

Interagency Wolf Committee

November 18, 2015

Meeting Notes

Attendees: Anna Schmidt, Chris Madsen, Daniel Ravenel, Rick Roeder, Rodger Woodruff, Terry Smith, Travis Fletcher, Steve Gibson, Mark Nuetzmann, Eric Rickerson

WAG Members: Mark Pidgeon, Jack Field, Diane Gallegos, Shawn Cantrell, Tom Erskine, Paula Swedeen

WDFW Staff: Donny Martorello, Stephanie Simek, Scott Becker, Matthew Trenda, Jeff Burnham

Welcome and Introductions: Donny welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made all around. Donny gave an update on staff changes at WDFW. The agenda was approved, as were the meeting notes from previous meetings.

Agency and Tribal Updates

Updates around the room from everyone present. Scott Becker started for WDFW, giving a Washington wolf monitoring and management update. As of the end of 2014, a minimum of 68 wolves in 16 known packs were documented. Five of those were breeding pairs. The distribution of wolf packs was discussed. Updated numbers (minimum wolf counts, pack distributions) will come out with the 2015 Annual Report, published in late March or early April.

Scott went over trapping techniques and priorities. Monitoring is a year round process, even though capturing does not occur every day. There are priority packs that are identified by a number of factors, including research projects, how many collars are in a pack, or how at risk a pack is to become a problem. Priorities can evolve or change throughout the year as new information is presented. Intensive monitoring efforts are conducted on each pack to determine these priorities. The primary goal is to get at least one collar in as many packs as possible. This is to assist with aerial captures during the winter months. Only packs with functional collars are targeted during the winter months.

There have been 15 wolf captures from nine different packs, plus one lone wolf, in 2015. Some GPS collars have failed, which drops the number of monitored wolves. WDFW will try to start aerial captures earlier this year, with a goal of December 5 for the first efforts.

There have been four known mortalities in Washington in 2015. Two were human-caused, one is an unknown care, one is under investigation, and there was one legal harvest in Idaho.

Question: What were the causes for the human caused mortalities?

Answer: There was a capture-related mortality this year, as well as the car accident on I-90 earlier in the year.

The future of wolf monitoring is becoming more challenging as wolf populations increase. The proportion of wolves collared will decline, as well as the number of packs with a collar. WDFW is in the process of developing alternative population estimation techniques.

Question: What alternative techniques are you working on?

Answer: We want to create a model that will implement the relatively accurate reports we get now (with Tribal and agency assistance). There hasn't been a lot of progress yet, but WDFW wants to get started as soon as possible. Ideas have included the use of remote cameras and citizen science for help with reporting. There are many people who have remote cameras and they are not difficult to use.

Scott switched over to livestock depredations. In 2015, there have been seven confirmed cattle killed by wolves, as well as an injured guard dog. There were no issues with sheep this year. Cattle seem to be more consistent over time, if you look at the Rocky Mountain populations, while sheep fluctuate from year to year.

Question: What is the land ownership for the depredations?

Answer: Most were on public grazing allotments. We don't know where the guard dog was attacked.

About 10-15% of known packs cause depredations, and while WDFW doesn't have enough years of data to form a solid conclusion, this is in line with Rocky Mountain data in the past. Mid to late summer is when the majority of depredations occur. However, depredations can occur any time in the year. From mid to late October to about June 1, livestock are mostly on private property and depredations are far less likely to occur.

Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for livestock (DPCA-L) were discussed. Stephanie helped with the explanation. It's important to know that each operator is different, and what works for one will not work for others. WDFW works directly with operators to learn what will work best for the exact situation. As of today, about 40 producers have signed since the beginning of the program. Twenty-five have signed since July 1. DPCA-Ls are currently under revision to ensure WDFW can continue to offer the option for producers.

