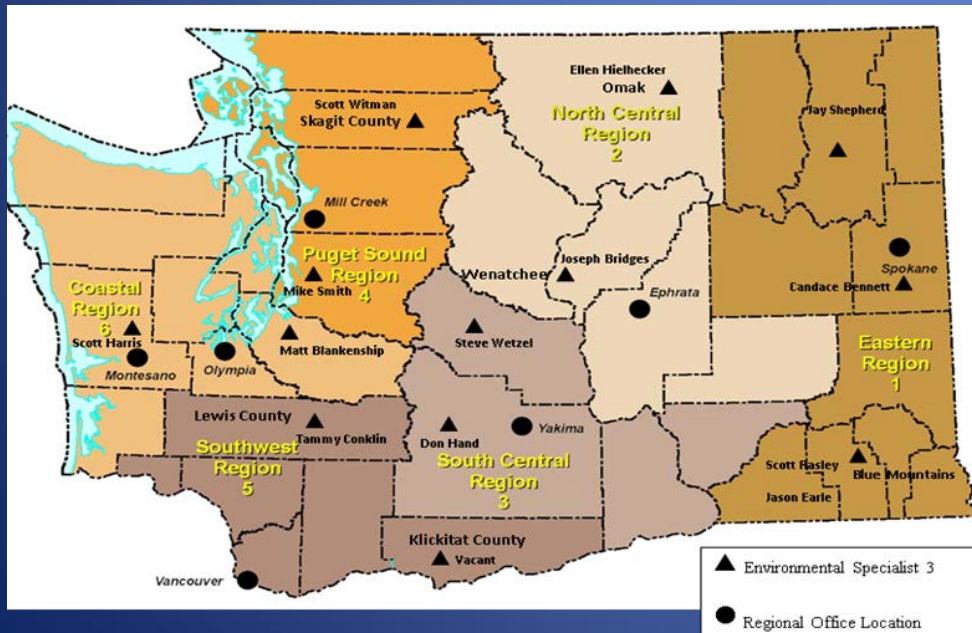
Overview



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Overview

- Transferred wildlife conflict responsibilities
- Program development and implementation
- Need to revise and propose rules to address the future of conflict management.



Overview

Purposes Of Proposed Rule Changes:

- Update existing or provide new requirements for trappers, wildlife control operators, permit holders, hunters, landowners, and producers
- Provide a framework for producers to work with WDFW
- Update the existing wildlife control operator program and better align it with the trapping program.



Overview

- Preparation for proposing rule changes
 - Public input began June 2014
 - 2 Surveys (WA Hunter Opinion, Washington Residents' Opinion – Responsive Mgmt)
 - Game Management Plan (on-line commenting and public meetings)
 - Stakeholder outreach (WFPA, WCA, Farm Bureau, WA Trappers Assn., GMAC)

Proposed Changes

- Damage to Agriculture and Timber
- Killing Wildlife in Protection of Property
- Compensation
- Wildlife Control Operators



Damage to Agriculture and Timber



Damage to Agriculture and Timber

- Issue: Wildlife have the potential to cause thousands of dollars worth of damage to commercial agriculture and timber industries. WDFW is responsible for assisting owners with minimizing damage to commercial agriculture and timberlands.
 - *Damage prevention and depredation permits are an essential tool for wildlife conflict management.*
 - *Clarify language to facilitate an improved process and better customer service.*

Damage to Agriculture and Timber

- Replace 232-12-025 with proposed new rule:
232-36-320 Black bear timber damage depredation permits
 - Retains and clarifies rules addressing bear depredation permits.
 - Add reference to RCW 77.15.245 (Use of bait and hounds)
 - Add definitions “damage to timberlands” and “removal”

Damage to Agriculture and Timber

- Replace 232-28-266 with proposed new rule 232-36-310 Damage Prevention permit hunts: deer, elk, turkey
 - Clarifies Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) requirements
 - Modifies permit numbers and season dates available under DPCA

Damage to Agriculture and Timber

- Propose new rule 232-36-310

Species	Area	Current Quota	Proposed Quota
Elk antlerless	Statewide	200	200 Eastern WA (GMU ranges 100, 200, 300) 100 Western WA (GMU ranges 400, 500 600)
Elk antlerless	GMU 372 & 379	60	70
Elk spike / antlerless	Elk Area 3721	50	100
Any bull	Elk Area 3721	30	60
Elk antlerless	GMU 501 -578	50	100

Damage to Agriculture and Timber

- Propose new rule 232-36-310 (continued)
 - Allow for use of un-filled turkey tags along with damage permit

Species	Current Area	Proposed Area	Current Quota	Proposed Quota	Current Start Date	Proposed Start Date
Turkey	GMUs 105- 130	Statewide	200	300	Oct 10	Oct 1

Damage to Agriculture and Timber

- Propose new rule 232-36-310 (continued)

Species	Area	Current Start Date	Proposed Start Date	Current Close Date	Proposed Close Date
Deer/Elk	Statewide	August 1	July 1	March 31	No change
Elk spike/antlerless	Elk Area 3721	August 1	July 1	March 31	No change
Any Bull	Elk Area 3721	May 15	No change	July 31	June 30

Damage to Agriculture and Timber

- Propose new rule
 - 232-36-090 Limitations to managing damage caused by deer, elk, bear, and cougar on private property
 - Clarify owners must seek WDFW for assistance
 - Clarify cooperative working relationship with WDFW and owner
 - Requires documentation of refusal to non-lethal measures
 - Provides an appeal process for owners
 - Non-compliance is ineligible for compensation

Damage to Agriculture and Timber

- Increasing hunting pressure and human presence can be an effective tool in minimizing damage from wildlife . Providing opportunities to utilize hunters for damage issues fosters good will.
- Revise 232-36-300 Public hunting requirements
 - Clarifying language
 - Hunting for “Species causing damage”, but allow for other species to provide additional hazing
 - Landowner and the department to cooperatively agree to provide ample hunting pressure to minimize damage.

Killing Wildlife in Protection of Property

Killing Wildlife in Protection of Property

- Property owners need to have the ability to protect their property from wildlife caused damage particularly damage caused by non-listed species.

Killing Wildlife in Protection of Property

- Revise
 - 232-36-051 Killing wildlife causing private property damage
 - 232-36-055 Disposal of wildlife killed for personal safety or for causing private property damage
 - 232-36-510 Failure to abide by conditions of permits, provide completed forms, or submit required documents of reports

Killing Wildlife in Protection of Property

- Confusion exists because of the various permits currently identified in the rule.
- Revise
 - 232-36-051 Killing wildlife causing private property damage
 - Clarify use of Damage Prevention Agreements, Damage Prevention Permits and Kill Permits
 - Removed permit types that no longer exist
 - Revised nomenclature and consolidated permits

Killing Wildlife in Protection of Property

- Revise

232-36-055 Disposal of wildlife killed for personal safety or for causing private property damage

- Clarify language detailing carcass disposal will be conditioned in the permits
- Add language directing carcass disposal for wildlife killed without a permit from WDFW

Killing Wildlife in Protection of Property

- Revise

232-36-510 Failure to abide by conditions of permits, provide completed forms, or submit required documents of reports

– Change language to reflect correct title for wildlife control operators and certification

Killing Wildlife in Protection of Property

- Propose new rule
 - 232-36-330 Bear and Cougar depredation permit hunts for domestic animal or livestock loss.
 - Addresses need to respond to livestock losses
 - Clarifies that landowners will choose WDFW authorized hunters.
 - Clarifies that a permit from WDFW is required to remove bear or cougar
 - Requires 24 hour reporting of take and 48 hours to dispose of carcass

Compensation

Compensation

- Revise

- 232-36-100 Payment for commercial crop damage –
Limitations

- Add language to correctly reflect Damage
Prevention Cooperative Agreements

- Clarify denial of claims for refusal of prevention
measures

Compensation

- Revise

232-36-110 Application for cash compensation for commercial crop damage – Procedure

- Change package due date from 60 days to “when damage stops” (aids in accurate assessments)
- Add requirement to meet Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement or have a WDFW waiver to file claim.
- Clarify harvest yield documentation required
- Clarify issues surrounding utilizing adjustors to determine losses.

Compensation

- Revise 232-36-110 (continued)
 - Clarify owner's responsibility to work with adjustor
 - Clarify use of owner selected crop adjustor versus WDFW contracted adjustor
 - Clarify denial of claim for non-compliance with DPCA
 - Ensures all producers using an adjustor pay a share of the adjustor's fees, regardless of claim amount (fairness and clarity)

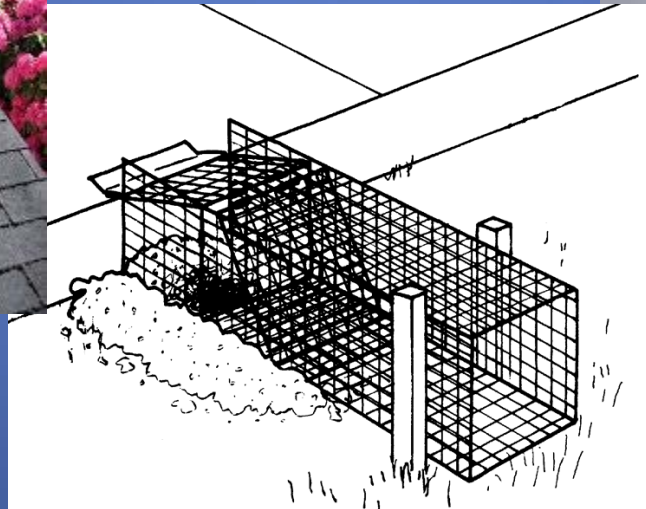
Compensation

- Revise

232-36-210 Application for cash compensation for livestock damage or other domestic animal – Procedure

- Add required to notify WDFW within 30 days of loss
- Change (extend) submission of complete claims package
- Clarify assess of losses caused wolves and other carnivores.

Wildlife Control Operators



Wildlife Control Operators

- Revise

232-12-142 Special trapping permit-Use of body gripping traps

- Remove “use of body gripping traps” from title
- Clarify term “permit” is a Special Trapping Permit
- Removed application details (information is redundant to the permit application)
- Clarifies that raw fur may only be retained by a licensed trapper during the trapping season while using a live trap

Wildlife Control Operators

- Revise
- 232-36-060 Director or his/her designee is empowered to grant wildlife control operator certifications
 - Must pass a WA state trapper education exam and possess 2 years of demonstrated experience.
 - Remove the date from the fee change. This information is redundant.
 - Change the term “permit” to “certification” to clarify the difference (see sections 2 and 3)

Wildlife Control Operators

- Revise
- 232-36-065 Director or his/her designee is empowered to issue wildlife control operator permits to address wildlife interactions
 - Specify WCOs are permitted to conduct work out of designated seasons to assist landowners with damage issues.
 - Clarify that Body Gripping Traps require a special permit.

Wildlife Control Operators

- WAC 232-36-065 (Continued)
 - Clarify the retention of animal furs by WCO's in season only with certain conditions.
 - Define the disposal of animals trapped with body gripping traps.
 - Adjust reporting requirements to reflect the new proposed WAC on reporting.
 - Clarify the period for which a certification or permit may be denied/revoked

Wildlife Control Operators

Proposed New Rule: 232-36-066 Report required of certified wildlife control operator

- WCO reporting similar to trappers – should alleviate confusion on how and where to report.
- Clarifies failure to report or false reports are considered an infraction. This will alleviate confusion on whether or not there are penalties for failure to report.

Wildlife Control Operators

- Proposed New Rule -232-36-054 Use of body-gripping traps and exceptions
 - Removed language from 232-12-141, Wild Animal trapping, to create this WAC
 - Removed listing of individual traps and replaced with reference to RCW 77.15.192
 - Changed trap check time frame reference to 24 hours instead of 72 hours

Next Steps

- June 12 - Public hearing
- August Commission Meeting
- Develop Policy/Procedure



Questions



Ungulate Harvest and Population Trend Data in Areas of Washington with Wolves



Washington Department of
FISH and WILDLIFE

May 2015

Can Wolves Impact Prey Numbers?

Yes, there are examples where wolves have caused or contributed to declines in prey numbers. However, in most areas, wolves were not the limiting factor for prey abundance.

Wolf impacts on ungulates is a concern for hunters and rural communities



Wolf Conservation and Management Plan

STATE OF WASHINGTON

December 2011



The potential impacts of wolves to Washington's ungulate species was considered in the development of the Wolf Conservation and Management Plan.

The Plan discusses wolf predation and the potential resulting management of wolves in page 116.

Washington Wolf Conservation and Management Plan

Washington's wolf plan has a strategy that allows the state to address wolf impacts to "at risk" deer, elk, moose, or other ungulates.

WDFW could consider reducing wolf abundance in the localized area occupied by the ungulate population if wolf predation is found to be a primary limiting factor

Definition of “At Risk” Ungulate Population

- Any Federally or State listed ungulate population
- Any ungulate population that falls 25% below its population objective for two consecutive years,
- Or if the harvest decreases 25% below the 10-year average harvest rate for two consecutive years



Woodland Caribou

How will we know if there is a decline in an ungulate population?

Monitor Ungulates

- Population estimates
- Indexes
- Composition counts
- Harvest trends



Blue Mountains elk survey

If a Decline in Ungulate Population is Detected

Look for clues to determine the cause. More obvious causes are:

- Hunting
- Severe winters
- Fire
- Disease/Parasites



Mule deer in winter

If a Decline in Ungulate Population is Detected

Less obvious causes are:

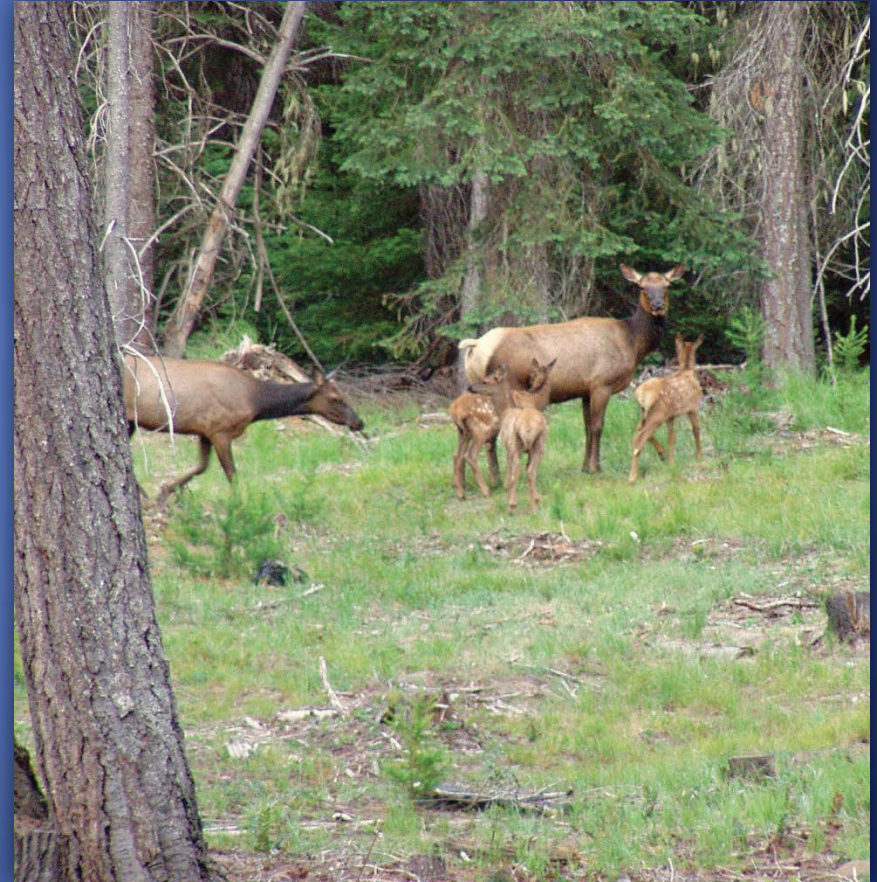
- Drought
- Changes in habitat
- Changes in vulnerability
- Predation effects



Cougar predation

If a Decline in an Ungulate Population is Detected

- Look at ungulate trends in surrounding areas
- Look at subtle weather patterns
- Intensify prey surveys
- Look for a change in survival rates of young or female prey



Cow and calf elk

If a Decline is Detected and Predation is the Suspected Cause?

