

**Wolf Advisory Group
July 6, 2021, Meeting Notes
Zoom Meeting (Day 1)**

WAG members: Samee Charriere, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Todd Holmdahl, Jess Kayser, Bill Kemp, Nick Martinez, Lynn Okita, Caitlin Scarano, Lisa Stone, and Paula Swedeen

WDFW staff members: Candace Bennett, Andrew Kolb, Ben Maletzke, Donny Martorello, Joey McCanna, Steve Pozzanghera, Annemarie Prince, Trent Roussin, and Julia Smith

WDFW Commissioners: Molly Linville and Lorna Smith

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

Welcome and check-in

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

Meeting Purpose

Provide Department updates to members and answer their questions, get WAG member guidance on ungulate “mutual learning” information needs, and get WAG member guidance on initial post-recovery planning issues for future WAG discussion.

Comment

There is quite a list of Department updates to start off with. When the public calls in before a WAG meeting to talk to staff members, we usually give space for the Department to share main highlights or themes of discussion; wolf collaring update, Special Focus Areas (SFAs) update as the Department was going to experiment with changes there, grey wolf periodic status review, developing decision timelines surrounding lethal removals, wolf rule development, and then hiring a third-party neutral facilitator. Then there are two other items on the agenda, one having to do with ungulates. I’ve heard a lot of discussion about ungulates and wanted to propose space on the agenda. Is this an opportunity for mutual learning? The other one is post-recovery planning. Talking about alternative ideas and getting space to get your advice on what topics you think WAG can most help with for post recovery. That is a summary of what the agenda is now. Any recommended adjustments from the members?

Comment

I expressed interest to you and other people that I would like to see depredation investigations, walk through that part of the protocol, and try to get to some of that. I think there is stuff on the ground that has seen errors through the years, and we should try to work through those.

Comment

Any objection to me adding that and opening that discussion up? What we might want to consider or discuss with depredation investigations? I will put it after the post-recovery topic, and we will include it.

Comment

I would do before post-recovery because that might extend, and I want to make sure we get to that item.

Comment

Anything else before moving on to updates?

No objections

Comment

Let's start off with the morning public session, where members of the public talked to staff members.

Comment

We had some good conversation in the breakout rooms. Someone brought up comments that they provided in a Commission meeting about recent wolf poaching in the Wedge pack; what attention was being brought on that, what the agency was doing, funds. There was two-way dialogue about the difficulty of finding people in poaching cases, and we are grateful for groups coming forward and putting up rewards for information on that. We also talked about, "What does it look like to have WAG talk about this?" Others brought up concerns about advertising, that we didn't do press release, so we talked about the future of how we would advertise something like that. Also brought up were comments on CPoW and range riding efforts, how the Department worked with them, Department of Agriculture funding, broad culture changes, and outreach and education. The Commissioner touched on Project Cat and how influential that was. We talked a little about doing reach out efforts with wolves, possibly involving potential partnership with Wolf Haven. So, a lot about outreach and being more ahead of the story. How does DFW lead the narrative, especially with the challenges of social media we have to contend with?

Comment

I was going to add there was also discussion about reaching out to local radio stations in Spokane.

Comment

Thank you. Breakout team number two?

Comment

We also in our breakout session had discussions about the recent Wedge pack female poach. We did talk about the loss to the wolf population and what those could mean. We also had a conversation about what happens if charges are filed and what the process

looks like. Also, we had a discussion about grazing on public lands and wanted to make sure we kicked that to the appropriate land manager (Forest Service, BLM, etc.) Also, the Wolf-Livestock Protocol. Also, about collaring and the process for how that may look. For example, different techniques in the future and how that will help with monitoring and other efforts. We had comments about reintroduction for wolves into the Olympics, and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process as well as how wolves disperse. We also had a conversation about wildlife corridors and overpasses and if that would help wolves. The last comment was about grazing and wanted to make sure we, again, kicked those to the appropriate land manager.

Comment

Any WAG members have questions for breakout staff members?

No questions

Comment

Okay, I turn to the appropriate staff members to start the conversation onto wolf trapping and collaring update.

Comment

The wolf team has been working since April going to different packs and putting collars out. We've been to ten different packs and been able to collar eight wolves from seven different packs. We weren't able to get collars in the Wedge and Tucannon packs but will loop back around and hopefully get them there. We got roadblocked by hot weather in the last couple of weeks, but we are getting back after it. We really focused on packs with a history of depredations, SFA packs, and also front of wolf recovery in the North Cascades. We are working to get those and now looping around to get collars to remaining packs who didn't get collars. We got two collars in Sullivan. We are back to one collar in the Togo and Kettle area, but it seems to be the same pack utilizing those areas. More updates on the Togo and SFA packs?

Comment

I can provide more detail. We've been able to collar a wolf in Togo in May, then some district biologists were checking cameras for other species in June and discovered that some wolves may have covered Kettle pack territory in mid-March. We made plans to get in there and capture wolves. We caught a wolf but realized wolves showing up in March were actually Togo wolves and running into unoccupied Kettle territory. So, thinking of SFAs into summer, we thought of Kettle and Togo as separate packs but after spring monitoring efforts, we are treating those as the same pack territory right now with basically Togo roaming down into historical Kettle territory. The wolf we were able to collar in Kettles, it was a Togo wolf. It has dispersed and is maybe still going north.

Comment

Right now, we are monitoring 24 wolves in 16 packs and actively monitoring across the state. Pretty good coverage and continuing to work on that as the summer goes on.

Comment

Thank you, other staff, for keeping track of that stuff. I was going to add that now with several years of monitoring wolves, we've seen this kind of thing before. The pack territories are such a dynamic thing, as they kind of move their boundaries. Thank you, team, for having that information and keeping us up to speed.

Comment

I want to thank the staff. I know it is hard and dangerous work to collar that many wolves. It is fascinating that the Togo pack is expanding down into the Kettle territory or even if the one wolf joined the Togo pack. I'm wondering if you can say, generally, how much of that central Kettle pack territory is being used by the Togo pack? You don't have to give geographic details but are they using just the northern part of prior Kettle territory or OTP territory? Or more widely focused in the area of traditional Togo pack area?

Comment

Based on collar data they appear to be using the entirety of historical Kettle territory, but sporadically. Sometimes in Togo territory, then a few days in Kettle pack territory, then move back up. They are using the whole territory but not with the same intensity if there was a pack rendezvoused in there. But all the way to Sherman Pass and Highway 20 almost.

Comment

I'm not a wolf expert, but from a layperson it seems successful to be able to collar that many wolves. Next, I'm circling back to you on SFA updates.

Comment

I can start. We went into this grazing season thinking we will have small town hall meetings with producers. But because of unwillingness and Covid restrictions, that made it difficult. For the Togo and Kettle area, we met with producers individually. We had the Northeast Washington Wolf Cattle Collaborative, and they have range riders and Cattle Producers of Washington and then the local county specialists. We met with producers several times trying to get things figured out; what to try this year, pilot projects, who tries what, availability, etc. Everything has been verbally agreed to. We have a draft mitigation in the works. Producers want to work with us and try new things, so not the town hall meeting we wanted but individually it has been really good. Moving into the range rider coordination, I started meetings in January with the Forest Service, the Northeast Washington Wolf-Cattle Collaborative (NEWCC), with Cattle Producers of Washington (CPoW), We would meet monthly to make a draft plan for all of northeast Washington on which range riders would assist which producer. Our contracted range riders' contracts ended in the end of June, so we figured out who was going to reapply and new people coming on with the Department of Ag grant ending in June, and a new cycle of grant application process. So, an early draft of where range riding would be moving forwarded. At month three, there was a lot of questions, so I invited the Director to be part of some range rider meetings. Expectation was explicit and they were able to ask the Director any

questions they had. The Forest Service was extremely helpful because there was a new area in the Vulcan area and a lot of allotments going to be vacant for whatever reason (habitat, previous issues, etc.), which ones are vacant, which are idle, maybe new producers on new allotments, and other valuable information. Then with producers, meeting was really good also because in Togo some of our contracted range riders we have NEWCC range riders, CPoW range riders, trying to figure out the near-daily. We are trying to do a lot of coordination so there may be a NEWCC rider and then one of our contract range riders, then CPoW, coordinating who's there, what are you seeing, cattle behavior, focusing on looking for stragglers and getting them back with larger groups of cattle/moving through the allotment. This year we had more communication, and every Monday morning meeting with range riders and producers. Every week a lot of coordination there if changes or adjustments were needed. Then I have lot of coordination with CPoW multiple times a week regarding moving people around. One question in breakout was, "What are the activities so focusing on late evening time?" Range riders of ours and CPoW's have track logs so we are able to utilize that. They are also utilizing our range rider logs and what we are seeing in the field. I think I'll stop there before moving to career seasonal stuff. Any questions?

