

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

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

WDFW staff members: Candace Bennett, Dan Brinson, Ben Maletzke, Donny Martorello, Joe McCanna, Scott McCorquodale, Steve Pozzanghera, Annemarie Prince, Grant Samsill, Julia Smith, and Jeff Wade

WDFW Commissioners: James Anderson, Molly Linville, Fred Koontz, Lorna Smith

US Forest Service: Robert Garcia

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

Welcome and check-in

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

Review the agenda and make any adjustments

Rob presents the agenda to the group.

Meeting Purpose

Share Department updates and seek acceptable language for a Special Focus Area (SFA) section in the Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol.

Comment

We talked about before that a couple of members have moved on. We have offered four positions recently. We are preparing for another recruitment announcement because we have two vacancies. We will be using the recruitment pool to fill future vacancies. One other item is one of the things we've been communicating about with the United States Forest Service. Just a reminder for all of us, we have our resource circle but really, we need to take advantage of our resource entities. We have things that are forest centric and those should go to those forest experts. We are honoring the system of turning over forest service questions to those folks the same way they would turn over wildlife questions to the Department.

Comment

I want to recognize that the value of these discussions is the opportunity to have a free-flowing dialogue. Often, the conversations can get going frantically. That may be where WDFW would speak to something that is really in the authority of the Forest Service. We are not making policy statements on their behalf, but the answers could be incorrect or

information that should be presented differently. We have an opportunity to recognize this and call it out and continue to have the dialogue and keep going but please understand we have a lot of different agencies with different authorities and we should reach to them for their expertise.

Comment

I feel like my role here (as a Forest Service representative) is outside of the circle as an outside expert. I am here to be of service to you however that might be.

Comment

Along those lines, I wanted to call out that we may have mentioned this in a previous update, but the Department has worked to deploy signs on some Forest Service lands to help connect cows and producers when cattle are being taken off the range. There have been concerns about that. Offline we have talked with producers so that they understand that we were just trying to help, not cast blame. It is good for cows and people for them to re-connected. We did that and we put up some signs and we took them down now. One of the issues that comes up, is that is there any way that this could be damaging for producers? Which wasn't the motivation. We are working with the Forest Service on how to do better in that sense. I don't have an answer today, but I wanted to flag it because I know it's important to folks. We are listening to the various communities out there.

Comment

We are recognizing that there has been some concern and certainly some things that we did not consider as an outcome as what was put forth as a good gesture to locate livestock on the landscape. So, we've craved out time in our annual coordination meeting with the Forest Service to have a conversation about the signage issues and wolf-livestock management. The meeting is scheduled for February 17th, 2021.

Comment

When I found out about the signs, we took it as a good faith measure. We know that there were no hidden agendas, but we are glad you are having the meeting. We look forward to hearing the results.

Comment

I want to also acknowledge and thank WAG members when things are heating up on the landscape and we do something like this, and it is not being received that way. Thank you for letting us know. We don't want to put something in motion and realize it is causing issues and now we can address them. If conflict specialists could give a quick update and then department staff members can share what they heard in breakout room sessions this morning, I think it would be a good place to start.

Comment

This is the time of year where wolf stuff slows down but elk stuff picks up. We are going through post-season check-ups with producers. I have spoken with most producers in the Grouse Flats territory and we have three who have reported they have cattle missing. That's what I have currently.

Comment

I will say that producer contacts have been increasing as I've met people. Heading into the next grazing season I will have had the opportunity to meet with those who run livestock operations in Touchet pack territory. With that, I am trying to listen to what some of the needs are from producers in those pack territories. I look forward to increasing the collaborative efforts between us all. I am looking forward to the winter to see how movements have changed compared to the summer months. The interactions are reduced this time of year due to the fact the producers in these pack territories do not want their cattle there. That has allowed me the opportunity to talk to those producers and get a better understanding of what they need in the next grazing season.

Comment

For our WAG members and public, could you both share what parts of the landscapes you work on?

Comment

I work on the west side of the Blue Mountains where the Tucannon River is the dividing line, geographically speaking. My work is primarily focused in Columbia and Walla Walla counties.

Comment

I am in Asotin and Garfield counties and primarily the Tucannon and Grouse Flats territories.

Comment

I am in northeast Washington in the Stevens and Ponderosa counties area. At this time of year, we are getting our deterrents out and looking at what we have versus what we need. We are touching bases with producers. Just getting back information regarding claims or still receiving new claims coming through occasionally. We are also reaching out to our contracted range riders and starting plans for the upcoming year. We have a meeting on Friday about amendments to range riding contracts with WDFW. We are also working on FSA pieces. It's a lot of "office time" and I'm itching to get outside right now.

Comment

I am a specialist in the northeast part of the state and cover Ferry and western Stevens counties, pack territories include, Stranger, Huckleberry, Togo, Kettle, Sherman, and in some seasons, Strawberry. As mentioned, right now is our off-season or slow season. We're taking some deep breaths to plan, coordinate, and prepare for the next season. There aren't any immediate wolf-livestock concerns. We're not responding to many depredation investigations. We are occasionally fielding concerns about wolf activity in certain wintering areas, but it has slowed down from a field standpoint. As others mentioned with the cattle observation signs, we have removed them all from the forest and since our hunting season wrapped up it was logical anyway. We are still deploying fladry and FoxLights when needed in response to wolf activity. We're taking an inventory of where we stand in the district regarding deterrents and filling in the gaps for the next season. Lots of planning and coordinating in the next few weeks which will be focused on reaching out to producers and gauging their interest in new ideas and plans for the next season.

Comment

We've heard from DPCA-LS that have submitted a request for payments and haven't received them and wondered what the general timeline is?

Comment

Our headquarters team has been doing an outstanding job of getting those payments out. Typically, there's a thirty-day period in which the contract would identify that as the period in which they can anticipate payment once the invoice package has been submitted. Sometimes there is work done to make it a correct or complete invoice package. The clock doesn't start until we have an actual invoice package that is complete or accurate. If you'd like to provide me with the information of the producers waiting, I would be happy to investigate it.

Comment

I want to second what was just said, our new team is hitting the ground running. We are in good hands here and have a new phase in front of us.

Comment

If we're on the topic of payments and compensation, I was wondering if department staff could address the question of if you are going to reconvene folks to work on the compensation programs. I understand the concerns and frustrations about the complexities and time it takes to get those processed.

Comment

Absolutely, we are, you all did get a good start on it. We are reconvening but it may also be another item that is indirectly associated with the small business economic impact of things for rulemaking. I would expect something coming from there. Something else coming up is that we are reconvening the data sharing group.

Comment

Can we share what we heard in the breakout rooms this morning? Can the staff members in those rooms share what they heard and some highlights? We can finish up any note sharing after or when the Director joins us. For members of the WAG, public, and commission members, we experimented with Zoom breakout rooms where the public could have conversations in those rooms. Each staff member will share highlights from their rooms.

Comment

In our breakout session room, here are some of the questions we talked about and discussed. Some people were more focused to hear about SFAs and increased conversations with producers and wondering what it would look like then versus now. Another comment was looking at these special focus areas and expressed concerns about if WAG can't come up with some direction before this season what would WDFW do this time around. If we can't come to a consensus what are going to do in the meantime? We also talked about the dialogue between WDFW and the Forest Service. What are some strategies moving forward and they also brought up the fact that there isn't much of that documentation readily available to the public about those conversations? Another individual talked about how we phrase things in our conversations. One of the things when we respond, we want to help producers, but our department's goal is wolf recovery, but it sometimes feels like the producers drive the conversations too much. As someone else previously brought up, they were wondering why we didn't have a press release as to wolves being delisted federally.

Comment

The conversation about how we phrase things, I thank that person for bringing that up. It may be a matter of semantics but when we say we're helping producers we're still trying to help the wolf recovery effort. They're for both groups.

Comment

The Director has joined us now. We're at the point now that we would like to give the Director a chance to address the WAG, new members, and commissioners.

Comment

I don't have a particular agenda for you all. My biggest thing is to just let you know how much I appreciate your work. WAG is a model for our advisory groups, and they span on the spectrum but none of them are nearly as important as you all are. Of course, the work all our advisory groups do is valuable, however. The way you come together shows that you have really done your work. Truly in guiding our work this is the most important group we have. It is a highly functioning organized group. I've heard you want to hear what I'd like this group to focus on. We're coming to the end of SFAs and we're going to shift into the post-recovery mode. There's a ton of work when it comes to recovery. Questions about when the arrival, compensation, and other items. You know the issue well. It's going to be the same level of need and value done by this group. I'd

also be interested to hear from you where you think you would be most helpful to us. Let's just have a conversation.

Comment

I think you addressed the needs. We wanted to give members a chance to ask questions or share concerns with you.

Comment

I have a question for the Director. What would be three primary options or things that WAG could do that you would consider to be successful?

Comment

We need to wrap up things with the protocol and rulemaking. We'll be working on a status review that probably is a low threshold. I would want a real focus on the post-recovery plan and how we're going to be managing that. I need to sit down and review, but I think getting moving on the post-recovery plan is essential because we're going to be there soon.