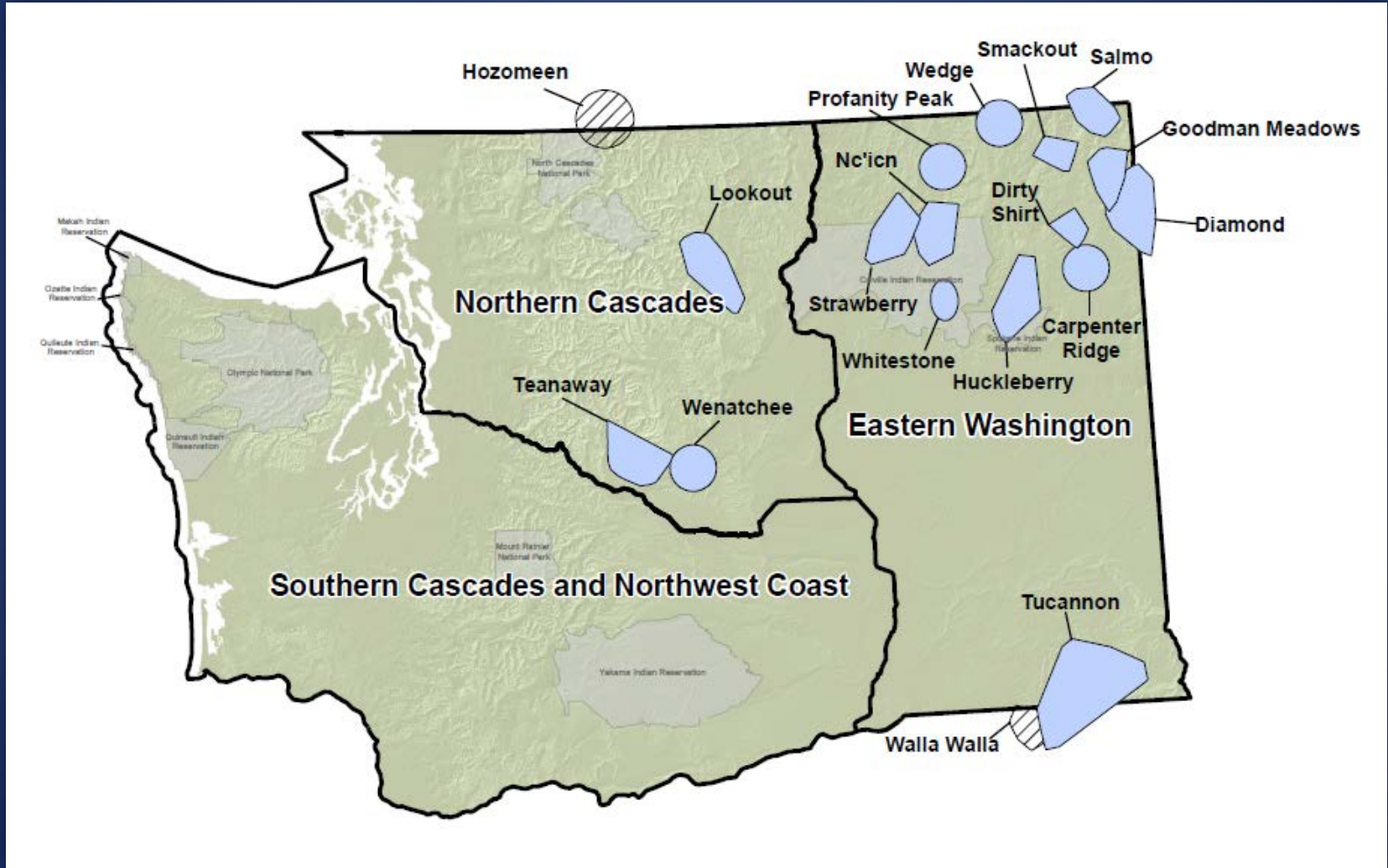
- Assess the available scientific information
- Conduct risk assessment
- If warranted, define appropriate wolf removal action
- Conduct public review of the proposed removal action
- Implement wolf removal
- Monitor results to prey and wolf population



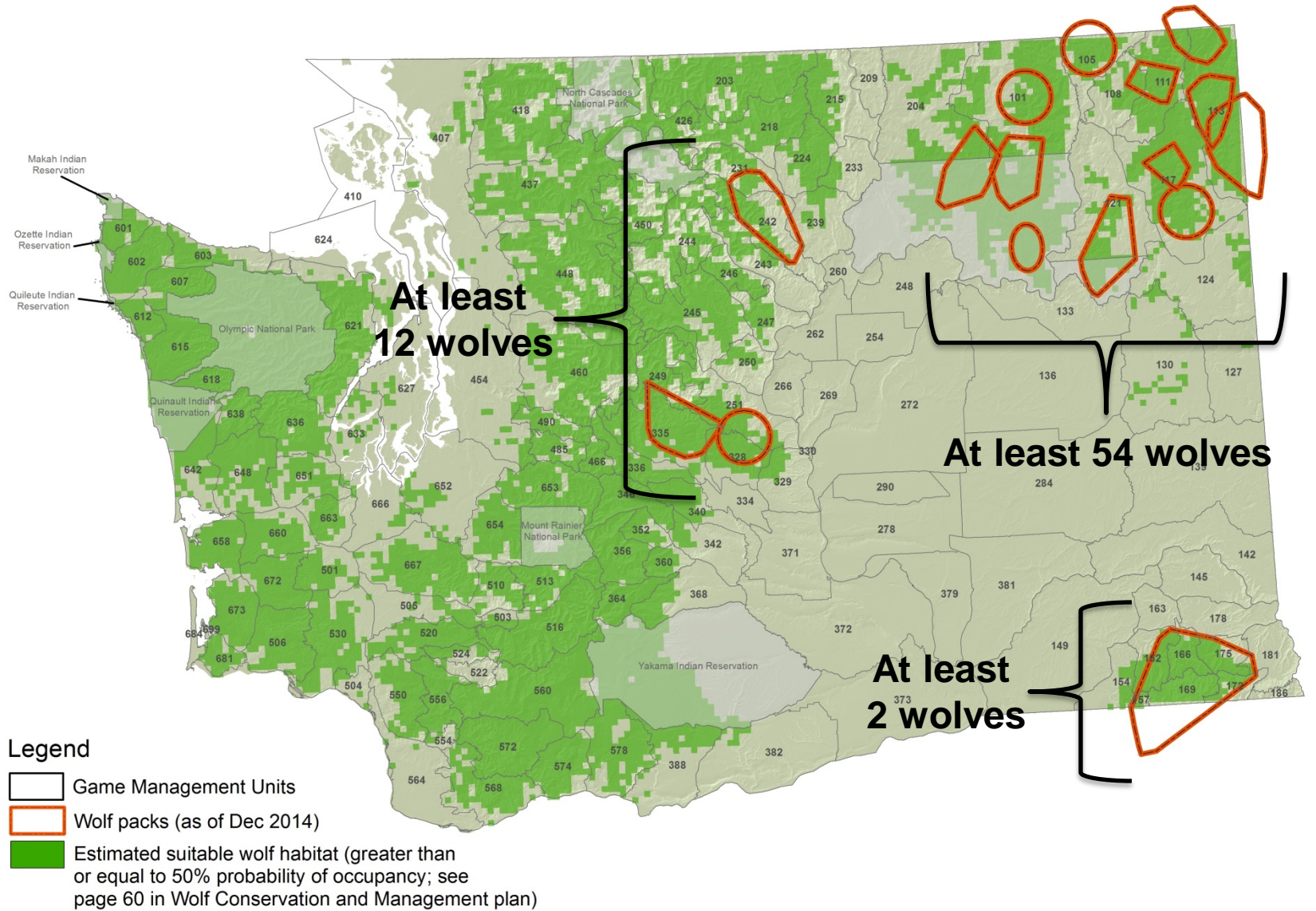
Elk capture

Wolf Status

Areas with Known Wolf Packs in 2014

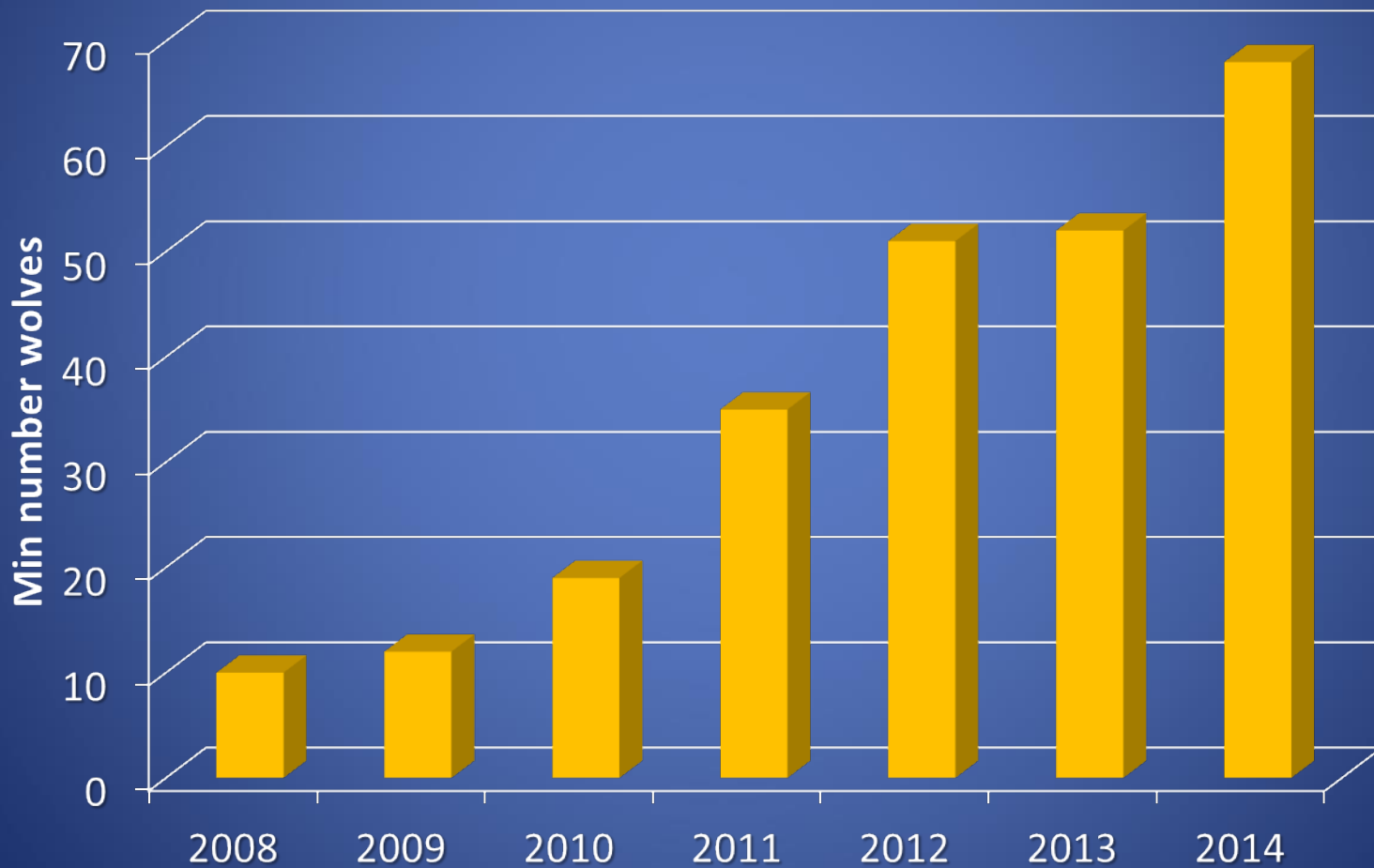


Washington Wolf Packs Relative to Estimated Suitable Wolf Habitat



Minimum Number of Wolves

Expect population to continue increasing



Deer, Elk, and Moose Status in Areas with Wolves

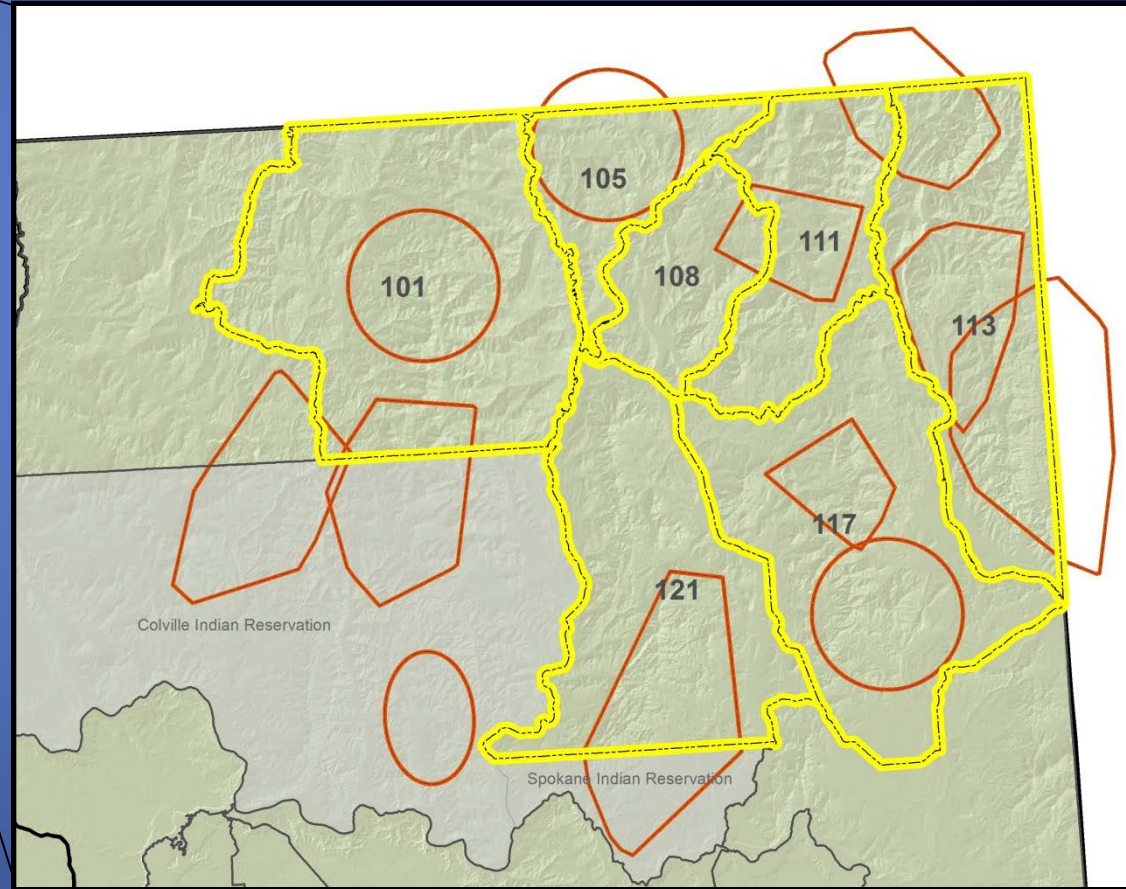
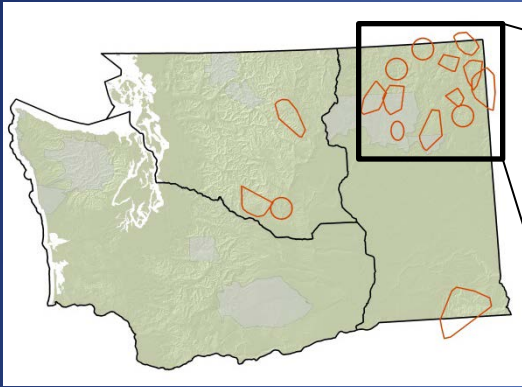
Northeastern Washington