Comment

I was wondering, is the draft mitigation plan something that can be shared with WAG members?

Comment

It is in the stage of just trying to get it complete. We'd like to get those wrapped up and then, of course, if you guys want to you can. They are public documents so you can request those things. Unless you have it on the next meeting to discuss. The priority is to get them complete but there is no reluctance to have people see them. I know the team has been working hard. I remember that SFA discussion was going long, and you heard me complain a little bit to get that guidance and move forward because it takes time to make it happen on the landscape. They've been working really hard with producers, but is a plan at the pack level? My other question is any flavor of any new tool or list of creative ideas or pilot ideas in terms of that list of eight or nine? Anything going to be implemented in this grazing season?

Comment

Yes, so the mitigation plan is for the entire pack territory. It is hard to get hobby farms in that area, so we are trying to target larger allotments. In Togo pack territory we have three producers utilizing the VHF ear tags. One producer had 18, one had 20, and one had 15. We have cows that have VHF tags on them, supplying them with those and receivers and antennas. Training sessions with range riders and producers with how to utilize those. The goal is to find all those, the 18 or 20 or 15, and try to locate those cows or yearlings daily or nearly daily. Then keeping a log of those (i.e., we saw that cow today, but not yesterday). That is something new we are trying. The other one in the SFA is we have 30 reflective collars and bells in some of those same herds. We do have a radioactive guard box out in Togo pack territory. We've increased the number of riders since we have one

confirmed injury.

Comment

I wanted to clarify the answer to the question about making it available to WAG. If I understood correctly, you meant, "Let us finish first, then we will share."

Comment

Yes.

Comment

Does that meet your needs?

Comment

Yes.

Comment

What do you use to measure the effectiveness of your different things you're trying? Simply depredations? Or can you track conflicts between wolves and cows? Or is there other data you're using?

Comment

Our main goal is trying to locate those cattle, and, on our end, we are using a measurement of, "are we finding straggler cattle or cattle away from the rest of the herd?" So, no stragglers. Yeah, if we don't have depredations that is our key. What we are trying to do is be proactive, so we don't get into any depredations.

Comment

Next on the agenda was challenges with career seasonal wildlife conflict technician recruitment, then status ungulate populations in SFAs.

Comment

I'll touch on conflict technicians. We advertised those positions, had interviews, and none of them ended up accepting. They took another job or declined, so we opened it up for a second time and through that process only had one. It has been extremely tough to find people. So now we are in a spot where we've been through the process twice. Now we are looking at a non-permanent hire. So, if we could find someone who is interested and has the qualifications and could hire directly just for the end of the summer, and then just go through the process again next year. It has been extremely tough.

Comment

I had a quick question back on the prior topic. I'm wondering how well the discussions with producers are going in general. I heard you say it is harder to get to smaller operations but are you finding producers being receptive to the idea of trying out new things? Or receptive to the idea that you guys, as the Department in collaboration with nonprofits, are doing range riders as sort of what the WAG intended with these SFAs?

Which is to help them lose fewer livestock? I'm looking for a flavor of how this concept is being received. I heard you say they don't want to get together as a group but despite that obstacle, are you having discussions that will lend towards this whole concept of SFAs working when we figure out the kinks? General question about receptivity.

Comment

I think, so far, it has been good for producers worked with. We've also met with ones that don't want to work with us, so we are trying to find out who's going to the recording, what's going on, and when. I think our coordination has been good. I would say with all producers they are willing to meet with the Department and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), so we have ruled this out as a pilot project and now we are doing the draft rulemaking. I think that is catching up with us, but we have been describing the process and encouraged them to get involved in the rulemaking process. Does that answer your question?

Comment

Yes.

Comment

Moving to ungulate population, that would be the pilot project.

Comment

This is what I have in the background information of the conflict mitigation plan about ungulates. The Togo pack territory is in GMU 101, or the Kettle range. That is a pretty big GMU, but that is the finest scale data we have. We don't have data in where exactly the wolves are. As those who have been to the northeast know, we are quite heavily treed, so we don't have the option to survey. We don't fly for deer in 101. We do fly for moose if we have good snow cover. Without snow cover, we are not going to see them in heavily treed areas. What we do is use harvest as an index for abundance, so it is not giving us our true abundance but tells us if population is going up, down, or staying stable. Most of the GMU we use modern firearm buck harvest for deer because that is the most consistent regulation-wise and where a bulk of the harvest comes from. For whitetail deer for GMU 101, we have seen a downward trend starting in 2015. It was a high harvest year, so it has been declining. Last year it did tick up and is sitting a bit higher than it was in 2011 (another low year). It is hard to tell with the drought, but we could be looking at blue tongue outbreaks with limited water on the landscape. With mule deer, it is generally the same trend but with more up-and-down than whitetail. It has been down trend in the last couple years but is hard to tell where that will go. For deer, some GMUs we are able to do summer surveys and do pre-season deer/buck ratios. Going to the Kettle Okanogan zone this summer. But you have to do it from the road and need about 1,000 deer for it to be reliable.

Elk herd in GMU 101 is not large; we don't know what it is, but seven elk were harvested in 2020 so we can't use harvest to say anything about elk. We can probably say it will increase or stay the same but, for the most part, deer are the main prey on the landscape there. For moose, we haven't done fly surveys, but the Colville Tribe shares that data with

us and haven't been concerned with the calf-to-cow ratios that they've observed. It is hard to tell with moose harvest because it is a special opportunity, and those typically have very high success rate (last year I think was around 80% success rate). That is what I have for ungulates if anyone has questions.

Comment

I'm sitting here in 101 right now, so I know this hard question. Do you have any idea what's causing the decline? Habitat? Winter? More hunters? Predators? I know there are tons of bears around here.

Comment

I would say we observed decline in more mule deer than whitetail. Everywhere that mule deer exist there has been decline, for different reasons in different places. Winter does make a difference. In some places, even where predators are consuming fawns, winter is a bigger driver. So, we don't know. There have been studies within the Kettle range that looks at forest treatments and forage availability for both mule and whitetail. Habitat is always a big driver.

Comment

Are we going to do anything with this data?

Comment

Us, the biologists, do stuff with this data yearly when we set harvest regulations. We don't have any antlerless harvest for whitetail and mule deer, and that was in concern for population trajectory.

Comment

Could you reorient us on areas you just spoke about where the Predator-Prey Project is?

Comment

The Predator-Prey Project is in GMUs 117 and 121, so both east of the Columbia River, east of GMU 101. Colville is the northern part and then Deer Lake is the southern edge but all the way over to the Pend Oreille River to Columbia. All graduate students are done with data collection so the last fawns and elk calves from last summer have made it to their year mark. We are now in the analysis phase, so I imagine results trickling out pretty soon here. They will probably have survival rates, home range size, etc. That is for whitetail deer and elk in the northeast. There is another study area in the Okanogan.

Comment

Is there any actual preliminary data in elk calves in the southeast?

Comment

I am not the right person to ask but we typically don't make any conclusions until we have a full data set and I know they are just getting going.

Comment

Last I heard, they were having poor success rate keeping them alive even for a week. Not sure about the reason.

Comment

There are two parts to calf and fawn survival studies: If you have really high adult survival, you don't need that many of the young to survive. It seems counterintuitive but you can still have positive growth rate if the young ones die. Not sure if that is the case in the Blues, but it is complicated. In any calf and fawn collaring study, a lot of them die.

Comment

I would be happy to share that we are collecting information, and we got 125 collars out. We had initial information regarding the fate of those animals that went out to a southeast stakeholder group. I can look for the latest update and let the group know what we are seeing. But as indicated, we are losing elk calves to a variety of sources including predators, but I don't know if anything at this point is more or less surprising to what we usually see with elk. But I'm happy to pull that information together and I can post in the chat as soon as I can get that update.

Comment

I was in your neck of the woods, and I understand that Washington State University is doing a link study in the Kettles and has extensive wildlife cams up there. I'm wondering if there is anything useful you can do with that data. They are picking up a lot of ungulate stuff on his link cameras, but I think they have got at least 40 cameras in the Kettles, maybe more. Just curious if there is anything you could do with that data.

Comment

Good question. I guess my short answer is no, not yet. We are really hopeful about new methods to use camera data to estimate ungulate things, but the methods aren't there yet. We looked into seeing if we could get moose/calf ratios. There are too many things that make things unsure to figure out. There are people working on it, and we are hopeful that things will be developed. But no, we can't use the camera data and be sure it makes a difference for animals on the landscape. Make sense?

Comment

Yes, thank you.

