

**Wolf Advisory Group
April 26, 2021, Meeting Notes
Zoom Meeting**

WAG members: Samee Charriere, Tom Davis, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Todd Holmdahl, Jess Kayser, Bill Kemp, Joey McCanna, Lynn Okita, Dan Paul, Caitlin Scarano, Lisa Stone, and Paula Swedeen

WDFW staff members: Dan Brinson, Donny Martorello, Annemarie Prince, Trent Roussin, and Julia Smith

WDFW Commissioners: Molly Linville and Lorna Smith

US Forest Service: Robert Garcia

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

Welcome and check-in

Rob welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the agenda for the day.

Meeting Purpose

This meeting is more of check-in. WAG members came to agreement last time for SFA guideline concepts and gave permission to the Department to put it in paragraph form. The Department did that, sent it back out last week, and today's purpose is to go around to members and check-in: Did the Department capture what was agreed upon? If not, let us know where the discrepancy is.

Comment

Anybody have any concerns with what we're trying to do today?

No Objections

Comment

We can share the screen and show the agreed upon guidelines and paragraph. Those are a couple tools available. Why don't we go down the list and start?

Comment

Good morning. Sorry I missed the second day last time, but when I saw the results, I was very pleased. It is something I can live with; it covered a lot of areas we were looking for.

Comment

I'm pleased with where we're at, but I want to hear the conversation more.

Comment

I'm good. Staff did a great job capturing the conversation. I appreciate it.

Comment

I don't think I ever agreed to the guidelines. I just agreed to let the Department write it up so it could go out to the people I represent.

Comment

I remember you gave that guidance last meeting, yes. As it stands now, any concerns with the language the Department put in?

Comment

Yeah, I have a lot of concerns.

Comment

Okay, how about I go through the group and I come back to hear more about those concerns.

Comment

Yes, I thought the Department captured our conversation well.

Comment

Apologies, I wasn't at the last WAG meeting. From the notes I read, it sounds like they captured what was basically being worked through. However, I've got some severe concerns at the final draft after sending it to some people.

Comment

We'll come back to you as well.

Comment

Yes, it captured what we talked about.

Comment

Yes, I think it accurately reflects what we discussed. I do have a couple questions once we're done going through the group.

Comment

My apologies for also not being at last meeting, but after reading the outline and getting some background and looking at the paragraph, it looks accurate to me and looks like the additional language – from my perspective – doesn't add things that are different, just allows for a coherent set of steps to implement the concepts. I feel good about it. But of course, now I'm anxious about it after hearing producers say they have problems with it. I'm interested in what they have to say. But it looks like a good representation.

Comment

Sorry, I did not hear the question.

Comment

Did the Department wording that they sent out last week accurately reflect the guidelines that were agreed to in last meeting?

Comment

For the most part. I do have two things that I'm concerned about.

Comment

After I get through the group – you're not alone – we'll get to the group and circle back to you. Others?

Comment

I like it. I thought the Department did a good job capturing what we talked about it. I like what's in there.

Comment

I guess the simple answer is "yes," and the more complex answer is "yeah, but..." There's some clarification points in here and small concerns we can talk about.

Comment

I have five people we need to circle back with and hear what they're saying and give them an opportunity to share concerns. First person, what's on your mind, please?

Comment

I guess I'll speak to hunters because that's who I represent. In developing the formal plan concept in Section 9, "ask the group to describe what's known about the prey base. If there's an issue, notify Department staff." In the last meeting, I expressed the need for ungulate population data lines by species along with recruitment. A biologist spoke up and said the Department had that data. That statement is really untruthful. I hate to say that, but the Department does not have deer, elk, population data, and neonates for District 1, let alone in the GMUs in District 1. Hunters have been put off this topic for decades. I'm not buying in on that. On the lack of truthfulness and the fact the Department has been kicking the can down the road on cause-and-effect issues. Hunters I represent don't vote on Section 9 as it's written because it's not a problem-solving document. We believe the whole model put forth years ago is flawed. We need to look at that model because we don't have any wolves south of I-90. That's probably the first thing we should work on. I'll stop there. I will say that because I sort of represent livestock producers also – they seem to think they need to call me – I've had no positive feedback from producers on this Section 9.

Comment

I can speak from the producers, or producers I've talked to, and the fact that I currently don't have wolves in my range, so I try to yield by the folks that do. To reiterate what was said, there is zero support for Section 9. Just due to the fact of trust issues and a lot of

these things that have been talked about, and this being more of an action item... You've got to have action before you can have trust. I want to yield my time to folks who were at the meeting and dealing with this stuff directly. I can't sign off on this. I apologize.