Information From Collaborative Ungulate Research in Washington

- Moose abundance, distribution, and demographic characteristics in eastern Washington: Univ. of Montana: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01699/>
- NE White-tailed deer habitat use, movements, and mortality rates: Univ. of Montana
- NE White-tailed deer abundance: WDFW
- Predation impacts on mule deer and white-tailed deer populations: Univ. of Washington

Buck Harvest in Core GMUs with Wolves

GMUs 101 – 121



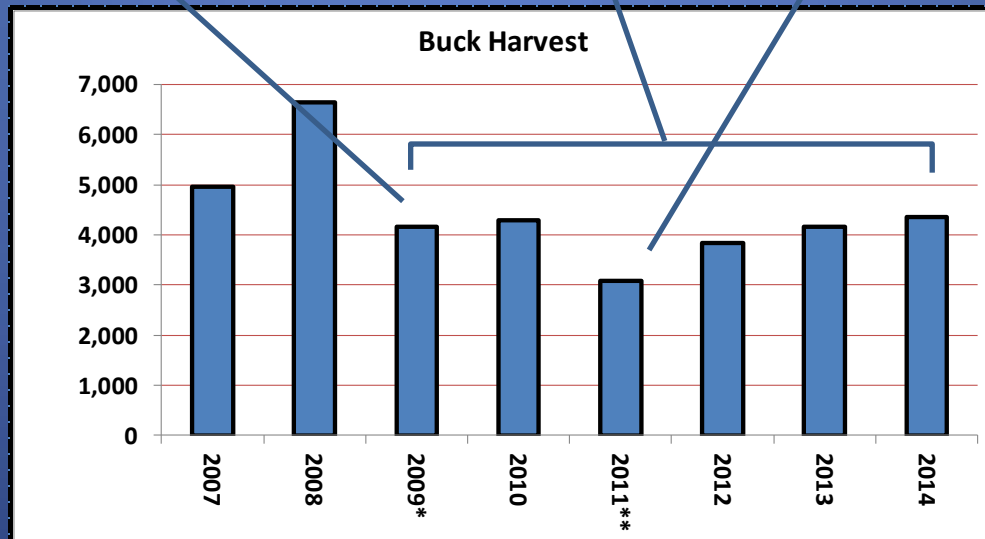
Buck Harvest in Core GMUs with Wolves

GMUs 101 – 121

Buck harvest declined significantly after two hard winters in 2007 & 2008

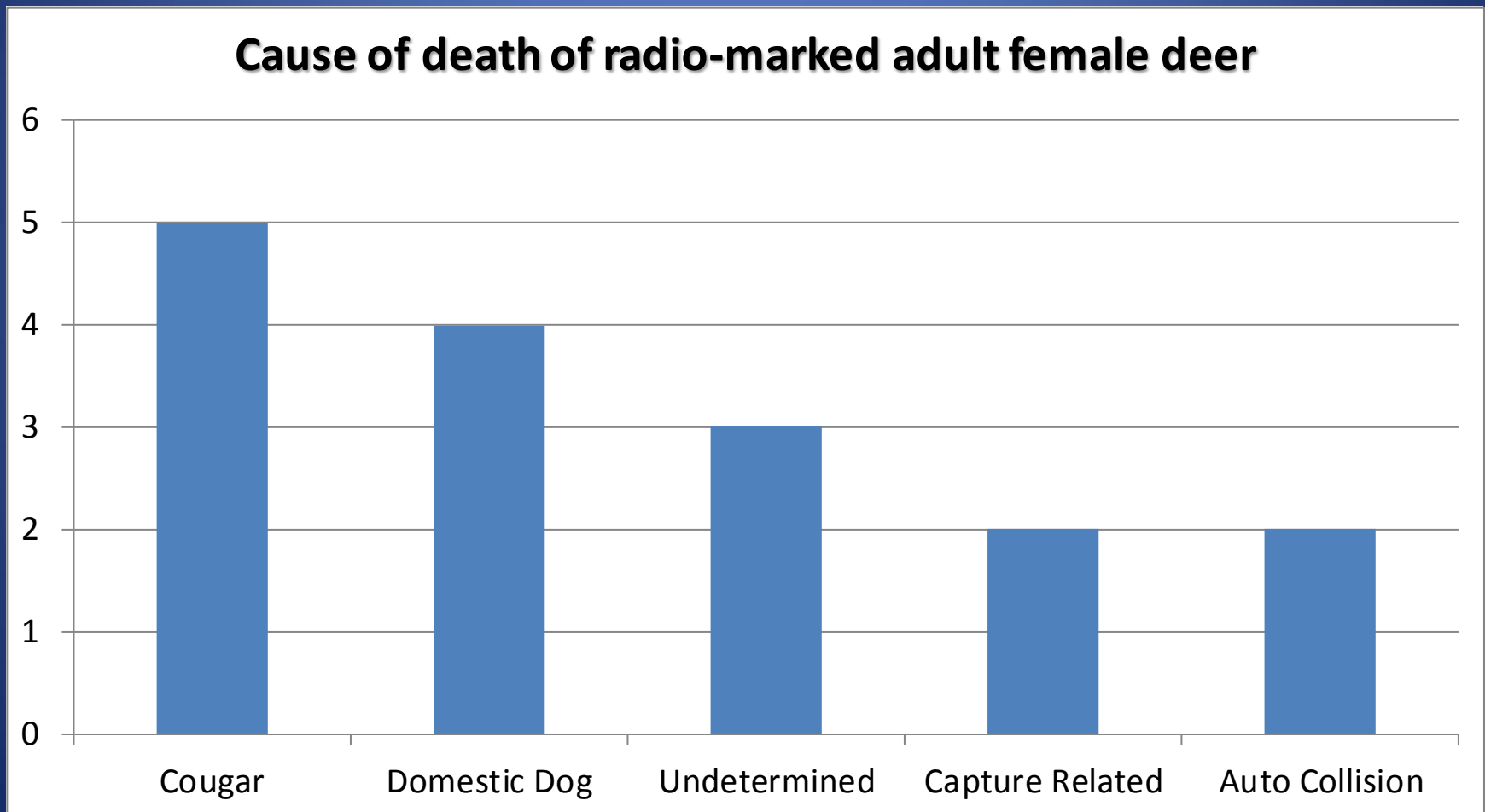
The first wolf pack was documented in 2009 and there were twelve in 2014

In 2011 a four point buck restriction was implemented in the two largest units (117 & 121)



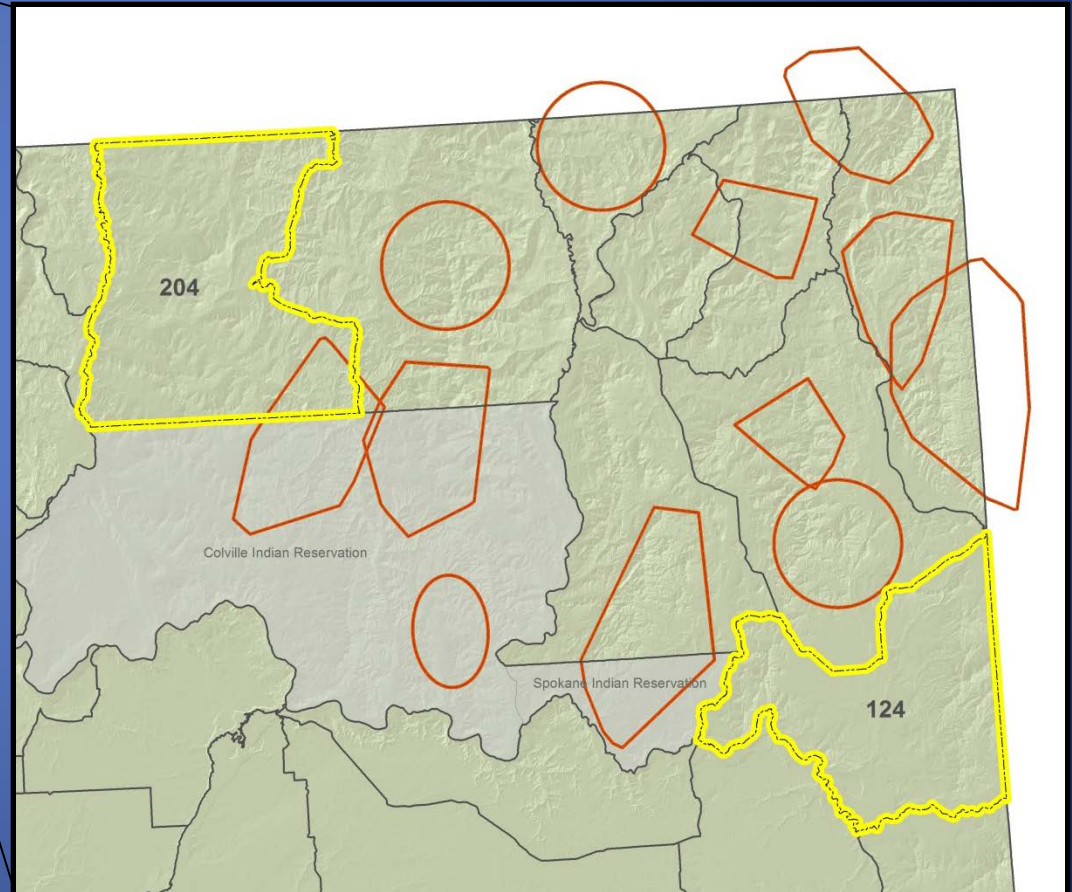
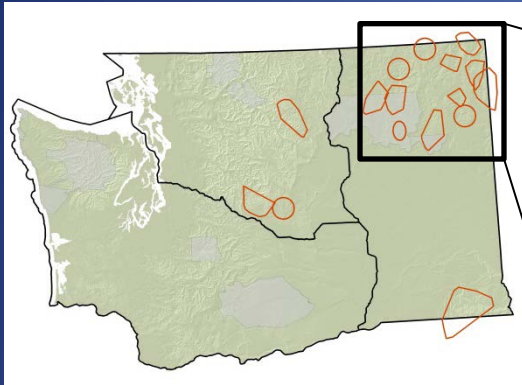
Causes of Mortality in White-tailed Deer

