

**Wolf Advisory Group**  
August 27, 2019  
Meeting Notes

Jamison Event Center  
605 E Nelson Road  
Moses Lake, WA 98837

**WAG members:** Samee Charriere, Tim Coleman, Tom Davis, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Jess Kayser, Dan Paul, Bill Kemp, Paula Swedeen

**WDFW staff members:** Donny Martorello, Dan Brinson, Steve Pozzanghera, Joey McCanna, Ben Maletzke, Scott McCorquodale, Julia Smith, Matthew Trendera

**Facilitator:** Rob Geddis

**Fish and Wildlife Commission:** Molly Linville

**US Forest Service:** Morgan Weinman, Robert Garcia, Brandon Lawson, Eric Johnston

**Welcome and check in**

Rob welcomed everyone to the meeting and everyone checked in around the room. The group reviewed the agenda for the meeting before beginning.

**Update WAG members on various requested topics**  
WDFW staff updated WAG on several requested topics.

**Education and outreach subgroup update**

The subgroup included several members of WAG who are no longer members. The group will need to add a few more members for the future. So far, the group has created a few fact sheets that are currently available on the WDFW website. New people will need to be added before any more action is taken.

Department staff members have been working to bring in guests from the Great Lakes states to work in Washington over a two-week period. The Great Lakes states are in many ways more similar to Washington than other western states. It could be beneficial to hear about experiences in that area. The hope is to have that happen for department staff members in late September over a two-week period, and perhaps other groups (WAG) after that.

**Comment**

Going back to the education and outreach, it was requested a couple years ago to have more visuals on wolves added to the website. We heard it would be coming, but I haven't seen anything yet.

**Answer**

I think that team is swamped right now. Once folks get a little more time and we have access to the photos, we can do that fairly quickly. Folks want to do that as well.

**Compensation group update**

We had one phone call back in the spring, and met in person in late July/early August. We started reviewing how the existing programs work. This is more about revamping the indirect

compensation program because it was structured in a way that people aren't going to use that much. We discussed ways we might restructure that program so it's easier to use and more attractive. The direct compensation is when there's a confirmed kill. With indirect, producers can get compensated for lost animals in areas where wolves were active, pregnancy loss, and weight loss. There are probably other producers who've had indirect losses but aren't using this program. Part of the concern is privacy (a lot of paperwork). There's a lot of concern with that aspect. That is how we got to the brainstorm session on ways to make that program more useful.

The invite went out just the other day for the next meeting as well.

Comment

I'm feeling really left out as far as all the subgroups. This is the first update we've gotten on them in the two years I've been here, and I had no idea they even existed.

Comment

Yeah, first of all, we need to do a better job so folks are aware of these subgroups. We need to have a better process for tracking these subgroups and communicating progress. There is also the data sharing subgroup.

Comment

We've replaced members who were on these groups and no one ever invited us to these groups.

Comment

That's a fair comment, and it is likely more of an onboarding issue that we need to flag for the future as well.

Staff hiring update

Region 1 has two new hires focusing on conflict.

Comment

Is data sharing a subgroup? I've not heard an update on that either. I know there's a lot of concern from producers in regard to data sharing and I don't know what's going on there.

Comment

Yes, with the events of the summer, we haven't had a chance to have another meeting.

Comment

In other areas of the agency, we have a thing called an action tracker, and that is reviewed every meeting with updates.

Comment

These subgroups aren't just WAG subgroups. They have members who are not WAG members. I think the department has been in charge of forming them and asking people to join, so it is important for WAG to know, but I think the department having a clear system on how they're started and how people are picked would help as well. That would let members know how they could potentially participate.

Post-recovery meetings update

When we talk about the SEPA and EIS process, the entire point is public engagement (on top of evaluating environmental impacts). We're thinking we want to go above and beyond with the public

engagement. We scheduled more public meetings for this than any other species recovery ever. Scoping means literally figuring out what the scope of this project is going to be. However, we had to cancel the public meetings due to circumstances. We've heard that they may be public safety issues. Now, we still will be accepting public scoping comments through our website. We will also meet individually with groups if they'd like to.

#### Question

Is the deadline still the same?

#### Comment

Yes, the deadline is still there. That gives us 90 days for comments. SEPA is usually 30 days, so that's good. The deadline is Nov. 1, 2019.

We are also planning to schedule webinars for the future, so keep an eye out for those. And those of you who know us know that we want to engage with you. So please do come forward.

#### Comment

Last year we spent two full WAG meetings talking about process for the post-delisting plan. There were a lot of good ideas that came up. We then talked about how WAG wants to participate. My question is how is all that work being used to inform how you're designing things right now. I would also like to hear a little more about the information that led you to learn the meetings may be a public safety issue. Not having open houses goes counter to a lot of what was said at our WAG meetings, so if you could share how that happened.

#### Comment

Yeah, so the first point about WAG engagement. I have a lot of concerns about that, and we'll talk about that throughout the meeting here.

#### Comment

We're not afraid of contentious issues, and we've gone there in the past, and the threats went a little above and beyond the usual. This summer has been horrific, and we all recognize that. During the course of setting up the 14 meetings around the state, collectively the regions started to see specific threats show up in social media posts. Collectively, the regions started making sure processes were in place with local law enforcement. During that process, it became more and more obvious that this was way more than just a difficult summer. This generated a lot of internal discussion as well. I want to emphasize that the purpose of the meetings was to receive input. There was concern that cancelling the meetings would be seen as the department not wanting that input. That's why the comment period online is 90 days. That's why webinars are scheduled. It just got to that point where the department could not guarantee the safety of the public and of staff. We've had contentious meetings in the past, and this decision was not that.

#### Comment

Just wanted to reiterate that if you do have comments, please let us know. We want to hear from you.

#### **Review protocol implementation since the June meeting**

Rob talked about how members have routinely expressed how this group is a relatively safe space to share opinions and emotions. After a really tough summer, it's important to talk about those things.

#### Comment

It's hard to frame this in a way that won't be misinterpreted. I want everyone to know that I'm committed to the goals of this plan and the WAG. That said, certainly there have been a number of calls to my office related to public lands grazing. What adjustments can be made? What improvements can be made? Why is WAG supporting a system that lets the same thing happen year after year? That's been a fire hose coming into my office. The public grazing question in regard to wolf management is something I've heard a lot from the public. I've even had people from the east coast angry at me, because they see those areas as their public lands too. They want to know why we treat public and private the same. I think we should have that conversation.

#### Comment

We use generally sometimes but they're not really meant to apply across the board. For the most part we don't have problems. There are these few hotspots. Members of the livestock community feel they're being attacked if one producer is being attacked, and that is not how I see it at all. It's been very difficult. There has been a lot of anger. More than any other time. And it's not simmered down at all. We spent so much time during the last WAG talking about the OPT, and how people would be outraged. We advised the department that it would be a serious problem. There's nothing different out there. Cows all over the freaking place. I spent several weeks hiking in the Kettle Crest and asking people what they're seeing. They're seeing the same thing. I don't want everyone's reputation trashed because of the actions of one producer. If one ranch can't get their act together then they don't belong on public lands. I recognize that it's not just them. It's also the US Forest Service managing it. Why does it have to be a tragedy every year? Doing business as usual is not going to do it. The cows go where they're used to going. I'm not expecting this group to dig into this in detail. I'm trying to stress that we established a protocol that we could live with, and I don't think that protocol is being followed. The department is being harangued on this, and there are conspiracies going around everywhere, and those of us who want to problem solve are experiencing anguish. People want to know why this is happening. I'm not saying no one should be on public lands. I plead that we think about how to deal with this.

#### Comment

I heard a lot in that comment. One thing was frustration with the situation and the feedback you've gotten. The other was that protocol wasn't being followed. Can you elaborate on that?

#### Comment

I can say that fox lights around salt licks is not enough. Human presence is insufficient. Even the folks from the sheriff's department are frustrated. It's a no win situation. Everybody gets beat up over this.

#### Comment

Just a reminder that everyone in here has had threats on their lives, so if we could avoid naming things outright, I think that would be good.

#### Question

I heard you say something about cows scattered all over the allotment. What is your solution there? Just bunch them up together?

#### Comment

Yeah, I think if we look into things like that in terms of range management. That's one option. I think it should be a collaborative discussion though.

#### Comment

I think that may be best for wolf-livestock management, but for erosion and over grazing and things like that, it could be bad. It might help in one area, but hurt in others.

#### Comment

You talk about stress. During this ten-day period I had my cell phone plugged in. I was taking until midnight to answer my emails. There's a little stress on my side as well. When you attack one individual you've attacked us all. That's just the way it is. End of discussion. We've gone around and around on this a bunch of times. It might suit your goals to go out and change a bunch of habitat and using wolves as an excuse. Is it going to solve the wolf problem? I say no. The OPT pack moved its rendezvous site twice. You talk about other areas, but every time they move their cows, the pack moves their rendezvous site. What you're proposing is not a solution to us. I'll go on record that what's happening there is going to happen in other places. I think several other packs are in trouble. We know the Blue Mountains are a problem areas. People want to argue about cost. I think we'll see the same thing in other areas of the state. I struggle with saying, "If we just do this it'll solve the problem." It's going to take a lot more than that. I don't know how to solve it, but it's not easy. We have predator pits all over the world and they're extremely difficult to ever bring back. It's pretty obvious what the problem is. There are other circumstances too. We have to identify the causes of the problems, and I've seen no effort to do that and it's frustrating. Cause and effect. I wish I had a wand that I could wave to solve the problem, but I think it's going to be with us for a long time. We can't start off by saying, "Here is the answer."

#### Comment

The Kettle Range is far more complicated geologically south than north. There're a lot more terrain traps. Fires have been there. There're a lot of places where it's difficult for wolves to be there. That's where the ungulates go. They hide in the thickets because they're difficult to get through. Given that argument, one producer is still having all the problems. I've heard this dialogue before. I've never said I have the solution. I've said that there are some ideas that we should try. We should work on it collaboratively. We all have a stake in our public lands. Those lands are leased to producers, just like they're leased to the timber industry. There've been huge changes in a lot of those industries, and in the end it's collaboration that made it happen.

#### Comment

You know, we can feel the anxiety. We've been here before. For all of us the rubber band is stretched as far as it will go right now, and we don't want that rubber band to break. I don't want to dismiss for second how hard this is for everybody. None of us are here so more cows and more wolves die. So what can we do to change these challenging hotspots? What is the near term and what is the long term? One thing I grapple with internally is finding that balance. I think in these hotspots, it's not a switch you can just turn on. The reality is we have to try to minimize as much as possible. I'm coming to grips with this reality that some cows will likely die and some wolves will likely die.

#### Comment

I appreciate the dialogue so far and the calling out that we're all stretched. What I've liked hearing is the acknowledgement of the need to have more collaborative discussions. I wonder what the venue is for that, and I don't think it's here. The producers working in that landscape are not here in the room. I appreciate that the US Forest Service is here to answer some questions. I also appreciate what was said in regard to the fact we don't want to focus on just one spot. However, because this is a spot that has had repeated issues, it ramps up the strain on all sides. So maybe we think of things outside the box. We need to think about how to get there. I think it's an important conversation. The

calls that concern me most are the ones I get from legislators saying you have one more chance to fix this or we're going to fix it for you. There is a sense of urgency, I think. How can we lessen the risk to both cows and wolves in this particular landscape? This has become a dialogue out in the public that is not very constructive. I am concerned about the discussion and proposed solutions outside of that collaborative dialogue. I would like us to think about where we go in regard to process from here. How do we break this pattern?