Comment

Is the post-recovery plan, the plan for when we hit the numbers in the document?

Comment

Technically, it's when we meet the threshold of recovery for wolves. As we get into more normative management of wolves, we should be preparing ourselves on how to better manage them in general.

Comment

My question is, are we or the stuff you've seen us working on, are we coming in at the right level? In terms of advice, what level should that be at for post-recovery efforts?

Comment

I think what I've seen from this group is solid. Usually what we receive from you is something well addressed. This is incredibly important advice; however, it is an advisory group and we need to maintain the decision-making authority of the Department. The level of detail you provide and the work you're doing is the right level. Some people say it's too prescriptive but the more focused it is the more it helps us.

Comment

My question relates to the newly approved strategic plan, is there a plan to roll that out to advisory groups? Is there anything in there that we need to know to make decisions?

Comment

A core component of that plan is better engagement with communities and the public in general. We need to be out there on the ground and with fewer words.

Comment

I wanted to share with the Director, from the community that I represent, that the conversations we have been having on the new Section 9 are some of the hardest and most challenging of all the conversations that we have had. I think as you have said when you said we are high functioning in the WAG, that it resonates. The relationships built over the years by WAG members is invaluable. I think the path forward may rely on that. It's a political issue that we've wrestled with. Typically, it doesn't feel political, but my own experiences make it hard to not see that. As a reminder that this is a hard conversation for us from the producer side of the table, but we understand the importance.

Comment

With the difficult nature of the conversations and controversy, you guys are tackling some of the most difficult issues. That's the definition of a high functioning group. I don't mean to demean any other advisory groups, but they are not dealing with these intense issues. I'm glad you're willing to stick it out because we are better when we work together.

Comment

One of the things that comes up in our discussions and about the section on SFAs is that our words on paper are only as good as they get implemented on the ground and the trust and relationships. There are inevitable miscommunications between staff on the ground and producers. It seems to be a strong reality. I'm wondering about what your thoughts are from a process perspective, how do you see your role as a leader to work through some of those issues in terms of improving trust and looking at where there are issues raised. How do we deal with trust issues and how staff can implement those with producers?

Comment

We must build trust one interaction at a time. We need to come up with something good in a formal plan so we can have predictability and follow through. I know of conflict, but we try to make sure we are being transparent. We may not always agree, but there is a joint effort or plan that forms at the foundation of that. It is that we are committed to as an agency on following through with those and hopefully the people they are interacting with. The quickest way to kill the trust is to not follow-through.

Comment

I didn't get a chance to tell everyone, how delighted I am to serve on the Fish and Wildlife Commission. I've had a chance to serve on several advisory groups, this group is very special because of the challenge and difficulty of the subject. I think the question about trust, the more transparent and the more you can explain the details the better. Often in our rulemaking, it's general, what builds trust is the kind of discussions you have and dialogue. I wanted to share my new year's resolution which is to talk less and

listen more. I want you to know that I want to listen as much as possible to what you're discussing. I am relying on your hard work and appreciate it.

Comment

I want to say it loudly; Section 9 will influence rulemaking. We need to make sure there's a strong connection between the WAG process and the Fish and Wildlife Commission. I don't know what it all looks like at the end, but we need to be in good communication with solid connections.

Comment

I wanted to add how much I appreciate this group and the work they do. I would ask for some forbearance at times, as we on the Commission receive different items. We may not always agree to carry out recommendations from advisory groups. Since I've been a member of a variety of advisory groups, I hope everybody knows that it's by no means a disrespect or devalue of all of the work you do.

Comment

I want to re-emphasize that all advisory groups are important, but WAG especially is very important. We are going to disagree on a lot of issues. There's not an avoidance of disagreements but the management of those ideas. If you'd like me to come back and specifically focus on an issue. You have certainly dedicated your time and reciprocated by being here.

WDFW Director leaves the meeting.

Comment

Would the second breakout room please share your experience?

Comment

One of the first questions in the discussions was about ungulate populations decline, so we talked about historical data, collection methods, and other projects. We had a question about are wolves helping reduce disease in ungulate populations? What is the probability of wolves attacking cattle based on the population numbers of both? Do we use data from other research projects in wolf management situations? If we have so many cattle on the landscape how do we protect wolves and wildlife from invasive species? Can WDFW offer cash compensation to retire grazing leases? We also talked about the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's decision to delist wolves, not the effects here but nationwide. Another participant asked how do we measure the efficacy of deterrents? We talked about the past and present. We had a comment about considering the environmental factors here when it comes to range riding, tree cover, and elevation. We had another request and comment about updating our literature review that we have and an offer from another participant that said they could send a list out. We talked about the co-existence working group and how to fill gaps with deterrents and then have them evaluated. How does WDFW not approve Section 9? We had

another comment about the range riding definition in the protocol not being clear. Our next comment was back to Section 9, the goal seems to be to reduce wolf conflict, but if removal didn't happen this year the area would still be considered chronic. We need to keep looking at that definition. A final comment about increased deterrents that should stay in place in SFAs even if they don't meet the definition.

Comment

I want to tell everybody, there was some dialogue about moving livestock from federal allotments to reduce conflict as well.

Comment

How about the last breakout room?

Comment

We're trying to minimize the staff footprint currently. We had diverse conversations. We started with thoughts on Section 9 and how to keep cattle and wolves safe. There was more about frustration with the WAG process in general and how easy it is held up. Also, there is a lack of information on how to find meetings and making it more apparent and obvious to find links. There were conversations about funding and if the Department caters to hunter's and fisher's interests. Also, on that note, we talked about looking at new sources of funding. We had a person in our session working with the Sierra Club who is doing wolf recovery work. Also, there was a comment made about having more vegan or vegetarian members on the WAG. I was happy to see members of the public again and engage with you. I'm hopeful we will be able to continue to keep doing these breakout room sessions.

Comment

Department staff members have spoken with researchers and that may be a good segway into the SFAs conversation.

Lunch

Comment

Does anyone want to give an update on the connection with the Department of Agriculture in Wildlife Services?

Comment

We invited Stewart Breck to have informal discussions with our biologists and conflict specialists. We wanted to talk with him about non-lethal deterrents research. We had invited him to talk about those things, as he works for WSDA's Wildlife Services, but other research entities and groups were consulted as well. He has done decades of research and continues to pursue research projects now. We asked what his focus is? The newest deterrents consider the protection of individual livestock. So, less pasture-

based solutions but still looking at specific cattle. Some devices are motion devices that can be hung as an ear tag. We also talked about things that could go on collars. There's research into fladry collars, which is something that looks like fladry that is put on the individual livestock. As you all know, most of where the issues occur are on these large open allotments where they're on the range rather than pasture. There's also a specific collar being used in Africa, that uses sound and smell as a deterrent. The development of more technology like drones is an option too. Of course, we are also considering working with individual livestock owners to see what works for them best.

Comment

Any questions?

Comment

I applaud the Department for having that conversation. Did you discuss the possibility of the Department serving as a lab for those techniques and learning opportunities?

Comment

Yes, that the capacity is there. It's a matter of finding producers who are interested in trying out these new techniques as they are being developed.

Comment

Now we can dig into Section 9. At the beginning of the meeting some folks said they would be able to share some updates on those developments.

Comment

We were trying to look for a path forward that keeps us together. We had two different documents, we felt like we were at an impasse. If we could put those two pieces together that we could work from may help us move forward. Would members be willing to have a discussion on that document and move forward from it? Any objections?

No objections

Comment

I wanted to applaud you WAG members for working on this beforehand. We can keep the document conceptual right now but let's start with it.

Comment

I concur. I like the fact that quite a few people have weighed in on it.

Comment

This document doesn't recognize a full agreement. I think there's enough of an agreement that this is a work in progress. In the beginning, there are six questions that we highlighted while working through. I think the questions are important for the whole process and they are difficult questions. For the general organization of the document, it's broken up into shorter narratives and paragraphs. In our conversation as WAG, we adjusted to more bite-size pieces to work through what else is needed in Section 9. The things that are different here are from the producer side of the table, as the Department goes through its review on what happened and a third-party review to that. So that it's not just the Department's work but an outside expert. In talking to producers in the northeast especially, that is something that they thought was important. If we're going to step back and it's that important that it would elevate the conversation in limited situations for that outside perspective. There's no consensus about the producer side asking the Department to place two collars in each pack. There are some data-sharing issues in here asking for more frequent sharing of data with the collar locations updated more regularly. I'll leave it at that for now.

Comment

This document is broken down by topic but let's go down each topic, then ask for reaction and comments for each topic.

Comment

I was going to suggest that we leave the six questions and if we can get through the document and go back to those.

Comment

I did not get a chance to read it. The contextual question is this a binding agreement or is this a recommendation?

Comment

We're an advisory group to the Department. The recommendation will be used in the Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol for the Department to consider when they make decisions.

Comment

Comments on the definition being part of the section?

Comment

I think the approach here or goal was to take what we discussed at our last meeting and try to capture that as closely as we could.