Comment

I just wanted to ask a question as the producers are talking about this. My understanding from the outcome of the last meeting is that you agreed on some conceptual language. I don't see the language that the Department came up with as different, so I'm really perplexed with what changed between the last meeting and this meeting. Can you tell me what changed between the last meeting and this meeting? Or specifically what is different between what the Department sent out and what you agreed on last meeting?

Comment

Let me get through the other members with concerns first, then we can circle back and reemphasize your question.

Comment

My concerns are very specific to the words on the paper. Page 2 number 4 has to do with the two collars. And I have been the person pushing for a second collar. I like how it's captured in letting the local group determine the type of collar that is used. However, I don't like the way it was captured that having a second collar is singular to packs with five wolves or more. I think there should still be an effort for two collars. Especially one with more available reading data. But there should be an extra effort for bigger packs. The idea is there but the way I read it, is it's only going to get a second collar in packs of five or more. And I know there was concerns with packs of two or less, but I don't think we should limit it to "only packs of five or more." My second concern is in a.), lethal removal. This very clearly states "all parties will make good faith effort." Is that "all parties" including producers, the Department... Who is "all parties"? That part is concerning to me. And then in slight response to the other question, when we went through and, as you say, agreed on things, we agreed to the words on the paper. I don't think this changes the fact that this is not a problem-solving document. I think having the expectation of this section preventing lethal take of wolves and depredation on livestock, with that as an idea of the document supposed to stop those things, doesn't. Does this Section 9 stop those two things from happening? I've been talking about expectations a lot. What our group wants, what every community wants, is to stop depredation on livestock and stop lethal take on wolves. Does this document do that? Those are big expectations. That's a big struggle as it's too big an expectation. There was agreeance to words on that piece of paper, however, does it meet expectations?

Comment

I should preface whatever I say with that the legislative session ended yesterday and I've been working for seven days straight so the timing of this call kind of sucks. I'm still amped up from session. I think what you're hearing from producers is the ongoing frustration of the Section 9 discussion and we, the folks representing livestock producers, have been messaging the WAG that this is the hardest thing we've ever worked on. It feels

political in so many ways to us and not practical. It doesn't address the need that producers have in SFAs. That keeps bubbling up and you're hearing that this morning. I think we have made good work, the work the Department did was true in that it captured conversations we had last meeting. That doesn't mean that we are all in support of where this document is right now, but I think it does capture the conversation from last time around. There's a couple of word usages that we have issue with as well. I think the Department is going to do this whether or not we reach agreement on Section 9, and they should. But this has not been adequately true with the best producers that are out there, but a conversation that was had last week with a conflict specialist and producer in the northeast, for the first time, after months of talking, that effort was finally made to go to producers and say, "Hey, how would this affect you?" That's a year and a half late in the process. And you're asking producers to agree when things haven't been tested on the ground. That just seems backwards. You put us that represent producers in a bad position. That's the frustration. The whole process has been frustrating. I think that illuminates what you're hearing from some folks. It gets back to the trust issue as well. That's the preface behind the frustration that I'm feeling this morning. Clearly, we have to do something. I didn't like to use the word chronic, but I think it works to describe these areas. Some producers feel when you're in an area that's experienced many problems in last couple years, tapping the breaks is not the proper action at that point. We've got folks coming from different perspectives, clearly. I think we are close and can answer the question of, I don't know if anything has changed, it's just that angst that exists in the producer community. But I do appreciate the work the Department has done and the work of the WAG in the last meeting. This is a much better document than what we've had, and, for me, it was the third-party reviewers and it was the collar data and I appreciate the Department has addressed those issues and come a long way. In the document, under 'assessment', it says "the group will select an agreed upon third party..." A little tightening on that language would be good. Does the Department have ability to veto a group that others are supporting? A little clarification of that would be helpful. I do agree on the two collars in a pack and I think she also touched on lethal removal subject A that "all parties will make a good faith effort." Who are the "all parties"?

Comment

I want to start and thank you all for sharing that the Department got the paragraph form back to you in the way you thought it would come back. We want to make sure we come back with what we said we'd do. So generally, the kinds of things we're talking about are at a stage of fatal flaws; there is space for a word tweak here and there, such as what are "all parties" and "five or more", etc. Look at the page and look at what you've all accomplished. It is a major step forward. I think the social/political things were mentioned. You get an opportunity to help shape what the Director considers. Cohesion is a powerful thing. I'm proud of what you've created here. Let's work the issues.

