

**Wolf Advisory Group**  
Conference Call  
May 24, 2019  
9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

**WAG members:** Diane Gallegos, Dave Duncan, Lisa Stone, Paula Swedeen, Sammee Charriere, Tim Coleman, Tom Davis, Nick Martinez, Bill Kemp, Jess Kayser

**WDFW staff members:** Donny Martorello, Rob Geddis, Julia Smith, Dan Brinson, Stephanie Simek, Jim Brown, Matthew Trendera

**Facilitator:** Rob Geddis

**Welcome**

Rob welcomed everyone to the conference call and reviewed the agenda.

Donny introduced new WAG member, Bill Kemp, and outlined the changes added to the Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol. Bill is an at-large WAG member from northeast Washington.

This is WAG's time to comment on the protocol changes. WDFW has tried their best to stick to the mandates WAG provided at the last meeting. Donny outlined the nuggets and amendments that have been added. These can be found on the WAG webpage.

**Discussion of draft Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol**

**Comment**

I do feel as though you've captured our conversation well at the last WAG meeting. Maybe at the next WAG meeting we can go over the process for when depredations begin and the Director makes a decision. At some point, I would like to hear about that process.

**Comment**

We don't count on depredations to occur, but we prepare. So as depredations occur, we prepare. We have depredation reports, we have conference calls so we're all informed, and we start putting a plan together as far as staff availability. Then if there is a depredation that meets the threshold of the protocol, we have a conference call almost immediately to make sure everyone understands the facts and we include all variables. Then the district team pulls that data together and makes a recommendation. Then it goes to the Director. In the last year, there is some added time there due to the litigation. We are under a ruling right now where we do an 8-hour court time notice before any lethal removal occurs. That's kind of it in a nutshell.

**Comment**

I have four comments, actually.

On page 5, section 3, the word encouraging is used for the citation. I wonder if that can be requiring since it's more prescriptive than an ideal.

On page 9, range riding. It seems like we talked a bit about training or some sort of certification so everyone is operating on a similar playbook.

On page 12, section 5, proactive communication. Would it be possible to include work with federal and state in terms of annual operating instructions. Connectivity between what's known on the ground by the department between land managers and wildlife managers.

Lastly, page 18, section 9, in terms of chronic depredation. Where it says two or more consecutive. One question I have is what if you have three in five years? I'm a little concerned with consecutive. Doesn't quite address the issue of chronic lethal removal.

Comment

Thank you for your comments. I know we can't wordsmith here, but I think the process is we hear all of your input and then work with you on what we can. Does that meet your needs?

Comment

Yeah, as long as there's a constructive way we can address this, that's fine.

Comment

I'm going to jump to section 10, page 19. This is the implementation of Bill 2097. I'm jumping down to that second paragraph. My sense is that they may not give you all, and producers, and the public, a real clear understanding of what that means. Do you all need more clarity? It's a balance, so perhaps not detailed explicit thresholds, but something that still provides flexibility while providing more clarity. What are those places in the plan where that flexibility can be? I thought about that a little bit, and looking at the Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, what are those dials, if you will? One might be the number of depredations, it might be the size of the rolling window (time period), it might be the continued use of nonlethal deterrents after lethal removal has been initiated. An example of that would be if WDFW conflict specialists don't think fladry is effective at all anymore while lethal removal is occurring. Another dial may be the number of animals removed. Another dial could be issuing a kill permit to producers while we're in lethal removal action. So is there language that would help you all better understand section 10?

Comment

Can we think about this a little bit and submit comments?

Comment

Yes, absolutely. Think about it, give me a call, and let's kind of walk through that. We're happy to get comments or ideas or suggestions. I'm wanting this to be an interactive process where we have email threads or multiple phone conversations. The sooner the better on those comments though. We'd like to get those by May 28.

Comment

A few folks have said that May 28 is a day after a holiday weekend. Can we prolong that a bit?

Comment

Let's revisit that at the end of this call.

Comment

I thought this call was to review the changes we talked about at the last WAG meeting, not to throw out new changes. Am I misunderstanding?

Comment

I think you're right, and the primary purpose is the changes that were sent out. I think Donny asked about the other items because we weren't hearing any comments there at the start.

Comment

The changes that were sent out were the changes we talked about at the WAG meeting. I don't think any of them are earth-shattering. Maybe include them for clarity. I think there are other changes that need to be discussed, but I don't think we should do it on a conference call.

Comment

The organizations I represent continue to support the directives of the wolf plan and believe they are necessary during this current stage of wolf recovery. But we've never had the chance to discuss our concerns with this protocol. We never got to discuss those issues.

Comment

I just want to thank all of you because this is really hard. It's hard to do in person, and then to do it on the phone is incredibly difficult. It takes a lot of courage to do what we do. What the department will do is make some edits from what we're hearing from you. Back to the purpose of the call, we are talking about those nuggets we discussed at the last WAG meeting. Did we hear those right and get them right on paper here? We're doing our best to stick to those. Explicitly, if you're okay with us adding language to section 10, please let us know. It'd be just to add clarity. If you have any friendly edits, please get those to us and your fellow WAG members. We'll get those and keep all of you informed on what those look like. The last piece is there are a couple areas where we saw just editorial updates we can make. For example, we can update the table in Figure 2. However, we are staying away from heavy changes in text.