The Department is also developing criteria for priority areas. There is also a current review of nonlethal tools. This will help determine which methods are most effective, and will also determine how to issue them. The Wolf Advisory Group (WAG) is currently providing assistance as well.

Stephanie went over the range rider contracts WDFW has utilized this past year. Range riders were deployed this year and some were even able to work multiple allotments. WDFW is looking to increase the number of range riders on contract for next spring.

Scott gave an overview of the Huckleberry pack split. There are now two groups, a northern group and a southern group. WDFW wanted to let the year play out to see if they were going to separate or come back together. At this point, it looks like they are separate packs, but there is

still some interchange between them. It is suspected that by the end of the year, the new group will be considered an individual pack. In late March or early April, the new information will be available. The map of known packs will also be updated to reflect new data.

Question: There have been two reports, one from WSU and one from the University of Montana, seem to have different results on wolf removal. Where are you guys on that?

Answer: They had different approaches, and the scale was completely different. WSU's was the entirety of the Rocky Mountains, while the Montana study was far more localized. However, we don't base our management off of a single study. What we try to do is look at everything available, stay as informed as possible, and take the best possible action with the information we have.

Question: Are you very certain that the wolf captured earlier this year was a member of the Profanity pack?

Answer: Yes, we are certain. That wolf covers from the Canadian border all the way to the Colville nation.

Question: Are you looking to set up compost facilities for carcasses?

Answer: Yes, we are interested in doing so. We are looking near the Lookout pack and in the Teanaway area.

Question: Is there potential for a partnership with DOT?

Answer: We are looking into that. Progress has been made, and there is potential there for partnership and collaboration. The hurdles include funding, manpower, and other resources.

It was suggested to look into setting one up in every county in the state.

Answer: While it's probably a ways before we set one up in every county, it's certainly something WDFW is moving forward with and is very interested in pursuing.

After the WDFW update, participants gave updates from their sides.

USDA gave an update on the litigation proceedings. As part of the litigation, the program has withdrawn from conducting any lethal management of wolves. USDA is looking forward to putting on a workshop in early January (no exact date yet) that will emphasize nonlethal practices that livestock producers can implement to minimize wolf conflicts. They are aiming for the second week of January in Moses Lake for that workshop. Suggestions are being taken from WAG for the best ways to go about the workshop. The goal is to provide practical advice for people, including fladry, composting, the compensation program, and other methods. USDA will ask WDFW for help with that. The National Wildlife Research Center has placed about 100 dogs across the inter-mountain west for livestock producers. They are testing new breeds of guard dogs that have not been used as much in the US. That study is in its third year (one year in

Washington). Two sheep producers in Washington are participating. USDA hopes to continue with funding for this project. It takes quite a few years of data to determine any progress.

Donny mentioned that WDFW has provided an amicus brief to Wildlife Services in support of them during the litigation.

Travis went over the monitoring of the Dirty Shirt pack. He wanted to emphasize that there should still be conversations from the Forest Service and the Department on any management issues. He mentioned that things have been going well on that front, but the Forest Service wants to continue to be involved in those conversations. With the intense fire season in 2015, wolf management was pushed back a little.

Mark: Throughout the summer we continued to place remote cameras across the reservation. Nothing new to report there. Ongoing training has been conducted on wolf management, monitoring, and trapping techniques.

Donny asked where they were on the wolf plan.

Mark: It has been on the backburner for a while. There have been several drafts over the years. One issue was that it has been attached to the overall wildlife management plan. A wolf management plan is at a good outline at this point, including getting more public and tribal involvement, especially ranchers and those that frequent those points in the reservation. Getting that completed in the next few years should not be an issue.

Donny: There are also a couple training opportunities for capture, immobilization, and monitoring that WDFW offers. Folks are invited to both of those trainings. Wolf Haven also provides a training course. Those opportunities will be available again this next year.

