

# PRINCE OF WALES WOLVES



**THE LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF LOGGING AND  
ROADS PUSH A TONGASS WOLF POPULATION  
TOWARD EXTINCTION**



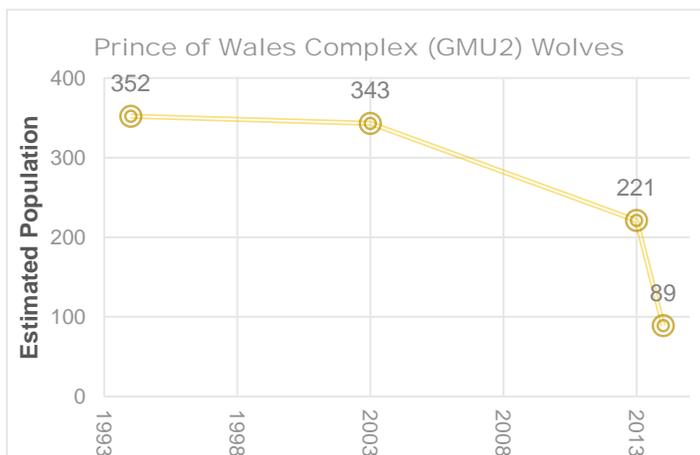
# PRINCE OF WALES WOLVES

The long-term impacts of logging and roads push a Tongass wolf population toward extinction

## Executive Summary

### A 75% DECLINE IN 20 YEARS

Wolves are a symbol of wilderness and ecological integrity. They are important in their own right and as a key part of a functioning predator-prey system. In Southeast Alaska, wolves bring significant economic benefits to communities as part of the package that lures more than one million visitors to the Tongass National Forest every year and that contributes more than \$1 billion to the Southeast Alaska economy.



Source	Estimate <sup>1</sup>	Year	GMU2 Total
Person et al. (1996)	39 wolves per 1000 km <sup>2</sup>	Fall 1994	352
ADFG (2009)	38 wolves per 1000 km <sup>2</sup>	Fall 2003	343
ADFG (2015)	24.5 wolves per 1000 km <sup>2</sup>	Fall 2013	221
ADFG (2015)	9.9 wolves per 1000 km <sup>2</sup>	Fall 2014	89

<sup>1</sup> Wolf density estimates were applied across the Game Management Unit 2 (GMU2) extrapolation area (9025 km<sup>2</sup>). Note that the 2003 ADFG estimate was expressed as 326 wolves on POW and surrounding islands (~8615 km<sup>2</sup>) rather than as a density.

## THREE STEPS FOR CHANGE

1

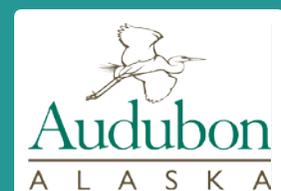
Halt hunting and trapping of wolves in Game Management Unit 2 until a sustainable population is rebuilt

2

Halt clearcut old-growth logging and road-building, and close unnecessary roads

3

Protect the wolf population under the Endangered Species Act



In 1994, there were an estimated 352 Alexander Archipelago wolves in Game Management Unit 2 (i.e. GMU2 or Prince of Wales Complex) (Person et al. 1996). In 2014, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) estimated there were 89 wolves remaining in GMU2 (ADFG 2015). The drop from 352 wolves to 89 represents a 75% decline in the region's wolf population. It indicates that the Prince of Wales Complex wolf population is not being managed sustainably by ADFG, the Alaska Board of Game, and the Federal Subsistence Board, which set hunting and trapping allocations, and by the Forest Service, which controls most of the wolves' habitat.

## THE CAUSES OF WOLF MORTALITY

The direct take of wolves is the immediate issue facing the Prince of Wales Complex wolf population. An estimated 87% of wolf mortality is human-caused through hunting, trapping, and illegal poaching (Person and Russell 2008). Much of the human-caused mortality can ultimately be indirectly attributed to six decades of the Forest Service's aggressive old-growth clearcut logging program on Prince of Wales and surrounding islands. How?

- First, the roads that are built to support the logging effort provide easy access points for poachers to enter the forest and kill wolves. The Prince of Wales Complex has over 4,200 miles of roads.
- Second, large-scale, old-growth logging eliminates important winter habitat for deer. More than 40% of the high-quality winter deer habitat in GMU2 has been logged. The eventual result is a smaller deer population and less prey for wolves.
- Third, the reduction in deer populations leads some people to view wolves as competition for deer, leading to increased poaching and public pressure to authorize unsustainable legal limits on wolf take to drive down the wolf population. It is estimated that illegal poaching accounts for the killing of 0.5 to 1 wolf for every wolf legally harvested, which can mean a doubling of the sustainable harvest every year in the Prince of Wales Complex (Person and Russell 2008, Alaska Board of Game 2015). Prior to 2015, ADFG, the state Board of Game and the Federal Subsistence Board did not include poaching in their calculation of a sustainable take for wolves.

## SOLUTIONS

In order to prevent the extinction of Prince of Wales wolves, Audubon recommends three important steps:

1. ADFG, the Alaska Board of Game, and the Federal Subsistence Board halt wolf hunting and trapping on Prince of Wales and the associated complex of islands (GMU2) until there is evidence of a sustainable, harvestable population of wolves. Following recovery, illegal take must be realistically accounted for in hunting and trapping limits to ensure sustainable management.
2. The Forest Service halts large-scale old-growth clearcut logging and road-building for the ongoing Big Thorne sale and ends future large-scale old-growth sales in the Prince of Wales Complex. The Forest Service should also aggressively close and decommission logging roads to reduce human access to wolves.
3. The US Fish and Wildlife Service lists the Alexander Archipelago wolves in the Prince of Wales Complex under the Endangered Species Act.