Comment

Rob checked in with everyone on how they felt about the nuggets (did they capture what you expected?), and clarified how people felt about Donny's proposals for section 10.

Comment

I'm fine with the nuggets. I do not currently have the protocol, but as far as clarification, I'm fine with that as long as we see it before it's finalized. I'm not okay with us as WAG members emailing changes and having them included. I think those should be discussed by us first.

Comment

Fine with the nuggets, but with the clarity, I think we can cover that at an in-person meeting. But I'm fine with it as an idea.

Comment

I'm fine with the nuggets. On section 10, I do support clarification. One of the things we didn't have time for at the last WAG meeting is section 7 (lethal removal criteria). I think for all of us that remains a critical point of conversation, and there are probably many opinions on that. From the producer side, we think more conversation needs to happen on that before we'd be comfortable approving the protocol.

Comment

Well I have no real questions right now. I've been trying to get up to speed. At this stage I have no extra input.

Comment

I felt the department did a good job capturing the conversation and changes. In principle I'm fine with clarification language on section 10, but want to see what that looks like. I also agree that if WAG members propose changes, we want to talk about that as a group, face to face. I'm fine with WDFW making editorial fixes for grammar and stuff. I also want to say I hear that discomfort about the lethal criteria, and I'm curious and anxious about those thoughts, especially because we're so close to the grazing season.

Comment

I think the nuggets were captured quite well. The clarification is fine, but it's important that we don't make changes that change how the protocol looks.

Comment

Pretty much agree. I do think we need to have a discussion in person on section 10, and I do share concerns on section 7 with the lethal removal.

Comment

I think the department did well in putting together the nuggets. I appreciate the way this process is going as well. I'm okay with digging into section 10 and I'm anxious to see what you all come up with.

Comment

Pretty much agree with everyone. Would like to see the authority of the Director more defined in this document. I've got a long list. I'm a long way away from being in a position to accept this document.

Comment

Thank you, all. As you think about any changes to these nuggets, if those feel substantial to you, please get those to the full WAG so it's not just coming to the department. And we'll work on that. Turning to the calendar, what we proposed was your comments to the department by May 28. We're prepared to move fast, but we don't want to rush this. We want a durable product. If you all need more time that's okay. I heard one suggestion to extend to May 30, but we are flexible there. So let's nail down that date. Do we also want to schedule another conference call in June to do a check in? Or do we want to use part of the June WAG meeting for those discussion? Wanted to put that out there as well.

Comment

So I heard a couple questions for the group. One is do we need more time? The other was a proposal for an early June conference call. Anyone like to respond to that?

Comment

I support both of those proposals.

Comment

As far as the holiday weekend, that doesn't affect me, so extending it is whatever. I don't think it's necessary to make preferred changes without discussing them.

Comment

I would be concerned about trying to have a conference call to discuss major changes. I think we've kind of missed the boat with major changes for this grazing season. I think we can get started at the next WAG meeting, but the process takes time and it would be really tough.

Comment

So there is an important step that we need to think about together, and that is that we go around the circle and say whether we can support this or not. I hear you all loud and clear that this conference call stuff is not the greatest. But let's not skip a very important process element. I don't know the answer to that, but I think we have to have it. It's a gauge. Are we close, or do we really need to wait for face time?

Comment

I'm fine to have a call if we want to do that to say this is our protocol for this grazing season. I just don't see major changes happening for this grazing season.

Comment

I understand everything everyone has said. I really don't know the answers. The membership I represent wants to see major changes to the protocol, all within the requirements of the wolf plan. Some of these changes...I have to represent my membership. We'll put our comments on paper. We'll either reject this protocol or we try to sit down and pound it out. I know we're not asking for anything that is not within the directives of the wolf plan. I think based on the stage of recovery we're in in the eastern third (which needs to be clarified in this protocol since WDFW has no authority in the western two-thirds).

Comment

I think this a good example of getting your changes out to all WAG members. Whether it goes to Donny first for distribution or to all WAG members right away.

Comment

We'd be happy to work with you if you want to talk about wordsmithing or what nugget changes look like. We're happy to work with you if you want to get those changes out to WAG.

Comment

I have to clearly represent those people, and it's a large membership. We have to draw some line in the sand and stay within the wolf plan.

Comment

Agree with what was just said. We too have been involved in this wolf issue since the development of the plan, and we continue to support its implementation. We want to focus on maintaining social tolerance for wolves on the landscape. So what we do here is important. Hopefully we can have more in-depth conversation on how to help producers as we go into this next grazing season. I'm fine with extending the comment period because better is better than quick. I think that would help us. I think the follow-up call is fine, but would far prefer an in-person conversation.

Comment

I think changing the comment cutoff makes sense. Another conference call is also fine with me. We'll need a protocol cutoff date set for this season and then talk about future plans after that.