Eric: Currently there is only one collared wolf (breeding female from Strawberry pack) amongst the three packs on the reservation. There has been no success collaring Whitestone yet, though monitoring efforts continue. There has been some wolf sign detected outside of any known wolf area (west of Strawberry home range). It was discovered while we were on the Tunk fire this summer.

Coordination Strategy

Donny started by discussing strategies where coordination is key between the different entities. The coordination strategy document between USFWS, WDFW, and WS is not complete, but is in the final stages. Because the eastern third of the state is federally delisted and the western two-thirds are federally endangered, cooperation is very important. In the western two-thirds, the USFWS is the lead agency on any action. They are also the lead on captures, response to mortalities, etc. However, they have deferred a lot of the on-the-ground activities to WDFW and Wildlife Services due to staffing and funding. The coordination with producers is also handled by WDFW and Wildlife Services. If anyone discovers a wolf mortality in the western two-thirds, he or she can immediately contact WDFW or USFWS enforcement. When the plan is circulated, contact information will be made more available.

The threshold for agency action is also addressed in the coordination strategy. WDFW has a protocol for lethal control for any action conducted in the eastern third of the state. In the western two-thirds, USFWS does not have the authority to lethally remove wolves. The coordination strategy speaks to similar thresholds when the agencies would consider a responsive action, whether it be lethal control or relocation. The goal is also to be as proactive as possible. Earlier in wolf management, the Department was criticized for the lack of transparency. The coordination strategy speaks to added steps for notifying the public and increasing transparency.

The protocol should go out next week for signatures and approval from all involved.

Question: Does the USFWS identify new areas for relocation as well?

Answer: There has been no process for that yet. The protocol goes over how agencies will cooperate in that event. No area in the state has been identified as of now. One thing to keep in mind is that USFWS will not relocate wolves outside a recovery region.

Question: Would relocated wolves go to zones currently lacking wolves?

Answer: No. The relocated wolves would remain in the same management zones.

Question: Is this protocol looking at future management? It seems overdue.

Answer: The level of cooperation we've had is basically what the protocol covers, but it is a document that will play a part in the future of wolf management in the state.

Notice of Depredation Events

When depredations or events on the landscape occur, cooperation should be involved as well. If WDFW is heading out on a reported event, notifying the Forest Service would be beneficial. Whenever an event occurs, investigations go out to determine if it was a wolf or other. Notifications are sent out to necessary Department staff members in these cases, and Forest Service contacts have been added to that initial notification. Other notices go out as the investigation is ongoing.

Donny discussed that these notices can go out to other landowners. Letting the landowner know that the Department is on the way and a depredation may have occurred is important for cooperation and communication.

Travis mentioned that working with the Department and the permittee is the best way to go about these events.

DNR also would like to be in that loop, and while tenants are good at letting them know, it would a good balance to have those notifications from WDFW as well.

Donny brought up that adding this step to the protocol for the mailing lists that already go out for depredation events and other updates. These landowners would include DNR, USFS, BLM, and some private timberlands. WDFW would need names for contact information in this step. It would have to be more detailed.

DNR: It may be better to identify contacts by position, rather than name.

Donny: That's a good point.

Donny went over the carcass identification poster that DOT has been working on lately. There have been a handful of wolf-vehicle collisions that have resulted in mortalities. This poster was created to help tell the difference between a wolf and a coyote. It also has a small map of pack distribution in the state, as well as some contact information. There was an immediate need for this over the past year, and work was done quickly on it. They may entertain edits and suggestions should they arise. The pack map will certainly need to be updated as new information is brought to light.

Data Sharing

There are a couple different data sharing protocols that WDFW follows. The first is the one used with producers. GPS data can be followed through a GIS application, and users can login to see raw wolf locations. WDFW is sharing this information with livestock producers and county governments as a means to help minimize future depredations. WDFW has been restrictive about who the data gets shared with. Some federal refuges have asked for the data, as well as others outside, and WDFW has either declined or shared data in a more traditional method. The livestock producers have to sign a sensitive data sharing agreement that outlines their rights and any restrictions that apply with these data. Once the user signs the agreement, WDFW issues him or her a user name and password. The producer can then login and see locations for the previous two weeks. From March 15 to June 1, there is a blackout due to denning. This is to protect the location of the den site. During that blackout timeframe, the producer can still work with the conflict specialist to address any concerns.