GMUs 101-121



Buck Harvest in GMUs with few Wolves

GMUs 124 & 204

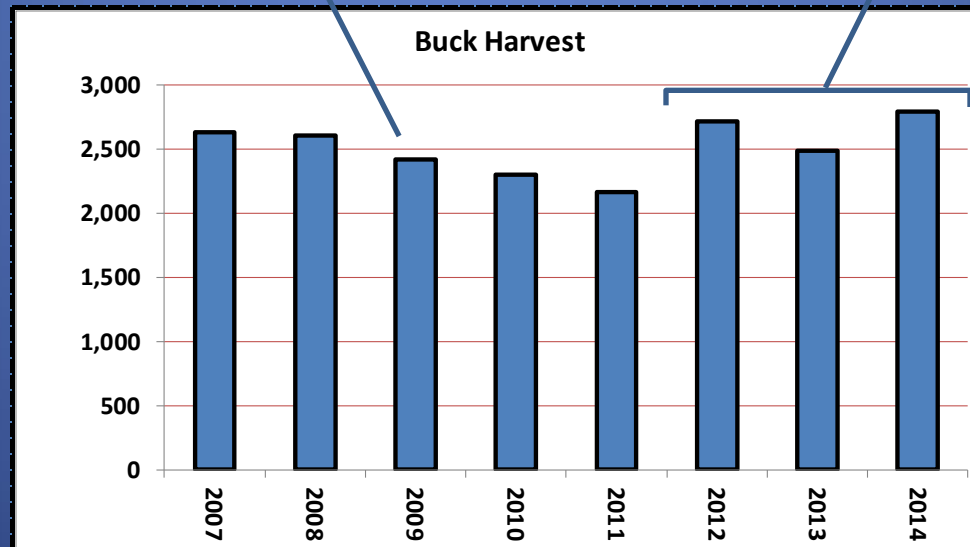


Buck Harvest in GMUs with few Wolves

GMUs 124 & 204

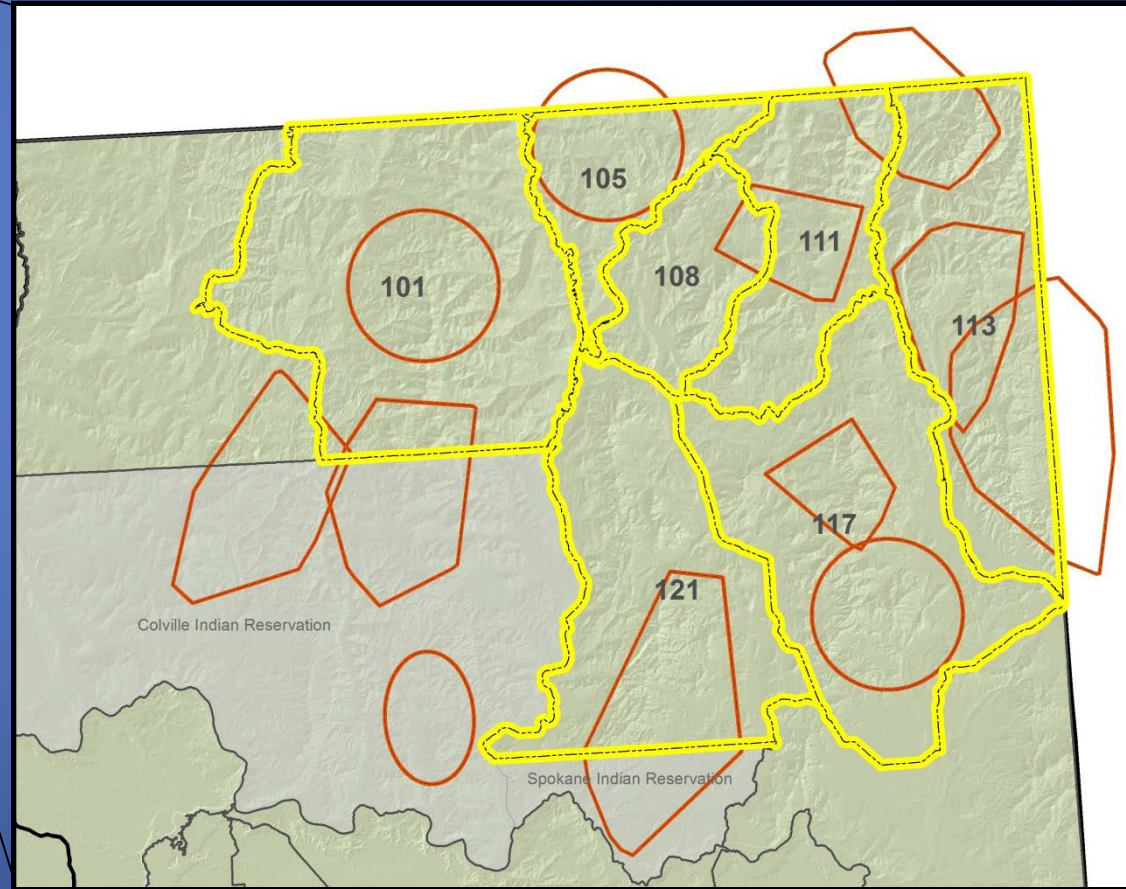
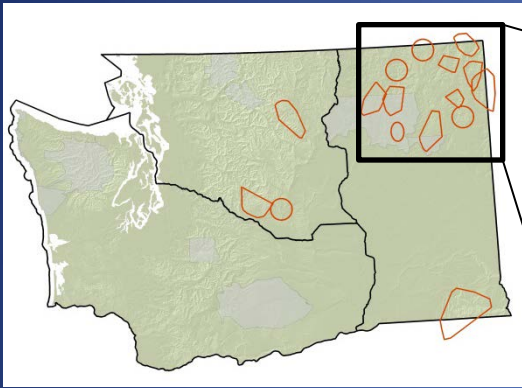
Buck harvest declined significantly after two hard winters in 2007 & 2008

Slight over lap with wolf packs, but wolves likely in area



Bull Elk Harvest in Core GMUs with Wolves

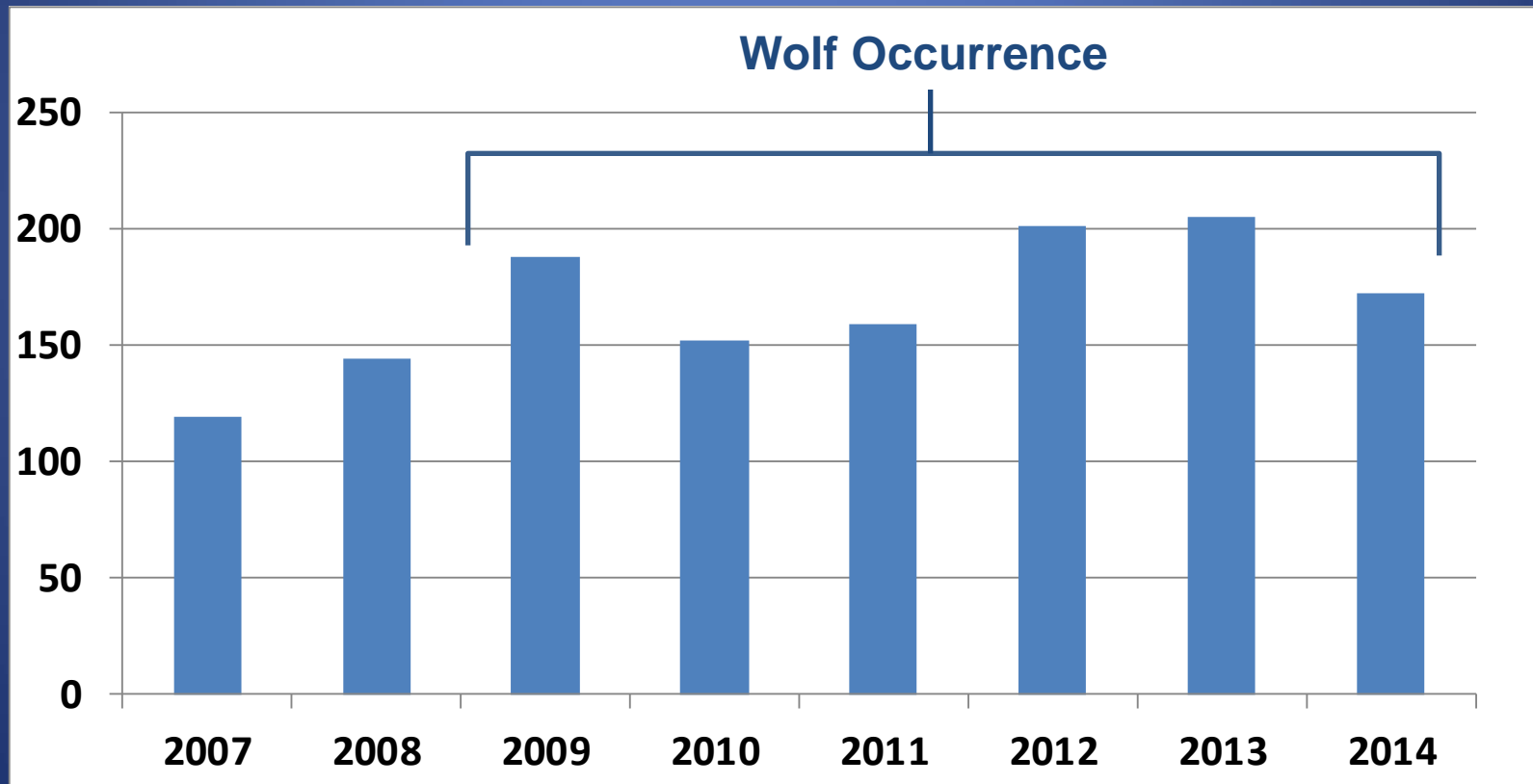
GMUs 101 – 121



Bull Elk Harvest in Core GMUs with Wolves

GMUs 101 – 121

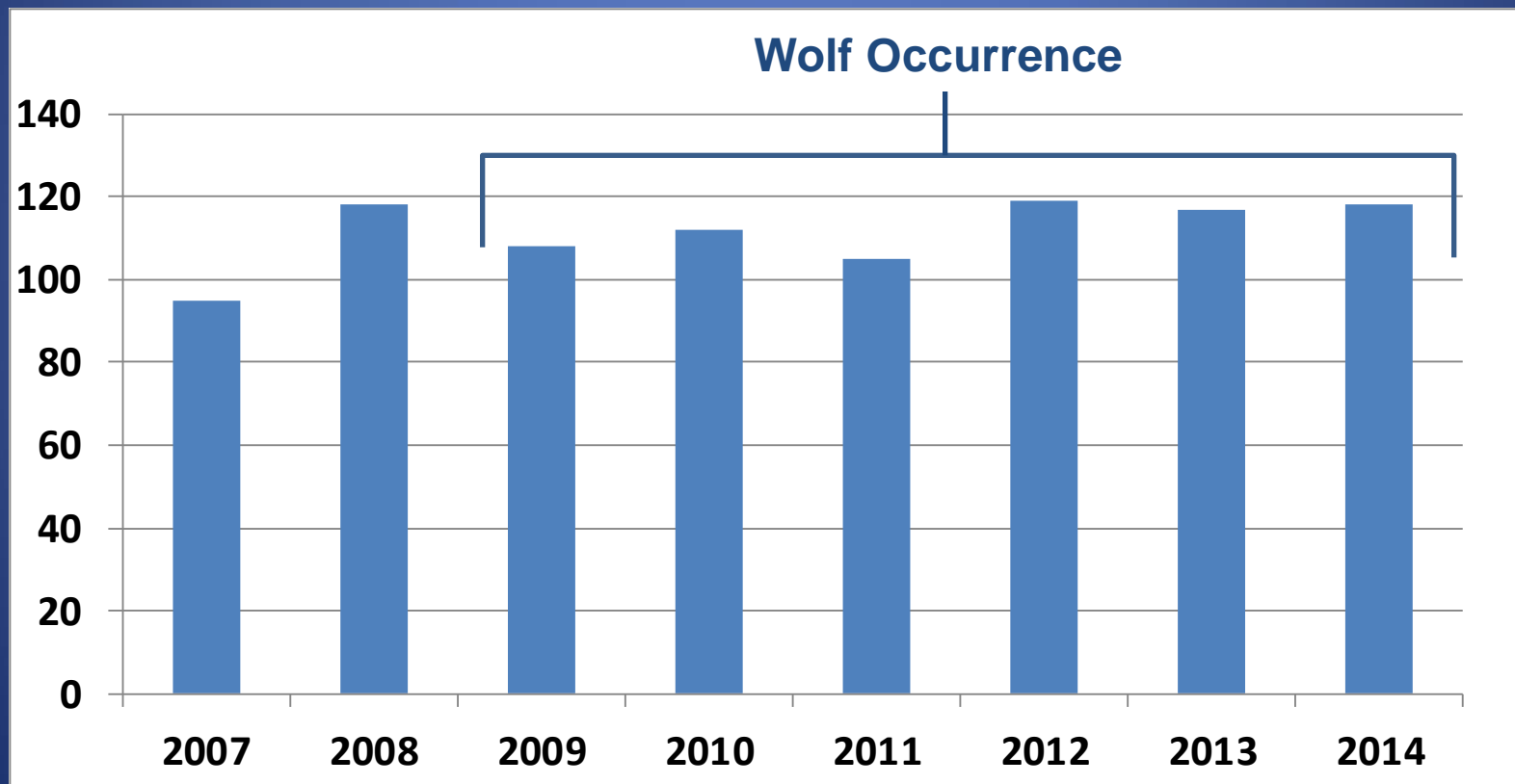
Wolves do not appear to be impacting bull harvest trends



Moose Harvest in Core GMUs with Wolves

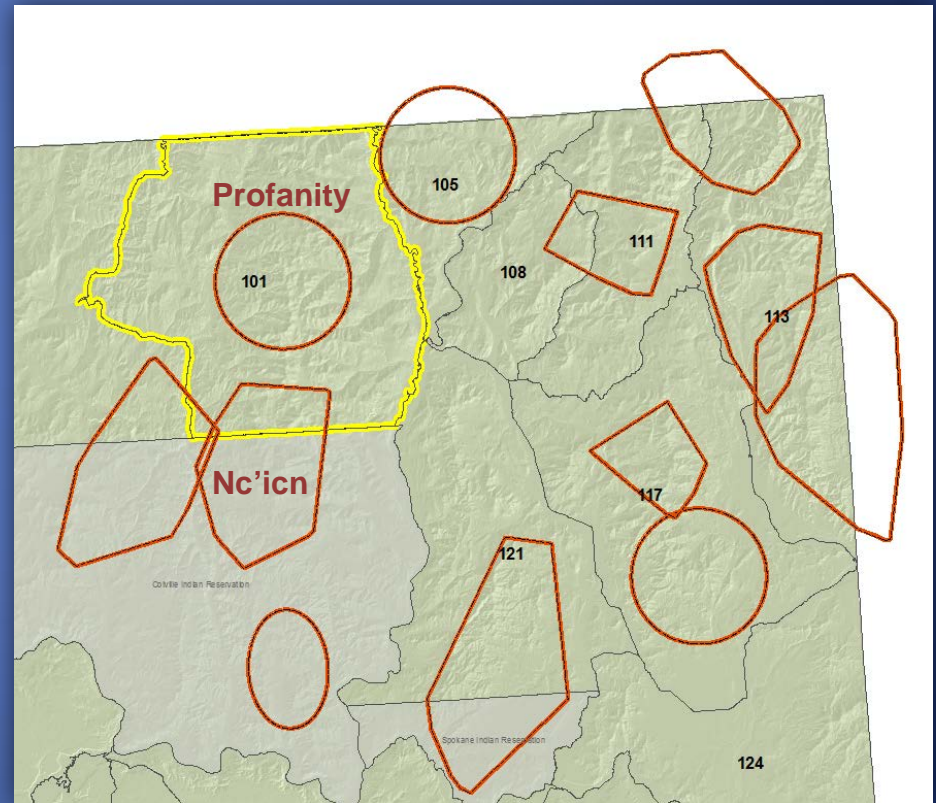
GMUs 101 – 121

Wolves do not appear to be impacting moose harvest trends



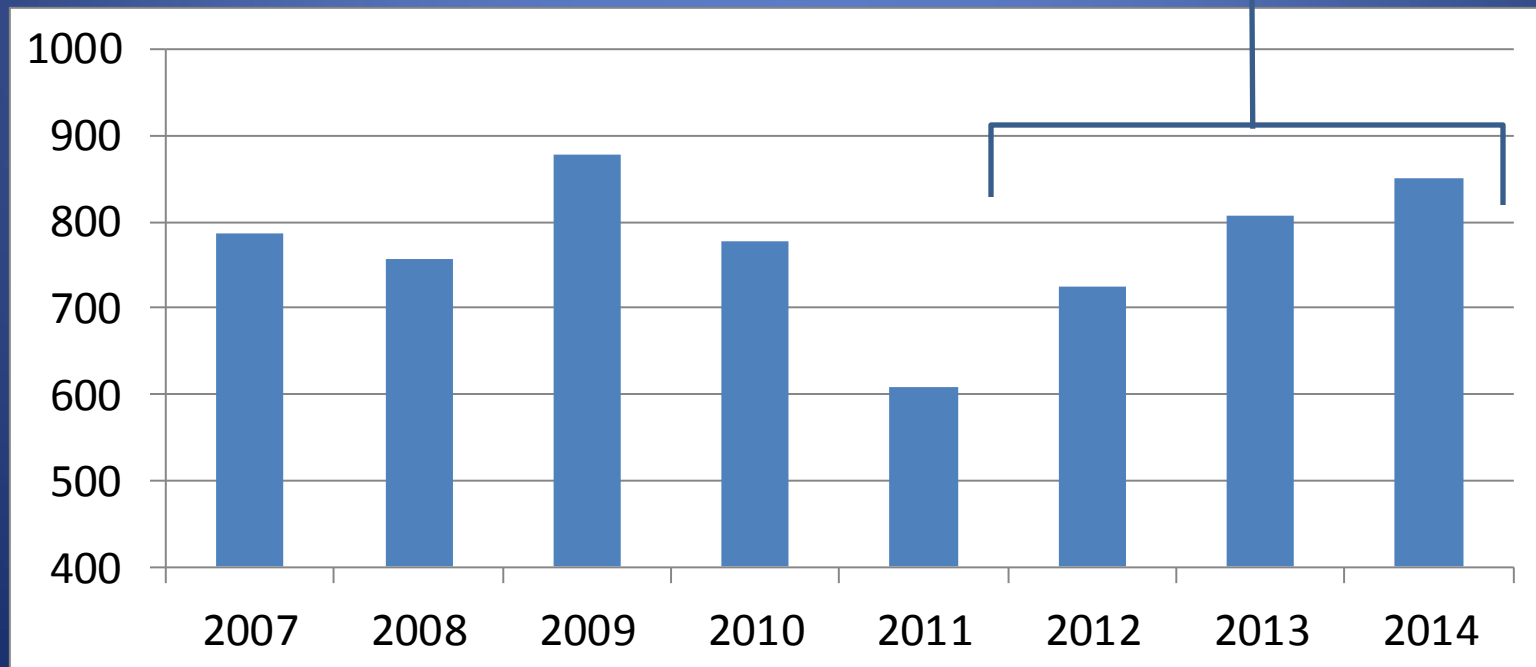
Wolf Packs in GMU 101

- The Nc'icn Pack has been documented since 2012 and straddles the northern border of the Colville Indian Reservation
- The Profanity Pack (which was likely the expected Boulder Pack in 2012) was documented in 2014