I wanted to touch on what was mentioned by producer representatives because the staff member did call me, so I know the conversation secondhand. I wasn't there but I was briefed on it. I also mentioned that I've talked with that producer about SFAs before. So they did have a good conversation; there was back-and-forth and questions and "Yeah, we can do that" and "No, we can't do that." It was shared with me that when they were

having a conversation about these small local groups, and what those groups will decide, it jumped out like a CRM (Conservation Resource Management team). Once that connection was made, that it's a collaborative process, the conversation seemed to really take off. The producer then said, "Let me reach out to these producers, and these producers..." It asks the questions and it's nice to know where the group can go and not go. There was a positive understanding there. That has started long ago but those conversations are continuing, and they sounded optimistic to me. And then the other things we heard, let's work those because you've got so much good stuff on the page. I don't think we are at a point where we can create new, but if there are some tweaks then let's roll up our sleeves and fix those.

One more thing, I wanted to add to the question about is there a veto power? If they can't make decisions, the WDFW Director has already jumped into this and been part of local range rider meetings and asked to engage and get feedback in the middle of this process. He's wanting to engage and be available and – I'm not encouraging going straight to the Director and skipping the local staff – but he made a point in saying he wants updates and if there's any hiccups or questions for him as well. Just wanted to share that.

Comment

Let me sum up what I think I'm hearing and get guidance: The good thing is there's no question that our goal is reduce depredation on livestock and reduce lethal removal of wolves. The section we're wrestling with is "what's the best guidance we can give to the Department to achieve that goal?" And do the words best represent that so far? And I think we're experimenting with it. From a couple of comments, I heard there's still that trust and I think that trust goes along with the actions. I think you've been good about communicating that regularly. If you can think about the words right now, and if the actions do match the words, would that alleviate some concerns? I offer that. And then we got some specific pieces that people would like to wrestle with. That second collar, when we reference a pack of five or more, maybe we can fix that there. Maybe clarifying what "all parties" mean, and then "mutually agreed upon" we can clean that up. I guess that's what I've heard. I think our group intent is to give the Department the best guidance we can at this point and, depending how it goes, the group has capability to adjust guidance as we learn.

Comment

I think that's a good summary and we want to focus on the words on paper now. There were a couple things I think were surprising. An idea was brought up of this isn't really solving problem of livestock interactions and depredations, it almost feels like we're targeting the wrong set of goals. I'd like to make sure we're focusing on things we should focus on. The other thing that is surprising is that we're not getting feedback from groups in real time. I thought the people here were supposed to be representing groups and the Department was to go and talk to producers. I think you captured it well, but those things might be in sort of the idea of "the parking lot." We have this discussion and we'll keep rolling the ball down the field.

Comment

Maybe using that as a touch point, I want to circle back to the hunting perspective comments mentioned earlier. You've been a good voice for the hunters and the need for better ungulate data and analysis and consideration. Thinking about what was just said, I think the language in there at least identifies the need to check with that local group and get their thoughts on ungulates. And use that as check point to make sure the group doesn't fail to consider that. That's pretty broad, but is that a potential "parking lot" issue, knowing we've got to do better with that issue? See if that might be acceptable from your perspective? To buy you some time to think about that, someone has their hand up and then we'll circle back.

Comment

The original questions I was going to ask I will hold off on because we're stuck at a point where they're not pertinent. Someone said that this Section isn't effective in stopping depredations and lethal removal but we're really not looking at "stopping," because our words are "minimized" and "reduced." I think those are realistic goals because we can't realistically stop either one. Someone else mentioned that you don't want to tap the breaks. I don't think Section 9 represents tapping the breaks; it's meant to be proactive, starting prior to grazing season so we are going into it with everything in place. I don't see that as tapping the breaks. I see this as empowering producers and giving them a voice in brainstorming how to minimize depredations in their area. Those are my thoughts currently.

Comment

I just want to clarify that it is our concern that this Section doesn't change anything or accomplish the original goal. That's the major concern from our end but I do appreciate your comment saying that it empowers producers to have a say. That is something our producers are saying that they like. But there's a concern about how that will be perceived and followed through with. I appreciate those comments. It's just a major concern because it's a big deal with huge impacts, so will it make those huge impacts? Will it make a big difference? That's the concern I'm hearing, and I think that's a fair concern for everybody on this call. Participants and panelist included. Will this make a difference? I think the expectations are really high.

Comment

I appreciate that. This Section is laying out a process. And the process has the intent of finding gaps based on an analysis of patterns that no one could've seen when the issue was emerging. It's not prescriptive. It's a process to bring people together and say, "what is it that has been causing this ongoing pattern of depredations? And ongoing pattern of having to remove wolves? Is there something we've been missing or has a big issue been not having enough resources applied to this issue?" I'm wondering for any other producers that want to speak up, is there something else that you would add to this document to increase your sense that it would be more affective? Or is the issue really just waiting to see if, from your perspective, the Department comes through with the resources that you need? Is there something you'd add, or is the proof in the pudding and you'd just have to wait and see?