If there is a data sharing need that partners present may have, the preference would be to share those data as other species data are shared. WDFW is reluctant to share the live data, for the reasons discussed above.

Communication has been great with Spokane and Colville tribes. Issues arise when wolves go off or on reservation land, as it can be unclear whether there is a right to share that data or not with livestock producers.

Colville tribe has always been open to sharing data, regardless of whether the wolf is on or off reservation land. Sharing with a producer is mostly fine, but the concern arises if that collar data is used for wolf removal as a result of a depredation. Colville Tribe does not, at this time, support the use of collar data to help with lethal removal.

Donny: So if there is a removal operation going on, the data sharing would stop during that process? Or about using the collar to carry out a removal?

Eric: Using the collar to carry out a removal. It is definitely fair to share the data with producers. The collar data just couldn't be shared to carry out a removal. If and when a depredation occurs, it will be interesting to see how it plays out, because it has not been an issue yet.

Donny: Is there an MOU in place between Colville Tribe and WDFW?

Eric: Unsure. Both have worked together well not only for wolf issues, but also with bighorn sheep and other species monitoring.

Donny: If we do move down this road, it would be a new step to have collar data available to those producers who live off reservation land. If that step is taken, an MOU should be created so we have that and there is no confusion down the road.

Eric: I agree and I think an MOU would be a great idea.

The last issue comes from setting out traps, whether it be state or tribal folks. In one sense it doesn't matter as much, but there may be philosophical issues later down the road, especially in the event of wolf removal actions.

Eric: In the past, there was less of a concern about who the collar belonged to. However, with Profanity especially, there was a sense of desire to get our own collar. The bottom line is that we want the data though.

Donny: That is correct. WDFW wanted our own collar in the Profanity pack. There was a much cleaner process to follow for sharing data with producers if the collar was a WDFW collar. A collar is helpful for understanding where the pack is located. In the event of a wolf removal protocol, the state does use that collar data for that.

A comment was made that it should be WDFW who collars, as some livestock producers have expressed difficulty in getting data from tribal collars.

Eric: I personally have never turned down any producer who has asked for data. I am the point of contact and you should definitely refer producers who wish to have these data to me in the future. I don't know who they've spoken with, but I have always been willing to share data with producers.

The same commenter expressed gratitude that Eric

Anna: Does WDFW get notified of any request for data sharing from the tribe? For example, if the producer goes to a tribe and the tribe says no, does WDFW get notified of this?

Donny: We routinely get asked for data sharing, and our conflict specialists work closely with those who request. Criteria must be met.

Anna: So if the Forest Service requests, do they come to you?

Donny: Yes. We want our conflict specialists to be the point of contact for producers, and if we get requests for collar data where that collar is a tribal one, we work with the tribes for that producer.

Anna: I want to say an MOU is a really good idea, especially between WDFW and tribes. I would also suggest that for the Spokane tribe. The MOU should cover a broad spectrum of not just data, but what is behind that data.

Donny: Data sharing builds an expectation, and communication about the reliability of the data needs to continue. In this case, the data flow stops on occasion due to the system running slowly sometimes. Collars are set up to release four fixes every day, but that does not mean you will always get the four fixes. Sometimes the system goes down and needs to be rebooted. It's something that needs to be brought up before we go down the MOU path. This system is not foolproof, and issues will arise. If this is not addressed, it can establish expectations that may not be realistic.

Eric: Should there be some discussion on whether or not we would allow producers who are grazing on the reservation to access data not just from tribal system but from WDFW systems as well. That could potentially become an issue, with producers off the reservation having access to data that producers on the reservation do not.

