



Written by [James Murphy](#) on October 8, 2018

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Ranchers Face Wolves at the Gate

The Diamond M ranch sits on the Kettle River in northeast Washington State, close enough to the Canadian border that a well-thrown rock might hit a range-riding Mountie and cause an international incident. It is a frontiersman's dream: acres of prairie surrounded by wooded areas with the pristine Kettle River flowing through the middle of it. It's an idyllic rural place where rough-hewn cowboys, who love the land as if it were family, gently tend their cattle. It hardly seems the place for a thing as dirty as a political battle.



But a bloody political battle — complete with actual death threats — is exactly what the McIrvin and Hedrick families who ranch the land are embroiled in. They are engaged with people who care little for truth and care even less for freedom. Environmentalist mobsters have targeted the family business because, sometimes, necessary action entails thinning the wolf pack in a lethal manner. And when even a single wolf is killed, environmentalists go predictably insane.

"We get a lot of death threats. My wife had to stop answering the phone," said Len McIrvin, the patriarch of the family that runs the Diamond M. "They say it would be better if you were dead than a wolf.... Another call comes in that said, 'If you'd like your kids to come home on the school bus, you'd better leave the wolves alone.'"

But the McIrvin-Hedrick clan has never shot a wolf. In Washington State, shooting a wolf, even to protect your livelihood, comes with a one-year prison sentence and a five-thousand dollar fine. Any lethal removal must be done under the auspices of the state's fish and wildlife department, an agency with a well-documented history of avoiding such aggressive action.

Len McIrvin and his family have been ranching on the land for over 70 years. The small business sells its cattle to several nationally known meat processors. If you eat red meat, there's a very good chance you've eaten some of the Diamond M's product. In those 70 years, things have changed in a lot of ways, but never has the Diamond M been so challenged as it is now. Of course, it's not just the wolves that threaten the Diamond M. The environmental mafia and the well-ensconced bureaucracies that assist them are even more threatening than the wolves themselves.

"The real problem with the wolves is politics," said Steve McLaughlin, an advocate who works on behalf of ranchers in northeast Washington.

Where Did the Wolves Come From?

In the last century, wolves were almost completely gone in the lower 48 states, with only a few scattered packs in northern Minnesota and the Isle Royale National Park, an island in the middle of Lake Superior, which is technically a part of Michigan.



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In 1995, the Clinton-era U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service re-introduced the gray wolf into Yellowstone National Park and a portion of central Idaho where the elk population was considered out of control and a threat to the delicate balance of the ecosystem. By that time, wolves had also re-introduced themselves from Canada to a remote area in northwestern Montana.

Wolves were trapped, captured, and removed from their natural habitat, where they were surviving quite nicely. They were then tranquilized, tagged, and set free in Yellowstone and central Idaho. The wolves were welcomed with open arms in Yellowstone. Idaho, however, was another story.

Yellowstone ecologists were soon giving glowing reports about the natural thinning of the elk herd due to wolf predation. New growth vegetation such as aspen and willow trees, upon which the elk had previously fed at an unsustainable rate, began to re-emerge. Other species, such as the beaver and the red fox, began to re-emerge due to the fact that the wolves now kept the unruly coyote population under control.

But in Idaho, the situation was different. Idaho's state government had opposed the reintroduction of wolves into the state but was overruled by federal authorities. Initially, the Idaho state government refused to participate in the wolf management plan because of its objection to having wolves released there in the first place. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Nez Perce tribe managed the wolf population at first, with the 35 wolves released there in 1995-96 quickly expanding, the government estimates, to over 700 wolves by 2007.

Those wolf packs, along with more naturally occurring wolf packs from Canada, began slowly migrating to neighboring states, including Washington, the home of the Diamond M Ranch. About a decade ago, the Diamond M Ranch's problems with the newly introduced apex predator began.

"We suffered the first wolf kill of livestock since the 1930s on our ranch about 10 years ago. It was a confirmed wolf kill," said McIrvin. "They're killing about 70 head of our cattle a year now."

And the trouble is about much more than dead cattle. The wolves' constant attacks on the herd have greatly increased stress on the cattle, which leads to a condition known as "open cows," which are females that cannot become pregnant. A normal, unstressed herd will experience two to three percent open cows plus a number of culled cows, which have become too old to breed. The stress caused by the wolf attacks has led to the Diamond M's herd having approximately 20 percent open cows.

"If wolves were attacking people night and day, I don't think you'd have too many people pregnant," McIrvin said.

These open cows become automatically less valuable and must be sold at a discount. And there's also the matter of the five to nine calves that each open cow should be producing over the next several years. All told, the Diamond M can expect to see losses of over a million dollars in the next six to seven years owing to wolf aggression. It's a loss that a small family business can't afford. And the State of Washington doesn't seem to care.