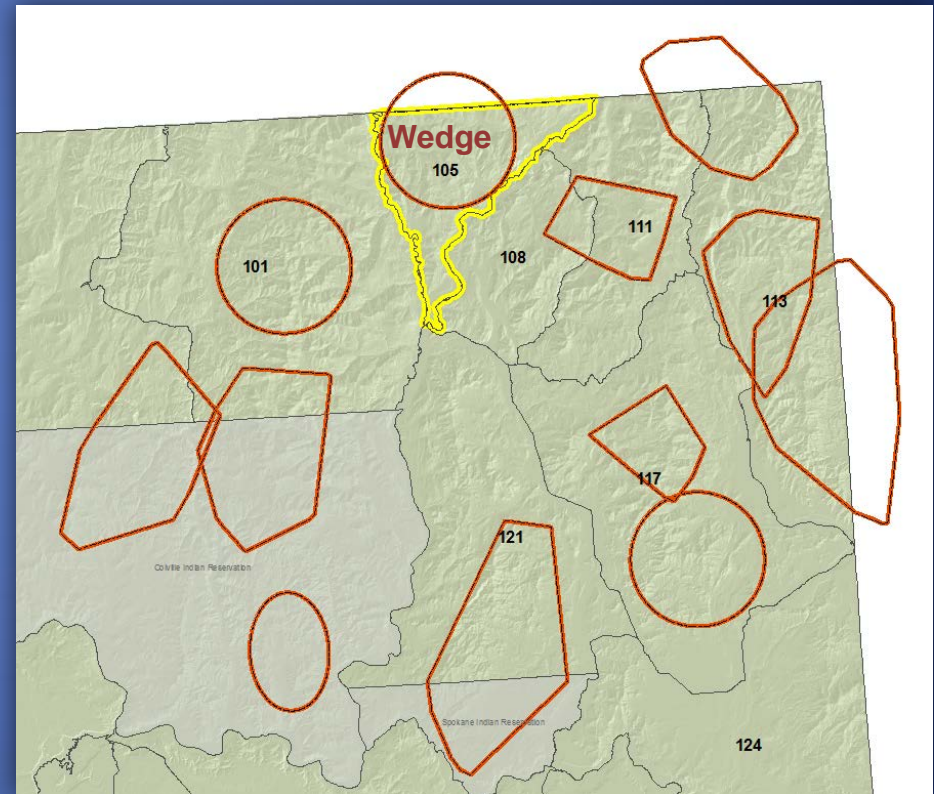
Buck Harvest in GMU 101

Likely period of established wolf packs



Wolf Pack in GMU 105

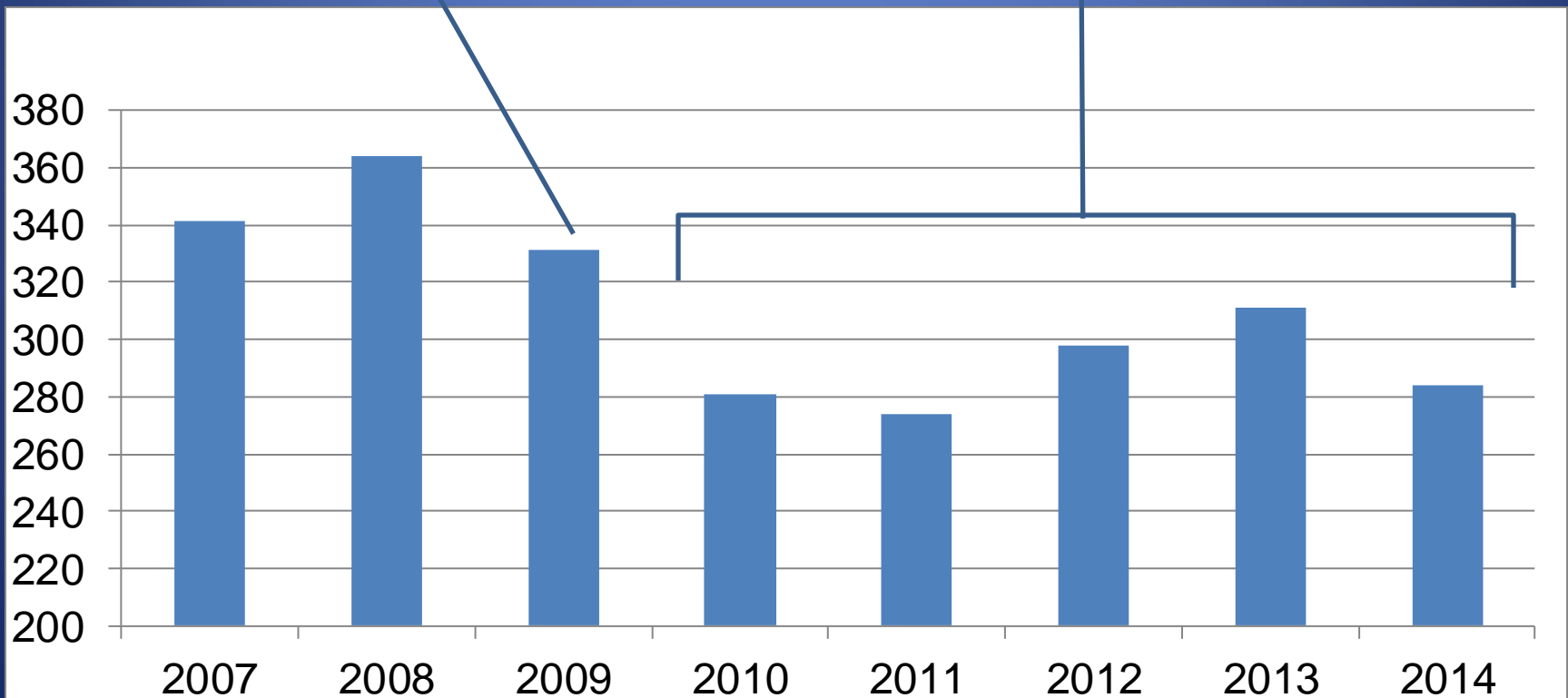
- The Wedge pack was documented in 2012
- Most of the pack was removed the same year after they killed cattle
- There have been at least two wolves in this area each year since 2012



Buck Harvest in GMU 105

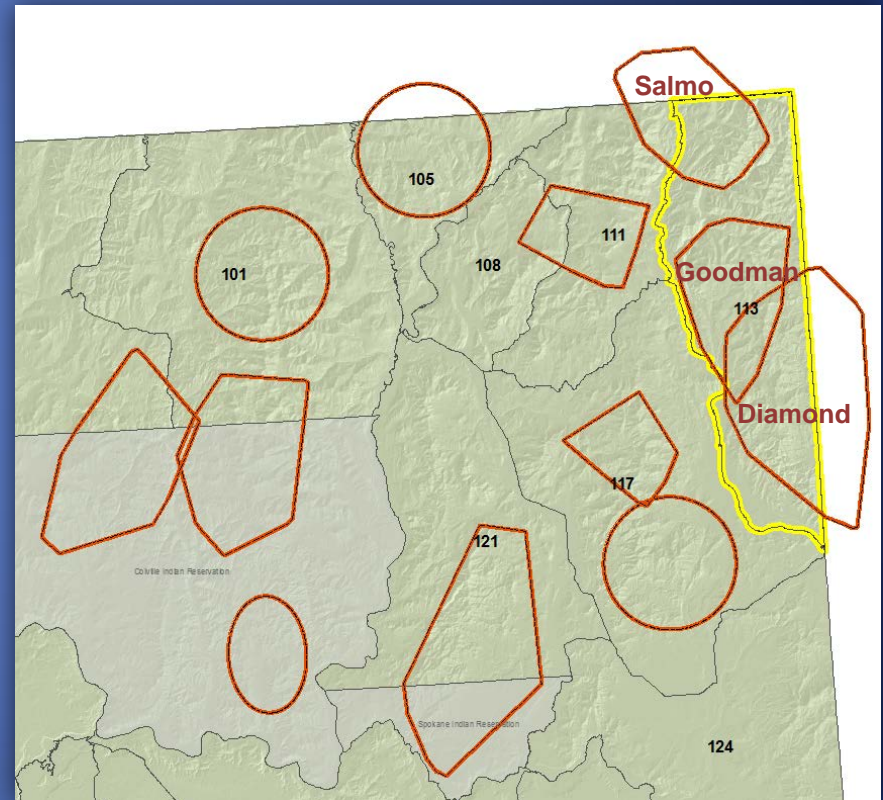
Buck harvest declined after two hard winters in 2007 & 2008

Established wolf pack



Wolf Packs in GMU 113

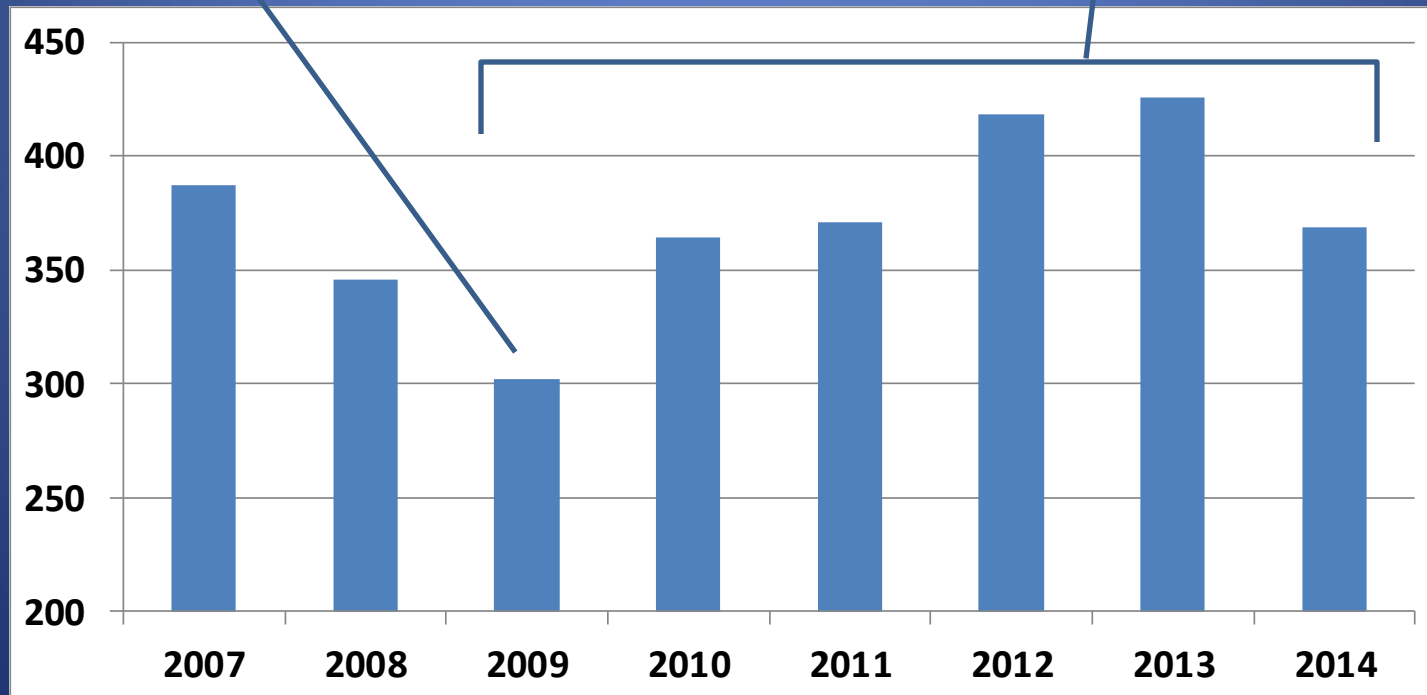
The first wolf pack was documented in this area in 2009; there are currently three packs