Break for Lunch

The discussion on data sharing continued on, with more discussion on collars in particular. Donny asked about collar data and having access to that information.

Eric: As long as both agencies have keys to that collar, and the manufacturer is able to give permissions there, there shouldn't be a problem at all with sharing that collar data.

Donny: Can there be two keys?

Eric: All you need is the key file, so that shouldn't be a problem.

Every tribe is going to be different, which is why MOUs should be tailored to the individual needs of each tribe. WDFW will reach out and get that going with tribes who have wolves or wolf packs in the areas.

Travis: How I view data sharing is that if I had that data, I would want to share it all with producers in the area. I just worry that if I did have that information, I would want to share it and be proactive, rather than follow proper protocols there. As it is, I don't know that I have a need for access to that data.

Donny: We do want to make sure the Forest Service has the data necessary for forest planning and forest plan revisions. If there are any concerns there, we do want to know about them.

Travis: No known issues at this time.

Scott gave an update on what's been happening with John. WDFW has provided data to the Forest Service in the listed parts of Washington, but not the delisted parts. Making plans as necessary for wolves anywhere is going to be better for preparation in the future. One thing to bring up is that even if GPS collars are working 100% of the time, only some of that data is accessible through the data sharing system. The rest of it won't be available until we physically have that collar with us. GPS collars also fail quite a bit, especially when they are on wolves. Wolves move around a lot, and those collars take a beating. WDFW has multiple collars that have failed way before the battery life was spent. WDFW is going to try to transition to a vertex collar, which has a battery life of 3-5 years. They are lighter and will last longer.

Question: Any efforts for a proximity collar?

Answer: There is a WSU grad student working on that right now. We would like to get one out this year that would function as a sort of proximity collar. However, battery life will be affected.

Question: Will the vertex collars be able to transmit data?

Answer: They will transmit data as well. The information will be similar to the information we get from current collars.

Scott mentioned that WDFW targets adults for VHF collars, as pups or yearlings are more likely to disperse from the pack and the collar has a better chance of survival.

Question: Would tribes that already have agreements require a whole new separate MOU for wolf data?

Donny: We would have a separate MOU or at least amend current ones to reflect this addition. Due to the complexity of wolf data sharing, it would be necessary to separate it.

Other Items

Donny brought up access agreements as one item to discuss. He also spoke about telling landowners when WDFW has tours or field trips. DNR wants to know about those times mostly because they get the calls asking about what is going on. WDFW could coordinate those events better, opening up communication a little earlier in the process.

WAG Update

Donny gave a brief update on the Wolf Advisory Group and how things are going with them. When WAG started, there was little cooperation and no real communication between the nine members. The people side of the issue was not progressing or improving. A third party neutral,

Francine Madden, conducted an assessment, interviewing dozens of folks at all layers of the issue. She determined there was “deep-rooted conflict.” Until those deep-rooted values are addressed on a topic, no progress can be made.

WDFW initially brought Francine on as a third-party neutral to facilitate the WAG process last May. There was an open-competitive bid process, which ultimately went to Francine based on her expertise. The goal is to humanize the issue and address those deep-rooted conflicts in an effort to move forward. WAG is now 18 members, including all of the original nine members. They have had at least four face-to-face meetings, a couple tours, and a couple conference calls. As they progress, they have begun to address the heavier issues involved.

WAG has been very busy since Francine was brought on. WAG is now in the process of sequencing the items they wish to address, and they have already identified some issues. Updates are provided to WAG in the event of any depredations or conflict throughout the year. This happened this year with the events in Dirty Shirt and Teanaway. They are currently looking at a couple producers to model a producer plan for nonlethal methods. They are also working on tailoring that process to be adaptable to different producers. This plan would also assist in the event that depredations are ongoing.