Comment

My topic is the pilot project and expansion of projects in northeast Washington, down into the Blues, and over to Okanogan. You already heard about VHF ear tags and bell deployment – we deployed 10 in Smackout territory. Telemetry may be new to producers on how to locate, functionality, and how they are compared to bells, so that will be ongoing. Hopefully, we will have some refinements for producers and range riders to see if those are viable solutions. Also, the other project is an infrared drone. Due to Covid, a lot of pilot projects are slow-going. But we did receive the drone and I should be taking the

test shortly on being able to fly it. I did practice the other day and the infrared works well so I'm excited to try that out and see if that is another viable solution. We are also working with a high school student robotics lab in creating a robot to use modified fladry. It is using reflective tape on fladry and using motorized light to reflect off fladry to see if gives another layer of something scary to wolves. I do have to say the high school students are better at engineering than I will ever be! That was an interesting partnership and I'm hoping to see if that gives another layer of fladry. Especially when turbo fladry is not currently an option because of fire.

Also, deterrent stockpiles. This included Foxlights and airhorns. Due to Covid, we've been slow because of sanitization concerns but we will continue that next year to see if there is receptivity. DFW along with ODF, California Fish and Wildlife, and Defenders, have been working on Ragbox 2.0. We've had field tests, sent it back to developers to make changes, and will be kicking out the prototype again. The way it stands right now, there is huge improvement on size and functionality. We will see how the second round of field tests goes, working on sensitivity and other things. Those are some pilot projects. The important thing is these are just to try things out to see if they help us, help producers, and help range riders easier find livestock. This is in its infancy, so I think we will come out having more questions than answers and make more tweaks this winter.

Comment

We captured our agenda items up until lunch. The next is grey wolf periodic status review. Would it be worth our time to insert this before lunch or wait until after?

Comment

I think after lunch. I wonder if there are updates on things down in the Blues.

Comment

Good morning, I am a conflict specialist for Walla Walla and Columbia counties. Summer grazing is in full swing in the Blues, the grass is short, and no doubt that available foraging water is less due to drought conditions. Over the last months we have worked with producers, nonprofits, Department staff, and the public to prep for grazing season. I would add that numerous producers have proactive nonlethal measures and efforts deployed on the landscape. Range riding efforts in the Blues are carried out by individual producers, many who have DPCA-Ls. There have not been any confirmed depredations in the Blues this season, but I would add that we are early in the season. Producer check-ins are continuous and will remain so through the summer. These check-ins can be in person or over the phone. Check-ins consist of cattle on the landscape, range rider activity, wolf sightings, and anything else to discuss. That is all I have from the west side of the Blues.

Donny:

Comment

I have updates on the periodic status review. I checked in with our University of Washington team and they are still on track. In our last Wolf Committee call, we talked about scenarios and we are getting them actually written out so they can run through scenarios a lot like our 2011 Wolf Management Plan. I may have an update coming in July

later. We've had a couple check-ins with the University of Washington team with the Wolf Committee in the Commission. Any questions on the periodic status review or anything to add about the check-in with the Wolf Committee?

Comment

We don't know if that is going to happen yet. There will be a public notice if it does.

Comment

The next one I have an update on is the process for developing a recommendation for lethal removal and the decision. If you go back to a meeting ago, we did a report there where prior to the last meeting, the Director had the opportunity to visit with WAG members. One item was when there is a situation where the Department is considering lethal removal (so there has been final qualifying for three in 30 and four in 10 months) That process can be very long, from that final qualifying depredation to when the Director makes a decision. That stretches out to be, in some cases, several weeks. I don't want this to be a rush to lethal. It is not that. We are as timely as we can be so that if there is a change in behavior that it is sooner than later. We have met with an internal team to look at that time between qualifying depredation and when a recommendation goes to the Director. What we are trying to do is set a system up – it is in draft right now – for three days. A couple of processes were set into motion.

Before we get into qualifying depredations, we have routine and ongoing dialogue with folks that do our nonlethal deterrents on the landscape, particularly ranger riders. We look at range riding logs, so we are up to date. Then after the qualifying depredation, reaching out immediately to the Director. The day we discover the qualifying depredation, the next day the district would meet, then everything covered verbally would be captured on paper in written recommendation that would then go through to the regional director. Then on day three to the Director for decision. We are looking at streamlining that, bringing it down to a three-day process. That is our goal. We are going to be giving the Director an update on that process. The Director recognizes that it has been on his desk in the past for a longer time and would like to change that, so when we take this three-day process to him, we will see what it looks like from his perspective and report back to you all with that. Many staff involved with this are on our Zoom meeting, so any other points I missed or clarification you might add? Anything from any WAG members?

Comment

Can you clarify when you said the Director had the opportunity to meet with WAG members? Were these people chosen or was it open to the WAG and I missed it? How did that occur?

Comment

I think you were there. Do you remember the meeting we canceled because it didn't feel like we made the progress to carry on SFAs and some said you wanted to visit with the Director? I can't remember. It was too long ago. But that is what I'm talking about where, in lieu of a WAG meeting, he had offline discussion with some of the environmental community and some the livestock community.

Comment

I guess I don't remember that, but I'll take your word for it.

Comment

I think I can finish up. The last one was the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process for an external facilitator. Knowing we are moving into post-recovery planning and we've heard from the public an idea that an RFQ is out for an external facilitator. That RFQ closes on July 12, so in just a few days. We will be scoring those applicants and making a selection. We are aiming to have one on board by September 1. We are looking to do a handoff where our current facilitator is involved at some level in shaping that first meeting or co-facilitating, and when we have that entity on board then planning what that handoff looks like.

Comment

While we are still on this topic, I will talk briefly about depredations in Togo. A couple of weeks ago, there was a confirmed injury in Togo pack territory, and another call about a possible other one. Staff went out and did an investigation, came back to the internal team meeting, talked about what was seen in photos, and determined that it was a non-depredation. Those are the two. We have another in Vulcan and that was also a non-depredation. So, one confirmed injury currently in Togo.

Comment

I thought I would circle back on the question on the status of elk/calf work in the Blue Mountains. I got ahead of myself in recognizing that we need to communicate with the stakeholder group, commissioners, and the public. I would like to work with biologists and regional program managers so we know what the update will consist of with those 125 collared calves. I had potentially had folks thinking I could pop some table into the chat, but I would prefer not to do that because I don't want to get ahead of the stakeholder group.

Comment

Okay, let's break for lunch and reconvene at 1:00.

Lunch

Comment

Now is the wolf rule development topic, so who from the Department would like to start this update?

Comment

I have a presentation for WAG and the public on this, but I wanted to give the chance to ask some questions on the meetings that the Department had with the Director and livestock producers and the Director and environmentalist groups. We had those back in March, but it sounded like some had some clarifying questions.

Comment

I just wanted to clarify that the reason I didn't think I was at that meeting was because it sounded very different from what I recall happening. We had those subgroup meetings for the stated purpose of helping each group understand the frustrations of the other groups regarding Section 9 and the Director was included to get perspective and answer questions. I heard him say the meetings between the Director and the WAG members were regarding the length of time between depredations and going to the Director. That perhaps came up, but it wasn't the focus of the discussion. What I heard and what some members heard was that was the focus of those meetings. I just want to be clear about what the meetings were about.

Comment

Thanks. I facilitated those and what you said was accurate to my perspective. It was maybe a byproduct.

Comment

Yes, great back work. It was not the focus of the meeting; it was the byproduct. I think that item got more discussion in the breakout with the livestock community than in the environmental community.

Comment

Any other comments? Did you get your needs met?

Comment

I did, thanks.

Comment

I would like to go back to the third-party neutral. I don't think there is any such thing. If they are paid by the Department and work for the Department, then the agenda is set by the Department. WAG notes or comments are rewarded or ignored by the Department. It is not third-party neutral. The difference between our current facilitator and a new hire, I think, is our current one is a fulltime employee, and the new facilitator would be parttime. It is going to take a lot for the new one to get up to speed and our current facilitator costs less money. Why are we replacing him? Those are my comments I wish would be answered.

Comment

It is good discussion. I'll off the cuff a couple of reactions. Thank you, I wanted to acknowledge that it is not truly neutral in terms of it still collects pay from the Department. But not an existing employee of the Department and trying to get that as close to neutral as you can truly get. One criticism we get from all sides is that we have one of our own facilitating and we have purposely had our current facilitator filling that role as a kind of pseudo-neutral. He hasn't worked in the Wildlife Program; he works in another branch of the agency, but he is still a permanent employee of the agency. What we've heard is

trying to have someone closer to the neutral. But note taken, it is still someone who is still paid by the Department. We are trying to honor that perspective as much as possible. I'm happy to visit offline about that stuff more, as I think you may have more specific questions. I do have a bit of a reaction because we capture notes for you all, and again, we try to have somebody who doesn't work with wolves, capturing what they hear and posting them online. I think you had a comment on that being influenced but in all the years I think I only reviewed the notes once. It needs to be as spoken. Anyways, I hope I got to some of that and hope we can connect.