Comment

I was going to share a part on the goal. You've all grappled with that. It's tough. We're in a situation where we can't bring these things to zero. We're doing the best we can. We've put over a year of conversation and saying making this a local, community level and empowering them. We think that is the way. I think you're on the right track. There is that struggle of when you get to the end, will it work? From my chair, you've all created something that's a great step forward and we've got to give it a try. And we're going to learn. You know the Fish and Wildlife Commission will be engaging in this for the 2022 grazing season. I think you've got something useful right now. We have to take that step forward and see how it goes. And take those lessons and pass that along to the Fish & Wildlife Commission. We could go around in circles for another year, but eventually we have to give it a try. And I think we have something good to try.

Comment

What may be at the center of this – and maybe it's less about words on paper and this is just my opinion – I have felt that myself and some within producer community, we avoid talking about staffing staff and concerns and trust issues, but we don't mention names because it's not right or fair. But in this discussion, I feel it's put me in a corner. If nothing is done to improve trust between staff and producers, this document won't work. This continues to be front and center for me and maybe even highlighted more as we go forward with this document. I don't know where we go from there, but from the producers I talk to, that continues to be the biggest issue. So, until something is done to rip the Band-Aid off, if that's something in WAG or maybe it's sidebar conversations with the Department, that is, to me, the big issue.

Another Band-Aid to rip off is the timing on the video that the Department showed to the Commission over the weekend. I know there was accolades from folks on the Commission, but it didn't resonate with us on the outside looking in. The messaging with the use of collars and listening devices, there are local reactions to such things and all of that does funnel back to this discussion for some of us. I'm trying to paint a bigger picture that some may not be aware of, but for folks in the community, those aren't messages that are appreciated. There was even questioning on why producers accept wolves on the landscape. I just don't think that was smart. At least if you want to build a relationship with people in rural communities, you have to think about messaging. I don't think it was helpful before this document either.

Comment

I missed the video that is being referred to. Anyone have any highlight on that?

Comment

It was a video that this group saw a couple meetings ago about how the Department tracks wolves, whether it's collars or listening devices. Ringing any bells? It was showed in a prior WAG meeting. It started off with a helicopter observing wolves over the landscape.

Comment

That might've been before my time. Thank you.

Comment

I wanted to circle back and react to a couple things. One, I'm hearing the staffing thing, so I wanted to share that the staff member that had the conversation with producers and was on last call was planning on today's call but didn't know when it was going to happen. They had leave scheduled months ago. So that's why that staff made sure to reach out to me and others about checking in and reached out to the Director and made sure the Director was aware.

The other one, on the staff one about the trust moving forward... Absolutely. We have to hold up our end of what's committed in this. Absolutely. And I know that we will. Imagine being in our chairs and going through the first year and we hear back that staff didn't do what they said. That's something that resonates in the document, it's the good faith on our part as well. When I hear the "good faith" in the language – and I think it needs clarity – I think that's the good faith in that working group. Each of those local groups, everyone has to do their role and hold their water so to speak. That includes Department staff. And then I hear the reaction to the video, and I understand not everybody will feel it the same. I do want to share we did reach out to producers beforehand. I think that video is not about conflict; it's about how we count wolves. The message is we will continue to look for new and better ways and I hope ways that make it safer for staff. But I understand not everyone feels same. It's a message from the Department.

Comment

A question I have for the producer members of our group is the trust concern, which comes across loud and clear. We're wrestling with the guidelines for this season as, I guess, sort of an experiment. When I think of trust and a relationship, that is bigger than the document. It will be proven over time that the actions will match the words. Is it helpful to think of these guidelines as the measuring stick for Department actions in the future? If you could help the group get the words on the paper so we can look back after the season? I don't think we'll solve the trust concern with words, but I'd be interested in your perspective. Could the words help us at least demonstrate if trust has been increased over the coming season?

Comment

I want to hear about when producers have dominated this conversation. I value your opinion, but as I've said multiple times, what if nothing changes from this document? What if that is the case? How does that make your community feel? That's my big concern is we've done this hard work and we haven't come up with any huge, exciting new things to try other than try to write a plan. What if that doesn't work? Where does that leave us? Does that make this document fail?

Comment

I appreciate that question and you're right, the things we're putting together may not do what we want it to do 100%. Not doing anything is, for sure, not going to do anything. I think this moves us forward, both in the trust area (a key component that people are going

to try to build that kind of relationship we need out there), but also evaluate what's worked best. And I think some conversation will lead to big creative solutions. I'm surprised there's so much negativity this morning. I thought we were pretty close. I haven't heard anything that replaces this except not doing anything. And to me, not doing anything is not satisfactory.