#### Comment

I'm all for solving hotspots. My concern is creating more hotspots. I think that is happening on the ground right now. Once you create one it is very difficult to solve.

#### Comment

I always kind of bristle a bit when I hear about folks back east talking about our use of public lands. If you look at the map, in the west we enjoy far greater areas of public land, and as you go east, it diminishes. I think we need to tell a better story about the design for public lands, the history of public lands, and how they were designed for multiple use. Of course, as the collective public, we can change how those lands are managed. I hope we don't, but it's there. I will also say, I'm glad there are a lot of legislators, and I'm hoping there will be some calmer heads that prevail. It truly is something that we have to be aware of. As the public talks to us, they're also talking to their legislators. I know legislators check in with WAG, and I continue to see that as a benefit for this group. My other thing is wondering why is OPT so different than other areas? Does the protocol apply well for all corners of the state, or do changes need to be made? Is there a separate chapter for hotspot areas? We want to help department staff be successful. I'm not sure a one size fits all protocol is going to work. We may want to analyze the hotspots more in depth.

#### Comment

I think a lot of the discussion has been around OPT, but we've had other packs where depredations have occurred over multiple years. But there may be hotspots on private lands, or WDFW lands, or even elsewhere. It's a hotspot for probably a different reason than the ownership. So I don't see this as a public lands issue. That's a characteristic of this hotspot.

#### Comment

I think that's good to remember, that other places could have different characteristics. I think the Kettles have a specific character, so there's a "place" in mind. I think that's a landscape that has a lot of public land that is seen as some people as a wilder landscape, and if wolves can't be there without being removed every year, that's a problem. So part of it is the repeated removal, and part of it is the character of that landscape. My perception when we raise the public lands issue is that it turns into a black and white issue. So I sense that when it's brought up, producers might take that to mean cows shouldn't be on the land at all. I think it's the sharing of the land issue. The perception is that cows always take priority and wolves are just removed. That narrative can be turned around, I know, but that's the perception. So it's finding that balance. We can't gloss over that perception though. We have to acknowledge it and address it. I think this area is a focus area for a reason.

#### Comment

I'd like to see a broader discussion. Thinking about hotspots, how do we start a diverse but local community broader than WAG. Can there be a discussion with local communities, US Forest Service, and others beyond just this WAG format? Discussion around ideas that could work and satisfy the needs of everyone involved. We want to find an outcome that works for everybody.

#### **Break**

Comment

I wanted to do a check in with the group here. We've talked about what we've heard from constituents. Is there anything else we want to consider before we go into next steps?

Comment

When reading the reports from the department, I didn't feel like I had a specific enough picture of what the deterrents were in the OPT area. I'm not saying that from a judgment perspective, but I'm asking just because I don't know. It's not a criticism either, but I also know that there're logs and checklists that have dates. There can be a longer narrative. You hear accusations tossed around, but I don't think we have enough information to make those types of pronouncements. So I was wondering if we could get a more detailed description of what happened on the ground.

Comment

How much detail is enough detail?

Comment

It's just trying to get an understanding. How many days were people out? What kinds of things were they doing? There were descriptions of foot patrols and stuff, for example. I don't need dates and times, but a little bit more in depth so I can paint a more accurate picture.

Comment

I would like to add the feasibility of applying the protocol. Is it feasible to apply range riding if there wasn't enough done?

Comment

That got me thinking about a conversation during the break where someone had the idea of just throwing out all the circumstances we had for this hotspot. What are some of the things contributing to it? What is it about that place that makes it a hotspot? What are some ideas that we could put there? That could help as we look into the future. That's one of the ideas as we move forward.

Comment

I think it would be useful to have other folks, some who are not even on WAG, to have that conversation. I don't want to put it off, but I feel like there are some other folks who would be valuable to have for that conversation.

Comment

I wanted to clarify the ask on the more specific details on deterrence measures. I know we have local conflict staff who are not here today. Can we get that information for all of you and do it in a better fashion outside of today or tomorrow?

Comment

I think that's a piece of the idea that was proposed. A greater understanding of the deterrence effort, with a better understanding of what's practical, and then what are the factors that make this a chronic area. Filling out that picture is going to be very helpful for us to then make constructive suggestions. I don't mean to say someone didn't do the right thing. It's acknowledging that we can figure out other things to suggest. If we're not ready to have that conversation today, that's okay. We do need to flag it though. And if you can provide even a little more information to help for today and tomorrow that would be helpful.

Comment

In the sense of conflict review, it's different from what we've been talking about. We were looking at a bunch of different options in Huckleberry, for example. Maybe we can look back at those notes. Some of those ideas were alternative pasturing, supplemental feeding, etc. A review of that work could help.

Comment

I think we had the best intentions when we did that. We never found any other solutions. Supplemental feeding doesn't make sense. We could go back and review our intentions, but we couldn't find those alternatives.

Comment

I think we weren't given a chance to try.

Comment

What if we had a \$50,000 fund to purchase alfalfa from a producer for supplemental feeding? It's just an example. What if we were feeding them alfalfa right there? Is that some fall alternative we could apply?

Comment

What I think I'm hearing as a suggestion is that there could be value in reviewing previous discussions.

Comment

I don't personally think that it goes anywhere. There is not alternate place to put that many cows. The cost is too high to feed them, and I think the wolves will go down there and attack the cattle anyway. I would rather see us try to prevent new hotspots from being created. I would rather those discussions, because this one discussion takes a whole committee and I don't know if there's any way to solve it. I just don't want to see new ones being created. I think that should be more our duty.

Comment

I wanted to touch back on the more specific details. We can provide more information, and we can also provide more in the future. Is that what you meant?

Comment

I just wanted some more information on what was tried this year. And then I was trying to fit it into the future discussion of the factors. I wanted your perspective on the ground of what was helpful and what was not helpful. I also think it's helpful to have that discussion in public because lots of phone calls I get say things like they don't think anything is happening on the ground. I don't think that's true, but I don't have the information.

Comment

I'm thinking back to the Huckleberry pack work and the work with Stranger. We have a producer who is interested in pulling cows off now and looking into supplemental feeding. As we all know, each situation is different, but that is something being discussed right now, as of yesterday.

Comment



I think what we're talking about now is next steps. So we have hotspots, and we want to identify what factors go into creating those hotspots. We have a suggestion to review the previous notes. So what can we do now?

Comment

I think one of the things that created deepening conflict was the final increment of killing OPT the same day as the judicial process happening. There was confusion over whether it was 4 or 5 wolves. The headline said something like, "The department finally admitted..." which made it sound like the department was trying to hide something. I was sad that we couldn't help with the communication of all that. I think all of that added to the deepening conflict that occurred.

Comment

When the Director put forward the lethal removal, that's not a process that happens quickly, particularly in this terrain. Removing those wolves is very difficult. There was no intent on any of that other than the availability of the helicopter and when that could be carried out. It just happened to be when the wolves were seen. It's not an exact science of being able to pinpoint it. I don't know why it all lined up on that day, but that just was how it happened.

Comment

That is what I assumed. I think what was challenging for me was hearing the legal team representing the department say there were 5, and then seeing later that the pack was removed and there were 4.

Comment

We did get one picture of an individual early on and we didn't know if it was in the pack or not. So when we go through, we thought there were 9 individuals in that pack. When we got down into the work, we never saw that individual again. So when we got to the last increment, we had a lot of things to weigh. That one individual could still be there or it could have gone elsewhere. I know there are a lot of questions around that last one, but we just didn't see it.

Comment

That whole day was very confusing for a lot of folks. I hope you all know well that we want to be transparent with the public and want to let them know. It's really important for us to get everything we know to the court. So as the information was coming in, I was shipping it to the court in real time. It was very challenging, and I think that's where a lot of the confusion came from.

Comment

I never once thought the department was trying to hide anything, but the way it was reported caused distrust in the media and in the public. I think we need to keep that in mind during conflicts. Maybe there's some language that would help people pause and get together and figure it out.

Comment

It's our responsibility to make sure the records match the facts.

Comment

So we're in the middle of the summer, what can we do next?

Comment

I'm curious back to what was being said on the lethal action. I think it was an interesting decision to schedule the lethal removal operation on the day of the court date.

Comment

That's just the way the schedule worked out.

Comment

You didn't want to wait until the court date was passed?

Comment

Honestly, I was looking to get things scheduled and wasn't really thinking about the court date. That policy decision came from Olympia.

Comment

At the time, we were carrying out the Director's authorization to perform lethal action. During that time, we're using multiple methods, and we have that chain of communication ready so if there's a change in direction, we can let field staff know that.

Comment

Do we want to spend any time talking about Grouse Flats or Togo? Other areas where depredations have occurred this year?

Comment

From our perspective, we have a person who has been there 5-7 days a week. About 17 days ago was the first time the collar visited our allotment. The collar data sucks, to be blunt. We're currently 3 days without any point lead. There are 3 points very close together, so I texted our conflict specialist to let them know. I'm concerned that our conflict specialist is not looking at data. I don't know if there are cows there or not. The Grouse Flats pack has been very active. That's very interesting how far they travel. When they do get up to our allotment, they make huge movements through that area. The collared wolf was seen by a hunter. So we moved some cows, and I got on and saw the collar data, and it turned out we moved the cows right to where the wolf was located. That's part of the frustration with the collar data.

Comment

Are you able to see it on your phone now?

Comment

You can as long as you have the right link. So I have to go back through my email to get that link. Some producers in that area want nothing to do with the government. They live remote and they like to keep it that way. I'm confident there have been more than the three reported depredations, but they've not been reported.

Comment

The pattern for the Grouse Flats pack is very different. It's not isolated to a small area. It's almost across the entire pack area. We did have a scenario where one of the depredations was on department lands. We had two producers on department lands. The contracts go to a certain date, and then there is consideration for renewal for a couple weeks or so. When that date came up, rather than issue the extension, the department gave producers ten days to move cows. The two producers have moved the cows to other areas now.

Comment

There's always a delay with collar data, and I think the main area to avoid is that rendezvous site. That site area is the most important. This time of year, the pups are going to be moving with the pack. They will still have areas where they congregate, but they'll start moving more as a pack. It depends on which member you've collared as well. Different members move differently. Some might break off.

Comment

The expectation for the conflict specialist is to look for clusters? It's not our expectation for conflict specialists to investigate clusters. They would reach out to producers in that case.

Comment

That'd be great. I'm saying this person isn't looking at the data. Sharing that data would be his job so we as producers can go check that.

Comment

We have had a few times this summer where the collars have acted up. Collars can malfunction over time. We have had times where the data goes down and the script needs to be reset. Sometimes the system goes down and we reset and it comes back up again.

Comment

We've been told don't chase the data points. But the cluster is where you want to avoid. We need to check those points out. If they're within a half mile radius, three points, there's probably something there.

Comment

Are there any updates in the Togo pack as well? Any updates on what's unfolded? What's been done, what's been difficult, etc.?

Comment

There's been a lot of range riding activity. Their using the whole range, and it's been really spread out. We have a lot of range riders out there. There was a depredation on Friday last week.

Comment

In terms of the Director's authorization, the lethal removal period is ongoing. Within that, there are periods where you attempt to remove wolves, and there are periods where you pull back. We're in a pullback phase right now.

Comment

The carcass on Friday has been scavenged by bears and such, and we're investigating right now.

Comment

The details will be included in the next public update.

Comment

One of the things to keep in mind about a cluster site, you want to leave it alone so wolves can actually eat what they kill. If I'm a wolf biologist and I know there are no cows there, I want to avoid that area.