Comment

It sounds to me like the producers and some hunters have things that they want to talk about as a group that are significant changes to the protocol beyond the stuff that is being incorporated so far. I'm not sure a conference call is helpful there. I'm wondering if getting together face to face is preferred there. I know we have June 27-28 planned, but that's late. I want to echo a previous

comment that said it's probably too late to make substantial changes for this grazing season. The other point is I noticed for June 27-28 that only 10 WAG members would be able to attend, so wanted to flag that as well. Can we meet earlier than the end of June.

Comment

I'd agree with the producer comments. I don't think a conference call can get it done. I'd be interested in a sit down meeting for sure.

Comment

I pretty much echo all of that. If we meet earlier, I won't be available though.

Comment

I agree that face to face is more constructive. I could meet sooner. I also just want to support the producer side, because I'm also not completely comfortable with the document right now. I think adding face to face is a good idea, and I'm certainly ready to do that.

Comment

Rob summarized the comments that have been made. Time is short and we're about to enter the grazing season. There's doubt that we have time for any substantial changes for this year. However, there is interest in meeting soon to discuss items. I'd like to make another poll to see what that potential is for a sooner meeting.

Comment

Thank you, all, for your comments. Once again I'm very impressed. I'll kind of summarize what I've got here too. We're going to continue to work on the edits we've been doing in relation to the nuggets. We'll also work with you all and Rob on a face to face meeting soon to dive into more substantial things. If you all have changes that are larger, communicate that to the full WAG, and we'll carve out time here soon for a face to face to continue that discussion. We'll also change the deadline date for comments to May 30.

Comment

On the new poll, would that meeting be in Ellensburg? My attendance changes depending on location.

Comment

I think what I've learned is that we only choose Olympia if it's during session. So this one would be in Ellensburg or someplace close by. So that would be our goal.

Comment

So that last agenda item I had is to give a quick update. One of the directives we got from WAG is to review what near term and long term actions we can do in those very challenging landscapes where chronic depredations occur. So I want to turn it over to Dan for a rundown of that.

Comment

Like Donny said, we brainstormed to try and identify near term and long term actions we can do. Again, this is brainstorming, and many of the ideas had a sort of implication to the protocol. Those are maybe best talked about in person. I'll go over some of the ideas though. The first category is our range rider program and how to leverage that in a chronic depredation scenario. That of course depends on the capacity of our contractor pool. We're currently in the process of evaluating the proposals that came in. I can tell you our pool will likely not get bigger, so it appears our capacity

will be limited. One thing we can do though is to implement much more frequent communication with our range riders. This would see our range riders communicating weekly with our conflict specialists. That way we can make adjustments to our deployment and make sure they are in focus areas on the landscape. We'd work with the producer and land management agency to identify areas where we can place mineral sites or water sites (away from rendezvous or den sites). We can explore some ideas of site cleanup to see if we can't move cattle away from certain areas. Another strategy would be exploring pasture locations and trying to identify a strategic way to ensure cattle aren't using pastures in the highest density areas of wolf activity. In terms of nonlethal management, we can ramp up to the best of our capacity to monitor wolf movements and try to place more collars out there. Another option is more trail cams throughout the landscape. Also, monitoring den and rendezvous sites to see disturbance and get more proactive if we see disturbance. That is the portion of the list I wanted to share for near term. Our long term options are more extensive, and I'm excited to dive in with WAG in the future on those options. This is a busy time of year for our conflict specialists. Current DPCA-Ls are still in place. They expire June 30 every year, so conflict specialists are working with producers to renew those that need to be renewed and add new producers where we can. Here at headquarters, we're busy gearing up with new contracts and getting those in place so we have a seamless transition as we move into the next fiscal year.

#### Comment

I'll just add that I'm communicating with conflict specialists as well, and they're out there every day doing this work. We actually have a deployment strategy that outlines what range rider is covering what allotment. As Dan said, we're also constantly watching telemetry data to see where packs are denning. We're finding where those are and communicating with producers on that. That's all on the preventative side, and on the carnivore side, our staff are all out trapping. We've caught a handful of wolves over the past few weeks, so we've seen some early success there. Any questions for us on any of this?

#### Comment

Another comment that gets brought up every meeting is changing how we talk to land agencies. Those guidelines don't change overnight. You've got to start with your department. I think you're misleading by saying those are things you can change.

#### Comment

Thank you for that comment. This step we're doing is not a diving in and trying to make those changes. However, we're checking in with landowners and producers so they all together have a game plan. Checking in the rotation schedule, and things like that. It's a collective discussion.

#### Comment

And I apologize for saying that wrong. What I meant was that we're exploring potential to do that and make those changes.

#### Comment

So I have two tasks out of the call today. One is making comments on the protocol, and that deadline is now May 30. The other task is to me, Rob, and that is looking into getting a face to face meeting sooner. I'll look into that and be in touch.

#### Comment

Public, thank you for being on the line. As soon as we learn more about an in-person meeting, we'll post that information so you'll be able to attend as well.