



California Wolf Center

336 Bon Air Center #271
Greenbrae, CA 94904
949-429-9950

Website: www.californiawolfcenter.org

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Media Contact: Karin Vardaman, 949-429-9950, karin@californiawolfcenter.org

California Wolf Center's announcement of Release of California Wolf Conservation Plan and Year in Review for California Wolf Recovery for 2016

On Tuesday, December 6th California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) released the final Conservation Plan for Gray Wolves in California.

We wish to express our appreciation for the Department's tremendous work in creating a Wolf Conservation Plan that takes into consideration all stakeholders perspectives and interests.

The Plan came to fruition through the diligent efforts of CDFW along with the input of the California Wolf Stakeholder Working Group, a group we are proud to have been a part of. Meetings between CDFW and the Stakeholder Working Group first began in 2013 and concluded in December of 2015. The finalization of this plan represents more than the future of wild wolves in California, but also the coming together and cooperation of diverse groups who historically have not worked together. As a result of this diversity in perspectives, it is understandable that not all points were agreed upon on the final version of the draft.

“As we review this plan, we are committed to continuing our work to ensure successful wild wolf recovery while protecting and supporting viable working ranches in the Golden State. We look forward to continuing the critical conversations and collaborative efforts that will best serve wildlife, livestock and people.”

~ Karin Vardaman, Director, Northern California, California Wolf Center

As we look at the challenges that other states have experienced, California Wolf Center is pioneering a new model to accomplish successful wolf recovery. Through unprecedented efforts on the ground and directly empowering those impacted by wild wolves through ground-breaking new strategies, the visionary path we began in 2016 has the potential to not only serve wolves and support the livestock community, but to neutralize the polarizing debate that has historically hindered successful wolf recovery elsewhere.

“California Wolf Center is the only organization that has provided anything useful or hopeful to our community”

~ Mark Coats, Siskiyou County rancher

Since OR's historic steps into California in 2010, and the Shasta Pack's celebrated discovery in 2015, California Wolf Center has endeavored to take a different approach in laying a positive foundation for the wolves' return in the context of where they live. And we have been successful. Because of our work over the past six years building positive relationships among those who would share the landscape with wolves, investing the time working in the trenches, and earning the trust among diverse stakeholders, we have had the unique opportunity as a conservation group to approach the wolf-livestock issue from the inside out. Below are some of our accomplishments for 2016.

- Ranching with Wolves Workshops

In April, 2016 California Wolf Center partnered with renowned conservation biologists, Timmothy Kaminski and Carter Niemeyer along with Joe Engelhart, multi-generation rancher from Alberta, Canada to conduct first-of-their-kind workshops for livestock producers in California. The strategy presented was based on the merging of ranchers' expertise about their livestock, their land, and grazing experience with the science of wolf biology and behavior. This past November, we held a second series that expanded our efforts beyond Siskiyou County further north into Southern Oregon as well as further south into Plumas County – where the most recently announced wolf pair has made their home. The thirteen leading-edge workshops proved to be tremendously successful and positively embraced by the communities in which they were held.

”This work requires ceaseless diligence, willingness to get in the trenches and selflessly investing in wolves livestock and people. California Wolf Center is doing just that, and that's why I wanted to be involved.”

~ Timmothy Kaminski, Conservation Biologist

- Range Steward™ Program

In July, 2016 California Wolf Center established the Golden State's inaugural Range Riding program, now referred to as the Range Steward™ Program. Through our work within the ranching community, our gained experience has shown a need to move beyond the commonly coined term by conservation communities, *Range Riders*. The Range Steward program represents more than traditional “range riding” and moves towards more comprehensive stockmanship and husbandry practices that are founded on ranchers' role as stewards of the open space. As part of this program, several California producers were sponsored by California Wolf Center to participate in a formal range rider training program in Montana both in spring and fall of 2016 hosted by Hilary and Andrew Anderson. Our foundational Range Steward™ Program experienced measurable success and overwhelming praise from participating producers.

- Working Circle Collaborative

Founded by the California Wolf Center in partnership with Northern California ranchers, the Working Circle is a unified assembly of willing participants intended to foster collaboration through collective vision, regular communication, sharing of knowledge and gathering of reliable and useful information. Outcome driven, the Working Circle Collaborative is working to provide tangible resources, solutions, and a foundation for a more socially acceptable approach to preventing and managing wolf and large carnivore-livestock conflicts on public and private lands alike. California Wolf Center believes that the

outcomes of good intentions depend upon their beginnings and are led by example. In our experience, understanding is the first step. We have been honored in 2016 to work with ranchers throughout Northern California as we seek solutions together.

- Ranch Risk Assessments

Recognizing that wolf--livestock conflict reduction is not a one-shoe-fits all scenario, California Wolf Center initiated confidential and personalized ranch wolf-livestock risk assessments to northern California ranchers. Working Circle Collaborative's Timm Kaminski works directly with individual ranchers to evaluate potential risk and create practical options to reduce vulnerability in cattle while supporting viable operations.

- Outreach and Education

We cannot recover wolves in a vacuum by simply focusing on conflict mitigation. Since the journey of wild wolf recovery began, wolves embody something so much larger than themselves. They exacerbate pre-existing fractures in our community as a figurehead for differences in culture, lifestyle and values. These varied stakeholders - the ranchers who will live with wolves, those that live in urban areas and take action for wolves, the state agency whose responsibility is to protect wolves, the next generation who are the future stewards of the wolf may all be part of diverse communities but they are all part of the greater community. It is when this community is working together, openly communicating, gaining knowledge, moving forward through opposing views and focusing on common ground that long-term wild wolf recovery can be achieved and viable working landscapes can endure. It is imperative to set this community up for success by bridging gaps and building understanding between diverse groups. California Wolf Center seeks to do this by continuing to provide dynamic and innovative educational and outreach programs throughout California. Over 14,000 people, children and adults alike participated in our programs during 2016.

The success of our efforts in 2016 would not be possible if it were not for the tremendous support from those who share our vision, including our generous funders, state and federal agencies, conservation partners, and most of all, the ranchers who have offered open hearts, minds and expertise in working together in trust and for positive outcomes. Happy Holidays.

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