Buck Harvest in GMU 113

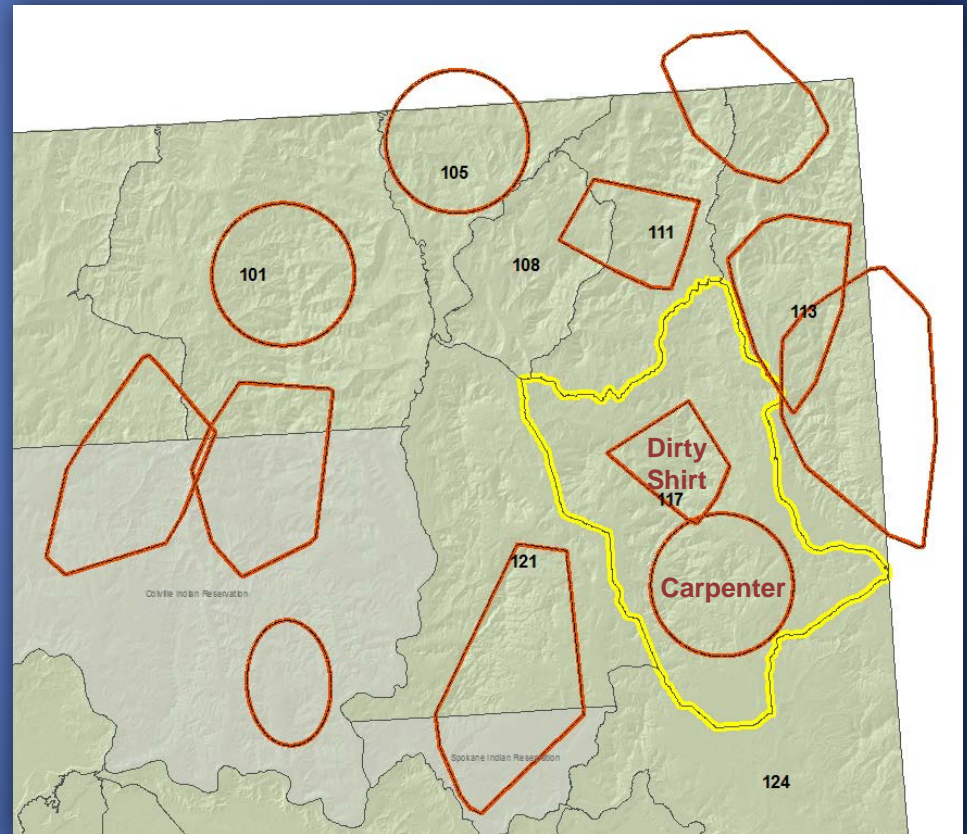
Buck harvest declined significantly after two hard winters in 2007 & 2008

Established wolf packs



Wolf Packs in GMU 117

The first pack was documented here in 2012; there are two in this area currently

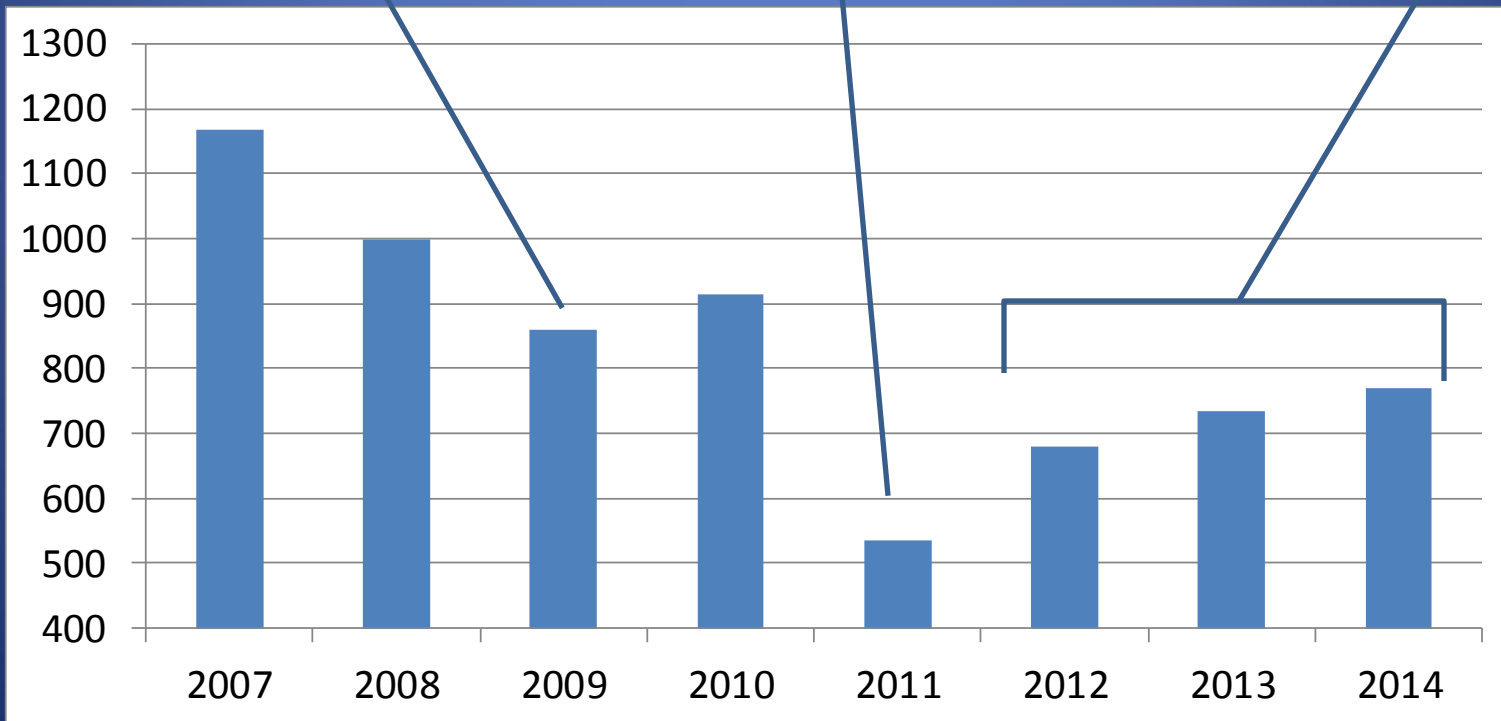


Buck Harvest in GMU 117

Buck harvest declined significantly after two hard winters in 2007 & 2008

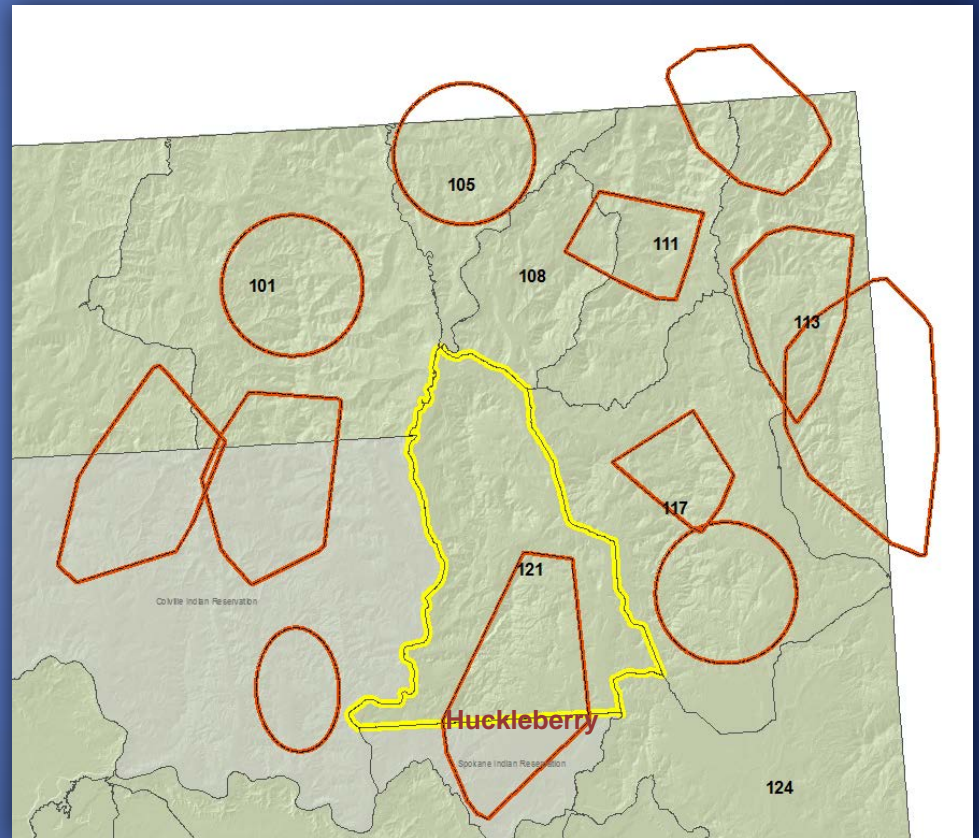
Reduced hunter participation and harvest after 4-point restriction

Established wolf packs



Wolf Pack in GMU 121

The Huckleberry pack documented in 2012. Range extends to southern portions of GMU 121