Comment

I needed to get it off my chest. I don't think we should call this person third-party neutral because they are not. By definition, they are not. They are employed and paid by the Department and highly influenced by the Department.

Comment

Thanks for getting that off your chest and keeping it real. Now moving to the wolf rulemaking topic.

Comment

This presentation is about the Commission rulemaking process. I know this is something that is a little difficult to understand. There are a lot of different components. Even for folks really involved in items that come before the Commission it can be confusing. I put together this PowerPoint, and the intention is to break it down to components and explain timelines, so you and the public understand. I have some documents under today's WAG agenda, if you go to the [WAG meeting page](#) and it says Handouts, you'll see links to some documents that I will talk to you about right now. One and two pertain to this topic. One of them is [PowerPoint slides](#) and another is a [document](#) if you are interested in this topic you can dive in a bit more. Another clarifying point before I dive in: There are a lot of wolf projects and I know they can get confusing, so I just want to clarify the items we have right now that are overarching wolf projects: The post-recovery plan, or the plan for when wolves no longer are threatened species. Then we have this rulemaking. Then the other one is the periodic status review for grey wolves in Washington that the University of Washington is working on.

Slides 1 and 2: Right now, we are talking about Commission rulemaking. We don't totally know what the new rule will be called but right now we are calling it "Wolf-livestock Conflict Deterrence Commission Rulemaking." As you are probably aware, the Department has initiated rulemaking to amend WAC 220-440 and sometimes those in the agency call it the Wildlife Conflict Chapter. We have initiated that process.

Slide 3: There are three major process components. There is kind of an order, but they are somewhat concurrent. Some rules that come before the Commission require a SEPA process. For this one, we are going to develop a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). The second part is our obligations under the Regulatory Fairness Act (RFA), which would be developing a Small Business Economic Impact Statement (SBEIS)

which we don't know yet. Finally, the Commission rulemaking process, which you may or may not have seen, all go before the Commission as a CR-101 and CR-102, which I will explain.

Slide 4: First, I want to dive into the SEPA and SEIS process. For the SEPA process, sometimes we talk about doing a full environmental impact statement. For this SEPA we are going to adopt the 2011 final EIS for the wolf plan. That plan covers a lot of the topics. It doesn't really analyze criteria for use of the measures (timeline, appropriateness for a specific scenario, etc.). That is the kind of stuff we talk about in the Wolf Livestock Interaction Protocol. That is why it was developed. Lethal removal is talked about in the EIS for the wolf plan but, again, it doesn't provide a plan for things like if livestock have been clearly killed by wolves, if nonlethal deterrents have been tried, if depredations are likely to continue, that sort of thing. After talking to SEPA experts, we will prepare a supplemental to address impacts. Throughout this presentation, you'll see that anywhere there is a public comment period I have highlighted that, so you know it is coming and see your opportunity to dive in. There will be a public comment period of normally 30 days but given the expedited timeline, I'm not sure how long it will be yet. Finally, this step will include responses to comments.

Slide 5: This slide I think of as a reality check for what are we actually able to consider in alternatives. We want them to meet objectives on rulemaking. I wanted to make sure the words are there for those reviewing the presentation later. The first bit is straight out of WAG and WAG members helped craft this sentence. It says "WDFW recognizes that repeated livestock loss and wolf removals are likely to cause significant hardship for livestock producers and their animals, as well as their communities, wolf packs, the wolf advocate community, and WDFW staff." This is something that puts strain on all of us and is something that we all want to work together to solve best we can. The other one is, "Livestock depredation by wolves is not uniform across the landscape." We talk about universal application and tools, but as most know, wolves and livestock overlaps in almost all areas of their range in Washington. We expect to see similar things in western Washington. But most places where wolves and livestock overlap, it doesn't necessarily mean there will be depredations, only about 20% are involved in depredations. You can't always predict when or where depredations will occur. We only know it will not be statewide constantly; it will be hotspots as we can see. The third bullet here is about livestock operations in Washington state. This data is hard to get exact information to convey, but Washington State has over 9,000 beef cattle livestock operations alone. There are a lot of livestock operations in Washington, so it is neither feasible nor sustainable to oversee and document the implementation of nonlethal conflict mitigation tools on an individual basis. That is just something that is a fact. It is not something DFW can personally oversee for each individual livestock producer. Another thing to think about is DFW has broad authority, but our statutes don't "mandate, regulate or enforce the management of livestock operations or animal husbandry practices." I just want to put those out there so folks understand our limitations as we develop alternatives.

Slide 6: Here is the preliminary draft of alternatives we are considering. Developing a rule

based on the protocol. As you know the protocol is guidance, so we would use it to establish criteria. The second one I want to point out as a preliminary preferred alternative. Right now, this is the agency's preferred direction, but we don't know yet. This is an alternative that is really thinking about developing a rule that "uses area-specific conflict mitigation plans to establish criteria for the use of non-lethal and lethal measures to mitigate wolf-livestock conflict in areas of chronic conflict." That is something similar to what WAG has discussed to Section 9 SFAs. If wolf-livestock tends to be focused on certain areas, would it make sense to focus our resources to those specific areas? Alternative three would develop a rule similar to the 'Petition to amend the WAC to require use of nonlethal techniques to reduce livestock-wolf conflict.' That would be what would it look like if DFW used provisions similar to that petition. That alternative is the most specific and most prescriptive alternative for sure. Alternative four is the no action alternative, which we would not develop rule changes related to wolf-livestock conflict deterrence."

Slide 7: The timeline overview: the preparation of the SEIS draft is happening now. We hope to have issue draft September 2021, and that is when we would have a formal comment period. Hopefully it would take a few months to respond to comments. It is easy to get overwhelmed, so it does take a long time to respond to those. Issue final SEIS is TBD, so we don't totally know yet.

Slide 8: Moving on to the second component about the Regulatory Fairness Act. This one is tough because it requires having a proposed rule to know whether we need to complete this process yet. We would need to see if "WDFW determines that a proposed rule would impose more than minor costs on small businesses." Livestock producers, what kind of cost would this have on their business? We don't know yet whether they would have a cost that is mandatory.

Slide 9: If we do this, this is what the process would look like (slide 9). We would need to do significant outreach to livestock producers, as they will be the ones incurring costs of doing certain things. We would need to speak with those people operating those businesses and see what cost would look like. People creating the SBEIS would access costs. We need to decide: Do we do one? Sometimes you could decide to do one even if it is not mandatory, you'd want to do it anyway. All of this says "if applicable" because we don't know at this stage if it is applicable or not.

Slide 10: We would make every attempt to notify livestock producers of preparation of SBEIS by August 2021. We would prepare an SBEIS September to December. I do my engagements possibly through surveys October to November, and then issue TBD.

Slide 11: The third component is actual rulemaking. The first one is putting together a timeline. For this rule we would like it in place before the next grazing season. We think timeline, file CR-101, here is what we propose to do. Next, there are a lot of steps in between. We are in between the CR-101 and CR-102 steps right now. Filing the CR-102 is filing the rule making notice and saying this is what is going to be here. That is when there is a public comment period, changes based on comments, decision, and then a filing of

the CR-103 and CES. Also, there is a really neat resource on the [website](#) where you can read more about rule terms if you are new to the process.

Slide 12: Here is our CR-101, filed October 2020. “The Department is considering rule changes related to wolf management in WAC Chapter 220-440.”

Slide 13: These are the steps completed: We filed the CR-101 in October, we conducted intake interviews with individuals and groups with special interest in rulemaking in the beginning of this year, we compiled results and developed rule process recommendations, and then we brought it in front of the Wolf Committee on April 5.

Slide 14: These are the forthcoming steps: Prepare a preliminary draft SEIS right now, and then once issued, hopefully in September, there will be a public comment period. I’m excited about new technologies for public comment accessibility; more on that to come. In fall and winter, we get some time to review and respond to those, and finally issue the CR-102 that is supposed to be January 22, 2022. Before then, we have to propose rule language. It is tough but we would see the SEPA document out followed by the CR-102 followed by SBEIS. When the CR-102 is filed, there is a public comment filed on the CR-102, so that is different from the SEPA comment period. Those would be separate comment periods to make less confusion. We are intending to have a draft rule to the Commission and a public hearing in March. There are sometimes calendar changes but that is what is on the agenda right now. In March 2022, we would say we are going to work on the CES and CR-103, and then Commission decision is scheduled for April 2022. We want to have the rule in place by grazing season next year.

