

California makes plans for return of wolves

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

A lone gray wolf in the prime of his life roams 730 miles to seek a mate and a new home, crossing nearly the entire state of Oregon in two months.

He skirts small towns, crosses numerous highways, surmounts the Cascade mountain range and pauses just 30 miles from California.

It sounds like the stuff of legend.

But this journey is very real, and it holds huge implications for California. If the wolf, known to Oregon officials as OR7, resumes its southbound trek it will make history as the first wild wolf confirmed in California in nearly 90 years.

The wanderings of OR7 are already stirring excitement, not to mention controversy.

"It's actually a reason to celebrate," said Suzanne Asha Stone, Northern Rockies representative for the group Defenders of Wildlife, which led the charge to reintroduce wolves to the West. "I didn't think I'd see it in my lifetime."

Cattle and sheep ranchers in the state's northern counties are not among the celebrants. Some are watching OR7's travels with dread.

"We definitely have concerns," said Jack Hanson, a cattle rancher near Susanville and treasurer of the California Cattlemen's Association. "I'm hesitant to say I see a clear road and things will go well."

The California Department of Fish and Game, for more than a

year, has quietly worked on a plan to prepare for the eventual return of wolves. It expects to release the plan in January.

Read the whole story