Comment

Perfectly fair, but if there are cows there, you want to examine that spot.

Comment

Yes, exactly.

Comment

Any other ideas for what we can do next?

Comment

I started thinking through what was being said about reviewing previous notes on Huckleberry. I know we dismissed it because we didn't want to set a precedent. But I'm wondering if we focus on hotspots, we can open it up a little and include those things. We don't want to set a process to use them on a regular situation, but hotspots may qualify for it.

Comment

I'm concerned that it sounds like a reactive instead of a proactive action.

Comment

I think that's a valid concern. I think we want to be proactive where we can, but I guess I see the discussion as being proactive. So if these hotspots are in place, maybe we can open this up. So the planning part is proactive, but the reason you'd be using it would be reactive.

Comment

I think it would be helpful to have a discussion on what could be done as far as proactive things in time for next season. I'd like to involve US Forest Service in this as well since they are here today and tomorrow. What are some things you could try? Is it feasible to put cows somewhere else? What would that take? What kinds of things would you need to do? If a new pack comes in, is there a way to establish a new pattern? This is a wild idea, but what if wolves got to encounter the landscape without cows for a year or two before cows were put back? I understand the producer may be hesitant to do this, but if the producer was interested, is it feasible?

Comment

I wanted to follow up on that dialogue. You never know, right? The producer who is affected here may also be in a place where they don't want to be in this place again. I think whenever that's brought up, it feels threatening. I don't think that's the goal here. I think it's worth it to start a dialogue. But there are other producers in the area as well. So there is an opportunity here to start some proactive stuff that is actually proactive. Get collars in whatever pack fills in that area early on so we can set ourselves up for success. There will be wolves back in that area, and there are about six producers just in that core territory.

Comment

I believe there are a couple producers who didn't turn out because of the wolf activity. Is that correct?

Comment

Yes.

Comment

Just this year?

Comment

Last year too.

Comment

And you can vacation for three years before you lose your allotment. So this is in the process. There are producers who have made that decision. They don't pay when they do that vacation, right?

Comment

Correct.

Comment

Is there any provision where you can allow for more than three years of vacation?

Comment

We don't have a final answer on that, but that is being discussed. We're considering unique circumstances with concerns around safety.

Comment

We have two permittees not running livestock this year because of wolves.

Comment

And that three year rule is due to fuel?

Comment

There are several laws that mandate us to authorize grazing. I'd have to review to see if fuel was one thing listed.

Comment

Are reactionary methods taboo in the group now? It seems like at times they could be useful.

Comment

I don't want to be reactionary in the middle of a grazing season.

Comment

Right, but planning ahead for that could be useful.

Comment

I guess to me it's proactive to look at the protocol and plan something different for those hotspots. Are there tools we could use specifically for those emergency situations? If we all agree in advance, that counts as proactive.

Comment

Yeah, I think it'd be great to explore that a little more.

Comment

I'm confused as to why you'd want a plan to deal with hotspots. In my opinion we don't want any more hotspots. We should have those tools before the hotspots are created. Those should be applied throughout the eastern zone to prevent those hotspot situations. That's where we should spend our time. Before we have the problem.

Comment

I agree with you. It's not a tool that I think we want to use all the time because it's not a sustainable tool. But if we have an area where we have a problem year after year, it needs to be there. We had talked before about supplemental feeding of wolves. I know that's complicated in so many ways. But it seems like if we're in a situation where we're spending a lot of money to kill wolves, wouldn't it be worth it to try it? I do think we could look at those options.

Comment

I think there is a step here where every idea is a good enough idea to make it on the board. Then we tear them up and see if they're good enough to carry forward.

Comment

I'm against feeding wildlife, but I think we have some spots where we could use it. Coexistence to me means we can have wolves, ungulates, and cows on the landscape, and we have multiuse land out there. If there are problem spots, maybe we can do some different things.

Comment

Our district team did have a robust conversation on that with OPT. We talked about it a lot, and decided against that for a number of factors. We considered it, but in this specific situation we decided not to use it.

Comment

I also want to have a discussion about what's going on with the ungulate situation. I think more and better information about population trends throughout northeast Washington could help. Right now I just hear debate. Instead of it just being a point of conflict, I'd like to figure out a way to get a handle on it. Are there more rapid assessment methods we can use? Get baseline information and talk about all the factors that will contribute to a healthy, sustainable ungulate population. How do we trust in the data collected?

Comment

Two things. We have the ungulate numbers for the Blue Mountains, right?

Comment

This year, coming off of winter mortality, the Blue Mountains elk population is down approximately 25 percent. The adult bull component is likely down 50 percent.

Comment

I would add to that, the Blue Mountains is doing the same thing as Yakima and Colockum right now. It's the same perfect storm of conditions that started with the summer drought of 2015. All three have behaved the same in the same timeframe.

Comment

So the last two years have been when wolves really appeared in the Blue Mountains. My problem with the predator/prey study is that it started when predators were already there.

Comment

Do you change the tags for elk this year?

Comment

Yes, the hunting opportunity reflects that.

Comment

Why are we putting all the blame on populations based on wolves? In the Blue Mountains we have a very high cougar population. We have a lot of black bears too. The deer population is down. We can't just blame wolves. It's all predators. We have single species managed cougars for 15-20 years, and the population grows 10-15 percent every year. They've got to eat. These are my concerns in all of these areas. We can't have wolves on the landscape without a robust prey population. We have to also recognize the other predators out there too. In most areas there are no baselines. Hunter harvest is one baseline, and that's down. We have to get our arms around the predator situation.

Comment

Just a couple clarifications. The predator/prey study has a definite lapse where we weren't pre-wolf. The cougar population does regulate itself. You are right that there is a slightly higher density in the Blues, but we didn't see a 10-15 percent increase at all in the cougar population.

Comment

I'm not going to sit here and argue, but I've got the data. I'd be happy to sit down in my office and go through it. We have cougars everywhere, even outside your cougar management areas. Take a look at Oregon's very detailed studies, and it's all counter to what you're trying to tell me here.

Comment

In my range, over the last 30 years, there's been a drastic decline in elk and deer. We don't have wolves yet. The number of cougars has at least tripled, if not more, since the hound hunting stopped. That's just my opinion.

Comment

When I hear the conversation, it reminds me we can't think of wolves as just a vacuum. We have to think about all those other factors on the landscape as well.

Comment

You've mentioned that the number of cougars being killed annually is high or higher than it was when hound hunting was done. So biologically, it doesn't make sense to me that a lack of cougar hunting would lead to population increase. I also know cougars tend to move around more if territories are disrupted. I don't know the answer to that, but I get questions more and more often about what we do about cougars. There are more instances of depredations and cases where Enforcement is called out. Is the department doing any assessments on population models and counts?

Comment

I think that is part of the predator/prey project. I know we have a ton of data in certain areas where cats are being collared and studied. I think we have 7 study areas across the state where we've captured and collared cougars since 2000. We have assessments of density in all those areas. We've got a pretty solid idea on that. As more people live here and move out, that can cause issues. And that's not going to stop. I think there is a wealth of research that's been done in this state and others.

Comment

Earlier this year the Director asked the Wildlife Program to put together a group of people to review our management and think about things that we're not quite as happy with. There is a group of people who've met three times or so. It's made up of staff from across the state. We're actually creating a document with ideas that could be implemented. They are tweaks on things that we

could do. We're probably not overhauling the whole thing, but we are thinking about if things are working the way we want everywhere.

**Comment**

I'd love to hear from the department if there are things we don't have in the protocol that would have been useful this season that we could have done. Is there anything that would have helped? Does the department wish there were things there that aren't?

**Comment**

I wanted to offer some thoughts as we wrap up for today. We'll re-engage tomorrow, and whatever I suggest now, we can change it. Part of the review we just had gave us a lot of ideas for the future. What I'd offer is that we review those ideas with the group here with the intent to look at that suite tomorrow and determine which ones are worth investing some time and effort. That's my idea. I'm going to pause in case there is any objection, but then let's review.

\*Rob reviewed the ideas discussed during the meeting (look at the meeting materials for a quick visual of these ideas)\*

**Comment**

We seem to have coined the term "hotspot" now. We've done a lot of work in the draft protocol, and I want to know if we're talking about hotspots or chronic depredation zones. Maybe just as an editorial habit, we should decide on a term and stick with it. That or define what those terms mean.

**Public comment**

**Public comment #1**

I think one thing we're missing is the human factor. We can talk about wolves, elk, whatever. Sustainability is humans. Let's look at what our actions do to the humans. These families in the northeast are in distress. Their families are being torn apart. They can't have a normal conversation anymore. It's always wolves. They are deciding whether or not it's worth the fight. Our family has been there since 1984. We've managed that resource because we enjoy it. But at some point, is it worth it? As a father, I'm thinking, "Do I really want to put my daughter out there in this situation?" We're threatening their livelihoods, and for what? We need to make things sustainable. That doesn't mean I want to kill all the wolves. I've long considered the ESA should consider what it does to the people. Our small communities have been in financial stress for quite a while. Some things are coming back, but a lot of those places can't even sustain a school or a hospital anymore. I just urge you to look at the people.

**Public comment #2**

I just want to reiterate that we have a huge population of people that aren't able to make it to Moses Lake, and we want to urge the department to record these in some ways. I think it was really brave of Diane to propose a solution that may not be considered popular. Throwing out those ideas to discuss them is great and important. Being able to think about new and creative solutions seems like what needs to be done. I think the idea of baseline information is good. It sounds like some of that is already out there. Maybe think about where are some holes in information where people are not agreeing, and that information might exist in some ways. Brainstorm with the WAG what that information might be so discussions can be based off of that information instead of arguing about something that may already be known. Thank you all for your work on this.

**Public comment #3**



First of all thanks to all of you and you who are sitting in the back rows. I'm a cattleman from northeast Washington. My family has been dealing with wolves since 1995. We started this wolf plan in 2008, and I was engaged in that. We were one of the first families to engage with the department to take proactive measures. I don't think we've left a tool unrolled over in the box. We're dealing with six wolf packs right now. Two of them are unknown. They impact where our cattle graze. We're roughly a third of our cattle on public land, with the rest on private land. We've taken losses and had conflict even with our nonlethal measures. I'm really concerned that this has morphed into a land management deal rather than dealing with wolves themselves. The plan was to manage a species. We didn't know where the species would go at the time. It was hard to put a tack on that. It's something this is continuously evolving. This goes back to the tools. There's a lifespan to those tools and how well they'll work. Range riding is a very effective tool if the collar data is used with it. That's important to provide to the producer. If I'm bouncing around too much, stop me so I can help you understand. We're not out there chasing locations to find out what the wolves eat. What the range rider is doing is knowing where the cattle are and preventing conflicts to the best of their ability. We don't want to bump a wolf from an ungulate kill either. They'll come back and finish it off. It is important though, to find dead livestock carcasses so we know when we have a problem. I heard talk of the Smackout pack. Smackout is a very different situation in how it's set up. There are 400 acres of meadows in the center, but it's a small portion of that permit. It's hard to manage out there. We can manage within the meadows, and even so we still have problems with wolves. We use multiple deterrents. Most of them only work in certain circumstances. When we first had the Smackout pack, the female in charge of that pack kept control of that pack. I learned to watch and study and we could see how that female kept the pack in check. We didn't have a problem until a new one took charge of that pack. Then there was a testing of the cattle, then they were killing the cattle. This started three years ago. So now we've got a pack that's killing cattle, and we got to the lethal removal phase. We've done lethal removal, the department's done lethal removal, and we've done it with incremental. It did slow it up. Where we are today is we're back to the testing of the cattle. No matter what measures we put forth. That's all due to harassment. We know it's building again. As the pack grows in size, this will happen. What we've seen is there's several factors that have played into this. The conservation side of this has to own part of this problem. We already had predators on the landscape, we've added the wolf now, we've had hard winters, and we've had other things. But the biggest was being tied up in the court system for forest management. The habitat loss is the probably the biggest factor in why we have a decrease in ungulate populations today. I don't blame the wolf for this. It's hard to get ahead of that curve. Whether it's public land or private land, we pride ourselves in that. We see what our ungulate populations are doing. We've seen a moose herd go from strong to nothing now. We knew that was going to happen. I don't know the answer for rebuilding the ungulate population as a food source. I know that's why we're seeing more depredations from wolves. One of the things my family did was make a commitment to the department. We were going to work through this no matter what. There've been speedbumps, but I don't think that commitment is lost. It's still there. One thing is the respect I have for your side of it and your passion for what you like. We don't hate wolves, as ranchers. We really do enjoy the wildlife. So I would ask that back in return. Understand our passion. It's generational. I want my future generations to be here too. It's a people issue, not a wolf problem. One of the things to come out of this when it comes back to the people thing is the death threats. My family has had them. I don't think anyone should have to go through that no matter who you are. That's wrong. Somehow we need to come to terms without using that as a last resort. There have been some speedbumps but I'm not going to go into that today. I'll challenge the department to come to the table and we'll work through this. I understand that statewide you have a plan to manage wolves, but right now I think the importance should lie on the eastern zone. What are we going to do to change things so we're not repeating this year after year? You can't have them become habituated to eating livestock. To save wolves lives is to prevent habituation. If we could