Slide 15: Right now, the rulemaking page doesn’t have a way to link directly to wolf items, so I want to show you [the rule page](#). Things that are Pending rulemaking, those are pending. Right now, some wolf items are in Preproposals. One is called Wolf management, and if you click on that it has got the relevant documents there. It has the CR-101 and the basic timeline. With that, that is my presentation. I hope it clarified more than confused things. Once you read that 14-page document about SEPA work, if you would like to have a meeting on that, my door is open.

Comment

Wow, thanks. You conveyed a lot of information and you obviously know this stuff. I appreciate the links.

Comment

Thank you so much for this. It is so nice to have everything together. It makes it so much easier and understandable.

Comment

That concludes our updates. I would like to move on to the next agenda item. Any objection?

No objections

Comment

I'm going to attempt to set up this next agenda item. The topic is ungulates and is an opportunity for WAG members to do mutually learning on ungulates. As I facilitated this over the past years, I would often hear comments on ungulates or the abundance or lack of. Those comments and assessments would sometimes be different without much clarity. I'm aware there is a predator-prey study, and we hear data collection is completed and now moving to analysis. I know the Department is starting another study in the Blue Mountains. We have members in personal experiences and those who they represent which guides their assessment of abundance or not. Then there is the phrase "mutual learning" and I think that is a phrase used for an experience that happened in WAG before my time. If I got this right, we have people on WAG who lived through it so correct me... For example, with livestock production there would be a field trip to go to a livestock producer's business and learn more firsthand from the livestock perspective. Or for environmental perspective they would bring in an expert, and the same with hunting. It was an opportunity to identify what information would help us all as a group, livestock production being one of them. After hearing how difficult it is to assess ungulate abundance or not, the research going on, and different assessment from different people, I was offering this agenda topic to ask WAG members: Is there information that would be helpful for you or us as a group to use as a common reference point? A common understanding or common learning on this difficult topic? I am interested hearing from you what would help. Maybe we are doing everything we can within reason; that is valuable too. I don't know if that is understandable or not, but I would like to open up for any questions or ideas you have at this point.

Comment

I'll take an attempt at this. I feel like common ground for all of us would be for all of us to have a strong ungulate population. As a hunter it is good for the wolves. I am concerned that we don't have good tools to measure the prey base. It seems like there are a lot of assumptions based off harvest reports and those are declining. It feels as an organization that we want a very strong ungulate population that benefits the larger group. It should be something we spend time on to understand the data because you can't make a decision unless you have accurate data and figure out plans to address any deficiency of any plans out here.

Comment

I think your assumption is correct. We do as a Department want to have healthy ungulate populations. The difficulty in surveying ungulates is not the same across Washington. In open landscapes, like Okanogan, they can fly to mule deer and get accurate counts because they can see them from the air. We just can't do that here, and same with down in the Blues. I don't want it assumed that it is difficult across the state, because the way we use data varies across the state. Some have fancy tools like the Mount Saint Helens elk herd. When they fly it, they can get accurate abundance estimates. There are differences across the state.

Comment

I appreciate that. It seems the most important place, though, is the northeast. If there is anything we can do, some magic, it feels like it is worth our time to look at all possibilities to determine ungulate population in that area.

Comment

I want to make sure we are all going to dive into this issue in post-recovery discussion, and that we are working from the same knowledge base. Maybe we make sure to daylight that information that some folks have, and others don't, so we are all working from the same knowledge and we all understand the assumptions or the strengths and weaknesses. That could be: What are our questions about Washington? It is different for different parts of the state. What about similar terrains outside of Washington? What does that look like? At this stage, where are our information needs? So that when we dive into the content, we all have the same background.

Comment

I agree with what was said. Living here in the northeast – and this is no criticism to the Department staff at all –in talking to hunters in particular, the frustration I hear is lack of information especially because wolves impact things in this area. They really feel the Department is not getting the picture when it comes to ungulates in this area. I don't think the Department isn't doing the best they can but there should be a better way to get that information consistently. If that doesn't happen, you are not going to get the buy-in from the hunters in this area.

Comment

One common theme that could be across the state is neonate survival. That entails, of course, collaring young neonates. That could be done in the northeast. I feel the Predator-Prey study pretty much failed for that reason in my eyes. That was not done.

Comment

We have collared fawns and elk calves in the northeast as part of the Predator-Prey Project.

Comment

I'm making an assumption here, but one value I would put on the table would be that we go through the process together where we hear about our information on ungulates and status and our district biologists around the state, our ungulate section lead, our specialists, so that we have the latest updated information. Then we are able to learn from them together and ask questions and understand what we know and what we don't know. That would be one. But I want to be humble because there are wolves and ungulates and jurisdictions outside of Washington, right? So maybe there are things to learn there too.

Comment

Building on what was said and maybe moving more into process mode, what I would

consider is everyone says ungulate population is important. If we agree that it is, we could get a baseline of what it is in the different areas then maybe go through a brainstorming exercise and work through that methodology.

Comment

The thing I picked out is developing the common understanding as a start point, especially as we get into post-recovery planning. Our information is limited and even more limited in the region we are talking about. Establishing a baseline, or all of us hearing at least from Department perspective, their specialists, and their assessment as a start point. There may be others outside the Department we invite. I don't know yet. Your process makes sense to me. Just confirming that we all think it is important enough that we want to spend some energy. And figuring out how we get that baseline and then find ways to improve. That is what I think I'm hearing.

Comment

I hate picking on folks but I'm curious. We have talked quite a bit about how we have not talked about ungulate stuff. I'm wondering if there are other hunters or producers or environmentalists that feel like they have an information need here or even if it is just learning each other's perspective on it.

Comment

You do need to know the numbers but also sometimes if you have the numbers it creates issues on competition with ungulates coming down on the range. We may solve one problem in the summer but create a new one in the winter. So, we need to see the overall effect on the landscape. We have elk coming down, so if we have a bigger herd there may be a bigger problem. It may be wolf-related or not. We need to look at the whole picture.

Comment

I think that this is hard to articulate. If the Department is giving updates on these studies or numbers, as a WAG member myself, I need it to be put by the experts into explicit terms. "*This* is what we are seeing, so it could mean *this*." If we get those numbers or talk about trends, the connections between that and how we should be thinking about these things regarding our decision making are not clear. I feel we wait around for people to make those things more explicit. I'm not a hunter. I'm not a biologist. I'm not asking for one perspective because they all differ. But I would like someone to say, "it could be this or it could be this," to summarize the theories regarding the data.

Comment

Similarly, I'm not an ungulate expert so this is a hard conversation because we know we see cycles as far as population goes. Sometimes it is habitat or climate. I don't see where it tells us a lot short-term as far as any decision making we would make, because there are so many variables involved. So, I'm just trying to listen a lot on this one.

Comment

This ungulate question is so hard to try to find how many we have and there are so many

opinions from the public. I really understand how hard it is to get good population data out there. In addition is the predator question. How many cougars do we have causing problems with ungulates? With bear? The other issue is I'm sitting 20 miles from Idaho, and Idaho has lost the social license of the public. The legislature has taken over control and has asked for 90% decrease of wolves. It is basically year-round season in most areas, and I would hate to see Washington get to that stage. We need to avoid getting to that situation and learn from Idaho where the Game Department of Idaho doesn't have control anymore and the legislature has taken over. I think the predators need to be discussed also.

Comment

I guess this was a simple concept to me but maybe I misunderstood it. I thought if we care about wolves, we care about the competition they have with other predators. So, by understanding what the prey base looks like, that will give us the opportunity to make decisions on how much hunting in a particular area, what livestock depredation may be happening, if there aren't enough ungulates there, etc. I thought this would be straight forward that this is something we want to do. Maybe a biologist can explain why we might not want to do that?

Comment

This has been something asked for since I joined WAG, was more ungulate information so we know what the prey base is. I think the Predator-Prey Project came out too late, so I think there are other things that need to be taken into consideration. Let's get accurate numbers. Now is not going to give us answers of the past, but it will give us where we are now. I think this has been asked for a long time and is just now getting on the agenda, so let's do it.

Comment

I appreciate asking about explaining connections and the other questions because from a simplistic perspective, not being a hunter or a producer, hunters are concerned about having enough hunting opportunity when it comes to ungulates and there is concern that the wolves are taking those away. As for a producer, it is if there aren't enough ungulates then the wolves will attack the cattle. That is simplistic but that is what the general population probably understands. Are we trying to explain why wolves are the problem or are we trying to coexist with them? I think there is plenty of depredation of opportunity out there that have nothing to do with ungulates. Why wouldn't a wolf go after a cow instead of chasing a deer or elk? I'm just throwing thoughts out there.