Comment

Circling back to the big rock for some on the producers' side is that trust is really preventing you from focusing on the words on this document. Is that true? Those who have had trust concerns, thoughts?

Comment

I'm hesitant to talk about this on behalf of producers, but my phone still rings. So, I could kind of analyze some things I've heard. What are the new tools? You're committing me to a lot of time to participate in this group and what's going to change? What's going to change on the landscape? What changes are we going to get out of all of this participation? The 40-acre person with a job cannot commit to what we're talking about. This might work for someone with 700-800 cows, but the 40-acre guy cannot commit to it. It doesn't fit his program. He can't be out there every day and can't afford to be involved with a range rider. It just doesn't fit. Truthfully, our industry is a lot of 40-acre people. It doesn't seem to fit with them at all. Those are highlights of what I've heard by just listening on the phone.

Comment

I appreciate you raising that point and it may be something we can work on as a clarification. Because this should work for smaller producers with 40 acres. If the producers themselves don't have time to participate in the planning process, Department staff and anybody available to cover their property, should still work out a plan for that producer. Sometimes it feels like a catch-22 where we want to write these things so that the producer is involved, but you're absolutely right. If they have a day job or don't have the ability to sit through these meetings, there should definitely be a process where a plan could be written to help that producer. What's important is how do we express that where it's being done with the intent of increasing protection and decreasing likelihood of depredations. It was never in my mind when we first started talking a year and a half ago that smaller producers would be excluded.

Comment

I think that producers as a whole feel like it's being imposed upon them. Even some larger ones don't have the time to participate in this process. I didn't expect the pushback that I got from producers. It was pretty heavy pushback on the fact that it just wouldn't work. What are the new tools? They just felt the Department is building another area and another process to hide behind. They really feel that the Department has a mandate and a job to manage all wildlife out there. And yes, they want to be proactive, but they cannot be this involved.

Comment

Can I follow up? I hear that but I harken back to what was said about if nothing is done, then I see the problems reverberating. I guess there's been multiple situations where we've looked at depredations perpetuating and, at least from my own analysis of the documents the Department has put out or on-the-ground knowledge, it seems there's usually gaps that can be filled. There's usually "we only had five range riders on the landscape of 3,0000 acres and couldn't get people..." that's a solvable problem. So again, in know you're under lot of pressure because you've got people to represent. I think we've done a pretty good job coming up with words on the paper, but I hope we can give this a try. I do think the intent of having people come together and if it's not the producer themselves, but they send someone they trust, that seems like a better outcome than to keep losing livestock. This is an effort to say we've tried stuff, it hasn't worked, now we do the best we can to be creative and really dig into the problem in a way we haven't before on behalf of the producers, so they lose fewer livestock. Also so there's not a need to go to lethal control as often. But I think the status quo doesn't help everybody. I hope producers can see that after trying this out hopefully we'll see the benefit.

Comment

I believe in collaborative process. But what we seem to have on paper doesn't seem very marketable. I went along with saying let's write this up, let's see what the reactions are... it's not very marketable to producers.

Comment

Maybe to build, I thought this was a very collaborative process. I heard the discussions and people didn't always get what they want and that happens. But I feel we came to something that is worth a try. Then I go to these trust issues and I think we have to assume that everyone in the group has the best intentions and that we really also need to give people grace because they will make mistakes but have the best intentions. We have an opportunity with the group for feedback and that's when we can give feedback in real time. I feel we have a good document, good intentions, and we have a process going forward to fine tune it if things aren't working.

Comment

I feel there's also an aspect here that seems to be missed. It's not all financial. It's not, "well, if this doesn't work, we'll send more resources." There's also the side that producers care about their livestock. Not like their own child but they want them to prosper and be healthy. If it was a complete financial deal, there wouldn't be producers in business because there's not a terribly easy way to make a living. It's not just about money. There's the livelihood of the cattle, sheep, whatever. No one wants to see anything have pain. On what was said, putting things on paper doesn't do anything for people on the ground. We've been doing that for 10+ years and my thoughts are that nothing has been working thus far, according to people directly affected on the ground. These people I've talked to about Section 9 is they're tired of things on paper. They want to see results. We've put their livelihoods at stake and emotions out there for several years and haven't had results. That's how the trust issue comes into play.