have had the chance to remove the bad actors earlier on, I believe the Smackout pack would be stronger today. We were handcuffed and couldn't get it done, and now we're seeing it happen again. Nobody wanted to see the OPT wolves removed, but I think if the department was able to step in earlier and remove the problem wolves, we wouldn't be in this situation.

#### Question

So two years ago, lethal removal was used in the Smackout. What did the pack look like at the beginning of the year this year?

#### Answer

There are two den sites with the Smackout pack and it's a tossup which den they're going to use. Our conflict specialist thinks there are 4-5 adults still in that pack. We know they had pups this year. We know where the sites are and we're not trying to chase them away. We put everything in place, and this current female actually picked up the pups and brought them down to the fence line. How do you break that habit? You can't ever break them of that cycle. That's instilled. She was involved in the depredations for the past two years.

#### Question

If you had your magic wand, what's the thing to focus on as a people issue?

#### Answer

Being able to not be so polarized and understand where people are coming from. There is going to be some cattle loss, and I can accept that. That's part of the game. There will be wolf losses in the state, and that's going to go on forever too. We have a healthy growing population. What we have is good and it is growing, and it has to be okay to take out the problem individuals.

#### Question

I understand what you're saying about the bad actors, but I think it's hard to tell sometimes who in the pack is the bad actor. I think it's a people failure when a pack with four pups is killed. And it doesn't seem like the right answer when it happens over and over again. I'm in strong opposition to WDFW killing a pack of wolves over this situation. I think we have failed wolves. We have to be creative and all of us should be helping with that.

#### Answer

I agree with you. I don't think it should get to the point where it's a complete pack removal. It is possible to determine who the bad actors are. You have to look at it, but it is possible. It takes time and you have to understand the problem. This is the frustrating part of the collaring. There's a reluctance from the department to put out the expenditure towards collars. We have to do that if you like wolves. With the right collars, you can know the conflict, and break it up and stop it right then. There is technology that can provide this information to us. I think it can be a big improvement. Maybe some of the lethal removal spending can be diverted to getting better collars. This is something that's evolving all the time. The wolf is always right there our maneuvering what I can do.

#### Question

You have probably more collars per wolf than other producers. I've heard so much conflicting analysis out there. It seems like with the technology there, that is possible. Without the technology, it really is a crapshoot. It's tougher to have that in other areas.

#### Answer

I understand that collaring wolves is not cheap or easy, but I think there should be a big emphasis on that. It's the one key you have to have out there.

#### Question

What's your opinion on GPS ear tags?

#### Answer

You know I do support that to a certain degree. I don't know whether we're there yet. We did use some things that sent off mortality signals. I think they do a better job nowadays with technology. Why not put that technology to work for us? Now they've got solar powered collars you can put on cows. Those collars will give a cow a shock if they go outside the boundary. Why can't I take that a step farther? Why can't the wolf get a shock if it's too close to cows? It comes back to keeping an open mind and using tools. It's not about moving cows from public lands. That won't end the issue. We're dealing with wolves 12 months of the year, on both private and public lands. We don't have just a grazing season any longer. As the population has grown, we need year round data to stop that conflict somehow in between.

#### Public comment #4

I think in the last few minutes we all learned more than we did in the previous few hours. He deals with the wolf 12 months of the year. The person came up there and laid it out there. You got to applaud that and I think it was excellent to hear.

#### Public comment #5

I would like to echo that this would be helpful if this was livestreamed. I also really appreciate Paula and Diane's comments and questions. On that note of making everything public, when there are complaints that are filed, I believe the public should know. I think WDFW should press those issues and make those responses public. There should be more public record. I think that would bring less misunderstanding and more informed views. That way, we as citizens could write to our representatives and influence things better.

#### **Meeting adjourned for the day**

## **Wolf Advisory Group**

August 28, 2019

Meeting Notes

Jamison Event Center  
605 E Nelson Road  
Moses Lake, WA 98837

**WAG members:** Samee Charriere, Tim Coleman, Tom Davis, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Jess Kayser, Bill Kemp, Paula Swedeen

**WDFW staff members:** Donny Martorello, Joey McCanna, Dan Brinson, Ben Maletzke, Julia Smith, Matthew Trenda

**Facilitator:** Rob Geddis

**Fish and Wildlife Commission:** Molly Linville

**US Forest Service:** Morgan Weinman, Robert Garcia, Brandon Lawson, Eric Johnston

### **Welcome and check in**

Rob welcomed all to the meeting and everyone checked in around the room.

### **Public comment**

You all heard a heartfelt comment from a livestock producer last night, and I've been thinking about it all night. There are a hundred more just like him out there right now. I just want to encourage everyone to think about that statement because it was so real. None of us have the right to drive people out of business and run them off the land. I ask you all to look at all sides. We're at a point where you can't imagine the anger from some of the people. There is a lot of partisan bickering right now in this country, but I'm hearing from my constituents that they want us to get along and solve problems. Walk a mile in the other one's moccasins. I have a lot of sleepless nights around these issues. I just had to come and share with you folks. I appreciate you all and the time you've given me.

### **US Forest Service discussion**

#### **Comment**

There were some questions yesterday about what's the basis for grazing on national forest. Why are even doing this? So I wanted to break it down a little bit for everyone. When we get down the allotment-specific stuff, I'll pass it to my teammates here. I think you all know we have a pretty broad mission, which includes grazing. What we do is dictated by a variety of different laws that have been passed over the years. It started early on, and in 1960 we had the multiple use language, which included grazing. So clearly grazing is supposed to be one of the uses on the national forest system. There was a lot of other legislation in the 1970s that further tightened up the frames of what we do. One was the National Forest Act. It lays out what we do from a planning standpoint. It also introduces specificity around wildlife and biodiversity. The ESA, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act were all passed during that time as well. Another really important law is the national environmental policy act. It doesn't tell us what decisions to make, but it requires us to look at what those things would be. So again, grazing is clearly something expected. How we do it has to fit with all these other things that are out there. Our challenge is meeting all of those laws. None take precedent over another. This whole soup of laws come into play whenever we make decisions.

Grazing is a valued use that occurs on the national forest system that we manage with all these other things, including wildlife. I mentioned the National Forest Management Act. One of the things under that act is that part of the management plans have a sort of zoning. We're looking at suitability for a variety of different uses. It includes grazing, timber harvest, and other things. At the forest level, you have this plan that lays out how things should occur and where they should occur. Everything we do, every project, there is a NEPA consideration around that. At the allotment level, we have zoning and go through that decision process under NEPA. We look at all those laws and develop alternatives, then reach a decision. Every allotment has a decision associated with it that takes all these things into account. That's what sets up the allotment plan and the permit. That ensures actions that occur there consider all those laws and all that is disclosed to the public. I did also want to mention one thing relative to the wildlife aspect of things and how we're structured. So I mentioned the National Forest Management Act. That has the diversity provision in it that speaks specifically to wildlife, fish, and botany. One of the major tenants/goals of that is to maintain diversity and avoid a situation where species would be trending towards federal listing. We have a variety of identified species that fall into a sensitive category. Our biologists make a determination for each allotment to determine if that project would affect that wildlife or plant or fish. The thing with wolves is that under that construct, we're not really pushing that threshold. Wolves are expanding quickly, they're great dispersers, and they are recovering. They are in a different place than other species we may be looking at that may be in a downward trend. So specific to the framework in which we operate, wolves aren't really one of those "watch-out" species from a biological standpoint because they're doing well. I don't bring that up in a callous sort of way, because there's no denying the magnitude of this issue. I wanted to put that out there though because I wanted you to understand that in our decision structure, it's not a situation where there's a downward trend biologically. It's awful and terrible and makes us all feel bad, but it's not in that same arena we're in with a lot of other species. Back to the allotment part of it, I said we go through this whole decision-making process, and we ask producers to be cognizant of all these different things. All that gets built into that permit. Many of the things that are the nonlethal deterrents are things that are not directly captured in that NEPA decision or that allotment management plan. So whenever we ask that permittee to do something not in that plan, it's more of a negotiation thing. That is something that has to work for the operator or producer. Can you do this and will this work? I message to our folks in the region that it is important to have those conversations with our permittees. I think you all heard yesterday that it is in no one's best interest to be in this space where there is so much controversy over this. But again, it has to work for the operator and work within that decision that was made through NEPA and still meet all those laws. I think people get frustrated with USFS because things don't work quickly for us. We have to go through that analysis and think about all these things before a decision is made. In order to move cattle to different places, we'll have to have a decision that discloses the effect of those actions. Actions we take, we need to be able to demonstrate compliance with all those laws.

#### Comment

I'll talk a little about deterrents. In 2012, we had the Wedge pack up in that area. I issued a permit and was working with the permittee and we noticed things were a little different. There were these things happening and at the time we weren't sure what was going on. We had a lot of communication with WDFW and the permittee around that issue. Annually, we had WDFW in our permittee meetings. They brought some of the nonlethal methods and a lot of other information. I think the department spent countless hours working on that stuff. This isn't something that we've all experienced, so it was a big learning curve. As time has passed, the working relationship between permittees and the department has increased, and there has been more openness to trying new things. The management plans we develop for allotments tell us about the use and it's the guiding document we have to manage out there. We meet with our permittees annually and talk

about grazing. Allotments are all different, so it's different for each permittee. Permittees have worked on turnout later, making sure animals are healthy, and more. So from an animal husbandry perspective, that's been worked on. WDFW has worked on nonlethal, and we've worked on looking at those permits and finding different solutions. Some allotments don't have as much flexibility as far as a turnout pasture. As we've gone through this the last ten years, we've tried to provide flexibility administratively, and it hasn't always worked.

#### Question

In that flexibility of rest/rotation, is that within season or next season?