Comment

I think the concept is largely the same, the only new concept is a portion or all a geographic pack area. It doesn't necessarily limit us, but I think that would be the main difference in the previous definition.

Comment

Let's give people time to read both definitions and provide reactions? Concerns?

Comment

I think this sort of changed the definition from before when we are talking about lethal removal was authorized for two out of three years and changed incremental lethal removal. I'm not sure what the incremental removal part means there?

Comment

I think the intent is to keep both of those concepts from the original so that the language that is pasted about the Director authorizing lethal removal and this sentence intends to say that it is the same thing, but it is saying something about the depredation piece. That would be enough depredations to authorize lethal removal in two out of three consecutive years. I think it is trying to say that enough depredations have occurred to authorize lethal in the last two out of three years.

Comment

I'm okay with the definition but I think the two out of three consecutive years should be at the end so that it covers both lethal and incremental lethal. I think it would make me happier to see it that way.

Comment

I think it is saying that it's the fact that it doesn't have to be a lethal removal but when a lethal removal is authorized. Incremental removal is when they take one wolf and then reevaluate. I think that piece was put in there by department staff.

Comment

How I'm reading it is that it would be okay to do lethal removal after one year and not incremental.

Comment

I'm following that. There is a pattern over years of depredations and lethal removal, so I think that moving that to the later part of the sentence encompasses those elements.

Comment

Any other concerns?

No Objections

Comment

How about we scroll to the goal topic? Please read this section and provide any comments.

Comment

A question, when I look at that, the last sentence there, about historic depredation events that could be used to recognize an SFA, is that meant to allow for something other than what the definition is? I'm sure not about the intent of that?

Comment

I think that sentence is sort of redundant, I think that the last sentence can be deleted.

Comment

I concur. I wasn't the one that wrote that sentence, but if whoever does not agree, please speak up.

Comment

Let's cross that sentence out for now. Any other comments?

No objections

Comment

Let's go to the creation of an SFA. It looks like an attempt to give the Director the option to use discretion based on concerns or conditions. Concerns?

No objections

Comment

Now let's look at the review required topic. Comments?

Comment

Since our last meeting and knowing that we had this conversation coming up, full disclosure, we're working on a template to what is described there in the first paragraph in this. Could we get more information about the second paragraph?

Comment

I don't have an answer. Why do we have the county Sherriff listed in Ferry and Stevens counties but not others?

Comment

We need to take that out, but it could be a representative from the County Sherriff.

Comment

There's a special relationship there that isn't anywhere else in the state. The third-party review I mentioned at the beginning, for those of us that support this language it's important. In these SFAs we are asking a lot of the producers, to step back and put on pause mode while a review is done. It's certainly elevated in the eyes of the producers. We have experts in the agency but why not, bring in a third-party review of the good work that the agency staff has done to make sure we're not missing anything. I think it's fair to ask this from department staff. How would these experts be chosen? They're folks out from Montana, Idaho, and the US Forest Service. There's a lot of different groups. Those are the types of people who may be able to serve on this third-party review.

Comment

There is that part, where it stings reading that because it feels like it takes away from our expertise a bit. One of the concerns also is that will it create the "what about our expert" kind of thing. I understand your intent here, but I'm wondering if there could be a group of folks like this, sitting down and creating their plan together. Is there a way to enable them to seek outside entities to review?

Comment

I want to acknowledge what you said about the sting, but you're right I don't think that was the intent. I do like the idea because I remember when we as WAG brought in some outside experts on non-lethal deterrents and it's when we had our field trip. Someone who is not involved in the day to day can bring fresh ideas to an issue and there's the concept of group intelligence. We do lots of consultations with folks outside of the state to see what's working or not but that's why group discussion with outside experts is the idea. Maybe there is a way to change the idea, so it doesn't sound like WDFW doesn't have enough expertise themselves.

Comment

I know they are other people who haven't seen it before and have a different perspective on it.

Comment

When I think about this stuff and how we come up with stuff as a team, we have been doing this stuff for a long time now in some places. They sit down and everybody comes up with a game plan and then we send out it to experts to make a decision. At what point do we draw the line? Whose information supersedes the others.

Comment

I feel like, looking at this, we've all learned different parts of this process. My only concern is that I want to make sure we're creating space for each of the SFA participants to identify what they need. This non-department wolf expert thing, I do think there is that collective intelligence already happening. If they feel they need outside perspectives, they can decide that for themselves. Anything too prescriptive here takes away the creativity and space that we can come up with. It's another thing prescribed for us, I'm a little concerned about anything like prescriptive groups that the SFA groups can't work on.

Comment

The intent is not to be prescriptive. I don't want you to be threatened by an outside review, but you know that some producers don't have a good relationship with department staff. They may not think you have all the answers. There are people I work with who don't think I know what I'm talking about. On a science and wolf management basis, it is just another layer for review. This language we're talking about here is coming from the wolf advisory group not from agency staff but in the end it's WAG that approves this language and submits it to the Director. He can do what he wants with it at that point. I don't want department staff to have an overreaching on what WAG does or does not do.

Comment

I think the second paragraph creates more questions than it answers. It kills the timeline too. If you need to have lethal removal, you must be ready so adding another layer in there will add an extra piece to the timeline. That non-department wolf expert piece is unclear, I'd be fine with dropping it.

Comment

I'm going to be honest; this is one where we need you all to have our backs. There are a lot of folks who don't trust us or believe in us. We do the best we can in our job. I would hope you have the flexibility as a team to ask other experts. I think this becomes divisive because it's a symbolism of the lack of trust and not believing in department staff.

Comment

I disagree a bit. To me, it helps with trust. If we got to the point of having an SFA, it's nobody's fault but what we have been doing hasn't been working we need to go out and find the solutions. Why not have another outside group just for ideas.

Comment

I like the idea of the groups being able to reach out and get outside help so what if we have some language, with the whole group and that it's not just the Department. I hear

you all, but I think the spirit of this is not about trusting department staff. The group that is doing the SFA assessment is encouraged to reach out to outside experts for the assessment.

Comment

Maybe we could move this along by adding the non-department wolf experts to the list of groups that must be consulted.

Comment

There's a "must" statement in the first paragraph, based on this discussion is there an option for a second sentence to be something like "if this group determines or believes that external input would be useful" it could become a "may" statement based on the group's judgment. It would not be a "must" but a "may" statement. If deemed the input is helpful, then can then go ahead.

Comment

I want to circle back to the previous comments. Does that sentence change create enough space in the group dynamic about the option to check-in with non-department experts?

Comment

So, the first paragraph talks about doing the assessment. The second paragraph says you have the assessment done and let's have somebody else review it. I think I disagree with moving it up to the first paragraph. The second paragraph is dedicated to reviewing the document. This is something the producer community needs. Multiple people have asked us to fight for this.

Comment

It's like a double-check of your work.

Comment

It's the same for the producer. Yeah, it's a check, and another works.

Comment

So, I appreciate your comments. Honestly, I go back to this, an SFA is a unique situation. Most of the packs aren't causing problems. We have one or two packs that rise to the level of an SFA. Wouldn't we want to do everything possible to make sure we turned over every rock to make sure it didn't work? You're experts but you're still human. As scientists, why wouldn't you want another review of your conclusions? I get none of us like to get our work checked but if you're asking producers to do all of this, you owe it to all of us to make sure you're doing the right things. We do not support

moving it up into the first paragraph. This would be a secondary review of the work previously done.

Comment

Where this currently sits there hasn't been a plan written yet. This is simply a review. I think a review is going to want to give suggestions or comment after. I go back to a previous comment about how these experts would be chosen. Who gets to choose these "experts"?

Comment

This isn't just about what works or doesn't work. I don't think we should overlook that. I think that's maybe where the expert comes in that sees something the group didn't see.

Comment

If we're going into year three of lethal removal, there's going to be some inherent questions between the producer and the Department, so I think another set of eyes looking at it is mandatory. I think you must have a third set of eyes looking into this because something is not working.

Comment

I'm thinking about our own process. Like what we are, there's a group of folks coming together and different opinions in the room. My sense here is how do we empower people to reach an agreement. I understand the concept described; how do you meet these needs where it is mutual learning without shifting the power of the decision. At the end of the day, everyone is equally informed about what the entity brought to the table. It's setting the review up in a way that empowers this group to take that ownership.

Comment

I have real concerns about this and the timeline. I like the idea of the second set of eyes but to me, it's a lot of work and vague.

Comment

I think if the group decides to invite outside experts on their own, that would empower people to do it with mutual learning. They're creating a plan and through that process, they consult others.

Comment

I do think that was what was intended. Maybe there's a list of available experts, which WAG might come up with maybe not? We should have pre-defined experts to be chosen. The group doing the assessment could go a few different routes. The document could read as it being mandatory or that as we've heard a lot of producers want this.

Knowing that there are going to be entities within most of these groups to create an SFA that they will choose to do this. Have the outside experts be part of the assessment and they can be there to provide constructive suggestions on the product. The group is the final decision-maker. The Department, producers, and other entities in deploying deterrents are going to have to be the final decision-makers.