Donny wanted to emphasize that the kind of progress he has seen with WAG is remarkable. We are starting to see cooperation and cohesion that we were not seeing at all before.

Information will continue to be shared with WAG and IWC as it has been, though some emails will be the same for both groups.

Livestock Compensation Panel

WDFW has had a few claims for direct losses, where wolves have either killed or injured livestock. The Wolf Management Plan also has an entry to address greater than normal losses. Weight loss is also a factor, as well as pregnancy rates. These are all indirect losses. WDFW is putting a panel together to help look at these indirect loss cases and recommend action that WDFW should take. The panel will have five members, including two from the livestock community, two from the environmental community, and one neutral party. No other state offers payment for indirect losses.

The process is that producers will maintain their records for losses, pregnancy rates, etc. The producer would submit a claim to FSA, and what is denied or not paid, he or she can submit to the state and the panel will review it. There will be an announcement sometime next week about the members of the panel. This process will be happening fast, as WDFW wants the two claims already submitted to be addressed by Christmas.

Update on WDFW Projects

WDFW currently is a part of an ongoing wolf/livestock project funding students at WSU. They've been out there for two years. WDFW received funding to help support that project staff from the last legislative session. They are looking at interactions between wolves and livestock at

a number of different levels.. Contact Scott Becker or Stephanie Simek for more information or updates on this and other projects going on in Washington State.

The legislature also provided funding for a wolf/ungulate study. This will be combined with other funding WDFW has to perform a larger predator/prey study. This long-term study will be initiated soon, and will include several areas of the state, most notably northeastern Washington. There will be a study plan for comment, but the funding is for only two years, so it will move fast. WDFW hopes to have that going by the first of the year. The research on this project is partially directed through University of Washington, who will work cooperatively with WDFW on that project.

Joint IWC and WAG Attendance

Grazing Plan Process and Implementation

WAG members joined the meeting for a grazing plan process and implementation presentation.

WAG has expressed interest in the past in learning more and more about grazing, the process, and the implementation. The IWC has expressed interest in meeting with WAG members as well. In this meeting, WDFW wants to give an informational presentation on grazing practices. Rick will cover the DNR perspective, and Travis for the USFS.

Jeff presented a Power Point on grazing practices on WDFW controlled land. Due to fires the last two years, some landowners have lost grazing lands and WDFW has found alternate sites for them. The Habitat Conservation Plan and the CCAA for sage grouse are not in place yet, but will be before long.

There are a number of requirements that the Fish and Wildlife Commission has created in order for grazing to occur on WDFW ground. These requirements are listed in the Power Point presentation. For almost every grazing permit, there is a grazing management plan in place. They are not a requirement, but they can be very helpful.

Grazing can be a great many things, including giving WDFW the power to control the type of livestock, the intensity (stocking rate), the season, duration, and frequency, and pasture layout. Each place is different and has different management needs. These factors can be affected by infrastructure, finances, water availability, and other resources.

Ecological integrity is always a main concern on grazed grounds. Monitoring (compliance and effectiveness) is used in each case in order for WDFW to use adaptive management.

WDFW requires a number of things from permittees. They need to be available to the Wildlife Area manager, maintain infrastructure, and record dates and reports of actual use. WDFW does not have minimum standards for use.

Grazing is certainly not appropriate everywhere, but it can be used to effectively manage certain areas.

WDFW allocates forage and bills for use based on the AUM. There is a discount for producers who deal with the Department, as management can be more expensive with the requirements by WDFW. Some Department lands are not available at all for grazing due to acquisition contracts and others where agreements are in place to not graze for certain periods of time. WDFW is currently looking to revise the process and improve it.

Rick presented DNR's grazing process and implementation. DNR functions under the same standards as WDFW, managing lands for sustainability and integrity. The leases themselves are very similar to WDFW as well. There are grazing schedules, maximum animal units, forage usage requirements, and other variables. This is all done through the land managers, who are the people on the ground every day for DNR. There are a little over 800 leases and permits. Adaptability is key to DNR on many fronts. There is very simple language of grazing requirements, and DNR reserves the right to adjust based on a number of factors.