Comment

I think that is right that a lot of the concerns are about hunter opportunity and having enough prey items for wolves so that they wouldn't prey on livestock, and what role that has in livestock depredation. Another item that is difficult to research but a lot of biologists want to know is: What are the ecological benefits of wolves to ungulate populations? It doesn't always apply to Washington, but it is something that comes up a lot in terms of diseases like will chronic wasting disease ever become a huge issue in this state? What

about hoof disease we have in western Washington? This is part of that discussion too.

Comment

What I would like to add is single-species management of any species really never works. I think we keep talking about wolves, wolves, wolves, and I think we need to talk about all predators and relationship to the prey base. We might have a problem in an area with a prey base and it might not be wolves at all, but if we don't have any baseline... That is why we need to do neonates studies. As a result of that, you can figure out if you go to those sites, and what the predator is that is creating the largest percentage of the neonates becoming prey. We've got to put our arms around this whole thing and can't just talk about wolves.

Comment

I liked the discussion of us, at least right now, free flowing and thinking about needs. It also goes beyond just information. A lot of times folks have a different thought in their head so when information we have doesn't match that, it becomes a trust issue and a credibility issue. How can we have a process in this group to unpack that and try to overcome that? I love the fact that our public is watching and reviewing our WAG meetings. What does our process look like where we can build trust in the system? We want to be able to assume the best of each other but what does our process look like for covering this information so we can advance to the next stage and the public is there with us? I don't know the answer to that or how to approach it. But we have to build something like that in our process where we unpack stuff in enough detail that it is answering fundamental questions or maybe there is something for us all to learn.

Comment

I wanted to ask Department staff, after listening to what you heard, do you have any thoughts on ungulates?

Comment

Responding to the question about if we think it is important to look at the whole system. Yes. That is why we are doing the Predator-Prey Project. It is not just wolf centric. We have collars on cougars, mule deer, elk, whitetail... We are looking at predator-predator interactions as well. I do have one more thing about the other question. Those are really hard for us as wildlife biologists to answer. We can interpret the data but ultimately, we are meeting a lot of needs for different people in different groups. We are balancing needs and if it was all interpretation, I would say there is plenty for everyone. But no hunter is going to be acceptable with 10% success rate. We manage wildlife for the people of Washington, so it is not really up to our interpretation. We are just meeting those objectives.

Comment

I think that covers it well. I keep hearing about need to do more research on ungulate and neonate survival, but I think it is really important not to look past the research we are doing. Whether that is on moose in the northeast corner or... We have done all these

studies to get at these questions and we should look at data subjectively. At the end of the day, from that data is, “how much depredation is too much?” and those are social questions. Those aren’t scientific questions. Those are questions that the public has to decide. We have to balance those different groups and their needs. I think a lot of groups don’t realize that it is not that simple.

Comment

I should try to stay in my own lane here, but I do have experience in habitat. I think our habitats are changing across the state. We really need to consider the habitat for this conversation.

Comment

I have gotten to go to Colorado and Idaho and hunt other places and compare to Washington. We have more people in this state than probably Oregon, Idaho, and Montana combined. Every year we get more and more development, building more under the foothills. Not only is it a habitat quality issue but there are more vehicles and more fencing that impact migration routes and what they need to live on the landscape. Also, the competition in the winter. If we have larger herds, we have more conflict for other reasons in the winter time. They need to come down to the valleys. The highways have more and more collisions so there are a lot more impacts than just predators on the landscapes and thinking about populations as a whole. People have both direct and indirect effects and coexistence with these species is a lot to navigate as we move forward. Not just to have opportunity for hunting but to coexist during difficult times of the year. And thinking about feeding wildlife and what that brings, the vulnerability of that and spreading diseases. There are a lot of contexts that come into this that doesn’t always get brought to the forefront, so I think that is important to think about as well.

Comment

I’m speaking for myself but also, if I can, my part of a bigger group which is the Wolf Advisory Group. We have been centered on wolves, so it does feel like there is a need to hear from our folks that work on ungulates, the biologists of the state, specialists, the ungulate section manager, ungulate researchers, and experts on other large carnivores to recognize it is not just wolf prey; it is other large predators. And understand more about not only the status and that some areas have herd objectives, and some don’t. What does that look like, big picture? And then knowing that nothing stays constant. What are the things you experts look at to get your first glimpse that maybe there is a predator/prey interaction going on that needs to be dived into deeper? Help us understand what that looks like. I know those agency experts are visiting with other states as part of their job, but it would be helpful to learn what that conversation is like. When you are visiting with counterparts in other states about wolves and ungulates, what are the lessons learned or things that you feel like are kept in mind? A little bit of getting our feet under us on this subject would help us all to have that same footing and the same information.

Comment

Thank you, you are touching a little on what I was thinking. What numbers do we estimate

now and what are our assumptions and what are our indicators? What is our start point? Do we start with the Department or is it a reasonable start point to develop a baseline? Do we ask the Department to share what they see big picture across the state? Numbers, assumptions, indicators? Is that a reasonable thing or does anyone else have any suggestions?

Comment

I wanted to come back to you using “statewide.” I was reflecting on site-specific information or, in some cases, how we lack site-specific information, but the sources of information are all very different. The first thing to me that would be helpful is a scope question. We are throwing around “statewide” and “local,” so for me it would be helpful to hear from WAG members about their interest in scope. That is going to potentially dictate a lot of what we attempt to look for or provide or how we might choose to respond. I would start there as we try to take the first bite of this.

Comment

I thought your idea was reasonable. To answer, I think the scope needs to be ungulates, predators statewide. The priority should be on the SFAs first, and the areas with wolf packs second, then the broader part/rest of the state. This needs to be an integrative plan rather than a single species plan.

Comment

I’ve got each of your comments and some suggestions for the next step. My next task is to talk to the Department and you with the ideas you have shared and propose a process on how we do that next. After taking these recommendations and talking to you outside of meetings to propose a process, I will come back with some proposal processes before the next meeting. Any other comments before we break?

No objections

Break

Comment

Shifting topics, the topic is depredation investigations. Sharing your thoughts on what would be helpful to WAG regarding that topic.

Comment

The experience I have had with depredations most WAG members have not had the experience with how the process goes. I think it would be beneficial for WAG to see how the process goes from the time a producer calls a conflict specialist, to the time the conflict specialist calls the producer back with the determination. Have a conflict specialist walk through confirmed, probable, and not. And the process they follow to do that. Then by doing that, we can open the discussion as far as what potential changes could be done to the livestock community. Where this is coming from is the number of wolves in these packs. We as producers are not going to find them soon enough to be able to know 100%

what killed each one of them. As you saw, there is no way they have something drug out in that brush until it stinks. I think there needs to be more tools to allow for the collar data. Was there wolf sign all around, this was a healthy animal, etc. There needs to be some common-sense side of it, as far as how these animals are being found dead. In this country I'm in right now, there is no way. I just heard a tree branch and have no idea if it is a wolf, cougar, bear, or squirrel. I think there needs to be open discussion about how the investigations go and how some investigations are being called "undeterminable" and what they look like. I would love to hear other opinions, but as a producer who has heard "there is not hemorrhaging, so we can't confirm that" so many times, I feel like I'm hemorrhaging in the brain about it.

Comment

We haven't talked about depredation investigations in a while, so I'm fine with a "quick and dirty" to what the Department is currently doing and best practices. That might be good review for some WAG members. I don't know if people are prepared to give that information now, but...

Comment

We have not had the discussion since I have joined WAG three years ago now. I fully agree we are not fully ready to have this discussion. What I was trying to get the Department do is start that conversation.

Comment

I know early in the day we had some depredation investigation trainings that we had an opportunity to go to, so I think there are probably a lot of new WAG members that would benefit from hearing about it.

Comment

Whatever WAG needs for a walkthrough I can totally do, or if it is just to get more feedback from others on a path forward.

Comment

I'm wondering if folks are thinking is this something a small diverse team of you visit offline and discuss and then report back what your dialogue was and next steps? What sort of process do we envision for this?

Comment

I personally think all of WAG members need an understanding of the whole process. It goes back to us giving advice on something we don't know what we are giving advice on. Just throwing it out there but I would guess pretty close to half of us haven't gotten that training. I think WAG can have an understanding where the distrust in the Department comes from. The Department may not like the outcome of it, but it needs to happen. We have worked on range riding, worked on SFAs, and this has been eating at me for a year. I'm not necessarily proposing changes in the protocol but there needs to be an understanding of WAG members on what is going on in the field, just like with SFAs.

Comment

I agree. We all need to hear this and I'm interest to know how it is done.