Comment

It is strongly encouraged for groups to seek outside information from other experts and that the comments from outside experts will be included in a summary.

Comment

One of the biggest issues we have is not knowing what is causing these issues in this area. We have to keep the cause in the discussion, not just tools.

Break

Comment

The range riding section is something we need to do as a group. There are still two other sections we haven't touched on yet. We can continue in the section we were just working on or we look at the other two to see what's there?

Comment

My two cents, I don't think that the stuff that's in the section we just covered, I think we can get there I don't think we're going to stumble hard there. I think we're all in a spot that some level of a review is a good thing. I would recommend moving on.

Comment

Let's look at the SFA Conflict Mitigation Plan. There are a few different sections to look at it so let's look section by section. Any thoughts or things that pop out?

Comment

If you scroll down to the "must include" section, that is very detailed there.

Comment

I do have some reaction to that. Since the Department knew this section was coming and we have done brainstorming of creative solutions. We have thought about ways to use the collaring of wolves as a lethal deterrent. We won't be able to as creative with this very specific language.

Comment

Anytime we have this, it does box us in. When you're talking about the number of locations, there's a lot of packs with depredations in varying locations every day. The collar isn't always helpful to prevent anything. It's really important to find proactive tools at this point and developing non-lethals so we can stop depredations from happening and wolves being killed. There are a lot of other tools out there, eyes on the back of the cows or LED lights and even collaring calves. If we have a depredation and go into trap, just the act of putting traps on the ground can be a good deterrent, we saw that in Leadpoint this year. I think it's important to understand that we are taking some tools off the table. Trying to get out and recollar wolves every year is hard, and we are not always successful.

Comment

I appreciate your comments. I guess there's always going to be a disagreement on the value of collar data. Producers will often see the value in having access to that data as more valuable than what some experts think. I appreciate hearing the comments about the fact of setting out the traps as being a beneficial non-lethal. That's an eye-opener to me. I think there is room to work and have conversations about this because we're talking about a subset. In the couple of areas where SFAs do occur is there a capacity to employ more or room to grow at all to meet the needs of producers who want that data. I'm willing to continue the conversation. There are producers out there that value knowing where the wolves are out there within these SFAs.

Comment

I thought I heard you say having the collars out there takes other non-lethals off the table.

Comment

Just the fact of putting the traps on the ground and the negative response of that to the animal. We're focused on where the livestock are. When you are handling wolves around livestock in those areas it becomes a negative reaction by that wolf. Plus, you have the activity of checking traps daily in that area. That's where it becomes that deterrent. Some papers have documented that.

Comment

I feel like we try to make the cattle like the sheep. Cattle are scattered and sheep are bundled. The fact that you are focusing on where the cows are is strange.

Comment

I thought I might push back on this topic and point out the optics around this. I'm happy to say, I think what needs to be considered is that it is almost as if the Department is

saying we are not successful at this so we shouldn't be accountable for this. I think there are producers out there, who are asked to do difficult things and are expected to do the non-lethals and don't have slack. Here the Department is saying this is too challenging and we don't want to say something we can't do. Some folks feel an unfairness on this. I'm not making a judgment call but I think it's a hard thing to say that hasn't been said out loud.

Comment

This came up in our subgroup around collaring, having that many pings a day is going to deteriorate the collar's life. When the collars were first put on wolves, there were a lot of data points. Producers had a lot more luck and intervening. If you have one collar existing and maybe it only lasts a year, even if the battery isn't good, didn't it do its job? That's what the purpose is behind putting this in here. What if getting that second collar in there helps and breaks the whole pattern?

Comment

I think there are certainly some of those feelings. In the past, we've told the producer community and the public that we'll work to deploy collars but as we know it's not always that easy. Some entities will push on us and say that we said we would do something and then for whatever reason we can't. Having two collars in every pack is simply not do-able. We try to maintain as many collars on packs that we can. In conflict packs it is a GPS collar, that's where we're at now. They are getting ready to go put more collars out on packs that already have them which is standard. Now is an opportunity for us to try different things. Part of this is also is the dialogue with a local group about putting a plan together. There are different needs in these landscapes. We can take lessons from other states, but the concept of it all is getting it in a mix together. At some level, we need to document the different concepts we have like maintaining a collar and looking for opportunities to create negative stimulus at the first sign of conflict. We apply those in the local circumstance and environment.

Comment

As you mentioned, we weren't getting location data for Togo or Kettles area packs. For the last several years we have had major conflicts in both of those areas. The producer didn't lose livestock in Togo. There other things we were doing with range riding and focusing on livestock, something was working. We're not saying not to put a collar in those packs. It's not saying we aren't going to put those collars out, but we want to make sure we can do our best to protect livestock and wolves.

Comment

I hear what you're saying. We're not going to find the depredations without more wolves being collared. Just because the collar doesn't have an advantage to the producer, the producer can sit back and take a breath.

Comment

One of the other things we've thrown around is collars on cows or GPS ear tags. That is another way of using the same technology to find potential depredations or just cows that may be missing due to the environment. There was a WSU (Washington State University) study that put them out on calves, thinking with that same technology and how we can be creative in the application.

Comment

That's the item on the creative list that could be paired with other tools. If I were a producer, I would see the value of having the collars. You would be proactive in protecting a live calf versus finding a deceased calf. Is there a way to say these plans must include a dialogue about the following values? Like maintaining GPS collars in packs where it is valuable. Speak to the tools and how they are going to be used to be proactive and balance the need for still having other values integrated.

Comment

I'm wondering if department staff could address the wolf pack movement patterns. My understanding is that there are times of the year where wolves don't travel together. I do understand collaring when possible, I also think that sometimes it gives a bit of a false sense of security. You can get depredations without a full pack being around the wolf with a collar. Someone pointed out that there's a big difference of opinion on the utility of collars. At some point, we need to have some sort of seminar for WAG where we can get information and talk about the collar issue to increase everyone's understanding or comfort in which collars do and don't work.

Comment

If you read the words on the paper, it says "must commit and make attempts to". This is one of the things that makes range riding more successful. In these SFA areas, to find the depredations and to be more successful. There are not even that many SFAs. You're talking about putting tags in the head of thousands of cattle rather than ten wolves. Who has access to data and who has time to sit and watch where the tags are moving? I don't understand the pushback from the Department to do something like this. Focus on the SFAs so that we're giving them the focus on what needs to be done.

Comment

Just know that we already work to deploy GPS collars and tags. In many of the packs, we try to get a second collar out anyway.

Comment

You're saying you're already doing it and we're asking to change the data so that they provide more information.

Comment

We already do that. This is not pushback. We're attempting and see folks interpret that differently. We're not making that up and to see it play out. We're flagging that as part of the discussion. Staff, help me, there are right now in areas we flagged, there are producers who do not want collars. I am trying to acknowledge that there are other things to think about in this. Does deploying a collar supersede trying new things? It's not just a pushback on this stuff, but in the first part of this, we already do that a lot. We want to recognize other values out there.

Comment

If we have a collar in a pack during the summer months, that is when the pack is most dispersed. Most of the time the breeding female or adult will be at the den. You're going to have wolves scattered throughout the territory. Usually, they come together more during the wintertime. As far as collaring goes, we try and get a collar in those packs and capabilities for several locations. For us to catch a wolf it's 10,000 dollars to fly a helicopter and 1,800 dollars for a collar. We usually have about 36,000 hours of helicopter time to collar a single wolf. We do try to get these collars out, and you're already doing work to put a tag in a calf's ear. It would probably be the same price to tag all of those calves rather than collar one wolf. In some of these areas, we haven't had a grapevine from the producer. You end up with a county specialist and kicking wolves off the lands. At two locations a day you can find clusters, it's not about the number of locations or having a collar. We can get the information and there are better tools to do that. We've been trying and we had collars in Profanity, Sherman, and OPT, and these areas, it's not proactive it's a reactive tool.

Comment

I have questions. Some producers don't want collars, were you talking about producers who don't want collars on wolves or cattle?

Comment

Some producers don't want collared wolves in the area.

Comment

I would be interested in understanding why. I also noticed when conflict staff was describing the ear tags rather than collaring wolves, I was wondering why you thought that wasn't a great idea?

Comment

Most of the producers out there do not run their cattle through a chute to put tags on them. There's a significant number of producers who do not run the calves through a chute in the spring. Some producers don't use the collar data. They have not been successful for whatever reason.

Comment

I'm feeling guilty here. There's not a resistance here, we're talking about Kettles right now and Togo, but the team is getting ready to go put out a second collar in Togo in a short period. There isn't a resistance for this item but the "must" is tough and we want it to be more creative than that. Certainly, we're not out of the phase where we're getting out of the collar business.

Comment

It seems to me; this shows the cultural divide between those who see collars are useful and those who don't. Maybe a better way to put it is, there is not a clear recognition that most producers do want access to collar data especially in areas where we know there is a heightened risk. It's not just two collars but its access to data in a timely manner and for it to be useful to them. The data is not deployed as usefully as it could be. We're talking about a unique area, not applied across the landscape but I agree that the Department needs flexibility. I think over the evening; I've been recognizing that culturally that the Department does need the flexibility to deploy these tools. On the other hand, producers expect that the Department is going to provide them with good information.