DNR is under the same state and federal regulations as well. It is common to have a lease with a party who grazes and also has other operations, such as orchards or something similar. Adjustments are constantly made to work with neighboring landowners for the benefit of all involved. Monitoring is constantly done to keep up with any necessary changes.

DNR controls about 850,000 grazing acres. While wolf issues have come up, adjustments have not yet needed to be made on leases. It's about 90% cattle. DNR is, at all times, maximizing parcel usage. That comes directly from the Constitution. They are not looking to move any producers elsewhere, making it difficult to adjust if an allotment is not able to be grazed due to wolves.

Travis gave the overview for USFS grazing. Where USFS differs is that they value multiple use, with grazing as one approved usage. Grazing has been a part of the landscape since the homestead era, with the oldest agreements coming from as early as 1911. The permit has to be validated, meaning there has to be proof the livestock is out there grazing.

It is the expectation of the agency that these landscapes will be grazed. It is very unusual to have land that is not being grazed (similar to DNR). USFS identifies the effects of grazing on all grazing lands. An allotment management plan comes out of the NEPA, which takes several factors into account that identify how USFS will manage that land and protect the resources on that land.

Before any livestock goes on the land, bills have to be issued, paid, and money received. The permits have three parts: who the permit is issued to, the number of livestock that can be on the allotment, and the timeframe that the grazing can occur. The permits state that it is a privilege, not a right, to graze USFS land, which allows USFS to make adjustments as needed (if any management needs are identified). The terms of the permit are typically ten years.

There is "type" of livestock (cattle, horses, sheep), and then "classes" of livestock (yearling, cow, etc.). USFS does have the ability to make changes based on resource needs. If depredations occur on an allotment, USFS have identified adaptive management strategies. If they are not tied

down to a specific rotation, USFS can change those things if there is a need. This was done last year in the Colville National Forest.

It depends on the situation when referring to the time it takes to go through the NEPA process. Some have taken five years or so, but the bigger the issue, the longer the time investment. There is no standard answer, as it really depends on the situation. When there is new ecological range management science, from a NEPA perspective, you look at the perspective. If there is something on the landscape that was not there before, you determine whether or not your analysis is no longer complete. If a producer does want to do something new, we may be able to simply allow it. It depends on the action and what it would entail.

USFS has 1.1 million acres on the Colville National Forest, with about 800,000 acres of grazing allotments. Okanogan has about 1.6 million acres of grazing allotment on about 4 million acres.

The annual operating instructions, developed in spring, do present an opportunity to include den sites and other factors. There is an opportunity there to cooperate more with WDFW and build stronger relationships there to sit in on the permittee meetings to talk about allotment specifics and how actions play out in a given year.

Dispersing livestock lessens the impact on any given area. Bunching can take a toll on those areas. These pastures are very large, and in that type of landscape, livestock disperse and their individual impacts on any one spot are lessened. Livestock behavior changed when wolves arrived, and livestock wanted to stay together in a big group rather than disperse as they did before. USFS has never told producers they cannot have bunched livestock, but when they are bunched up they are required to be moved more.

USFS feels like they do not have the authority to tell producers how to manage their livestock, meaning a set guideline or plan (perhaps created by WAG) may not be realistic. There may not be any value to bringing something like that forward, as most every producer already knows the best management practices in regards to wolves.

WDFW has been directed to include a list developed by Stephanie Simek, but requiring a specific one would be run on a case by case basis. DNR is somewhat similar to WDFW in their practices, and tenants are made aware of who to contact and what options are available to them. It is also very case specific.

Public Comment

One public member commented that it is very encouraging to see all of the different players becoming involved with wolf management in Washington State.

Meeting Adjourned