Comment

So sorry to butt in but this sparks some more thoughts in my mind. There are probably WAG members who haven't run through what a proper carcass removal and disposal looks like and we got comments on that in Commission the other day. I bet there are more basics those of us who have been in the trenches think of as basic information, but new WAG members could really get some use in hearing.

Comment

It sounds like there is support for this idea, at least from the few of you I have heard from. It sounds like that is another task for me to propose a process on how we actually get at that. Any other comments or concerns on that topic?

Comment

Just to clarify, at this stage we are information learning, and we are going to walk through what that depredation process looks like from A-Z?

Comment

That is my understanding as well, assuming most of WAG probably haven't had an introduction to that. The Commissioner even offered other things like carcass removal and disposal. There is potential for mutual learning. That is my task to coordinate back and forth how detailed or how general we want to get. Does that answer your question?

Comment

It does, yes. So, A-Z, which includes getting the carcass to its final resting spot.

Comment

Thanks for clarifying. Now we have one agenda item remaining which is post-recovery planning. Then some space to get initial WAG thoughts of best use of WAG time to provide advice on that. Did you want to take that topic off this afternoon, or would you rather wait until tomorrow?

Comment

I can be prepared to talk about that whenever folks want to. Post-recovery is pretty detailed, and discussions would usually go an hour-and-a-half. But I'm happy to give it a try and maybe go over things quicker, so folks can noodle over it overnight, look at that document, and get back to it tomorrow. I'm happy to go into it this hour if you want.

Comment

I was going to share the PowerPoint presentation going over the alternatives and the document I shared was the [matrix](#).

Comment

You'll be able to cover the matrix today you think?

Comment

Maybe. If I try to be quick about it.

Comment

I think that would be awesome because having folks sleep on the matrix a little will give us time to unpack it tomorrow.

Comment

I agree and some wrote in the chat that we are missing people who will be here tomorrow, so we can discuss tomorrow or not do it. I'm open to whatever is best. WAG members, it is your meeting so please tell us.

Comment

If you can jump in and cover what you can cover, that is great. We are known for re-hashing things – don't take that wrong – but I think whatever people miss they do have the document online to review. I don't think it should hinder the conversation tomorrow by jumping in today.

Comment

I'm ready, just putting into the chat the alternatives matrix. I can't remember the last time we had substantive conversation about this topic. It is sort of a framework, but we have never shared a document that was populated with ideas. So, in sharing that with WAG it is sharing it with the public for the first time what could show up in a draft. I am one human being so it hasn't been the top of my list (rulemaking and periodic status review are taking more of my time) so as far as timeline when you can expect a draft EIS, I can't answer. That being said, I know it is important for WAG to dive in and have a conversation. When we talk about it internally, post-recovery plan is 100x the conversation a protocol is. There is a lot of gnarly stuff to think and talk about in long-term wolf management conservation. What does it look like when wolves are no longer listed as threatened or endangered? We are not sure when the status change will occur, so we want to initiate these conversations early. It is important but no timelines yet. The goal is to show the ideas early so we can think about them. Those of you have done intake have seen this before, but to most this is new.

Page 1: This matrix looks like a bit complete and done and solid, but that is not what it means. It is a draft, so it is not set in stone. We are intending to reflect the range of alternatives and capture options, but it doesn't necessary reflect where we stand as an agency or where the Commission stands. Just a foundation for discussion, not the end of the discussion.

Page 2: From that matrix, I have taken each element that you might see in an updated Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, some come from the 2011 plan, and some are

new based on wolf management now. They inform us on what should we analyze?

Page 3: Each item has a status quo and ideas on how you could do things in the future. Actually, I don't know if the best way is to crash through these slides and let people jump in? Or pause after each topic and capture ideas that folks want to talk about? Some of our intention in this discussion is for WAG members to think about what the most important topic to you is to start with. How would you prioritize? What is your top three, or top five? I can pause after each one or crash through.

Comment

I'm good with you going through so we understand the document, but I would be concerned having much of a dialogue about it since the folks here today thought it wouldn't be until tomorrow.

Comment

I would agree with that value she had for saving the deeper diver tomorrow and just going through the document, but it is really easy for us to go down a rabbit hole. So, we could have the conversation afterwards.

Comment

The purpose is to familiarize elements and leave it at that today, then get into discussion about it tomorrow.

Comment

Page 3: That sounds perfect. The first one here is number of regions. The way we have it in Washington is three recovery regions (eastern Washington, Northern Cascades, and Southern Cascades/Northwest Coast). An idea, alternative 1, is you would develop wolf regions based on metapopulations; something like a GMU or ecotype. Some of those ideas need to be thought out, so thinking about wolf metapopulation, maybe northeast Washington would be one, southeast, maybe Northern Cascade, Southern Cascade, southwest Washington, Olympic Peninsula... Thinking about connectivity of those populations or if they function as metapopulations. You all know about GMUs, and that makes sense for certain species. When we draw management boundaries for wildlife, they are based on human needs. That doesn't necessarily reflect the biology, but it depends. Another idea is we don't have to have divisions of any kind, just consistent statewide management of wolves. Another is having an east and west region, which is what Oregon does right now. It works in the way that there are more wolves in eastern Washington, so that is an idea. Again, I have blank space because we can add more ideas. The second one is about numbers of wolves in a population. That is a really scientific question. The University of Washington team is working on that now and is not something we want to dive into in a WAG discussion.

Page 4: "Wolf conservation and monitoring; provide direct minimum count of known individuals, packs, and breeding pairs." Is it realistic at that point to do a direct count? There are questions about when is the right time to transition to a different kind of count? So, an occupied area rather than specific monitoring breeding pairs. Population level

estimates similar to what neighbors in the east do, occupancy modeling, etc. All kind of ways to monitor wolves that are more rigorous than direct minimum count. Idea two is maybe you don't need formal monitoring. Maybe you go off major needs and actions. Idea three is something like the status quo of population monitoring for a certain time period, after which transition to idea one. Some of these are controversial topics, so I don't mean to talk through them in a passionless way. I'm just trying to share all this information with you.

Page 5: "Translocation of wolves from one area of Washington to another." We decided we would put this as part of the post-recovery plan. Status quo would be to anticipate unforeseen events, as these things happen with all wildlife species. Maybe there is a disease outbreak. We want the ability to use translocation for that reason. It seems farfetched now but if we are maybe trying to plan 10, 20, 30, or 50 years in the future, what tool do we want available for conservation and management needs? Idea 2 is translocation wouldn't be a tool we used. We would allow continued natural expansion of range and establishment of packs in Washington through dispersal." They are not mutually exclusive. You could combine different ones and add different ones. Idea three would be "if it was determined necessary by the Director, translocation would be available as a tool if wolves do not meet 2011 Plan recovery objectives." Something more recovery based. We talked about translocation to meet 2011 Plan objectives, so that is more related to making sure you hit those breeding pair targets. Perhaps a Tribal partner wants wolves translocated to their area, or maybe a National Park wants us to translocate wolves and be a partner; that goes along to idea four, that maybe a team member wants to meet an ecosystem objective. Is that something the Department would entertain? Hunting of wolves is another big one that incites passion in folks. The first idea is that "hunting would not be allowed (this does not preclude WDFW from managing wolves for conflict or ungulate management)." Idea two is that maybe you would use hunters as needed for specific management objectives. Maybe in certain areas of conflict, a certain amount of hunters. This is not me endorsing this. I'm just presenting an option. An interesting way to look at it is if folks see value in managing wolves in a certain area for a certain objective, does it make sense to use hunters instead of government employees? Idea three: an example is mountain goat translocation from Olympic National Park, and folks were allowed to permit hunt. What if folks were specially qualified, like Master Hunters, and could do wolf management instead of government employees? Another idea is you would have something more like recreational hunting "through Game Management Plan and Commission process if/when populations are robust enough to support hunting." This is in line with other species currently hunted, like bears, cougar, deer, and elk. Some are more fleshed out than others, I will talk about why in a little bit.

Page 6: Status quo is maybe we would as an agency "support wildlife habitat enhancements, crossing structures, and processes." Just habitat connectivity in general so wolves would benefit. Likely if you do that to benefit ungulates, you are probably helping wolves as well. Those two options are things you could point to on a map. Again, those are not mutually exclusive.

Number ten, land management, is a little complex. Our status quo is what recently

happened and went through the Commission process. When we think about land management, people think grazing. Certain practices with wolves, like lethal control, did we do it on this land managed by this entity? DFW doesn't have authority to graze on Federal public lands. We can't make any management actions based on that. However, grazing on DFW lands *is* something the agency has control over. There is grazing guidance that just went through that process and was really great. That is something we would lean on in this new Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. I think we would follow that grazing guidance that was developed. Stuff like does lethal removal occur differently on public versus private lands versus DFW areas? Wolves don't recognize boundaries, so when we work on depredation or conflict mitigation, it may be a checkerboard landscape where you have different lands. Given that wolves don't recognize those boundaries, we manage wolves regardless of land management (excludes Park and Tribal lands). More ideas can be suggested.