Comment

Yes, we will be attempting to put a collar in Togo next week. We don't know if the collar is still submitting a signal. I don't want folks to think that we're making that promise. Yes, we're attempting but just putting it out there. The data not getting to producers in a timely manner, I sat in a truck for nine hours yesterday waiting for a deer that has had a collar for a long time. We don't necessarily know how the collars will work in the field.

Comment

I've never heard of that technology wrinkle.

Comment

Some collars fail more than others. Cost sometimes gets in the way. The companies that don't fail as much are sometimes twice as much.

Comment

I think what I'm hearing the Department says, is that they are looking for grace and flexibility, and creativeness around this. In addition to that, it's important that if we give the Department grace on collars then producers should be given grace in their non-lethals. I get the width of two different sets of standards around this. The grace must go both ways, as we are all navigating the same challenging waters. These special areas are circumstances where we need this. The Fish and Wildlife Commission is being asked what this will look like. I would encourage everyone to look at this as a unifying moment and that it's around the flexibility and creativity side of this. Everybody should get the same grace.

Comment

By no means are we looking for double standards? The same type of flexibility producers and conservationists are looking for we are as well. Our history tells us what will be read and believed and based on a "must" statement and when that hasn't happened in the past, the Department failed and didn't meet their obligations in the eyes of some. The very prescriptive nature of how many downloads, it's not even that collars that fail. We have to recognize these download intervals but because of canopy cover and terrain, that information may not be downloaded on that regular schedule. This is where producers get frustrated, they believe we have access to information that they are not seeing. As soon as the animal has moved the situation changes, the downloads occur and there could be multiple days of downloads at once.

Comment

It is all about creativity. We have created a draft about how we envisioned this process playing out. I guess to sum it up, it would be a group of WDFW staff members, range riders, US Forest Service staff, producers, and others to brainstorm and be creative. It's not that we're trying to push back, but we don't want to be boxed in from using those creative things. That's my hesitation.

Comment

Can we use these last few minutes to go over the language, before we turn it over to public comment?

Comment

Listening to everybody for the first time, it is a very respectful group. I am curious as to what the decision-making process is when you have a conflict like this. This is a tough issue and how do you plan to move through this? How does everyone get to agree?

Comment

This group has come up with “sufficient consensus” for decision making. There is a threshold, no more than three people can disagree, and those three people can’t represent a particular viewpoint.

Comment

Thank you.

Comment

Collar data due to terrain and how it may be old, the same would be the case for the ear tag data I would assume.

Comment

Ear tag data is different. I would like to see the last section. We will send a template for discussion later for all WAG members.

Comment

Let’s review the lethal removal decisions in the SFA section? Any reactions?

Comment

I think we talked about taking out the last sentence because it is redundant. I think it’s stated in the first part.

Comment

Let’s think about tomorrow. We are scheduled for noon until 4:30 pm. We don’t know how much time we will need tomorrow afternoon so we will have public comment at the beginning of the day. What do we need to improve before the next grazing period? If this group wants to make a recommendation to the Department that could be done. What do we need to accomplish tomorrow? Concerns?

No objections

Public comment at 4:00 pm

**Wolf Advisory Group
January 7, 2021, Meeting Notes
Zoom Meeting (Day 2)**

WAG members: Samee Charriere, Tom Davis, Dave Duncan, Dan Paul, Diane Gallegos, Todd Holmdahl, Jess Kayser, Jessica Kelley, Bill Kemp, Lynn Okita, Nick Martinez, Rick Perleberg, Lisa Stone, Caitlin Scarano, and Paula Swedeen

WDFW staff members: Candace Bennett, Dan Brinson, Ben Maletzke, Donny Martorello, Joe McCanna, Scott McCorquodale, Steve Pozzanghera, Annemarie Prince, Grant Samsill, Julia Smith, and Jeff Wade

WDFW Commissioners: Lorna Smith

US Forest Service: Robert Garcia

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

Welcome and check-in

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

Review the agenda and make any adjustments

Rob presents the agenda to the group.

Meeting Purpose

Special Focus Area (SFA) section in the Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol.

Comment

I think you all received yesterday's notes. We will display that on the screen. What we reviewed yesterday were six different parts. We seem to have general support for four of six parts. There are a couple of parts we're still wrestling with. One of them had to do with the review required period. The other was the content of a conflict mitigation plan. The Department sent out a draft of what a conflict mitigation plan might contain. I'm going to open it up to the group. Any ideas or starting points?

Comment

I will venture out there. I've been thinking more about and talked internally about the section dealing with the Department's commitment stuff. Coming back to that perspective and thinking about it. So, let's envision a scenario where we're trying to do all we can to understand wolves and cattle in these SFAs. There are no guarantees in wolf trapping so I struggle with the "must" statement. We would attempt to deploy two collars in a pack. One is a conflict collar and the other is a long-term monitoring collar or VHF collar. For the sake of this, in this plan, we continue to attempt to deploy two collars

in SFA packs. That's currently what we do, and we'll give it all we have but there are no guarantees to that. We had a conversation about ways to improve the monitoring of livestock as well. With the effort being, let's monitor wolves and livestock. That's part of the creative solution and ear tag transmitters. Not the piece we put out there as maintaining those collars but coupling that with improved ways to monitor livestock. The Department makes the data through our data sharing agreement available to producers. We have instituted changes from the Fish and Wildlife Commission. We would continue to give producers access to that. The agreement is there.

Comment

Question, in the data-sharing agreement, was there something about work by the Fish and Wildlife Commission on those agreements? Could you let me know what you mean by that?

Comment

There was some language in the consequent section of the data-sharing agreements of breaching it that our staff shepherded through. Our role is really to make that available through a data-sharing agreement and that we would continue to use that agreement to help producers in those areas. I want it to be clear that we don't just provide the data but it's through a data-sharing agreement.

Comment

When we worked out the data-sharing stuff, we looked at changing the section and all the stuff that didn't go through a data display. We worked with other offices and the program itself and it ended up being a business agreement between WDFW and the producers. To shore up the program and make it fit more into the business agreement we addressed that in the agreement itself. We also know there's a lot of components on how the collars function and nuisances about how the data comes in and the sensitivity of the data and none of that was on the previous form. It was added so that when a producer signs the agreement, they see all of that stuff. The agreement itself did change just to follow suit. The other thing that changed was the determination year. If there are any changes in packs over in allotment or got a new collar in a pack, it is addressed each year.

Comment

This is the biggest amendment to what we were working on before. For me looking at it, some of this doesn't sit right with the required additional collars out there. I want to hear more thoughts. There are wolves out there and issues and lethal order is determined by the Director. Just the act of going out there and setting traps has been shown to deter wolf activity. I'm wondering how with collars now out there; it seems guaranteed to move to lethal removal. Is that the intention?

Comment

I'll take a shot at it. This is one of the things several producers have brought to me. The collar data helps us find depredations. In the period in which the data points are uploaded, I know there's been a fear of range riders that are chasing the data points. All the current data points do is help us find the depredations. If we can get a second collar in there with quicker uploads that gives us the option to intervene. If they are frequenting an area in and out, then we have time to do that. With the 12-hour uploads, it doesn't do us a lot of good to intervene. Some of the producers involved with collar data, in the beginning, have said it was one of the things that producers found useful. The points will be four hours late or whatever we set it to. It's one of the things that producers in the Northeast have said was useful and they're saying they want it especially in areas with lots of problems.

Comment

I don't want to jump into the middle of this, but everyone be aware that it will get re-hashed when it does come to the Commission. Point of clarification, it was my understanding that originally the collar data would not be used to find depredations. If you know where your cattle are and know they're being preyed upon then you can move them away. I am concerned with the idea that the collars are being used to find collar depredations.

Comment

Going back, there is a mixed bag here. The collar data that is being talked about is when a producer logs in they see the raw points or activity center that has been calculated. It's essentially where over time those points are stacking upon each other like a heat map. When a producer logs in, they will see the activity center, which gives them a sense of where the wolves are. If the data is frequent enough, they may see clusters. The collar data does help with that. Producers do use it for monitoring depredation activity, and when you see the clusters you obviously want to go check it out. From the producer side, we have heard there is a timing element here. I want to validate that yes; the Department has used collars for lethal, but our collaring activity is not solely for that purpose. There are a variety of values in collars. Yes, we are committed to continuing to try and deploy GPS and long-term monitoring collars. We do want to look for opportunities to work with producers and try other things. Some states, do it after the first depredation and if you haven't used traps, they will do that to collar not kill. They use that as a negative stimulus. Every pack is in a different situation. We want to work with producers and mutually learn.

Comment

You were talking about the collar data, so I wanted to show you. I do want to address the other concerns regarding the use of collar data to find depredations. It's the only thing that's helpful when they're so spread out, that the only use is to see where the clusters are, it's an indicator to me that I need to go to that spot. With the way it's currently set up, it's the only use we have as producers.