Not only do the open cows sell at lower prices, their loss affects future earnings for ranchers. "If I sell off a three-year-old cow, I'm losing eight to nine years of future calves," stated McIrvin. "Pretty soon, you're looking at significant loss in gross revenue."



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The State of Washington Refuses to Help

Despite this, the legislature in Olympia is reluctant to assist the ranchers, owing to pressure from environmental groups such as the Center for Biological Diversity, Conservation Northwest, and Predator Defense, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that put both legal and rhetorical pressure on the state to leave the wolves alone.

“Our legislators in the Washington state government want to treat the wolves as a popularity contest,” McIrvin says. “The majority of the people on the west side of the state — they love wolves — so we’re going to leave them.”

In eastern Washington — the more rural part of the state where almost all of the wolf packs are located — people back commonsense measures to stop depredation, including forms of lethal removal of packs that are especially aggressive and threatening.

But to the liberals in western Washington, where no wolf packs threaten Seattle, Tacoma, or Olympia, the wolves are a success story: a valiant and noble species that must be protected from the true apex predator — humans.

The search for middle ground has yielded the 300-page *Washington State Wolf Conservation and Management Plan*, which stresses non-lethal solutions but, to the chagrin of those western Washington liberals, also allows for lethal measures of especially problematic wolf packs.

From the plan: “The purpose of the plan is to ensure the reestablishment of a self-sustaining population of gray wolves in Washington and to encourage social tolerance for the species by addressing and reducing conflicts.”

Sounds good, but a plan is only as good as its implementation. The Washington State wolf plan is a case study in how bureaucracy works: a one-size-fits-all plan, heavy on butt-covering documentation and lean on actual solutions. The lead agency in Washington charged with implementation is the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). And this agency is afflicted with the same infection that all bureaucracies seem to have: fear of making decisions.

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“The wolves completely devour an animal within a day; two days at the most. All you’ll find is the twitch of the tail and the bottom jaw,” according to McIrvin. “You’ll call [WDFW] in on a kill and they’ll say, ‘Obviously the wolves ate this animal but we have no idea what killed her.’ Even though there are dead [cattle] within two-hundred yards that they do confirm that the wolves have killed.”

According to a University of Wyoming study, for every wolf depredation confirmed by a government entity, there are likely at least seven more that go unreported. Both wolf kills and the wolf population in eastern Washington are vastly underreported in an effort to keep the species on the endangered list and unaffected by hunting.

Besides underreporting, the WDFW also plays a shell game of sorts with the packs themselves. In Washington State, a wolf pack must have four confirmed kills in a 10-month period to be considered a target for lethal removal. But a funny thing happens as many packs come near that number of confirmed depredations. The WDFW, for reasons that go unexplained, changes the name of the pack, which sets its number back to zero confirmed kills.



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“As soon as a pack of wolves gets close to that lethal removal point, then they change the name of the pack,” McIrvin explained. “The Profanity Peak Pack was renamed the Sherman Pack, when the Sherman Pack got close to the lethal removal number, the name was changed again to the Togo Pack. It’s a shell game that [the WDFW] play,” McIrvin concluded.

McLaughlin put it simply: “The Department of Fish and Wildlife is very economical with the truth.”

So save for the occasional wolf kill by the WDFW, the ranchers of the Diamond M get absolutely no help from the state government. In fact, many state employees are working four-square against the ranch. Probably the most damaging example of this is Dr. Rob Wielgus, the former director of the Large Carnivore Conservation Lab at Washington State University (WSU).

In 2016, Wielgus intentionally put the McIrvin-Hedrick family in the cross hairs of environmental groups when he falsely claimed that the Diamond M purposely put grazing cattle on top of a wolf den and that the ranchers were not following WDFW protocols on how to avoid livestock depredation. After a lethal removal incident, in which the Profanity Peak Pack had killed dozens of the Diamond M’s cattle, Wielgus told the *Seattle Times*, “This didn’t have to happen; this livestock operator elected to put his livestock directly on top of their den site. I just wanted people to know.”

It was a blatantly, observably false statement by Wielgus, as the Diamond M had a long record of following the WDFW’s rules down to the letter. In more than 70 years, the ranch had never received any chastisement from the government entity most involved in oversight over livestock operations. Nevertheless, the next day, Wielgus doubled down with another vicious lie. In an e-mail to the *Times*, he stated, “No ranchers in Washington who cooperated with us or the WDFW have had any losses (to wolf depredation) over the last three years.... Len McIrvin has refused to cooperate.... He hates wolves ... and welcomes conflict ... because the wolves die on his allotment.”