Comment

Really good discussion. I hear the producer community and others share that. When I think about it, in hearing that, it helps for me that we're giving this a try for this grazing season. We're going to review and work with the Commission but it's also a bite of the apple that we've defined by definition that we know it's not all producers. I think this is as good as anyone can come up with. It's something solid here. We've done this either in-person or through video. But the part where we are enabling the local group and they have a say, that's a really big deal for me. Now it doesn't feel so distant but now we are propping up and saying, "Hey, you all are local experts. This affects all of you, so what do you think?" That feels like a major step in right direction, empowering them. In recognizing our time, I wanted to kick into problem-solving mode. Could we specify the language where it talks about "good faith?" Can we clear that up? And the one about the two collars, could we remove that? Take that nugget out and the group could figure it out? We had conversation about in packs of four or less and how it's hard to get two collars. On that, I wanted to ask to remove the notation around five wolves and we can empower that local group to help figure that out.

Comment

When we talk about the 40-acre folks and how difficult it would be for producers, we're only talking about SFAs so it's a small percentage of producers under this umbrella. And those are producers that have dealt with conflict for years. Really look at how can we do something different? I just see very few producers being impacted by this language.

Comment

I'd like to follow a thread about language adjustments. Let's start with the five-pack reference. I think the recommendation is what if we took out that phrase/that qualifier? Is that accurate?

Comment

Correct.

Comment

Any reaction to that adjustment to the wording?

Comment

Comments I got out of producers is for the Department to get two collars on packs in the areas declared to be an SFA. That's the comments I've heard.

Comment

Two collars would be a prerequisite?

Comment

Again, it's a trust issue.

Comment

Just to share with the group, there are no guarantees. We're going to make that effort to deploy two collars. What I was offering is to let the group have that conversation. If there's one wolf, obviously you can't collar two. They'll have that conversation and say, "Yeah, there's five wolves but some are pups..." There are lots of details we can't really understand, and the local group is best suited to have that conversation. We're deploying this week to start trapping in SFAs. We're there to trap wolves. Does that mean two collars? No guarantees.

Comment

This is kind of something I've brought up from the beginning and something I'm willing to compromise, the two collars. What I think got lost in the discussion was the way it reads now, is that there would only be two collars if there are five or more wolves. There needs to be word adjustment. The agreement was, if I remember correctly, that there would be an effort to put two collars in a pack but there would be an extra special effort. Not an "only if" five wolves in a pack, there would be two collars. I'm not willing to take this out of here. I don't trust the group to make that decision. That effort hasn't been proved to me. So, I'm standing firm on not taking this out.

Comment

I can't add to what was just said. I was going to share something similar.

Comment

Thank you. So, if I heard correctly, there should be that effort? Especially if the pack is at five or more wolves.

Comment

Yes, not an *only if* a pack of five or more. The way it reads is an *only if* there's a pack of five or more.

Comment

I think one of my concerns is if you got two wolves in a pack and you're collaring both of them, that's a lot of intense pressure on just two wolves in a pack and then the chance of even getting collars on smaller numbers. That's why we ended up at five.

Comment

I was just trying to get clarification. I thought that it was desirable to allow the local group to make a decision on how the collaring would best work for the situation, so I was just surprised at your pushback on that. It didn't quite make sense to me that you didn't want the local group to make the decision.

Comment

You're right, it does give the local group the power. But in my opinion, it does need to come from higher than that because it hasn't been happening. The collar data helps us get between the cows and the wolves. In my opinion, they should be in all SFAs. I agree

that the two wolves in a pack is where the conversation stems from. While I don't think two wolves in one pack should be a priority to get the second collar in, if the opportunity arises, it should happen. They'll be reproducing as well. While that shouldn't be a priority when you've got bigger packs, there should be an opportunistic plan in place if it happens.

Comment

I'm feeling nervous when I throw things out, so easy with me, I'm in problem-solving mode. I want to emphasize this 'two collar' one so what about something that is "attempted to deploy at least one collar in SFA packs, two collars are desirable." They all get at least one collar, but the ones with five or more we try to get two collars out.

Comment

I want to throw one statistic in your annual report which says, 43% of packs have less than five animals in it. Just throwing that out.

Comment

My gut reaction question is, is there an SFA this year that doesn't have one collar in it? My gut tells me that these packs aren't getting to the point of qualifying as an SFA without at least one wolf in it? Packs that don't have collars in them aren't getting caught as often.

Comment

Yeah, so from my understanding the two packs that would be in an SFA this coming year would be the Kettles pack territory and Togo. Just to be clear, in the Kettles pack territory we only counted one adult wolf this winter. It doesn't even meet the state definition of a pack; there's one wolf and there's not a collar on that wolf. In Togo, there are no active collars in that pack anymore. I don't know exactly what the number is but it's less than five. Again, no collars in that pack. I think it's worth recognizing that if a pack territory is eligible to be in an SFA there's a really good chance we may not have collars in that pack because we probably did lethal removal and removed collars we had. So, setting up an expectation is kind of contradictory of the definition of an SFA.