Comment

I understand the use of collars to prevent conflict so thanks for clarifying that.

Comment

I think I heard an acknowledgment that the Department already makes a commitment or attempt to collar two wolves in a pack. The way it's written now, the Department is already trying to do that.

Comment

I would word it differently, but yes, essentially the concept is there. The Department will attempt to deploy two collars but not have the hour requirements because things don't always work out in those timelines. The second bullet I would shorten and say the Department will make available the data points to producers using the data-sharing agreement.

Comment

I've heard from producers that the higher frequency is what allows the collar to be used for the proactive deterrent piece (being able to intervene). I couldn't tell from what you were saying if the Department is willing to do that in these SFAs but to try and get downloads as frequently as possible. If that is what you were saying is there any way to put language in there that says something about the frequency level itself?

Comment

When we say a conflict collar, we're talking in the range of attempted fix every four to six hours. The reason that we should think about that kind of detail in this, that could go into the plans, as the collars advance, our staff can deploy a collar that has that capacity and do everything right, or they can wait until there is actually depredations occurring and then turn it up. Collars now have that ability. That's where I'm thinking we need to get the GPS collar out there and there are other things to think about like when you turn on the higher fixed rate and what does the local group want?

Comment

There are right now, several different collars. Every time the collar takes a fix it uses battery life. Every time it talks to the satellites it's a whole different system. Some you can change schedules, but it depends on the type of collar. There are capabilities in both but there's a lot of cost to the battery life. The more you talk to the collar the more the battery life goes. If you're getting six locations a day and asking it to collect and send information to the satellites, it's going to last maybe ten months. We may have it for one summer but usually not multiple summers. I think people lose sight of the fact that this technology isn't perfect. We do our best to get functional collars that do what we need.

Comment

I appreciate the response. I'm trying to say is there some language in there that you could agree to that expresses the intent. I think it's understandable. If you have a collar that's set to give a reading for however long that there might be circumstances that make it so it can't happen. When you're in an SFA and there's already more stress and tension and wolves and cattle are interacting, people are asking that you set up the readings to be as frequently as possible. I think what would get us to some resolution is an expression of intent to make that technology when needed.

Comment

I have a question about the data-sharing agreement, I don't know what's in it and if it's something that can be breached but how would that be handled?

Comment

I'm trying to balance getting the questions out and answers. Is there a quick answer?

Comment

There is a disclaimer in there about dealing with a breached contract or if data is shared beyond.

Comment

I know internally we have talked about frustrations with collars and how they work. I look at the same thing producers look at and having multiple days of no downloads is irritating. We've talked about VHF collars and the longevity and use of them as deterrents. We've talked about VHF because we've had those collars on animals for more than five years. We've talked a lot about how they can be used as deterrents. It has come up a couple of times, but certain producers or locations are better for GPS collars or for example the producer may not use those collars in those areas. In these SFAs, we should be giving latitude and ownership to the SFA groups to make those decisions.

Comment

Yes, we would be comfortable with the intent being to deploy a collar with four fixes a day or deploy a collar that can control the fixed-rate and then to address what was just said, with input and dialogue within the local team. In the second sentence that is highlighted, we could put in some intent language. I think in the first sentence of bullet number we want to call out one GPS and one long-term collar. It's important to acknowledge that we're pairing up different technology to get the full picture.

Comment

For this section, we got the proposed addition in the first sentence and the second sentence needs to describe an intent to focus more on technology in these SFAs. Is anyone uncomfortable with these changes?

No objections

Break

Comment

I deliberated on saying this, it's not a concern or comment but it was some language I messed around with over break. I can share it quickly. The language was focused on giving everyone more freedom and ability in the mitigation or plan formation. This is what I recommended as a language change to consider, "in SFAs, the Department will work with producers on deploying collars that meet the needs of the affected producers. This could include increased fix rates, more collars, etc.....".

Comment

A handful of us got together before the meeting today, this is was a little bit of working backward. We were trying to develop language to help capture the spirit in Section 9. Going back to the definition, I was working off a generation before this draft. I'll just read the definition that we came up with and maybe that would help. The definition could be, "special focus areas can be created in all or a portion of a geographic area where livestock depredations have occurred in two of the last three years". The understanding is that geographic is standard whereas pack territories will overlap. The addition after the lethal removal of wolves has been authorized or significant wolf-livestock conflicts have occurred, and the Department deems it likely that conflict will reoccur.

Comment

I think the idea is that we're not modifying or taking away the core concept as an SFA being a place where conflict has occurred in the last two out of three years but we would add this additional option.

Comment

I think that with the conflict will reoccur in the future part of the sentence, the idea was that it will continue in the subsequent year so that it can be designated as an SFA.

Comment

The thing that hits me is that we talked about the need in the definition that there is no ambiguity in it so there are not different interpretations. The word likely, how does the Department deal with that? That's going to be tough on us, and I'm wondering if there is a way to frame it for the same outcome?

Comment

I'm not comfortable with this. Historically, we said it was going to be lethal removal for the last two out of three years. In this modification, we dropped that again. This reads to me that if we have depredations and there is lethal removal once then we have a lot of SFAs.

Comment

To address that point, I think the spirit of that is that if there have been some deterrents put in and there are still multiple depredations in a short span it would still allow the Department to have some decision-making process around that. To your other point, I thought that yesterday's part of the discussion was about more flexibility and range of motion in the recommendations coming from this.

Comment

I think what we were trying to capture is a situation like Leadpoint where there were multiple depredations. Could something like that be an SFA for the following season? What kind of language can we use to capture that scenario?

Comment

In the protocol when department staff are trying to figure out whether or not to go to lethal, they consider whether depredation behavior will continue. There's a judgment call in there and it's the same here but it's over a longer time frame. Leadpoint is a good example, large pack, and area that was long skinny and in between pastures and forested areas and there was a rendezvous site nearby. Instead of waiting for a whole another year to see if there are depredations if it looks like the wolves will set up shop again, maybe kind of speed up the decision-making process so we can try to prevent it from happening a second year. I don't think the idea was to have an SFA every place where there was just one year of depredations but to do a risk analysis.

Comment

It's probably not my place to say this, what you just described we already do. We use the literature to guide our resources and what we know, for example, the size of the wolf pack, depredation history, and livestock interactions. I would call Leadpoint a focus area but for my opinion, I'm hoping there is a difference between an SFA versus just these focus areas.

Comment

I understand the concept that the group is thinking about and like what was said, we're doing this already. I can't speak for producers, there is a nervous sense out there about how widespread this is and there's misinformation about how many people this will affect. When we went through this exercise, we did a pool internally about the packs that we thought would meet the criteria. The acknowledgment of repeated depredations and removal and it's the thing that we're trying to change. Do we start more focused on the way the definition is now and build receptivity? This is still a guiding document. I'm nervous about taking a big bite of the apple.

Comment

Something that was said struck me. It feels like we've heard multiple times, "we already do that". So, part of me thinks, why don't we know that? I think back on the reports that we got yesterday, those guys didn't tell us anything about what they're doing. As the informative body that WAG is and doing it would help us it gets a better background. It feels like we've already heard "we do that"; how come we didn't know that? I would encourage for the future that Department updates are more informative.

Comment

There's value in keeping flexibility with the broader statement at the end of the paragraph so I think we're still wrestling with this.

Comment

I think there were good points raised about how the Department is already doing and planning things. So maybe what we do is just add a footnote that brings extra attention to these areas as we just described. It's just a way to document what was described and give people confidence that there will be an intermediate set of attention on situations like these.

Comment

I wanted to go back to the data-sharing agreement piece. The changes as to what was described in the agreement, are not all that new. Those changes have been in place throughout the 2020 season. I did not want those to come across as being new and those were not changes that the Commission made. The changes described earlier was with the AG's office. The last point is that there is still work to be done on data sharing.

We are reinvigorating the data sharing committee, and there are still discussions to be had about the issues of blackout periods and data communication issues. There's work to be done. The work that has been done is not new nor a Commission action.

Comment

Currently, data sharing is being displayed to those with a data-sharing agreement. Single point data which is a dot on a map that represents the last successful download of information on a collared wolf and then there are two others. Kernel density estimates, which is like a heat map and it identifies and allows the viewer to look at areas where there have been multiple occurrences and creates a color gradient based on use. The third form of display is the section block approach, where it colors a section based on the frequency of points that have been identified in a section. There are a number of terms and conditions in the data-sharing agreement, if the agreement and terms are breached it allows us to terminate the agreement.

Comment

We had some modifications under the review required section. The idea is that we were trying to incorporate the group discussion we had yesterday. We could change the heading of this subsection to assessment because that's what it's talking about. The second change adds a new sentence, that starts at the end of the first sentence that says, "groups formed to conduct the assessment are strongly encouraged to seek outside expertise from individuals or groups focused on reducing wolf conflict". The group itself should have agency in figuring out who those experts are and who they reach out to. What this did was removed the sense that there was an assessment that would be sent out for review and finalized. This just incorporates the outside review from the start.