Page 7: Number twelve is more specific to what WAG has worked on. The status quo is "WDFW will provide technical assistance to livestock operators to implement proactive measures to reduce conflicts. Assistance with some costs may be paid by non-profit organizations or other entities on a limited basis. Funding provided through DPCA-Ls and contracted range riders." So, envisioning a world where wolves occupy a greater part of the state. You may have hundreds more wolves than currently, so what is the direction long-term that makes more sense? Is it we talk about DPCA-Ls as something the Department should maintain authority forever? Or maybe transfer it to a different entity? And then chart a five-year phasing out? It is not necessarily to say DPCA-Ls wouldn't exist, but maybe the Department wouldn't facilitate them.

Page 8: Number thirteen is pretty straightforward; things like hazing wolves with rubber bullets. Right now, the status quo is "allowed with a permit and training from WDFW during all listed statuses." I'm not sure how much these are being used, so in post-recovery we would suggest allowing "without special authorization consistent with any other non-listed species."

Number fourteen is wolf collar data sharing. This is a new element not included in the 2011 Plan. Right now, we "share collar locations with livestock producers and government officials who sign a sensitive fish and wildlife data sharing agreement." Some ideas here are wolves are the only species we do this for. When I think about the word "normalize," what are some things we do for wolves we might not want to do forever? Maybe that is collar data sharing. The other idea is maybe we would continue that data sharing with certain governmental partners like Tribes. Remember that some elements will play into each other and one discussion will affect another discussion. Wolf hunting is directly tied to this element, so our decision is a push and pull on other elements.

Number fifteen is investigations and response. What we would propose is maintain WDFW consistent with black bear and cougar. Some is not within DFW control, but this is the idea we put forward.

Page 9: Number sixteen is lethal control of wolves involved in repeated livestock depredations. There is subtle difference here. It is "allowed and we can consider issuing a

permit to a livestock owner to conduct lethal control on private land they own or lease if WDFW does not have the resources to address control.” The first idea is that this would be allowed consistent with state and federal law and conducted by state or federal employees or agents.” Could you have a private contractor? There are specific groups that operate helicopters. Could a contractor be a potential option? With idea two, it is “allowed but conducted by DFW consistent with other depredation removal or federal employees.”

Number seventeen is permitted lethal control. The status quo is “allowed with an issued permit on private lands and public grazing allotments they own or lease when wolves reach Sensitive status.” We really haven’t got to this stage, as wolves are listed as Endangered in Washington. But the idea here is lethal control would be allowed by permit, consistent with other species, and limited to the number of animals, time, etc.

Number eighteen is “caught in the act” lethal take of wolves. Right now, the plan has different language for this. Since then, there has been a WAC put in place that supersedes 2011 language. One idea is to keep it consistent with that and the other is there are different WACs covering different species. Should we revise the WAC so 220-440-080 be consistent with bear and cougar?

Page 10: Number nineteen is the same one but about dogs. Does this “caught in the act” apply to dogs? I will say this would be a different thing.

Number twenty is compensation for livestock depredation. Most probably know that wolves have special provisions written specifically. Like if it is on a pasture of a certain size you might be able to account for all livestock. Another idea is maybe compensation for wolves be consistent with other species. Another idea is to provide compensation for wolf damages. Another idea is maybe it is transferred to a different entity or source; maybe DFW isn’t the place.

Page 11: Number twenty-one is indirect losses. This is another one not in the 2011 Plan, so right now “WDFW pays documented claims for indirect losses.” One idea is that “indirect compensation is not provided.” Saying if you had a direct loss you probably had some indirect losses as well, so maybe it is easier for everyone this way. Another idea not listed here is a pay-for-presence program. If you document wolf activity, you can be eligible to receive payment. Similar to the compensation one, another idea is to transfer to a different entity.

Page 12: Number twenty-two is ungulate management. I get why the previous discussion was important because this will come up as we talk about this plan and what the information need is. The status quo is to “manage for healthy ungulate populations through habitat improvement, harvest management, and reduction of illegal hunting, consistent with game management plans.” We have idea one because a game management plan is a much more adaptive document than a wolf plan will be. A wolf plan may last 10 or 20 years. We ultimately want long-term plan. Let’s say a certain herd is in decline. That is a situation that can be addressed in a game management plan easier than a wolf plan. That Game Management Plan is updated every six years right now, so that is when we said maybe ungulate management is more appropriately addressed there.

Along the same line is number twenty-three, wolf-ungulate interactions. The status quo is “if the Department determines that wolf predation is a primary limiting factor for at-risk ungulate populations and the wolf population in that recovery region is healthy, it could consider moving of wolves, lethal control, or other control techniques in localized areas. The status of wolves statewide as well as within a specific wolf recovery region where ungulate impacts are occurring would be considered in decision-making Page 13 of 17 relative to wolf control. Decisions will be based on scientific principles and evaluated by WDFW.” In line with the last slide, it is wolf management to address at-risk ungulate problems. Maybe this is more appropriate in a game management plan because it is more adaptive management, and the Game Management Plan is updated every six years.

Page 13: Number twenty-four is outreach and education. I think we realize that DFW is really interested in providing outreach and education but sometimes our partnerships are really instrumental in helping us get the word out and getting ahead of the narrative. Number twenty-five, research, is difficult to know without going into needs. But right now, “WDFW collaborates annually on several research projects detailed in each annual report.” If you want to know wolf-related research, it is at the end of each annual report. Idea one is that “research will be based on conservation and management needs and will be assessed periodically to determine where resources for studies are directed.” Number twenty-six is collaborative process. This is another new element, and it is about WAG. What the future of WAG once it is post-recovery? Is group maintained or changed to another format? There are always questions that come up so probably yes, we would have one. But other ideas to discuss is what if does it make more sense to have regional WAG to dive into local issues? Or a group meets based on an issue? Rather than how WAG exists today. Or after wolves are recovered, maybe there is nothing to talk about at WAG anymore! Which I think there is always something to talk about with wolves. That just scratches the surface. We want to hear other ideas.

Comment

Thanks, that was really helpful. The way you laid it out added a lot of clarity. Is that PowerPoint online?

Comment

It isn't now, but I will put it up as soon as meeting is over.

Comment

Thinking ahead and the purpose of this, I think there is merit in getting WAG's ideas. We've got 21 elements just showed and each has multiple ideas. That is a huge workload. Step one is familiarizing the group of all these elements which is what we are trying to do today and tomorrow. Then give some time for clarifying questions. Which are the ones we want to tackle first? There is a process we can see where the group wants to start but I'm thinking in future WAG meetings over time, is that what you are thinking with this particular topic?

Comment

What I was thinking – and I’m open to WAG members – is that there is a lot that goes into a new management plan. This is a yearlong process. WAG has limited time and may not be able to dive into each thing. My suggestion is what is maybe your top three most important things to dive into in WAG? And of course, knowing there is more opportunity later. But this is what items do you want to see in an EIS that will be analyzed? And where is WAG going to spend the bulk of their time in these discussions?

Comment

I agree with that. I think there is a prioritization step here. There is a lot here. It is a lengthy process, but how can we be the most efficient for what our job is? I’m just throwing this out there for a future WAG meeting, where we try to maybe break out into teams where we make sure we have Department staff and environmentalists and producers and hunters on each team and take a handful of these and work them. We need to talk about not only prioritizing but what is an effective process for us. The stuff she covered we have gone through an internal process with our folks across program, within program, regions, and senior staff. Again, it is a draft but we have made sure those folks are knowledgeable so we can divide up if that is the most efficient way to cover the most ground.

Comment

Did the Department consider putting together another wolf working group that is looking at this post-recovery plan? Or has it always been just that the WAG would try to fit this in with the conflict stuff that always comes up?

Comment

Good question. At least the dialogue thus far is that we would like the WAG to dive into this one. You are a great cross-section of our state. You all stay up to speed on wolf issues. We would like you to do it and prioritize it as top priority.

Comment

Okay, we will start tomorrow with the brief catchup with members joining us tomorrow. I would like to move to the public comment period.

Comment

I will post that PowerPoint after the meeting and the other piece. For your bedtime reading, go through that matrix. There is a lot of extra ideas so it may prompt other ideas for you too.

Comment

What you described is one of three tasks from this session. One is to come back to WAG and discover a process baseline for ungulates. The other task is proposing the process for taking a look at depredation investigations. So, that was our meeting today.

Meeting Adjourned & Public Comment