Comment

Again, I wanted clarification on the last discussion. I understand that if lethal control removed collars the prior season that you would be starting with few or no collars. But isn't the intent to try to get collars on wolves in those packs as soon as possible? So, if it's spring trapping/collaring, or winter when you're out doing counts, and you have one collar to start with and try to dart them, I'm just wanting to make sure that everybody is clear on the sequence of events. That there will be attempts at the earliest possible opportunity to prioritize trapping and collaring or helicoptering and collaring in those packs.

Comment

That is clear. I just think we should be realistic that a helicopter trap in the winter is a one-in-a-million. People think we can just fly around and put a collar on it, so I'm just trying to ground decisions in logistics. Something that is logistically possible. We can say we can try to collar as soon as we can, but it just flies in the face of reality.

Comment

I'd like to pose a process question here. We're scheduled to go until noon, and we need to honor that. We're still wrestling with key concepts. I guess my question is if we don't come to resolution on this call, then what? For example, our next meeting is not until the first week of July. Do we ask the Department to do their best with what we've given so far, and we try it? Do we need to schedule another meeting before July?

Comment

I would recommend the Department take the gist of what we've been working on and implement it as a pilot project and report back to us at the end of the year. This needs to be done. We're wrestling over the details at a time when this needs to be applied on the ground. I have no problem with this being a test project, a pilot project, and then report back to the WAG and then we can fine tune it going into the next round.

Comment

Yeah, I concur with that on going forward with what we have. I might do the updates more frequently, but if we have an opportunity at every meeting to get an update that'd be good as well.

Comment

I was thinking along the same lines, all this represents larger groups of people. It's very difficult to make a decision for a large group of people. I think we're really discussing this with the wrong people. I think the Department should go out there and sit down with producers and environmentalists and see if they can put one of these together. I think if we come up with something, we're not going to get participation because it's our grandiose idea that this will work. I think it's the Department's job to manage these wolves. If they think this has value, they need to go out and see if they can get collaboration and cooperation and try to tell the greatly affected people how to do it. I don't think we'll ever come up with an answer because I can't sit here and nod yes and no. Range riding stuff took lot of review from people who were going to apply the range riding. Why don't we have the Department go out and get participation? That's the key; can they get participation, or can't they? And to put a bunch of words on paper doesn't mean there will be participation.

Comment

Thank you. Let me try to sum up the proposal: Take the guidance you all have provided so far, in the form of guidelines agreed to last meeting as the gist, and experiment with it in the two areas identified- Kettles and Togo. Then report back, certainly in the July meeting, but whether we need to do another one we can play it by ear. That's the proposal, I think.

Comment

I don't think we should give them any guidelines. I think we should go out and find what the guidelines are to get collaborations. What it takes to go forward with this. And get some people on board to help resolve the issues. And there wasn't agreement on the

guidelines, there was just agreement to let the Department draw them up and put them out to see what the pushback was.

Comment

To make sure I heard what you said... As we, the group, have come up with language, it sounds like they could use this current language to do just what you said. This season let's see what it takes to garner participation and find the obstacles. Is that accurate?

Comment

Run a pilot program. See if you can get cooperation and collaboration. And don't design the wheel ahead of time. Just go out there and see if we can get something done. Don't limit them with the document. It's the Department's responsibility to see if you can go get it done.

Comment

I respect where you're coming from. We've all worked very hard on creating something. There are still questions and there's still nervousness. I understand that, but let's go back before 2015, 2014. Remember how it was before we had these conversations and the Department just went out and did stuff. Remember how hard it was for your communities because you didn't have a voice. We thought we were doing great and we weren't. Now we have this process where we can talk about this stuff and try to come up with something that meets all our needs. It's not perfect but we all contribute. I don't want to go backwards to a time where we were out there flying solo. What we have here is not perfect. Maybe you guys do something different and say, "This is what we contribute and Department, you fill in the blanks." I have a comfort where you give us your voice and we'll do our best in carrying that. There are gaps and we will do our best to fill in those gaps. There are other items and it won't be perfect. At some rate it's hard stuff, we've come too far, and I don't want to throw this stuff out. I think it's good. For the first time, we're empowering those local communities and that is huge step. We're not going to solve it overnight, we're going to see what worked, what didn't work, and pass it to the Fish and Wildlife Commission. To learn, take a stab at it, take a leap of faith that we take together, learn what we can, and pass it on to the next decision makers.

