

# Kurtis Vaagen

## WDFW wolf management plan

Thank you very much for the opportunity to submit public comments. As a lifetime passionate sportsman of 25 years I'd like to start off by thanking the Department for the opportunities we have been given to this point. I'd also like to apologize for my writing, as it will be considerably scattered due to using my iPhone. Also, I wanted to take this opportunity to address all predators. I separated them if you'd like to skip through but I'd like if my comments can be read in full.

### \* Cougar population

\* Multiple cats running the same drainages where historically they were territorial enough to spread out.

\* I have seen multiple trail camera pictures from our area that have multiple cats in the same area and even in the same picture

\* I'm not buying the offspring argument when there are more than 3 and up to 8 in one picture.

\* I've seen pictures of them hunting deer in packs.

\* Quotas in North East Washington GMU's are grossly below healthy numbers

\* Allow hound hunting and hazing

\*

### \* Caribou population decimation

\* Blame Forest Management (lie)

\* Number one reason for death is predators, not habitat fragmentation. This could easily be disproven if we looked at the forest management reduction in the caribou Zone for the last 30 years; the species not only sustained but grew some years until very shortly after wolf reintroduction efforts nearby.

### \* Moose population decimation

\* Number one reason for mortality is Wolves, then other predators.

\* We are told Ticks are the reason for moose declines but historically ticks kill calves and weaken adults. I have not noted any moose in our area with typical Tick Bourne illness signs or hair loss. They all look perfectly healthy.

\* Winter ranges that held 44 moose 8 years ago now hold a mere 6 to 9 with very few mature bulls.

\* Picking up moose horns has become a thing of the past, where I'd pick up 20-30 fresh paddles a year is now down to 4 or 6 fresh paddles, even when using trained dogs.

\* Logging contractors are informing us that they rarely see moose where even 5 years ago they would see between 1 and 5 per day, some saying they've only seen 2 or 3 all year.

### \* Mule Deer

\* Last season I was lucky enough to draw a Multi-season deer, elk, and quality Mule deer in the Douglas unit. This is the unit I've been putting in for as its the unit I've hunted my entire life for Mule Deer. Mountain Mule deer hunting is my passion and honestly I feel like its been stolen from me. This particular unit would produce nice bucks with average deer populations. Historically I would see between 10 to 40 deer in a day of hard hunting depending on conditions. During this hunt I spent 7 days cresting each of the largest mountains in this unit only to find 11 mule deer, 2 were yearling bucks. I had great hunting conditions, fresh snow almost every day and should have been in peak rut activity. I saw fresh wolf tracks every day at all elevations, on every mountain. There is no doubt there are multiple Wolf packs running this mountain range as I could see by the tracks

which pack I had crossed. 3 wolves in one pack, 1 had significantly larger prints, another 3 wolf pack, and a 5 wolf pack, along with occasional loner wolves. I spent all winter disgusted at what I'd witnessed, shame on the department for allowing this to happen to a fragile species such as mule deer, i fear they will be below huntable populations in these units within the next 5 years or less. Now I see more mule deer driven down into the valleys where I'd rarely see them if ever.

\* I haven't picked up a mule deer shed in these units for years now.

\* Whitetail deer

\* There is no doubt whitetail deer are our most abundant deer specie in north east Washington but there numbers have been declining as well.

\* The number of mature bucks on camera is a signal that shows me the deer aren't living as long as they once were.

\* Overall deer numbers to any of my winter feeding sites has dropped dramatically. Feeders that once sustained 30 deer through the winter now have 5 does and 2-3 smaller bucks regularly visiting. My feeding practices were to sustain deer populations while spreading them out to multiple feeding sites, lessening the chance for predation. I also try to keep it a safe but manageable distance to bedding, thermal cover, and natural winter feed. The methods I use are proven to help with overall health, increase fawn retention, reduce mortality, with no signs of disease.

\* Cougar hunting

\* Hound Hunting Cats with much higher quota in central and Eastern Washington

\* Bear hunting

\* Baiting should be allowed

\* Hound hunting should be allowed

\* Spring Bear should be over the counter

\* Should coincide with turkey hunting to increase positive economic activity in rural areas

\* Protects calving and fawning seasons

\* Bear population still very high although the extended season helped since it gave people a reason to hunt bear before any other seasons. very successful in its first year, and the second bear quota.

\* Wolf Hunting

\* Stop Naming packs to allow emotional ties from animal activists

\* Monitor pack sizes

\* Packs larger than 4 should be targeted for size reduction

\* There is no reason to have pack of 8 to 16 which we do

\* Even with hunting, wolf population can continue to grow in dense timbered area

\* There is no scientific reason the east side should be taking the heaviest impact so wolves can slowly and naturally make their way to all 3 zones

\* TRANSLOCATION immediately

\* Why are we allowing wolves to come into our small towns? We have documented proof of wolves in our logyard which is across the street from town.

\* With the current plan I am rethinking our partnership with WDFW to allow areal capture on our property. Being one of the easiest landowners to work with, I can tell you that many people in our area feel the same way. If someone like ourselves drop out, I can assure you others will fallow.

\* Tribal Wolf Hunting

\* If Wolves are protected (they shouldn't be), How can Native Americans hunt them with an "open season" within the boundary of the protected zone? (Ferry County aka The North Half)

\* I understand and support ancestral hunting heritage but why is it ok for tribal members to hound hunt in Washington State, (north half) while non-natives hound hunting and trapping rights were

stripped.

Please give us a fighting chance by allowing all predator management to be reevaluated. You may be winning the public sentiment in urban centers but you are losing all support in rural areas. I have been a proud supporter of WDFW over the years but each year it has gotten harder for me. Directed Kelly Susewind and Tony Leonetti have been a breath of fresh air and honestly a lot of the local agents have been great to work with. I look forward to the future but at the same time I know, most likely I will be disappointed by the bureaucracy and forced to hunt out of state. I will eventually take my kids, along with advocate for more people to do the same. Thank you for taking the time to read this and feel free to reach out to me at [kvaagen@vaagenbros.com](mailto:kvaagen@vaagenbros.com) if you need any clarification or would like to discuss any options moving forward, and put a sportsman on the wolf panel, it's embarrassing and lacks substance without it.