Comment

The problem I have with that and the SFAs, what are we doing today versus what we have been doing usually. I'm assuming that we are always seeking outside expertise from groups and individuals to get the best information whether it's from internal or external groups.

Comment

I don't mind having this in here. We do reach out to a variety of researchers. You are correct that we already do that, but I don't have a problem with it being here either.

Comment

What would you do differently then?

Comment

We've had this discussion before, I still get the sense that's what different is trying to get everybody together at the same time to analyze a specific situation. I understand department staff say they do a lot of hard work and talk to a lot of people but when these really difficult areas emerge what seems different to me is a concentrated effort in the room to lay out everything that has been tried and learned that includes what the range rider arrangements were or other nonlethal tools and the decisions that were made at the time. All of that comes together at the same time. I know there's a lot of conversations but having the group intelligence is important. I don't think we've seen a document that is proactive at the beginning of the season and here's our best assessment of what's happened and the plan we're working towards.

Comment

Thanks, that makes sense. What I heard is that the planning document and getting everyone together is the big difference between an SFA and a non-SFA. There may be a more direct way to say that.

Comment

Are we ready to go back to the definition? Are we ready to agree to that and see how people feel?

Comment

We would keep the definition but include a footnote that clarifies.

Comment

I thought we agreed that this is for after two years of incremental or lethal removal in the definition? From our last meetings, I thought that's where we were coming from. I remember the department staff telling us the stuff they were doing ahead of time, but we didn't want it to be so broad that it watered it down. To me, it looks like we went from two years of removal to only one.

Comment

I feel the same. I guess my perspective is that going back to where we had left it at the end of the day yesterday. Can we move that phrase "in two of the last three years" at the end after "authorized"? Does that better reflect your expectation?

Comment

I'd like to hear from others if they have issues.

Comment

How many areas would we have under this definition right now? We would want to it be unique.

Comment

That's the same question that came up a couple of sessions ago.

Comment

It's in the draft we circulated before this meeting. With the definition of repeated depredations and incremental lethal removal by the Department in two out of three years that would include Togo and the greater Kettle range area. It would be those two pack geographic areas.

Comment

Let's go around the room and see if people are comfortable with the definition? I'll review the concept and ideas we're talking about. Let's look at the goal section?

No objections

Comment

How about the Assessment section?

Comment

The intent was to remove the pink section. The experts would be included in the document rather than reviewing it afterward. You may want to highlight the "assessment document" as a deliverable.

Comment

Okay, thank you.

Comment

What about the "mitigation plan" section?

No objections

Comment

Let's look at the "plans may include" sections.

Comment

Is this plan different from the assessment document or the same thing?

Comment

I think the idea is that it would be a two-stage process. You have the assessment and then based on that you make a mitigation plan. They could be folded into the same document, but you need to do the assessment plan first. In the language that some of us worked on, we added a statement about the group being encouraged to consult outside experts in the development of the mitigation plan.

Comment

Under the creation of an SFA do we want the wording to be about the Director “may” create or “will” create.

Comment

I think it would be a “may” in this situation. We just make recommendations to them so I assume it is a “may”.

Comment

Was there time spent yesterday on the discussion around on what if a producer doesn't agree to this or sign this?

Comment

No, we did not discuss it yesterday.

Comment

There's a contradiction in the “must” and “will attempt”, maybe it should be “the Department will...” and then a list.

Comment

I am now looking at it, it has taken a bit of a turn from where we started. Data sharing as we talked about, is important to many producers. We have stepped quite a distance now from a level of commitment to work with affected producers and the Department will give us what they want. This part is less satisfying to me.

Comment

I think the only thing we were trying to share is that if a producer wants access to the data, they sign a data-sharing agreement. It's not that we just provide the data but there is a business agreement that they need to sign. That's the mechanics of it. I don't want the language to read like we just provide it to them.

Comment

To me, that's a secondary issue. After a producer has a business agreement signed with the Department, what do they receive after that? This has been sanitized so it doesn't make any commitment that producers can expect.

Comment

I fully agree. This is something very specific that producers wanted and now it's very vanilla and doesn't give me any confidence that there will be an effort to put a second collar in or more data points. I don't know how many times I can express how important it is. The intention isn't to kill wolves, it's to get in between the wolves and the livestock. Without better data, you might as well not give us data. I don't agree with what's on paper.

Comment

I understand, but you need to understand that there's nobody in the Department trying to be a roadblock here. We're doing our best to make these tools available to you all. We're committed to try and put out a GPS and VHF collars. The purpose of the GPS collar is so that we can increase the fix rates during the overlap of wolves and cows during the summer. That is the intent. There is flexibility there on how those fix rates will look. The whole point of the collar is increased frequency during the summer. Let the team putting this plan together figure out what this is going to look like.

Comment

If they change the word "this could include" to "this will include" would that satisfy you?

Comment

Maybe that gets us there. It's still somewhat weak but it does create an expectation that fixed rates would be provided. The fixed rates will vary by location and the needs of producers.

Comment

There's just no guarantee in there. I get you'll try, but these are important areas, so you need to do more than try.

Comment

I'm wondering if you all have some suggestions on how the language could be changed. You can't guarantee a certain number of collars will be in a pack. I get it's frustrating.

Comment

I do agree. There is the earnest desire to have it at a particular time, but it's not always possible due to technology. To your point, the language is important to us but can it be captured in a goal statement above, so it captures the value. It doesn't tie the hands of the Department but establishes that it is something of value.

Comment

I agree. I understand that it's hard to guarantee. You can guarantee the effort. What are you going to do about the Department when they don't make a good faith effort? It needs to be called out. Can we call in someone else to trap? There are other people who are trained and if those efforts or attempts are not being successful then bring in those people.

Comment

The effort is enormous. It's all the team does. Maybe it would be helpful for us to describe it. You cannot guarantee you will catch a wolf every time. The value statement is a good thing and that is our intent. Our intent is to have a fixed rate that works for producers. At the end of the day, there is a reality that there is chance in that stuff.

Comment

I do think, best effort is better than a reasonable effort. You could use "best-effort" since that's what they use in corporate documents a lot.

Comment

I understand what has been said but with the Department if they are making the effort that they say they are it's not gotten down to the producers. This has created a lot of distrust with the Department. This is a trust issue. Over the last decade, trust has almost disappeared between producers and the Department. If you think you're doing the job, you might be but not you're not disclosing it. The trust needs to be rebuilt. Just saying that you're doing it has not built trust.

Comment

I understand the intent of producers, I'm not comfortable with saying that department staff should risk safety to trap wolves or use helicopters to collar a second wolf. It doesn't make sense to risk human safety. If it can be done without the helicopter that's fine but I think doing it a second time is not something I can agree to.

Comment

I'm frustrated hearing the comments, I know neither of you is in the northeast. We've gone over many times, the amount of effort that goes into trapping and other things we do. I'm frustrated to hear that said, we have in some places at least portrayed that effort. I don't think it's fair to say we haven't communicated that or put in the effort.

Comment

It upsets me that you feel that way, I'm just saying that the communication is not working with producers. It's obvious because the trust has gone way downhill in that area.

Break

Comment

We're wrestling with the language regarding some language changes.

Comment

I have been looking for little things. In the third bullet, instead of "make collar data available" add "GPS conflict collar" so it's obvious.

Comment

It's the only collar data we have, by definition it will be GPS. We can't provide data unless it's GPS, the VHF collars depend. Regardless, any collar data comes from a GPS collar.

Comment

I was just thinking if there is a way, we could put ear tags on cattle and incorporate that into this section. If they couldn't do two collars, then they could be provided with GPS tags for a certain number of cattle?

Comment

I think that's something that's going to come up in the plans and be a situational thing for producers. I foresee those coming up in the plans in these SFAs. This is what we're trying to get out of the Department regarding what they're going to do with these plans. Can there be language about if the Department is being unsuccessful and to bring in a third-party trapper? Why not hire someone else?

Comment

I don't think that's the way to build trust. I understand it's frustrating, we're talking about one of the most elusive critters on the globe. The tracking success doesn't matter who you have. They catch wolves every single year. I understand the lack of trust; I would look for ways to build that trust in our team. Whether that is offering to say "come along

with us” or getting to know producers better. I don’t believe we need outside trappers. I think it is damaging.

Comment

I want to suggest that there needs to be some intentional and mediated discussions between producers and department staff about where the trust has broken down. Someone needs to talk to all the people involved and find where the lack of trust is coming from and how it affects how the communication of lack of trust and producers affects department staff. We need to figure out a way to repair that trust. We need to get back to everybody assuming the best intent. It's heartbreaking to see this but this is a continuous barrier to progress.

Comment

I like that idea. The foundation of trust is communication. If it's not in here already, some level of weekly, daily, or monthly updates between the two groups would be useful.