Comment

I was comfortable with the way things were described so I'm wondering if it would be helpful at least in our recommendation to the Director – in a sense, this is going to be a pilot. There's just two pack areas, and one only has one animal so far, but that could change. In a sense, this is a pilot. So how about if we put language in there that says we recommend this approach be tried for the 2021 grazing season and there will be a report back on how well things went and what the issues were that producers raised and that other participants in the group raised in terms of how the process to put these plans together or implement. But maybe just building and making clear this is a first attempt. There's only two pack areas. There'll be systematic learning about this process, and we will take those recommendations and see if we can refine language next year. I hear this will be moved onto the Fish and Wildlife Commission but I'm hoping we will not be cut out

of this equation and still be able to give input?

Comment

Of course.

Comment

Great, so I would just say to add a few sentences about how we're going to try this out and see what adjustments can be made in the future.

Comment

Thank you. Any concerns with that recommendation?

No Objections

Comment

Does everyone understand what the group is asking of you right now?

Comment

Yeah, I can take the lead and work with my staff in those areas to start that process.

Comment

So, we would implement the guidance that – so recommendation to director. Recommendation that we would implement the guidance you have given us, and we would implement that as a pilot for the current grazing season. And you all would have opportunity as stakeholders to share what worked and didn't work to the Fish and Wildlife Commission. We have a link between you all and the Fish and Wildlife Commission as far as providing input. Did I repeat that correctly?

Comment

As usual, we just tabled the predator-prey situation in populations in this whole discussion. I talked about that right out front, that the producers are not happy with referring right to the Department. We need to define what the populations are, especially what recruitment and retention is, because if we don't have it in these areas, we're in big trouble. My area is 14% recruitment and retention and the best elk herd in the west and we have very few mule deer left. We haven't even discussed the hunter part of this.

Comment

I hear you, thank you. I think you've been good about reminding us of this.

Comment

For ten years I've reminded you.

Comment

I understand and that is a bigger, longer issue than the seven minutes we have left. But I hear you saying, "don't forget it!" and you're not satisfied with how we've addressed it.

Comment

Yeah, sustainable predator population requires a sustainable prey base. Period. We have not taken a look at it.

Comment

Thank you. With six minutes left, any concerns with what was summarized?

Comment

We haven't yet discussed how the third-party reviewers would be selected, so if we could speak to that today it would be helpful.

Comment

I think the wording left it up to the local group to determine the party, but it might be part of the pilot to figure out how that works out. Anyone have any thoughts on that in the few minutes left?

Comment

The way the language is written now, it says, "mutually agreed upon third party" and also something about the reviewers should have experience with reducing wolf-livestock conflict and improving human-carnivore coexistence." Those are the only sideboards, but it's intended to have a person with that background and expertise. It's open so that group can decide. We left that intentionally open based on the will of this group.

Comment

I think this will be interesting to see how it plays out. That was one issue I brought up was what does "mutually agreed upon" mean? So, they can report back to us how that goes and that would be helpful.

Comment

With four minutes left, would you like to share the news?

Comment

Sure, that'll work. First, I just want to say we're going to do our very best. We have what we have. I want to see us have an understanding that we will do our best to implement those guidelines and document in paragraph form. It's not perfect. But we're going to try to make difference on the landscape and that's what we have so far.

The cat is out of the bag. I get emotional. I've taken another job in the Department. When I got here 20 years ago, I remember saying that Chief Scientist position would be the dream job, right? And it opened up a few years ago, but I was close to person in that job beforehand and he had passed away, so I didn't have the heart. It opened up again and I struggled very much putting my name in the hat. I do like managing wolves and the challenge but it's because of all of you in the internal team. It's been a pleasure working with all of you. It's really hard to step away from the team. Internally, it's the best team I've belonged to. I'm very excited about the new job, but probably the most significant thing in

my career is the WAG. It's actually changed who I am. I have a different outlook on life, and it's something I'll always carry forward and look to the voice of others in decision making. Anyways, I just wanted to share. I'm not gone forever. I'll still be engaged in wolf stuff. I'm only a phone call away and I'm not leaving the agency or anything like that. I know the wolf path and the Science Division path will cross on several items. It's been an absolutely joy and pleasure, and I really value you as people and on what you do.

Comment

Thank you. I look forward to the day where we can get together in person and congratulate you. Let's put that on our list of things to do when we can.

Comment

I will absolutely be there to join for dinner. I wouldn't miss it for the world.

Comment

It doesn't do it justice when one of us has to leave like this. We will look for the opportunity to congratulate you more. I'm going to check out here without going around the horn, as we don't have time. But I appreciate the effort and time and guidance. This is not over; we're evolving. We will be in touch. Feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Meeting adjourned