#### Answer

That's within season, next allotment. So moving livestock to the next allotment, within those pastures, that herd is still dealing with the same pack. So we hear, "Why don't you close the allotments?" As was stated before, it's part of our mission and our budget. So if you take livestock and move them over to a vacant allotment, you lose efficiency and could have more depredations. That's that working knowledge of the landscape. So that flexibility has been in three parts: a lot of work from the agency, work from the permittees, and trying to find where we can fill in.

#### Comment

I just had one last thing. We don't do NEPA overnight. We do NEPA on a majority of our vacant pastures. There is value to having that flexibility. In a lot of cases we have to do NEPA for those vacant allotments and it's a slow process.

#### Comment

So I've heard that NEPA documents are very old in certain allotments. If it were seen as a possibility to move cows to vacant allotments, you'd have to do new NEPA documents. How would that work? What kind of resources would you need? How long would that take?

#### Answer

We have NEPA that's been accomplished for our grazing allotments for various years. In 1995, we had the schedule come out that said we will reinitiate NEPA on certain allotments. So the allotments we have had analysis done in different years. Some are more programmatic, and some are very restrictive. The more restrictive ones have a lot less flexibility. So we're in the process of going through our active grazing allotments. They are usually in groups of four. Part of the process is analyzing and disclosing and coming through with an agreement. Hopefully that agreement has flexibility, because things change a lot. We're in the process of doing the NEPA process, but it depends on the forest and the range program.

#### Comment

The rescission act requires us to reissue permits on the allotments when they expire. That's why we've been using the old NEPA documents. There are various reasons we have vacant allotments. From endangered species to fencing construction. We have varying levels of NEPA. We do have a process that allows for review of certain aspects, including ESA, and sometimes that allows for flexibility. On a vacant lot where it's vacant because of an endangered species, it's going to take longer. You'd need an EIS, for example. We're in that process on the active allotments too, so there's not much time left to do that on the vacant allotments. We're finding it difficult to arrange NEPA on the active allotments, for example.

#### Comment

It sounds like it might be a long shot.

#### Comment

Time and labor equals money, so you're going to get a sufficiency review done. That's cheaper than other options.

#### Comment

The short answer is it's time, money, and staff. I think we can adjust if there's something that looks like a golden opportunity. It's not just range folks. You have to have all those other groups involved. When it gets into the endangered species side, we're working with another agency as well. We can make those judgements, and if there seems to be a good opportunity, we can shift resources.

#### Question

I know you mentioned wolves as being a robust population, but they're still listed as an endangered species on the state level. Does that listing have any weight on a federal allotment?

#### Answer

It does, and generally speaking if it's listed by the state, it ends up on our sensitive list. The federal listing is different because it goes through a different agency and has a different process. With the state listing, we weigh that heavily in our analysis. I don't want to give people the impression that we're not looking at wolves. It's just that they're in a different place than a lot of other species in terms of trends relative to habitat and things like that.

#### Comment

I wonder if specific location plays a part as well. At what level would that impact? Or does it not?

#### Answer

Part of that determination is in terms of threat towards its federal listing. I would suggest we're nowhere close to that because of the proposal to be delisted on the federal level. There is a geographic determination that comes into play. In terms of the planning area. So if we see a scenario where actions in the planning area would lead to federal listing, that would have an effect. But it's hard to make that argument.

#### Question

I so appreciate having you here. I think all of us have felt that learning curve as a new species comes into our state. I think that adds to the frustration we all feel in terms of reactive versus proactive. I hope that the group of people having this discussion looks at this entire state, rather than just a specific area. We know we'll have challenging areas, and we have probably learned what to look for, and it would be so great to be thinking ahead. I hope that's part of the agenda.

#### Answer

Yes, it was. The goal is to have that conversation on a broader level. But also making sure all the right players are there. It's WDFW having a conversation with USFS, but what about other land managers? It's other public lands, it's private lands, and we want to talk to all those folks. We're in this for the long game, so starting that now is our goal.

#### Comment

We may have more success with an interagency group at this point.

#### Question

I have several questions. There's nothing more frustrating for me than land management because of the lack of flexibility. I would like to see that policy changed. I understand that you're required to monitor these allotments or the permittee is supposed to monitor. Will we have access to that monitoring data online in real time? Does the forest handbook give you responsibility to tell the permittee to define stocking levels based on conditions? Maybe it's a drought, maybe it's wildfires. Does the handbook give you those options to make changes without NEPA? Are you going to make adjustments to protect the trails from cattle?

Answer

I'll answer the question on non-use. We have the policy called validating your permit. The handbook states that the permittee will be out of compliance if they turn out 90 percent of their head without non-use. We would set criteria for what would bring us out of that resource protection and what would be required to get there. In our monitoring, if we determine we have a decreasing trend in rangeland health, the handbook allows us to modify permits to reduce numbers. So going the other way, the handbook allows us to modify the permit to increase number if there's an increase in forage. So we some options to adjust those permits.

Question

So you can adjust numbers on range health issues. Can you change duration of grazing period?

Answer

So if you have 100 head for a month permit, you have a 100 head/month permit. We have conditions where you can put 200 head on for two weeks, but it still meets the permit.

Comment

So stocking levels, in 1981 we had the most livestock in the USA. Foreign markets helped drive that during that time period. We had a lot going on during that time. President Nixon signed in NEPA and a lot of research came out at that time. As time went on, we were able to analyze the numbers on the ground. The stocking levels we have are pretty conservative. We target about 25 percent of available forage, with the rest left for wildlife and things like that. Our stocking levels are defined by that analysis. As far as trails go, I know those trails on the Kettle Crest were actually livestock corridors. Now we have them as multiple use. There's a section in the new forest plan that talks about trail maintenance, guidance, and use. To monitoring, we have a set amount of allotments that we administer to standards each year. We don't monitor on every pasture or allotment every year. I don't know where that data sits right now.

Comment

I am getting up to speed on the technology we have to make monitoring more efficient and more available. There is an enterprise data warehouse. My understanding is that is a portal where the public can get that data.

Comment

Mine is more an appreciation. We've talked a lot in this group about vacant allotments. One comment I heard is that moving allotments loses efficiency. It's a big deal to take people and cattle and moving them to strange ground. I appreciate that being brought up.

Question

Those conversations about range riders and this idea about putting cows into small groups and putting them to bed at night. Sometimes you hear questions about if that complies to allotment plans. A similar one is when you have a planned turnout spot, but then two weeks before turnout



you figure out there's a den right in that pasture. At what point can you route around a den site? Last one, have you had producers come and say, "Are there other places I can go?"

Answer

I guess I'll go back to hotspots. We have these packs that overlap allotments. When you're talking hotspot, we're talking four allotments over 120,000 acres. I don't know if that's what I consider a hotspot from a range management perspective. Wolf packs have territories that overlap. When you look at den sites and hotspots, we don't always have the data. So what we can do is work with the permittee and maybe they don't salt in that area this year. But a lot of it is working with WDFW on nonlethal deterrents.

Comment

We could get into trouble with grouping cattle. It could lead to overuse. It's not worth taking that option off the table, but we want to avoid overuse.

Comment

We have had producers ask for another spot. Not in terms of wolves, but in terms of fires.

Question

I think we should clarify the hotspot term a little bit. A wolf pack area can cover 300,000 miles, and most of these depredations were within a few miles of each other.

Answer

It depends on the year. In 2016, the OPT was extremely widespread. This year we saw that it was a little more localized. We also noticed that the wolves were following cattle as they switched pastures.

Comment

We've had depredations within three allotments over several pastures. The point I was making was that it was a larger area.

Comment

I want to echo that I really appreciate USFS coming. I'm a 6<sup>th</sup> generation rancher, and we've always been taught dispersal. Use salt to disperse, etc. So these cattle have been taught over time. You've always got cattle you have to move around, and you don't always have water there. Everything uses that water. Grouping of cattle isn't an option for me. I think it causes more grief and more problems than it would solve.

Comment

When I say grouping, it's not just a single pair alone. It's like three cows and three calves, rather than just a pair.

Comment

My understanding is the whole group together. But understand that cattle are together a lot. It's rare you find one by itself.

Comment

I think a lot of the low stress ideas like grouping came out of different locations. That's a scenario where you have high commitment to get those cows trained. In the Colville National Forest, with the terrain and landscape, it may not be feasible. Different landscapes allow for different things.

#### Comment

I wanted to add to this concept of grouping. Myself and my staff have taken several trainings on that to learn what folks do and what was successful. Yes, in the terrain in Colville National Forest, you're not going to get them all grouped together. This does involve moving the cows more often, so this would involve working with USFS and making sure the rotation still works. There are no doubt challenges to doing this in that terrain. Essentially, we need to think about the principles that make it work. They're able to take whatever size group in appropriate and place cows where they want them and have the range rider go find them. You can't always see them, but the idea is to check and see their behavior on a regular basis. I just wanted to make sure those principles are out there. When we talk about grouping, there are a whole bunch of things that go with it. If you can see most of your cows on a regular basis, and move them regularly, that's the thing that allows fewer depredations. Being able to have techniques that allow that sightability seems to be the thing that helps. So we'd need to think about how that's adaptable to Colville National Forest.

#### Comment

The whole idea of working collectively together. I provided you with some of the framework under which we operate. We'd like to have greater flexibility, permittees would like greater flexibility. I think it's important to be willing to try things. Are they all going to be successful? No. But I also think it's important for us to be working truly collaboratively in a partnership. That means working with us at USFS, the state, permittees, etc. Things may or may not work, but I think we need to try. We also want to make sure we understand where we're all coming from. We cannot abandon the legal framework from which we are asked to operate. I know it's frustrating for folks. A lot of people expect a lot of things from national forests, and that's good. We all got into this business because we know and appreciate that.

#### Comment

We're having a lot of discussion about a lot of stuff we're not going to put into the allotment plans. So how do we get to those options? My answer to that is a forum like this, where you come together to reach an agreement and consensus. We're talking about wolves, but grazing and riparian areas are huge too. I think we need to focus on what we want to see in terms of coexistence.

#### Comment

I've never run cattle in timber in my life, and I'd never tell those who do how to run cows on the landscape. I think it's important to not breakdown grazing into a right way and a wrong way. The landscape in Washington changes with every hour you drive. So let's be thoughtful that cattle respond differently on different landscapes. Grazing is a huge spectrum, and it can improve habitat when done well. And that "well" can look different depending on the landscape.

#### Comment

I appreciate what was said about grouping and different techniques. There are producers out there who damage things. I spend at least five days, sometimes seven days a week, on the allotment making sure things are okay. And I don't have wolves yet. I will never, ever see all my cows. Unfortunately that's the way it is. We've got a good working relationship with our range in our area. Our range is a checkerboard. Every year we have a meeting, once in the spring and once in the winter. We talk about what the plan is for that year, and we just work together. But every situation is going to be different.

#### Comment

I think it's been a wonderful conversation, but I'm sitting here struggling with the fact that the problem we have is caused by cattle. We haven't defined what caused these hotspots other than that there were cattle there to be eaten. You have to find out what is causing the problem before you solve the problem. This has been a wonderful discussion, but it leaves me short.

Comment

Livestock producers are obviously the ones who will know best about running cattle on their allotment or their land. That's just from experience of working with them. With that in mind, and going back to these hotspots, how productive is this conversation without the affected producers?

Comment

I was kind of thinking the same thing. Maybe this group could come up with principles to have as those discussions are happening. I feel that way. I feel like there would be a ton of consequences from us throwing stuff up on flipcharts.

Comment

In this room, I know we all have a common goal and want to resolve conflict. But again, I struggle, because without those others at the table, how do we know that we are all after that common goal?