Comment

It is an interpersonal and communication thing. Trust is developed between a team. That’s why I don’t think an outside trapper helps build trust. We need to work together on things. It is hard for us not to react. We get a lot of flak, sometimes as a state employee, you have to have thick skin. That’s truer for our specialists than anyone. They put themselves in helicopters and risk their lives every day. I am protecting my staff and we’re people. They bust their asses doing this stuff and it's hard when you receive that kind of input. I wanted to go back to what we were working on and offer something. Someone had talked about “can we put something in there that describes the value” and I think we can. We should add a statement about the values we’re talking about. Something like, “it will be a priority in SFAs to collar two wolves, one of which will be outfitted with a GPS collar. The Department will work with affected producers to establish fix rates and trapping schedules that meet their needs”.

Comment

To do with the trust, I trust everybody in the Department and understand it is a difficult job to do. What’s going to build trust is results. I think that’s where it's coming from. As a producer, you expect results for your animals. I understand what you guys are doing.

Comment

It's obvious there’s the trust barrier, are there words we can use in this type of document that is acceptable for now or not? Is this a bridge too far at this time?

Comment

I guess if what's been said is you have the team to do it then put the words on the paper that says you will bring an outside trapper to come in and do it if you can't. That's what it comes down to. We trust these other people to get the job done.

Comment

I think that's the thing that will lead to division, not togetherness. We're dancing around the reality, of results. We're dealing with a situation where you can't guarantee you will catch a wolf. There will always be situations when we can't trap a wolf. There's a lot more trying than capturing. Our staff catch animals every year. I don't think that bringing in another trapper advances us in the trust component.

Comment

I disagree that it brings us apart. The Grouse Flats had two depredations and there were attempts to put in a second collar two years ago. There's still not collar in the pack. If you look at the data of the pack, they are predictable. Their home is the same spot all year. Maybe you don't have enough people to do these things. I fully understand you can't guarantee you will catch a wolf and producers feel that this is one thing we need in this document.

Comment

I want to reiterate. You know where that pack goes because there's a collar in there. We put a collar in Leadpoint, in the Wedge and Togo. We do shift around with our resources on where to go. You can't sit around and wait in one area for success. We do that work strategically. There are times like last year, we went into Huckleberry to try and get the second collar and in five attempts we were not successful. Either it's not a place we can get into with the helicopter and it's not because we aren't good enough, but these are tough animals to catch. You have a collar down there that gets four fixes a day. We put them in where we can and do the best we can. When it goes back to the trust issues, the first thing I do is talk to the producer. I talked with range riders every day. We do work hard; we aren't there daily but the conflict specialists work with us and even county specialists. On the ground, I think it's a lot different than what I hear in this meeting today. I want to set the record straight.

Comment

It seems like a concrete step is just a workshop. Any producer that wants to come to a workshop can and it would take effort. A workshop where all the people who trap for the Department can lay out what they do. You need to try and work through what the frustrations are. I think when I hear from department staff, "we're doing what you say we're not" but the producers are hearing from folks that efforts are not being perceived that way. I would encourage a next step to get through this.

Comment

I think we do have to take a step outside of today to work on this. It's a people thing. Its trust between individual people. I want to bring it back to what we are working on here today, we are talking about these SFAs. We will make the best effort to deploy the GPS collar and long-term monitoring collar. These areas will not go without effort.

Comment

From a producer standpoint, the last thing we want to do is go to another meeting. I think everyone has been communicating the efforts. The producers aren't getting the results they need but at the same time, they want their results somehow. I don't think having a workshop or another meeting is going to get you what you want.

Comment

Thinking outside the box, these will be new things we try this year. Is there a way before the season started that the producers and department staff and others come up for something where someone could get information and could attempt to restore the trust?

Comment

If you look at the term "best-effort" one might assume a third-party expert may be part of that.

Comment

Trust is two-ways. I think you can't just expect the Department to fix things and not make an effort on your side. The idea that producers wouldn't want to meet or go along with department staff is frustrating to me. I am now getting frustrated on behalf of department staff. You guys aren't hearing them say that when they don't trap a wolf it's not their fault. Bringing an outside person will not help this. The Department is saying they are willing to bring you along and describe and they continue to spend every day of the summer out there to help. All they hear back is that they aren't good enough. You, producers, need to figure out how to improve trust as well.

Comment

We've done this before. If you bring in an outside trapper that will show us your seriousness and trust etc. and we did. I enrolled our staff in doing that. We had a trapper come from Idaho, the trapper said "I don't know why I'm here. I'm not doing anything different than what you would do". The reality is, there is a struggle on the results side of things. The wolves are smart. When it is a naïve pack that you would get the best results. I think we're missing and trying to resolve the conundrum. Trap success is low and we're giving it everything we got. The team has described that they keep good contact. We have the calendars to show that we've been out there.

Comment

I appreciate the topic of trust issues and there are good ideas on how to address that. I do not believe that bringing in third-party trappers increases trust. It is divisive and relies more on externals rather than addressing the relationship and trust between the Department and producers. When I look at the movement on the first two bullets from today and I read those, I have to ask the group if they can just read the words on the paper. I'm starting to wonder if we have lost sight of what has been put on the paper. There's not much weasel there. I'd ask the group to consider those words. These are two pretty good bullets that I think fully incorporated your concerns and issues expressed today and yesterday.

Comment

When I read the words on the paper, I don't know how else to beef it up without a guarantee. Can producers help us with some language here? I wouldn't feel comfortable with much more than this.

Comment

I think if you had a legal document, this is about as much guarantee you can get. That's as close as you're going to get when you can't guarantee something.

Comment

I do believe the second bullet is a long step from where we were yesterday. I think that we've gotten into apples and oranges. I do think we've made great gains here. The trust conversation has distracted us from this. It's good because it puts the issue on the table. Remember in earlier WAG meetings we heard department staff say that the use of collars isn't important and that they would be phasing out the use over time. Those kinds of statements resonate into the minds of producers especially at times when we're trying to deal with these things. I am more comfortable with this language and the Department's willingness to meet us in the middle.

Comment

I think we have a good document here with goals but before the day is over you're going to ask me to "yay" or "nay" on this document and what you're asking me to do is speak for a bunch of people whose whole livelihood is based on raising cattle in wolf habitat. Couldn't we somehow get these people into the process? I think some producers would come to a meeting. To write this document and say here it is guys, be cooperative and I'm not comfortable speaking for them on this document.

Comment

This is overarching guidance. We want to empower these local teams to decide what works best for them. There should be wiggle room in those plans and when it's all said and done there needs to be receptivity for that team. I think we need to work on the structure of it and trust in that team to go into the details.

Comment

How does the group want to continue or use time?

Comment

I think we should break at 4:30 pm and come up with some new ideas.

Comment

I agree a break would be good. Maybe there's a sub-group that gets together to discuss this.

Comment

If there is a value for WAG to do some grammar cleanup? Just grammatical no content. I think we need a break, but I think we need to reconvene like next week. We can't jam the process that follows this. I think we need to prioritize the importance of this in our world.

Comment

I would like to get a copy of where we are today and take it back to producers and see where we're at. Will they cooperate or try to explain what the goal is? See how we score with them.

Comment

Does the group give department staff permission to clean up the document's grammar?

No objections

Comment

How many people should we get input from before we consider this a solid document? When people contact me with suggestions, I do my best to address them during the meeting. I understand the need for producers to take to others about the document but it's not always a fair balance between conservationists. If someone in the public has a comment that they want to be incorporated and it goes outside of the bounds, we talk about then what do we say?

Comment

We're trying to do so much. Not to add more stress, we're literally at the juncture right now where things need to be put in motion. Some calves are already on the ground in these areas. It's time to meet with producers now and have stuff in motion. There is no easy path here. One option would be to meet immediately and get this done, if we're not able to do that is that we're not going to have this in time for the spring. The Department would be trying to implement what we can and have heard to date. There's still stuff to be incorporated but we don't want to sit another year without doing it. That's the reality.

Comment

I think that where we are right now with this language, that we have met the main issues of the folks that I talked with. I think we've addressed key issues here in the group. I'm comfortable with where we've landed. I think we've made good progress here and another point, when is enough? As a group what is our responsibility to go back to the people we represent? We're here to do a job but in this case, we are dealing with an issue that has real economic impacts on the producers in these areas. I think it's worth it to be additionally careful and cautious to make sure the language meets the economic and mental health needs of our rural communities and ranchers. I support moving forward next week.

Comment

Do we do a subcommittee versus meeting next week or at the end of the month? The longer we take the longer it will take to get implemented.

Comment

We're advising the Department and the Department says that they need this now. I think we should try to wrap this up this week. The whole intent of this is for producers to be a part of the team that implements this anyway.

Comment

Do we think we're close enough to where we can wrap this up? I don't want to push anyone but if you're feeling like we're close, we can offer time to help move it along.

Comment

The plan going forward, you will all receive a clean version of the document. Department staff will check-in with some of you to see how close or far we are. We will use the information to see if we need to set a meeting.

Comment

We also never circled back to the questions at the beginning. I don't know if that's part of the check-in but some of those questions need full WAG discussion. Can we schedule an hour or two phone calls?

Comment

I don't think going through them now would be helpful. Why don't we look at them during your review of the clean version?

Meeting adjourned