Soon after Wielgus’ poisonous statements, defenders of McIrvin and the Diamond M came out with the truth. Danny Marotorello, the agency’s wolf policy lead, said, “McIrvin’s have been following WDFW protocols.” U.S. Forest Service officials chimed in that the Diamond M had not “put them [cattle] on top of a den site.” Even Wielgus’ employer, WSU, tepidly said, “Some of Dr. Wielgus’ statements in regard to this controversial issue have been both inaccurate and inappropriate.... They have contributed substantially to the growing anger and confusion about this significant wildlife management issue.... These statements are disavowed by our institutions.”

Although Wielgus was forced to publicly admit that he “had absolutely no basis for making such statements,” he got what he ultimately wanted: environmentalist outrage on steroids. Besides the death threats to the McIrvin-Hedrick family, an army of environmental keyboard warriors attacked the Diamond M’s Yelp ratings and Google reviews, making it sound as if the McIrvin’s themselves had killed the wolves, and for the sheer joy of it.

Eventually, WSU was forced to rid themselves of Wielgus at a cost to taxpayers of more than \$300,000 in the termination settlement. But as McIrvin points out, Wielgus’ legacy lives in eastern Washington State. “He was the Dean of the large carnivore study at WSU and most of the people in the wildlife agencies up there are people that he trained.”

Fallout From State Inaction

As the wolves become more habituated to livestock and the people who tend them, it’s only a matter of



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time until one of these packs corners an animal not livestock related. In fact, it's happened already.

In July of 2018, a female research student, working in northern Washington near the Tiffany Spring Campground in Okanogan County, was surrounded by a wolf pack in the area. The woman, whose name is being withheld, was forced to climb 30 feet into a tree to escape the wolves, who had surrounded the tree. The woman was rescued by a helicopter from the state's Department of Natural Resources.

And the wolves are spreading into ever-more-populated areas, wherever they can find prey. And prey doesn't only include livestock. Family pets and even families can be prey as well. "There's beginning to be some migration from those packs [in northeast Washington] to other parts of the state. So, they're kind of migrating south and west. I now believe we have wolves generally working from the Cascades crest throughout Eastern Washington," McLaughlin concluded.

So the wolves are slowly, but surely, driving folks such as the McIrvin-Hedrick clan into bankruptcy, and the government, aided by NGOs and environmental activists, is allowing it, if not encouraging it to happen. They are also beginning to drive people away from wilderness areas, with no repercussions against the wolves. Why is this being allowed to occur?

Agenda 21 Tie-in?

The Diamond M Ranch sits squarely in the middle of a corridor known as Y2Y, Yellowstone to the Yukon. It is an area, almost completely rural, which certain entities would like to see brought back to its pristine, pre-people state.

"For many years, they tried to make this a wilderness area," McIrvin said. "Basically, that would have driven the cattle and the cattlemen from the area. They weren't too successful. It's just not compatible to raise cattle in a wilderness area."

But where human trickery and obfuscation were not successful in convincing ranchers to give up their life's pursuit, the reintroduction of apex predators, which cannot be touched because they're supposedly "endangered," may be doing the job for them.

"These wolves are strictly a tool," McIrvin asserted. "These people that we're battling, they don't have any love for wolves. Basically, it's a political agenda to achieve the Y2Y corridor. Wolves are very effective."

And so are the many NGOs, such as the Center for Biological Diversity, that side against the ranchers and for the wolves. Steve McLaughlin points out that when the WDFW makes one of their rare decisions to use lethal removal against a pack of wolves, they are required to give one day's notice prior to taking lethal action. "All that does is give the Center for Biological Diversity the time to file an injunction against the removal," McLaughlin notes, thus delaying the action and giving the doomed wolves a little more time to kill.

It's an awful situation, but Len McIrvin and his family don't blame the wolves. Wolves are doing what wolves do, namely hunting, killing, and eating. "It's not the wolves. Cattlemen can always take care of the wolf problem. [The problem is] the bureaucracy and the threat of imprisonment if we do shoot a wolf or if we do try to protect our livelihood."

Families such as the McIrvins and Hedricks used to be the poster children for what it meant to be an American: riding the open range, caring for their livestock — a family business in the truest sense of the word. But such people don't belong according to liberal globalists. They're not easily controlled, and



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that's what the overseers demand. Those who want to plan and direct every aspect of human existence don't want folks such as Len McIrvin to be successful, especially when he makes statements such as, "We're guaranteed constitutionally, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Well, that's sure not the pursuit of happiness to have these wolves killing such a high percentage of our cattle." (Disclosure: The McIrvin and Hedrick families advertise in The New American.)



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