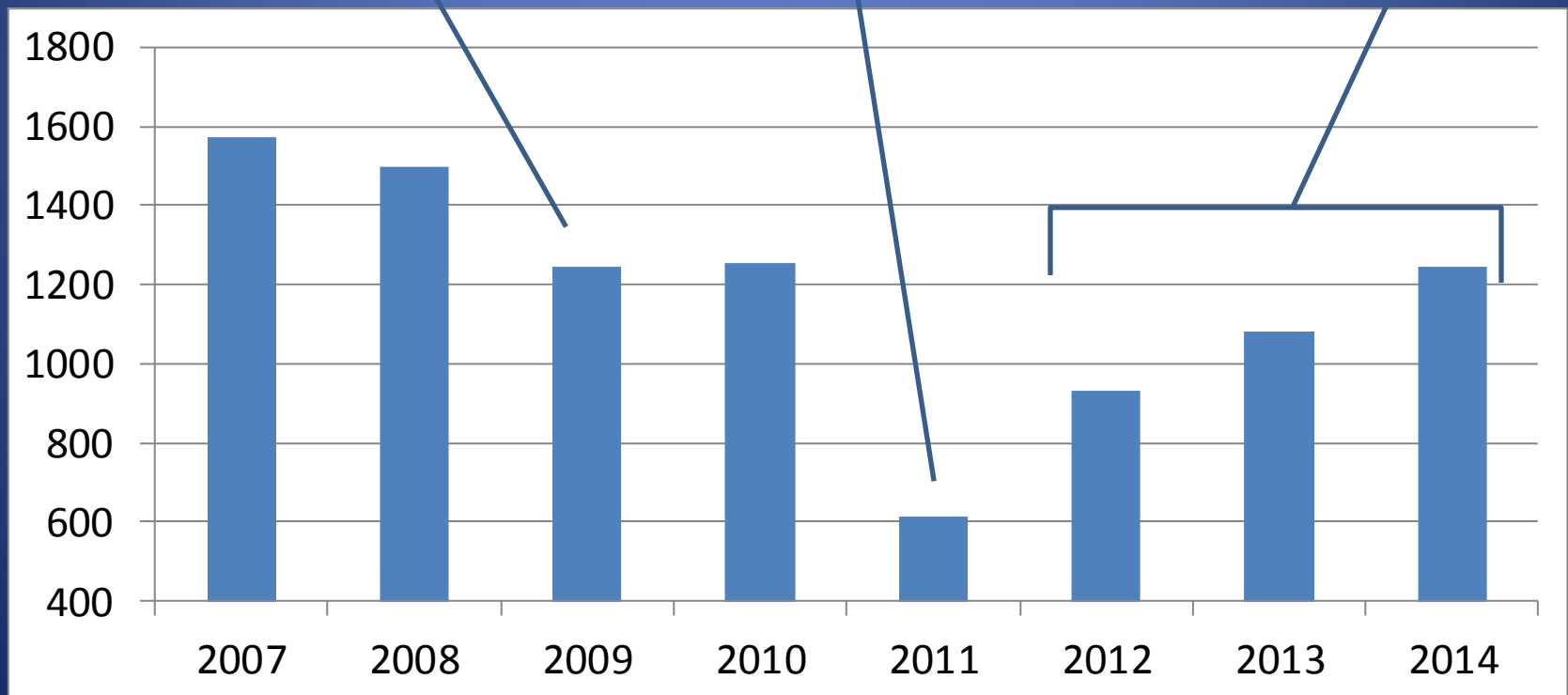


Buck Harvest in GMU 121

Buck harvest declined significantly after two hard winters in 2007 & 2008

Reduced hunter participation and buck harvest after 4-point restriction

Established wolf pack

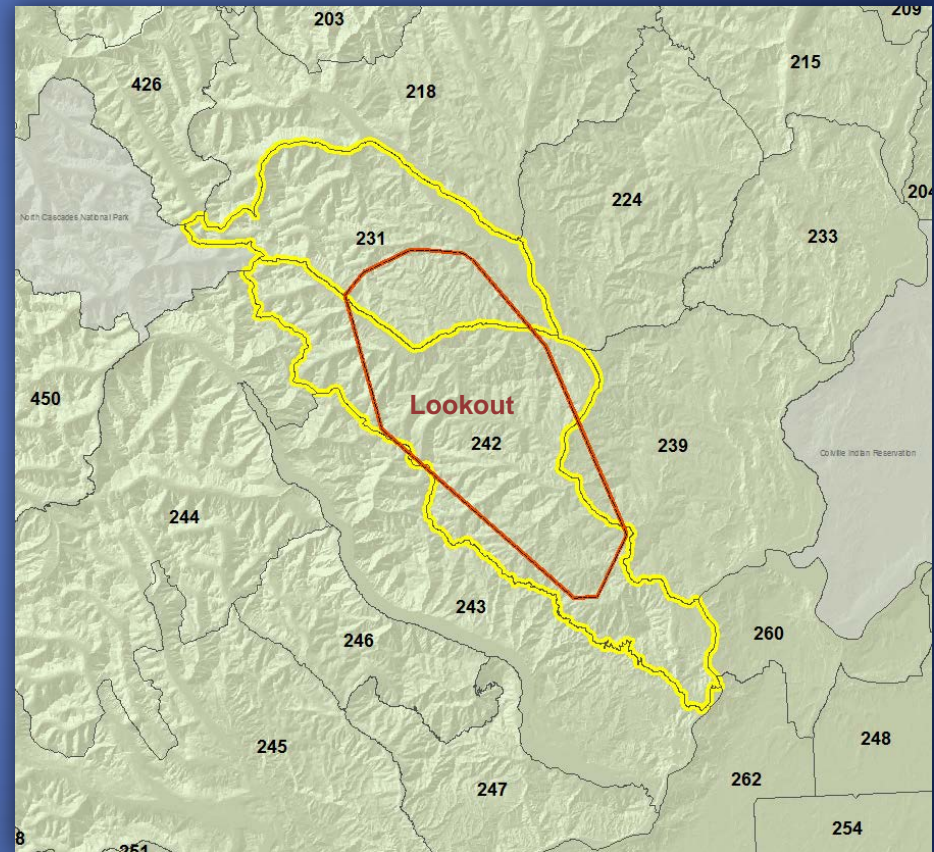


Deer and Elk Status in Areas with Wolves

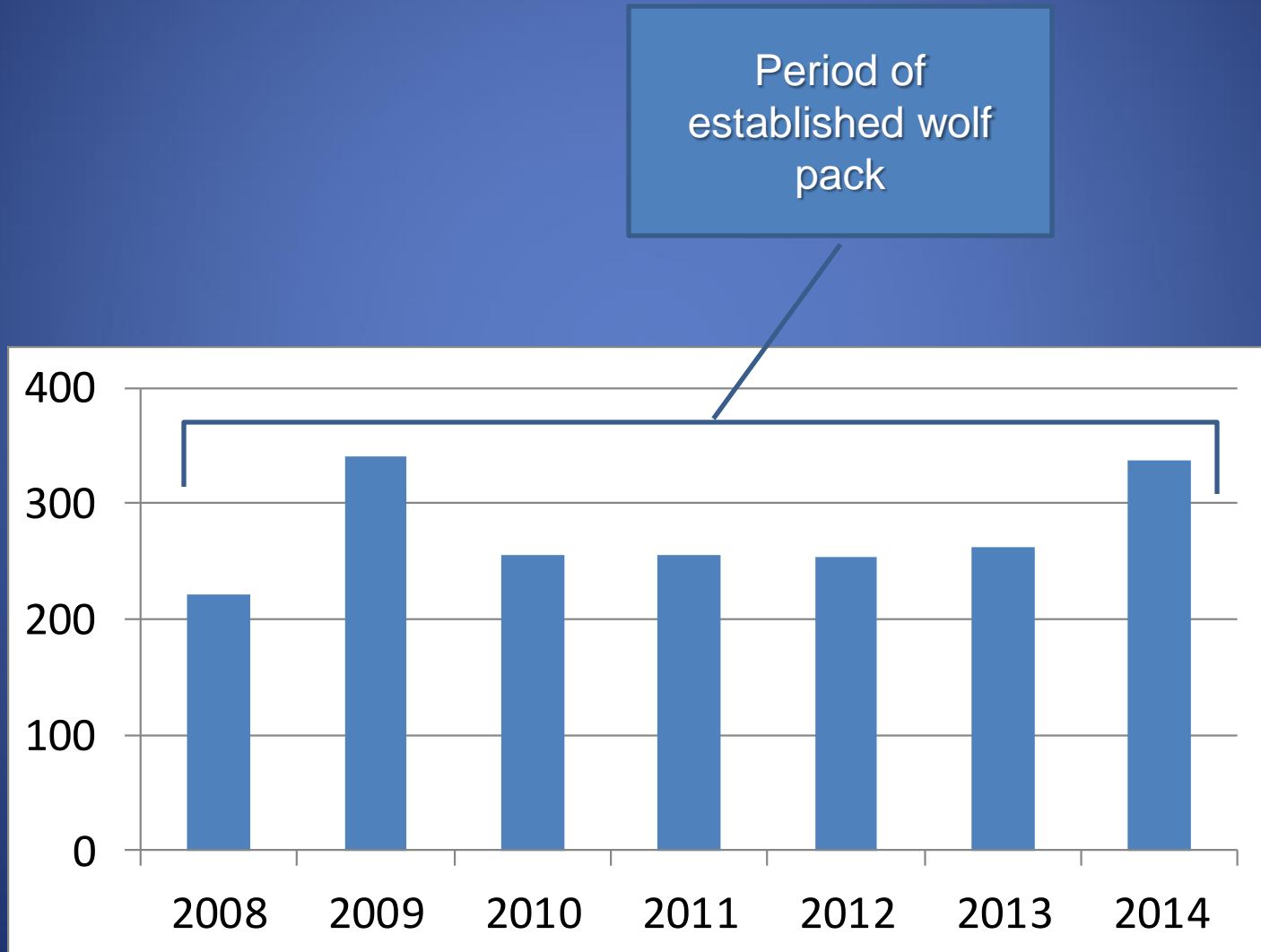
Central and Northcentral Washington

Wolf Pack in GMUs 231 & 242

- Lookout Pack documented in 2008
- Pack size likely small from 2009-2011 due to poaching

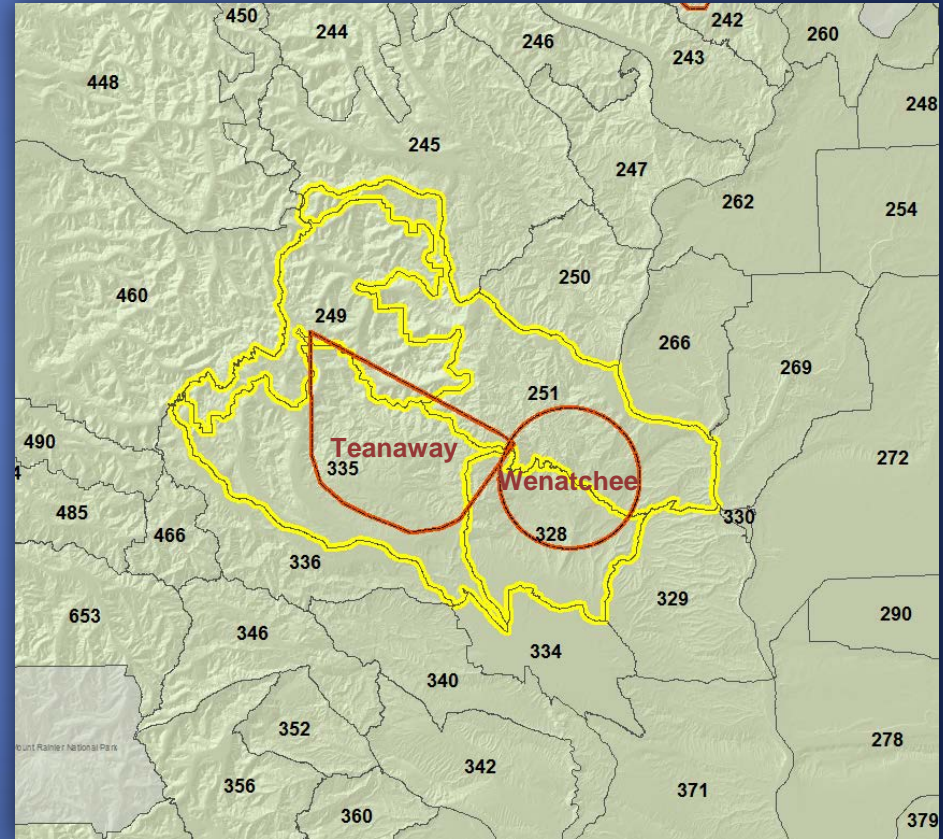


Buck Harvest in GMUs 231 & 242

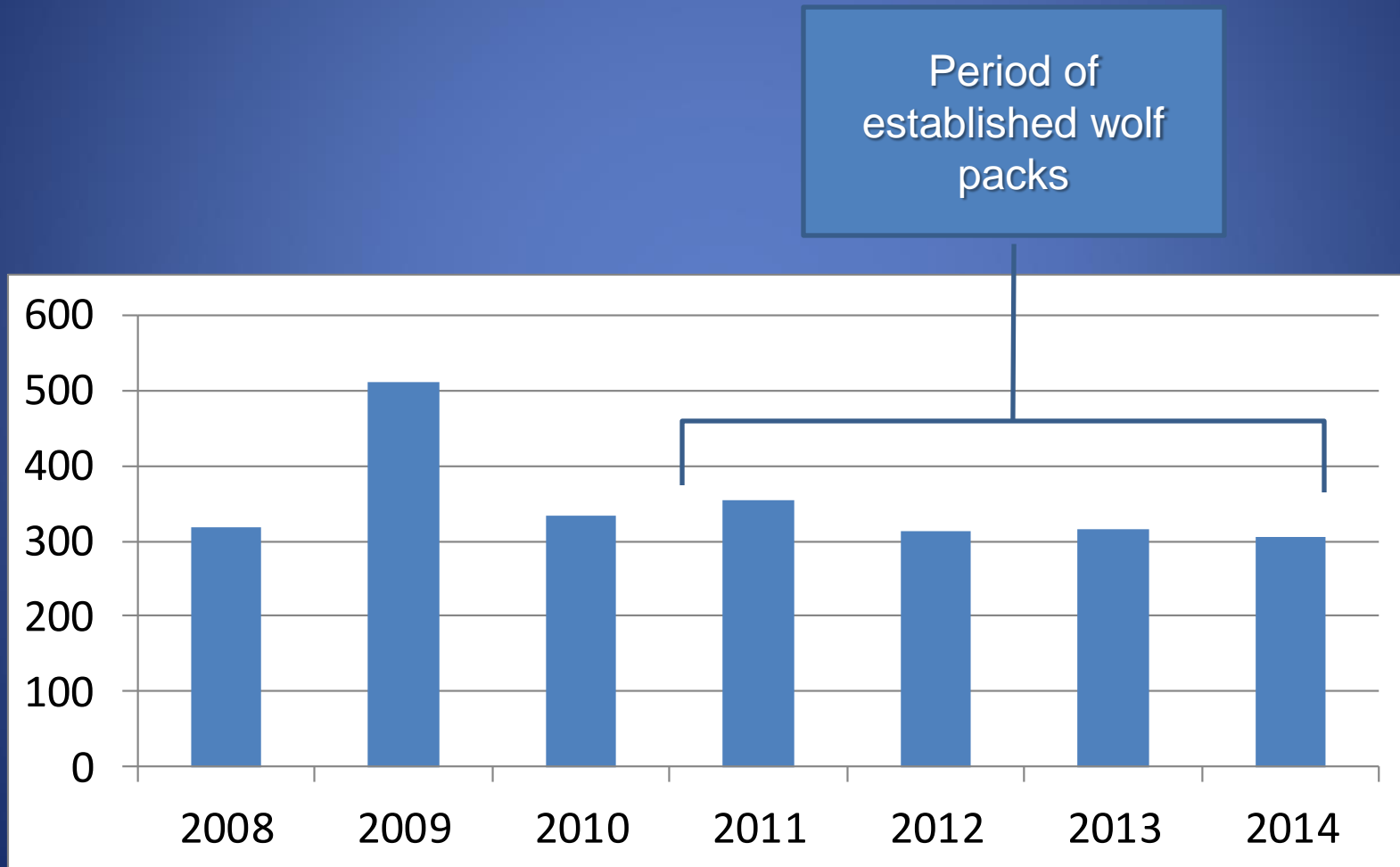


Wolf Packs in GMUs 249, 251, 328, & 335

- Teanaway Pack documented in 2011. Has been larger pack consistently producing pups.
- Wenatchee Pack documented in 2013. Believed to be at least 2 wolves.

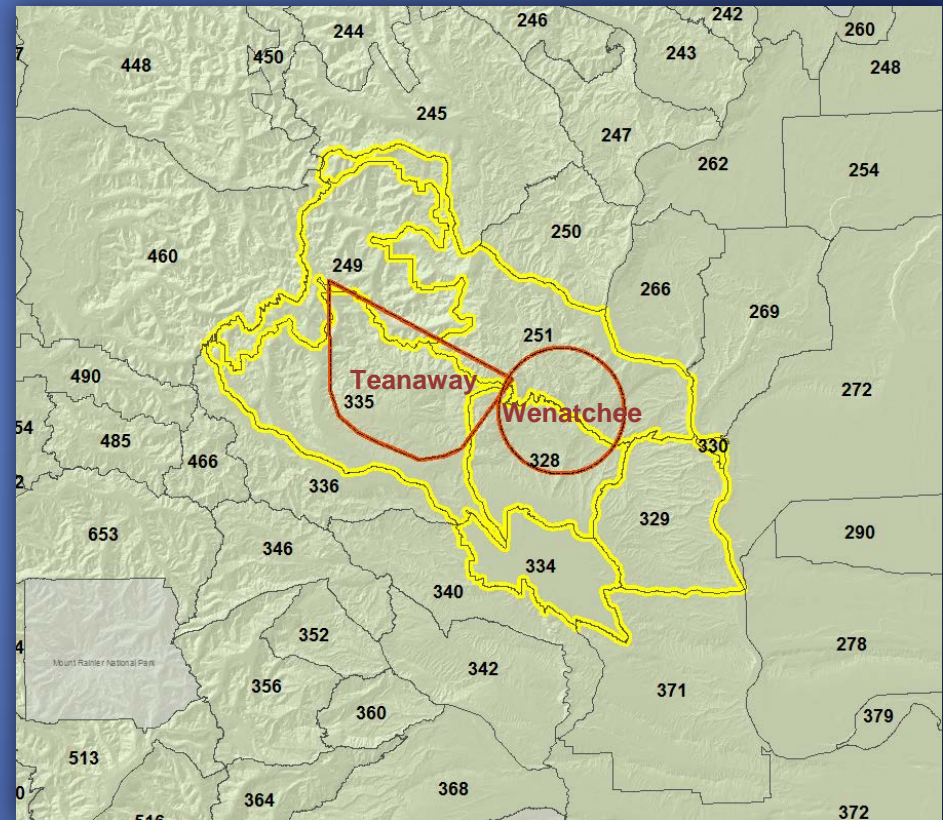


Buck Harvest in GMUs 249, 251, 328, & 335



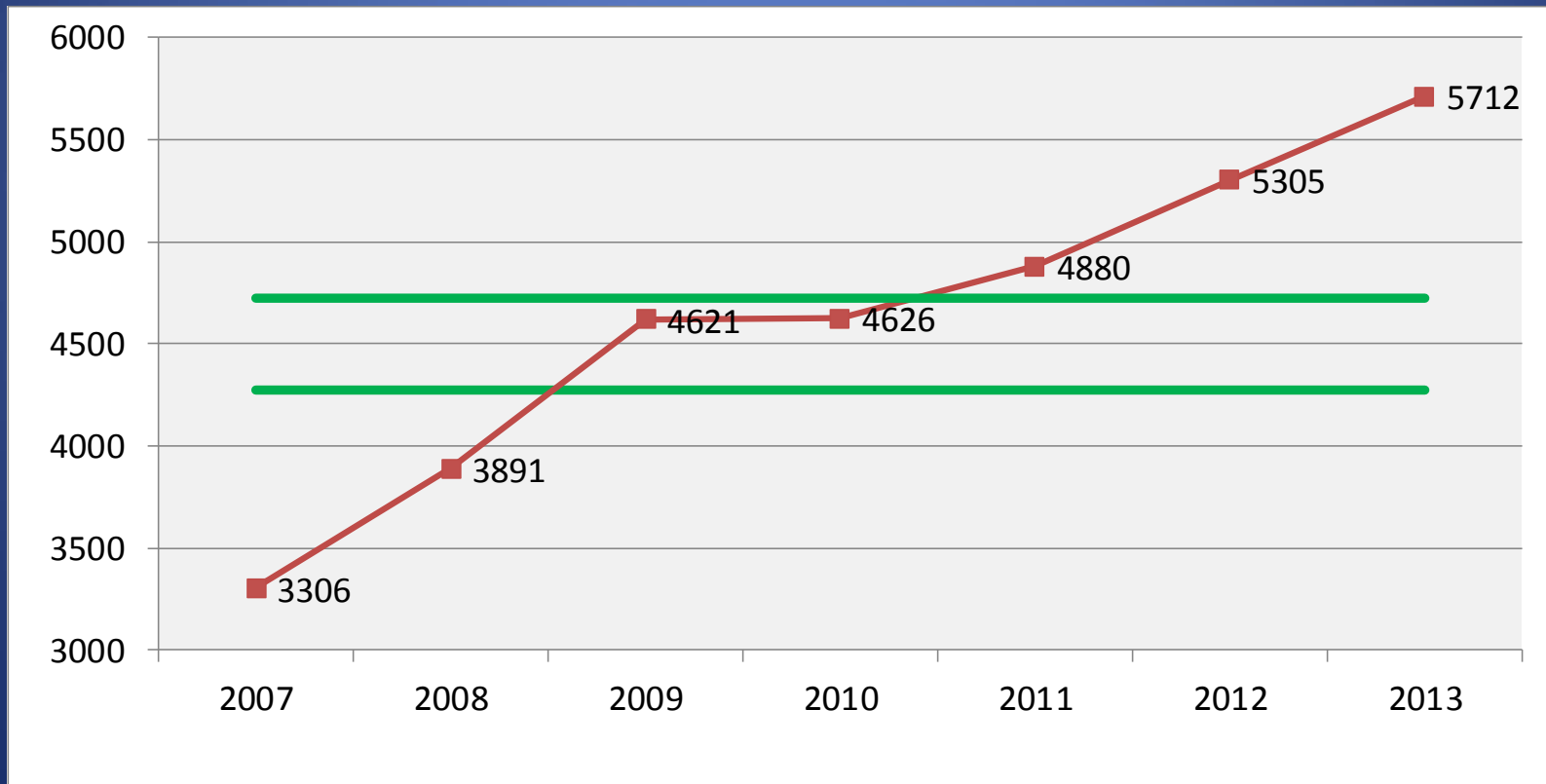
Wolf Packs in Colockum Elk Herd Area

- Teanaway Pack documented in 2011. Has been larger pack consistently producing pups.
- Wenatchee Pack documented in 2013. Believed to be at least 2 wolves.