Comment

I agree, and I think that's being attempted to set up. At the same time, as the WAG, there are enormous expectations on us to help solve this problem. So I think that we maybe need to figure out, what is our goal? This discussion is about learning, but there are a lot of people expecting us to help solve this issue. If we're not the right group, we need to know that. Our group is here to advise the Director, and that's important. But in terms of a specific solution, that solution doesn't come without the producer and other community members in the room. That discussion needs to happen. I just wanted to point out all the pressure on us. If everyone is saying we can't really solve this because we're not the right people, then I think we need to define our expectations.

Comment

I totally support that. The timber wars were resolved because we sat down with the timber industry and decided to support each other. It was about interest over conditions. If we can't find these solutions collaboratively with producers, and if we keep hearing that producers know what's best, I don't know how we get to the resolution. In the end, my constituents will say there shouldn't be any grazing. I don't think that's in anyone's best interest. I've told folks what I want to see, many times, and I've not been shown what I was asking for. Can't we support the cattle producers by moving the cows? Or by giving them one bite of that grass? I think we ought to try some different strategies. I think we can do that in a collaborative setting where everyone feels like they're being heard. It's time for a change and I think that would serve producers well.

Comment

I think the WAG is working. I'll start with that. We've reached agreements in the past on what a protocol looks like. We get in situations where livestock are killed, and that triggers a response. So that's working. We reached agreement on what triggers a lethal decision. Then the department does that, it creates explosions in certain communities. So that creates a notion that WAG isn't working, when what we're doing is initiating a decision that we agreed. The protocol worked as we agreed upon it. We all know that it would create angst. I'm concerned about how we're messaging the work of the WAG. We know this is a controversial issue, and people are going to be angry no matter what the department does. So I don't feel the WAG has failed. There are people who agree and disagree with management decisions, but that's different from failure on our part.

#### Comment

When I heard the word solution, that sounds like so much more responsibility than should be on WAG's shoulders. I also heard the goal is wolf recovery, and that is happening! That's not a failure. For folks who feel WAG is failing, I disagree. Wolf recovery is happening. It's happening at a good rate. There are so many areas that are going well. There are so many other packs that are successful.

#### Comment

I have my wolf plan here, and this is the sandbox. The goals are more than wolf recovery. It's also managing conflicts in a way that minimizes losses. Maintain healthy and robust ungulate populations in the state. I'm not sure we are actually doing that. The last one is develop public understanding of management needs for wolves in Washington, thereby promoting support for the species. In some ways that's failed and in some ways that's been successful. Let's not forget the other goals.

#### Comment

I coached high school football for 14 years, and I'm not doing that now because wolves. We're not winning because producers are being blamed. Each pack we deal with is a different team we play, and they're going to act differently. How can we get to where we want to go in the future. Let's stop with the tunnel vision and look at that bigger picture.

#### Comment

We really do focus on the depredations a lot. We don't hardly at all talk about the other packs that are coexisting. I also still feel that we want to solve this so bad that we get caught up in it. I want us to change that narrative. How can we improve this process, yes, but we have to understand that it's not ever going to be zero. I don't mean to be the wet blanket, but in some ways this is our norm. It doesn't mean we don't keep trying, but we're going to have these situations.

#### Comment

I agree with that, actually. We lose the forest for the trees so often. What I would love to see WAG tackle is how we get the positive narrative out there. How do we talk about all the successes in the state? Chronic depredation zones do exist, and maybe the protocol needs to address them better. That doesn't mean the protocol doesn't work. In this particular situation, I do think it's a little bit outside WAG at this point. WAG has a role, but so does USFS, so do the producers. Look at how low Washington's conflict is compared to other states. It's incredible. And I attribute that to the work WAG has done over the years. We cannot let the negative color everything else WAG does. It really is different in Washington, and WAG can do a lot to bring those positive stories forward.

#### Comment

There's always going to be some conflicts. Maybe the sustainable level of wolf packs in the northeast is fewer than there are right now. Maybe we explore translocation. Maybe we dive into the post-delisting plan. We'll have some conflict, but maybe it is reduced. Maybe we're beyond the number of packs we can sustain in the northeast, and maybe that would help some of the conflicts. So maybe there are ways we can experiment a bit there.

#### Comment

I love the idea of WAG stepping back and acknowledging the successes we've had. But at the same time, wolves are a really emotional topic. The fact of threats and lawsuits and so much angst about this. My organization has been putting that message out all the time. The positive messages haven't

worked yet. Having repeated depredations and removals in the same spot is causing a huge amount of angst. And not being able to figure out how to deal with it makes it harder. It can also result in social actions from different sectors that could cause strain on those areas that are working well. The human safety issues are scary. Whatever contribution we can make to this particular place that is so upsetting to people right now, I think we need to do it. Folks from all sides are feeling like the whole situation is out of their control. I'm concerned that decisions will be taken out of our hands. The reason for that weight on our shoulders is because forces can overwhelm us and make the good work we've done harder. I do think we've done amazing work, and we definitely can't forget that, but I also think we can't minimize the importance of finding a different path.

Comment

I appreciate hearing that. I have a different background, and different perspective, but in my mind, the protocol worked. We hit a certain number of losses and it took effect. Maybe we can look at the packs that aren't depredating and learn from them on what to do.

### **Review deterrent ideas**

The group discussed two items that were identified as focus areas yesterday for ideas moving forward.

How do we help WDFW staff pause and communicate what's working and what is not?

Comment

How do we better analyze cause and what works and what doesn't? Maybe that's the direction this conversation takes.

Comment

I think what I heard before is that we've been so buried in this that we haven't really had the time to pause and reflect. The thing is, we're missing almost all of our team here today. I don't know if we can have that conversation without them.

Comment

This conversation would be more the framework.

Comment

I'm in the same place, because most of our team is not here. I'm also looking for ideas though. I want to hear things we may not think of or consider. I know we've all got ideas on what might work and what we might utilize for tools. So I would look to WAG for more ideas to bring back to the team.

Comment

One thing elevated this summer was human presence. So hearing from WDFW and the producers involved on how we define it, how you saw it working on the ground, what it looked like, and what were the options. As we're asked to consider that more prominently in the protocol, I think that conversation could be good.

Comment

I think it falls under adaptive management. You have to always assume you're wrong. You have to monitor your actions, find out what works and what doesn't work, and you're constantly doing that. That's the only way I can manage natural resources on my property. If I try something and it doesn't work, I don't do it again. We haven't done that. We just set out a bunch of tools. I don't like the current definition of range riding. Maybe it does work. I want to know how we can make it better.

Does it habituate wolves? Is it the answer long term? It doesn't work in our hotspot. We have to figure out some negative stimuli. It's all adaptive management.

Comment

What I think I'm hearing is that we don't have the clear process to do that right now. We're not taking the time for people on the ground to do that analysis. We're doing it on the fly.

Comment

We're just dealing with the symptom right now.

Comment

It's happening on the fly, and the need is to be able to carve some time out to think about it more thoroughly. I think we've seen the definition of range rider evolving. I would reframe the part about something not working. I think there are tools that have a shelf life. I think there are other things where even if there are depredations, it doesn't mean it wasn't working. I think we have to challenge ourselves to say maybe that's as much as we can do with that one, are there any new ideas we could try on that landscape? One I'll throw out there is the idea of using technology and having a few lead cows wearing some sort of GPS unit. Things like that. Are there things unique to certain areas where we have good tools and there are things we can add.

Comment

How can you unlearn livestock behavior? How can you teach cows not to go in places they're used to going? It takes time. We've identified a chronic problem area. It's likely going to happen again. If not next year, sometime in the future. What do we do when we know we're facing that again? It's coming. Are we going to do the same thing again? We have other things we can use. Supplemental feeding. Are we actually going to do that? Let's just say we're going to rest that allotment and try something different. We'll supplemental feed, use GPS ear tags, and try something different. How are we going to deal with this when we know it's coming again?

Comment

We're kind of shifting to analyzing a process for identifying new ideas. That's okay if the group wants to go there.

Comment

My opinion on this deal is maybe instead of blaming the cows for being in the wrong spot, we train the wolves to go different places.

Comment

We went from talking about advising the department on how they could take time to reflect right to problem solving again, which is why no one has any time to reflect. I think we'd set November for the next meeting, and the idea was to start conversations in August so that things could get implemented. I would ask WDFW to get staff together before the November meeting to have that conversation.

Comment

I think we could look at that near term and long term idea for the November meeting.

Comment

Maybe we could agree to carve off some time for long term during that November meeting.

#### Comment

I had this conversation earlier about changing wolf behavior. The GPS collar thing triggered a thought in my mind. I use collars to train my dogs to tell them where I want them and where I don't. So what if wolves had a similar sort of thing? The deterrent would be the cow, and wolves get a shock when they get near cattle. This is a sort of hair-brained idea, but I'm wondering if there's something there that can be played with. I've heard something like that has been tried with some success, but I'm not sure how feasible it is.

#### Comment

When we heard that comment yesterday, he flat said that when the wolves start testing cows, there will be problems. So if we have something set up on the lead cows and on the alphas in the pack, maybe that's something worth exploring.

#### Comment

I appreciate the suggestion for reviewing what worked and didn't work. I think we've done a lot of that, and I think we're in an echo chamber at this point if the affected producer isn't there. So we heard yesterday, frustration was expressed, but also we heard they are willing to work with us. How do we work toward building trust with folks in high conflict areas? So we can have that relationship. The answer can't just be, "nothing works." We have to come to a point of having a discussion at least.

#### Comment

I wanted to get back to how we set up our next discussion to be really fruitful and also build on things like adaptive management. We've expressed a desire to learn from what's happened. We've also discussed that we need to look at root cause drivers for places that become chronic. Figuring out what's going on with ungulate populations, is it something about the landscape, is it something else. We can advise the department to "go do that," but I also want to be helpful. So how do you collect and analyze the information needed, and who does that? Do we partner with the university to help us with some more formal analysis? The department is really busy, so maybe working with another place could help with that. We can express our desire to learn from the past, but unless there are formal steps taken, it's not going to happen. We'll just end up in the same place every year.

#### Comment

The state farm bureau president had the same idea about shock collars on wolves. I've looked at it, and in certain situations it has shown some value. I hope that concepts like that can be tried in situations where it makes sense. Maybe some groups come together and help funding. Ideas like that are part of our adaptive management.

#### Comment

The thing is everything has to be sustainable. Right now, wolf management is not sustainable. It costs too much money. I don't think it's a secret that the department doesn't have a lot of money. So we need to keep that in mind. The asking producers to come to a meeting issue. When you start talking about other producers, they won't want to come to meetings if they're going to be attacked. Yesterday I saw a post that someone at the meeting felt threatened because of the cowboy hats in the room. I counted five. I want to hear what's worked and what hasn't, but I'm not sure asking producers to come is the right way to do it.

#### Comment

Absolutely agree. I didn't necessarily mean coming to the WAG meeting. Just like how we've cancelled public meetings because they wouldn't be a safe environment, I don't want anyone to feel

threatened. However that might look though, I don't think we move forward without that producer voice.

Comment

I've been brainstorming things that might be tried. What if we had a cow that was killed. Instead of moving the body off, we set up a system where the wolf comes back and gets sprayed with bear spray. There are also many chemicals out there that we could put in the carcass that would make the wolf puke and maybe they associate that carcass with getting sick. I think we can make better efforts to change the wolf behavior.

Comment

Super creative ideas. I wanted to talk about taste aversion a little bit. That's been done with captive Mexican wolves a little bit. So they would do taste aversion therapy with beef, and I can't say it worked really well. But I don't know that it's been done with wild wolves. It hasn't worked in captivity that well when those wolves are released on the range. I don't know about wild wolves.

Comment

I think it has been tried, but I'd have to go back and look at those papers again. I'm not sure what those results were.

Comment

I think it'd be interesting to do a check in with universities just to see some of the preliminary stuff that they may be working on. Even things like taste aversion and collars. Those may not have been as successful in the past, but that doesn't mean they can't be adapted and tried again.

Comment

Just so everyone is aware of where we are in northeast Washington. If you are a WDFW employee, you are the bottom of the barrel. Some of our best producers are actually turning against us. We're at a tipping point right now where things could go south extremely fast. It's really tough, and it's not fun being a WDFW employee up there. We have staff with applications out looking for other jobs. It's that bad. I just wanted to put things into perspective. Not what we went to school for and not what we thought we would be doing.

Comment

Is that primarily because of wolves or is that something else as well?

Comment

I think wolves have been a driving factor. I don't think it's just the lethal portion of it. You can try to have a meeting on wolves, and arguments can break out over water rights. It's extremely tough.

Comment

The political climate in how things operate in northeast Washington make it really difficult on staff. How things funnel down versus how people engage in the field. You're never doing enough there to make a difference or make people want to work with you. There's no sense of one on one. It's always coming down through different levels. There's just an anti-carnivore sentiment in northeast Washington. The department staff up there get pretty beat up in that arena. I'm not quite sure how to make it better.

Comment



Nobody signed on for that abuse in their job. But I guess that's how the producers feel a bit too. I was dreading going up there last week. At the same time, those producers aren't coming forward and talking to you, and that's a problem because that comes back to the rest of us. I don't know how to build that trust back.

Comment

I'd echo that. Nobody wants to go to work where they get abused so much. I've heard folks talk and they're so tired of the problems. They feel like the state owns these wolves and the state should take care of them.

Comment

I really appreciate the honesty and sharing what staff are dealing with. I came into this natural resource policy environment in the early 90s, when cougars were the focus. It was very much just like this. WDFW staff were not popular. It is truly the climate and the culture. But back then, there was no WAG for cougar management. It was just this constant battle. No working towards a resolution, and you had legislators just as deeply involved. But there wasn't this opportunity. My hope is that over time WAG will have an impact. Honestly, dealing with some of the folks in the northeast is a challenge for us too. I'm not sure how we can help, but we're willing to do what we can. I'm hoping this process can have an impact long term.

Comment

I was carrying a bunch of anxiety coming in regarding the protocol. Coming into this group and hearing the support helped. Sometimes it feels like it's pretty easy to attack the department because you can just say, "the department." But you all know who we are. It's the folks in this room, and it's hard not to take it personally. What I would kindly ask that we all do is try to remember that we should have each other's backs and take care of each other. If we can all rejuvenate on that, it would help us all.

Comment

I am sorry about the stress load on WDFW staff. I hear it from others too. I hear the complaints about WDFW staff. I always try to help there. I harken back to stuff we've learned from this process. There were exercises about bringing parties in dispute with each other together with a person who can act like a neutral. I don't think the system can function without the trust. It breaks my heart hearing that staff want to leave. What if we figure out a way to go through the steps of listening to each party. We'd need to have a neutral person. Do that preparation prior to meeting together. After that, bring the folks together in a safe space where discussions can happen. If we can't be honest, we're not going to be successful. I think without intervention, the relationship will continue on a downward slope. You can't go on dealing with that all the time. Just an idea.

Comment

I have some problems with some folks in the northeast also. One thing to remember is that the department is not clean in this either. Things were said years ago, and there are a few people who have created lots of the distrust up there, and they're people with the department.

Comment

To build on what was said, I know of an example just like that where there was a lot of finger pointing. We pulled those folks together in a safe space where discussions could happen, and it was a great experience. How can we do that again?

Comment

I agree with that. I want to say there's no excuse for having death threats. That's ridiculous. At the same time, some of these producers have the same feelings as department staff in that area. Nothing is going to get resolved if we can't fix that.

Comment

I think part of what WDFW is experiencing is also from past department staff from the cougar issue. I know as a rancher I was terribly insulted by the department at the time. I think you're paying some price for something you didn't do. I think the other thing is that their perception being downgraded causes heartburn. So many people have game cameras, so they think there are more cougars. But I think the cougars were always there, but now people are seeing them. That is a perception. I think dealing with that could be helpful? Just be so careful to not say, "you're wrong."

Comment

The department and those of us who partner with them have a responsibility to make sure the staff are taken care of. Restoring that trust is going to take some time. So what do we supply to the department on the ground? Do they need more resources? Are there support systems we can put in place? It's one thing to be out there, but if you know you have support there, you can get through that.

Comment

I think it's different, actually. I think it's all a human thing.

Comment

Is there additional training staff needs to help deal with this?

Comment

I think we have that. I think this group is the source of that. The part about having each other's back is also helping create that contagion. We see that, and when we need to make a connection, we can see how we foster that. It's just putting it into practice.

Comment

Whatever we do, we have to take the people into account. We have to account for the people affected. Something tries to take away everything I worked for, that's going to hit a hard button. I really and truly think you have to think about the people on the ground. That's staff and residents.

Comment

I was born and raised in Chewelah. I know a lot of people of there. I hear a lot from folks, "I trust you, but not the department." That hurts, because I represent the department. The other thing is that there are billboards up there telling people to not trust the department.

Comment

It might be a reality that the best thing you can do in these hotspots is make connections with people.

Comment

My perception of the Wildlife Program at WDFW throughout the 90s and early 2000s was that they thought they knew best and would do things. I don't see that in staff now. Donny is not that type of employee. I think that led to a lot of hard feelings. Through CCT and hiring the right people, you can address that. But it may take years to move past that. This has been going on for years. I think the

department is going in the right direction now with the right people and the right training, and that's making a difference. But it's going to take time.

Comment

I remember it being that way, where we were at an identity war for a long time. Internally, there was a sense of holding on to what we had. I do think the CCT has changed some of those perspectives. But it moves slowly. It's something that's growing slowly.

Comment

I think it's right to observe that it will take time. But I think once you lay a good foundation and have multiple attempts at creating these spaces where people can share their feelings, you can get past that tipping point. In my own experience, the perceptions of me have changed over time. I came to discover that a lot of the perceptions were because of actions my boss took 30 years ago. Once you get to know them, you can build off that relationship. It is possible to change those perceptions.

Comment

I did want to build on the comment of taking a long time. I guess for me the thing that's been so incredible is that with WAG, we've done a lot in record time. Where else in the country do we have ranchers in the room with a director of a wolf sanctuary problem solving? I think what's really helped is having the department sharing information with us. We have enough to say yes, we're on the right track.

## **Lunch**

### **Update on post-recovery planning**

Comment

The conversation over the last two days has been wonderful. It's the heart of wolf management. While we're in this room, wolves are establishing territories, breeding, dispersing, and moving to new places. We hope to continue to see the wolf population grow. So while we're here, wolves continue to do what wolves do. So we have to plan for that as we approach recovery goals. So now we're in this phase where we're starting this post-recovery plan. We've initiated scoping. I'm saying to WAG that we need you all. You developed a timeline last summer on this, and we have check ins scheduled during upcoming meetings. This process will take two to three years, but the time to engage is now. Scoping is when we hear from everyone, and the WAG's input on that is important. You can also develop a draft EIS while scoping, and we're going to do that as well. I'm flagging that we are moving forward, and I haven't had engagement yet from anyone on this. And at our meetings, we're dug into these other topics, and that's important. But I do want to flag that post-recovery planning is happening. So if you all want to weigh in on that, please communicate and tell us what you need. Also please communicate with your stakeholder groups and ask them to weigh in on scoping. Throwing out ideas is the essence of scoping. We want to hear ideas about managing wolves. Remember that we're talking about a different world than what we're living in today. This is about a time when wolves are biologically recovered in Washington. How do we manage that population?

We're talking about how to manage and conserve a species, which is a massive scope. The starting point is developing elements of alternatives. So for example, when wolves are recovered, we may not need recovery regions. But we may have different zones, or something else. How do we move forward on that? The scoping survey online right now has a lot of different topics and people can list what they want to prioritize. There is also space to add things that we may not have in there.

### Question

I was really looking forward to the opportunity to sit in the audience and listen as a WAG member. So will it be an option to listen in on calls?

### Answer

There will be the digital webinars, which will be open. I'm sad about giving up those one on one conversations. As far as official commenting, I don't think that will be affected.

### Comment

Remembering back to the process stuff WAG discussed last year. I think part of the vision was incorporating CCT into this process wherever we could. I think missing those face to face experiences is a real bummer. There would be opportunity to bring communities together. We were going to come up with ways to model that. This timeline looks really fast to me. If I'm missing something, please tell me. I'm also wondering if the conditions that led to cancelling the public meetings changed, would it be possible to then have public interaction? Or is that condition going to be there long enough?

### Comment

First thing is that this timeline is a draft. Part of the reason I'm giving it to you is to take comments and for you to tell me what you need. Given the situation we're in, I know our intention is still to do meetings, but right now how do we weave CCT into this? I wonder if we can meet with certain groups and do it that way. I know that's different from public forums, but maybe that's it for now.

### Comment

I think our focus on the protocol did give us the opportunity to weigh heavier into the pre-scoping stuff. With the public meetings, we were going to have live streaming and things like that. I think scratching those does take away from our face to face time. I do think having the wolf committee on the commission is a plus. Public meetings and scoping are not a requirement. There will be public meetings associated with the other steps in the timeline. I think we can look into this timeline and find places for face to face time. Where can we reinfuse that into the process? The other thing I'm hearing is a desire to not have public meetings during session.

### Comment

I think public meetings at this time are more important than ever. Webinars are impersonal and tend to be limited and exclusionary. The thing about scoping or even commenting is it's an official record. It's democracy, and it can be messy, but it's an essential part of democracy. This stuff around the public meetings feeds into that negative narrative that the department can't handle it. As someone who's been victimized, I think going forward with public meetings would be in the best interest here. It's an opportunity to connect with the majority of the public who believe in democracy.

### Comment

There's some media out already that doesn't believe the department about safety concerns and stuff like that. I can't go into the details, but I want you to know that if it was not real, we wouldn't have cancelled the meetings. We value that connection with the public. If that threat wasn't real, we'd be doing these meetings.

### Comment

I was really looking forward to these public meetings. Everything you expressed, I agree with it. This whole situation is really unfortunate. We were explicitly told to not have the meetings. What do we do with that?

Comment

We're going to try to hold to the timeline. We've already talked about how we have more engagement. I can't tell you how uncomfortable I am thinking about the next time I check in and we're already starting on the alternative phase and we haven't heard from you. This is a mammoth project, and we really need to carve out some time to hear from you on that.

Comment

I wonder if we're able to schedule another WAG meeting before November that just focuses on post-recovery planning. If we could meet before then, that would be helpful. The other possibility is for you to wait until after the November meeting to go forward.

Comment

I don't think we're going to hit the gas pedal in those two weeks. The better process is to wait for that November WAG meeting.

Comment

The thing that concerns me is that it feels like we're kicking the can down the road again. Do you have any sense of a timeline when you're looking at holding that meeting to include USFS and producers and WDFW staff? We haven't really touched on anything in regard to changes to the protocol, and I'm concerned about the timing for that. I see this post-recovery plan as mammoth, but this is important too.