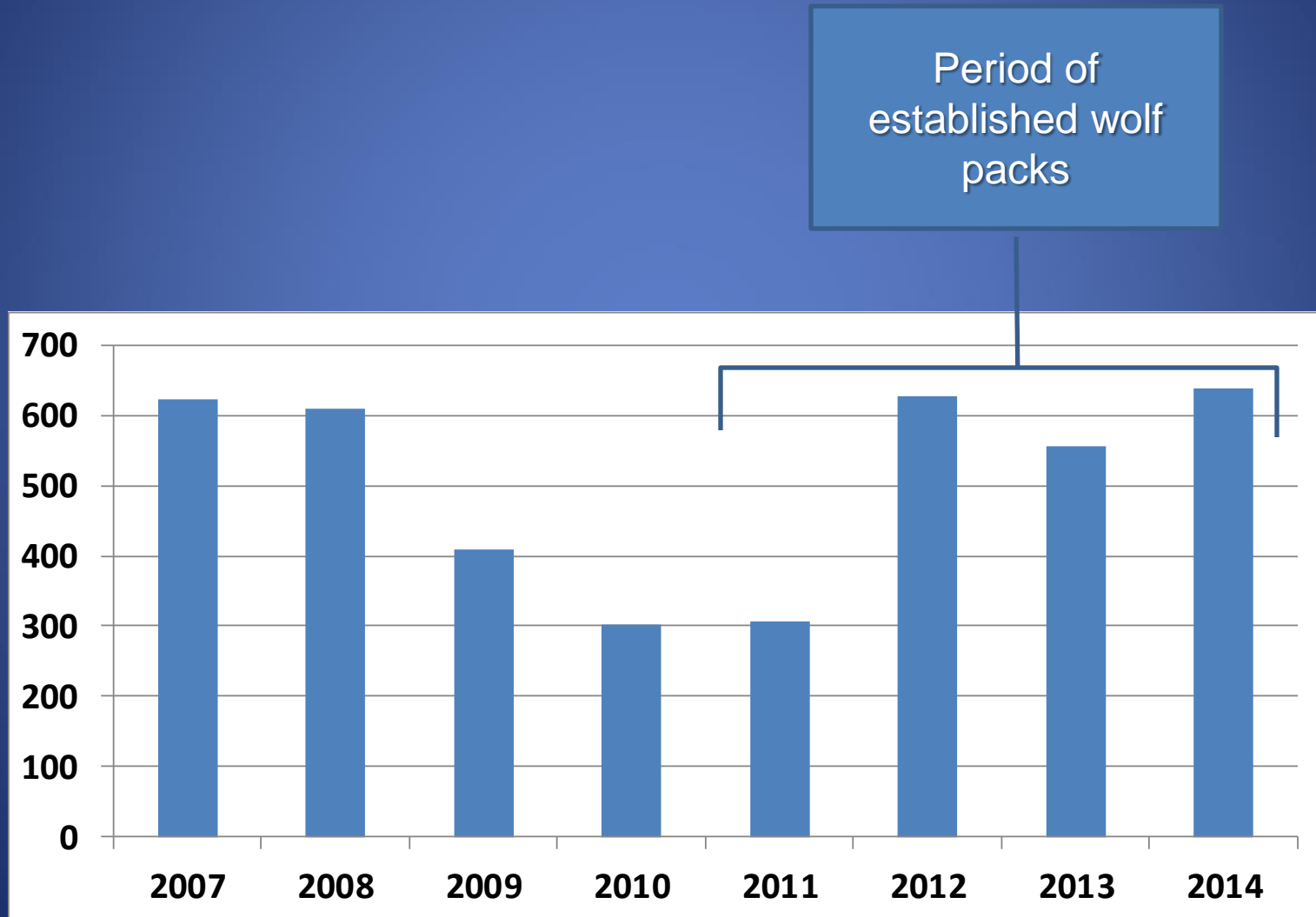


Colockum Elk Population Estimate

WDFW is planning to reduce this population with hunting because the elk herd is above objective (green lines)



Total Harvest in Colockum Elk Herd

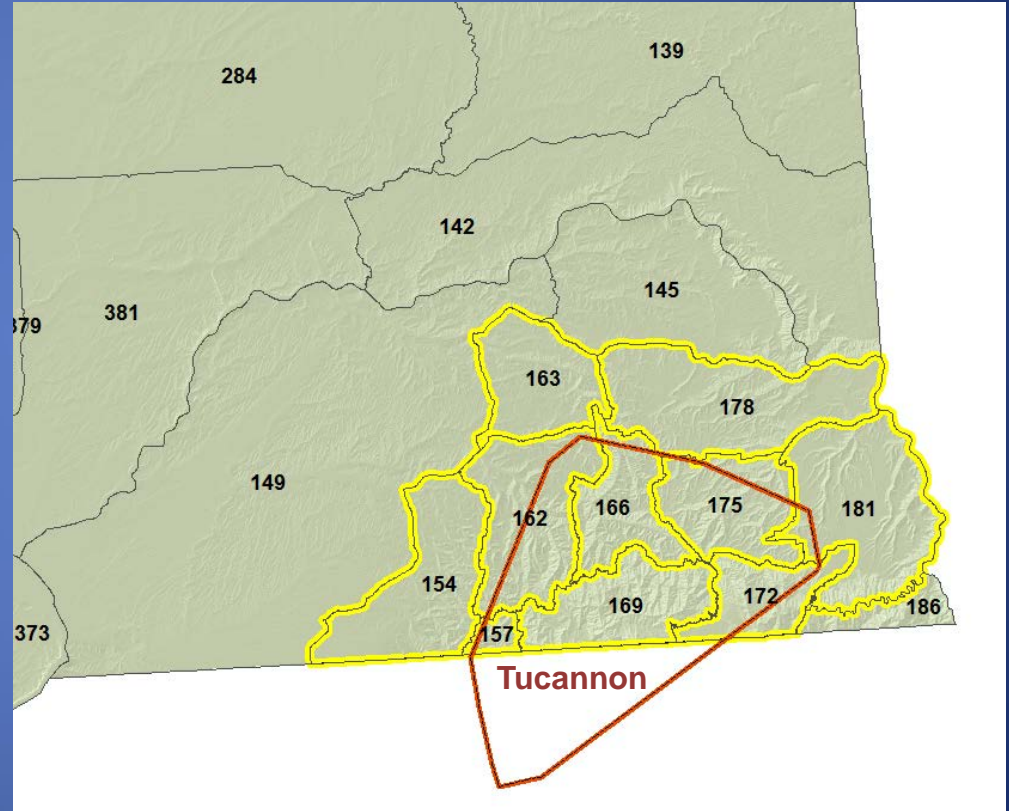


Elk Status in Areas with Wolves

Blue Mountains

Wolf Pack in Blue Mountains

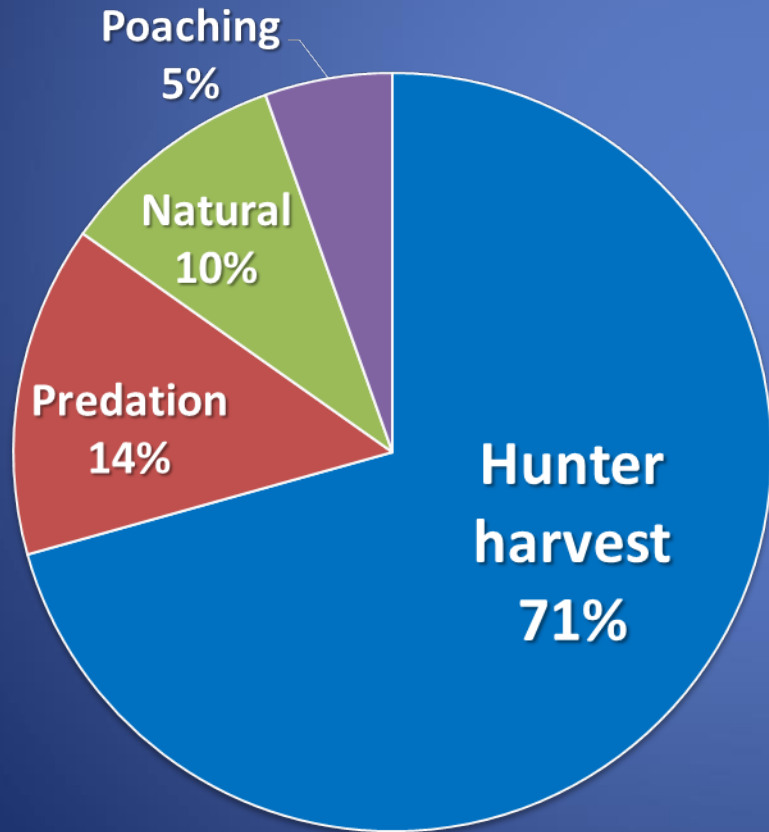
- Tucannon Pack documented in 2014, with at least 2 wolves.
- Other dispersing wolves from Oregon documented travelling through Blue Mountains.



Blue Mountains Elk Study

Bull mortality 2003-2006

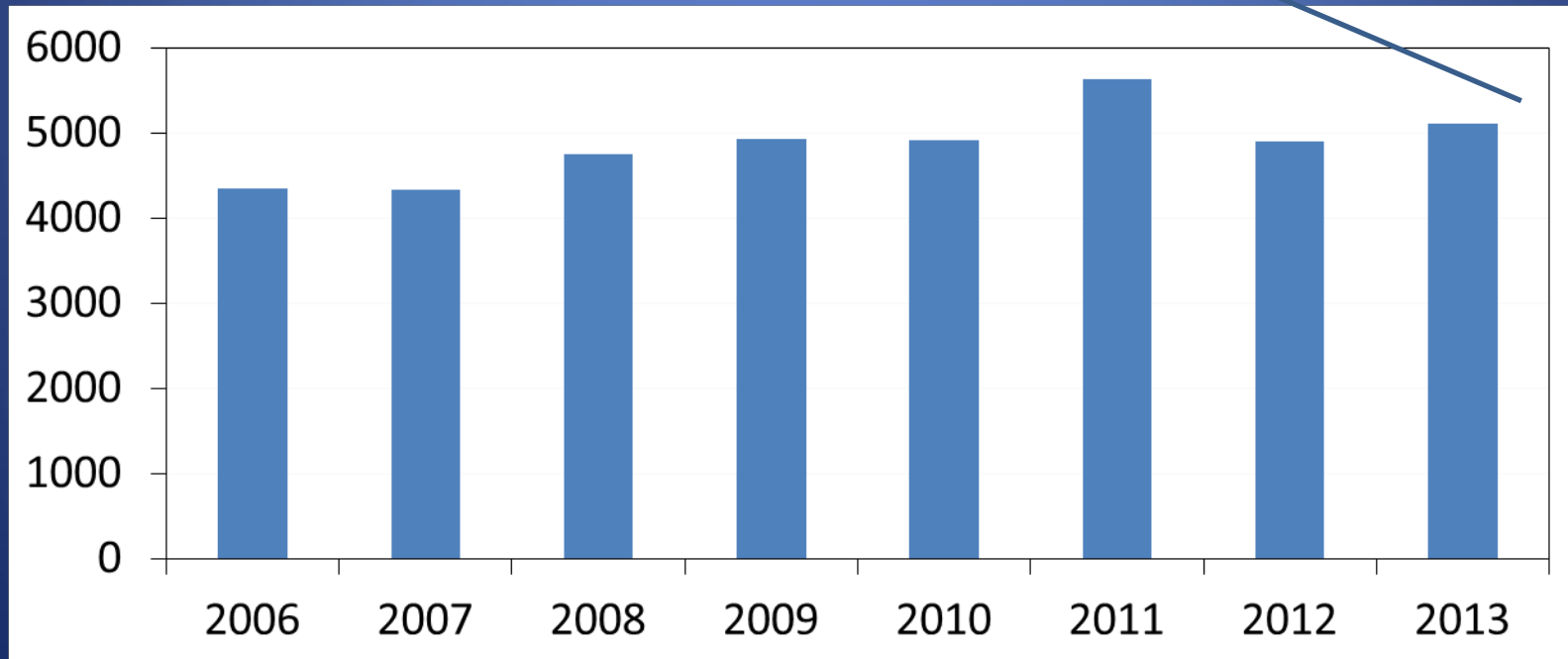
(prior to Tucannon Pack)



Hunter harvest, 2010

Blue Mountains Elk

First wolf pack detected in 2014



Blue Mountains Elk Study

- WDFW identified high (exceeded 15%) cow harvest by hunters was limiting elk in the Blue Mountains
- The elk population grew when cow harvest was reduced and the elk herd currently is meeting the population objective in the herd plan.
- There were other factors affecting the population growth as well, such as two large fires that created substantial habitat improvement (over 100,000 acres)

Summary

Summary of Prey Status in NE Washington

- Elk numbers are increasing and we plan to allow them to increase a little more by cutting back on antlerless harvest
- Mule deer numbers appear to be increasing, mostly in the western units
- Moose appear to be continuing their long term increase and expansion; although based on 2014 body condition work, they may have reached carrying capacity
- White-tailed deer populations are still low after the decline experienced with the hard winters of 2007-08, but there is some indication we may have turned the corner

Summary

- Ungulate population changes can be detected in a variety of ways
- As of today, WDFW does not have any measurable indication that wolves are having an impact on ungulate populations
- If changes in population levels are suspected, additional efforts will be employed to verify the cause

Summary

- Washington is fairly well positioned to understand potential impacts to ungulate populations from wolves
- The Wolf Conservation and Management Plan allows for wolf management for “at risk” ungulate populations
- Once delisted, wolf management options likely will expand

Questions:

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