Comment

I'm reaching out to community leaders, but there's not a benchmark set yet on that meeting.

Comment

I would hope that at least a benchmark is set. If we're not going to make changes, we need to be up front with communities. If we are, we need to not let it slide. We need a process in place so we know what our protocol is by the end of 2019.

Comment

Two things on post-recovery planning. I do have a job, and when somebody tells me to do something, I'm going to work on it. That's why we want you to weigh in. Otherwise, I'm throwing my own ideas against the wall. We have to work on this. This is our job as the department. The other piece is that before the next time we meet, if each of you haven't gotten on the website and looked at the scoping survey and made sure you have an understanding of it, please do that. If something is missing, please let me know. The sooner you can do that the better.

Comment

I have concerns that with the meetings being cancelled, the communities being reached will be skewed a bit. When you live out in the wilderness, you don't always have the best internet connection. I want to be thoughtful about that.

Comment

We have a lot of work to do with WAG. Is this an either/or situation with post-recovery and the protocol? Or do we set aside more time? Is it a three-day meeting in November? Do we schedule a separate meeting? Is this a situation where we talk to our communities but not as a group?

Comment

I like the idea of having a WAG discussion related to this. That helps inform my thoughts on this. It seems we could have a meeting to discuss this that wouldn't require every staff member to be here. Could we schedule something that wouldn't pull so many department staff into the room? The WAG could just come together to have that discussion.

Comment

Could it be a webinar for WAG?

Comment

I would vote face to face because that's always better.

Comment

Extending the length of the November meeting could work better for that.

Comment

We've got public scoping statewide right now. We've got three months of review scoping results. I see that as a time where we could do a January meeting where WAG could then look at that and discuss. I see a lot of value in figuring out the protocol, but use that time together to also review what we've learned from the public during this scoping time.

Comment

WAG's level of engagement at certain stages is up to this group, but I don't want to be operating in the dark and having WAG feel like we missed this.

Comment

I think it's really important to have WAG in the room and the people we represent. Even the other agencies. We come at this from different perspectives, and I think that helps inform the process. It also lets the public know there is this sense of engagement. We're engaged. Is it easier to do that up front? I think it's harder once you have a set of alternatives. The more public the process the better, and WAG can be that connection.

Comment

What I'm hearing is that WAG is interested in making the November meeting longer. I'll explore that and get back to you on it.

Comment

Washington has an incredible opportunity here to write our own story. That being said, plans have been written before. Would it be helpful to send out plans from other states to review?

Comment

That would be helpful.

Comment

If by the end of this week you could let me know of conflicts with the dates proposed for November. Please specify if it's a one-off conflict or if it's recurring. You never find that one set of dates that works for everyone.

Comment

I have an update that I forgot yesterday that is SEPA-related. This is for the periodic status review. The last time we talked we mentioned that we would have an interaction with some university professors that do a lot of modeling work. We did that about a week ago. Our staff have been busy pulling the demographics for Washington's wolf population. The role of the university professors was to review those and give us feedback. Now we're going to present that to the wolf committee of the commission. That'll be on Sept. 3. It's a living timeline. Ideally we'd like it to be in the spring. So right now we're grappling with that internally. More to come soon on that. The commission meeting is at Sun Lodge in Winthrop.

### **Protocol changes**

Comment

I'd like to hear what people are thinking about protocol changes so we can get those ideas out there.

Comment

At the last meeting, I think you all worked really hard and provided more context for those nuggets we had. You gave us mandate permission to sit down and highlight changes. We kicked that out in the middle of July. We were a little disappointed because we didn't hear back from anybody, and we didn't know what that means.

Comment

There were rumblings that folks weren't happy with some parts. Please then respond with comments on what we can do with that. We didn't hear anything.

Comment

Maybe we all could have done something different there to keep that momentum.

Comment

I think your points are valid as far as responses you didn't get back. One issue that was a concern is human presence. It seemed like as we were all watching OPT, the human presence was morphing. I know some of us were just watching to see where that landed. I think that might be why some didn't respond because things were still being shaped.

Comment

And maybe it's just a different perception of where we were. I thought we were at that stage where we were getting text correct. I did hear from several folks that maybe we were at a higher level. Just wanted to call that out.

Comment

I think this raises a process issue. I think it is unclear where everyone is. I had the sense that what came out of that meeting in June was pretty strong agreement. I had the perception that we were close to finishing it. I was surprised to learn that folks thought there were a lot of things wrong. This is different from the process we used the past couple times. It feels like it kind of changed, and I don't know where we are right now. What was all that work we did in June?

Comment

That's my impression as well. We discussed this at length and spent a lot of time on those changes. There were some tweaks the department was going to make and then send those back to us. My understanding of that email was, "Here it is and if you have any issues with it let us know." I didn't think I had to comment because I didn't have a problem with it.

Comment

I know there were things we starred that we didn't get to last time. So wherever those charts are, we could go back to those. For instance, the range riding and human presence nugget. I'm not sure it doesn't need further definition.

Comment

I had a similar understanding. I think the department included those in the draft with the intent of getting your feedback. We have those flip charts still. We can go back and refer to them. So those are available if that's the path.

Comment

That structure that Francine provided was kind of fumbled in the last meeting. So the mandate permission you gave us was to take those nuggets back and try to capture them in good faith. But you all did say that you wanted to bring it back one more time to give sufficient consensus. So now hearing those reactions, I'm wondering if there are some tweaks to make, or is there a bigger issue that is there now.

Comment

I think in any relationship it's important to verbalize needs. If there is a grinding issue on your mind, please respond with comments. Better even to include the whole group. Then the entire group would know that we aren't done with the protocol discussion. I don't think enough of that is going on.

Comment

My big point is that I think we need two protocols. I think we need one for the west and one for the east. It's confusing the way it is right now. I don't think it's that big to rewrite it into two. I think there needs to be more tools applied to the eastern zone if possible. Do something to keep wolves and cattle more separated. It's your job to recommend tools, not mine. Stay within the wolf plan and stay within House Bill 2097. We need more tools to separate livestock and wolves. I think they exist. I think we can find something that everyone can buy in on. We need to explore it. That's one reason I feel we need separate protocols. That's my opinion. I did talk to organizations, but that's it.

Comment

To me that's more than tweaks. That sounds like we need to spend some time considering bigger picture topics.

Comment

I'd like to hear from everyone on that. I want to know where everyone is with thoughts on the protocol.

Comment

Largely, I think this document does a nice job with our discussion in last meeting. The GPS tracking for range riders may be an example of something that doesn't fit statewide. Who provides the GPS? What does it cost? Who has access to that data? That raises concerns.



Comment

I'm not uncomfortable with using the protocol as is. I do agree that we need more answers as WAG members and members of the public. I've said it before that the eastern third of the state is in crisis mode, both in the human element and with the tools on the ground. I think there's work to do.

Comment

I would be in favor of two separate protocols.

Comment

I'm okay with the process that led to what we have right now. I didn't get everything I wanted, but that's okay. I support it and I think it's always more difficult to deal with a crisis when you're in it.

Comment

I think the biggest concern I heard from folks was related to the public lands. We had made a decision not to make that difference based on land management and territory of the pack. I don't know that we came up with anything that changed the decision. That's just what I'm hearing out there. We also need to spell out the chain of custody as well for the GPS information.

Comment

I think that can just be in the range rider contracts and not in the protocol at all.

Comment

The one thing I know has come up is when looking at depredations that are injuries versus kills. A lot of the time, injuries are detected as cows are pulled off the range, and those depredations are logged all at the end of the year. They all go down as a confirmed depredation, but there's no location data or anything like that. Does that depredation weigh against that pack? The other thing is wondering if we have a place where a pack has been removed, and a new pack moves into that area, I think that pack should have a fresh slate. I don't know if that's spelled out in the protocol.

Comment

Big picture I'm pretty comfortable with where we are with the protocol. I think there should be some more language around incremental removal. What does it mean? The composition of OPT changed quite a bit over the past year. I understand the rationale, but that's an example of a place where more language could help clarify. The idea of having two protocols is weird to me, because I've always thought of this as an eastern Washington protocol since we can't take action on the west side. If we go that route, I can't say if I'm okay with it yet. I think we want to incorporate some of the discussion we've had over the past couple days in terms of chronic depredation zones. I know I've been hearing from some in the public that they'd like protocol changes based on this year's experiences. If we're going to do a lessons learned in November, there might be things we hear there that trigger some changes to the protocol. It feels like there is more work to do. I think we have a solid foundation, but we may have more difficult discussions that we need to get through to make a decision.

Comment

I think there's a lot of work to be done. Evaluation needs to happen. It may be different in different areas. We need to look at what happened this summer. Do we need to modify definitions. Lessons learned would be valuable. Be careful not to limit ourselves to what we can and cannot do.

Comment

I agree that we should probably have two protocols. I also agree that we should just list other tools that we can use. If it's not listed in the protocol, it keeps the toolbox more vague. There might be something that no one thought about that isn't listed. So having that available would be good. Also the range riding needs to be discussed.

#### Comment

I wonder if we already have two protocols by nature of the federal listing. I think we're already operating in that way. That being said, it has to be something that works for everybody. Quality over speed. If we only stick with protocol, there are a lot of topics that will be missed. Your time is limited, and I wonder what the opportunity cost is for that. That being said, I'm behind whatever you all decide.

#### Comment

My sense is a more broad and robust protocol might be better than two. The flag that goes up for me is wondering when you're implementing either protocol. That's a whole new set of definitions. I think one robust protocol would be a better idea. I feel like I'm still hearing uncertainty around that email and what are the expectations. I would recommend that you make a statement to clarify that.

#### Comment

I would just say that it needs to work for you all and for us. This is your decision to make.

#### Comment

Thank you all for sharing that. I want to be genuine and share that I am frustrated, but I'm already over that. If we felt that we had substantial work to do, it should have come out in that last meeting. That said, process is more important. Quality over speed. I'm having conversations with the Director and the commission all the time on this, and as we think about what this looks like moving forward, I want to tell you about the feedback I hear from the Director, and remind you of the statement on the first page of the protocol. The Director doesn't want to get very prescriptive. He wants more flexibility to operate. Less like a rule. This is just guidance. So if we separate them, that's a challenge for us. We may be more restrictive in some areas and less restrictive in others. If there were two versions of this, we have to have that hope line to the Director so he's comfortable with that.

#### **Summary of the past two days.**

- Clarify the subgroups
- Heard reactions to the events of the summer
  - Expectation of lessons learned shared in November
- Protocol is not ready to be final
  - More time needs to be spent on it
- Plan for a longer meeting in November
  - Early in the morning
  - Adding extra day
  - Other ideas
- Post-recovery plan feedback

#### **Public comment**

##### Public comment #1

This is the third WAG meeting I've attended, and I've always gotten a lot out of it. Today's meeting was no exception. One of the things that was written down yesterday was coming up with a systematic way to evaluate past actions, and you never really got back to that. I think we just keep

on kicking this down the road. Until you take that on, history will keep repeating itself. There are processes out there, and I think some time should be spent looking at those processes and finding one that works. They don't have to be complicated. They could fit for something like this. I hate to see this repeat itself, and I don't think tweaking the protocol is going to get the job done. I'm not a wildlife biologist, and that's just my opinion. The other thing is that I feel like the Director needs to get out and hear from this group and other people first hand. He's got to get his hands dirty at some point. You can't manage from a conference room. You have to see the issues first hand. I would suggest having him put his ear to the ground and eyes to the problem more than he is.

**Meeting adjourned**