

Wolf Advisory Group
April 30, 2020 Meeting Notes
Online Meeting

WAG members: Samee Charriere, Tim Coleman, Don Dashiell, Tom Davis, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Jess Kayser, Bill Kemp, Dan Paul, Lynn Okita, Lisa Stone, Paula Swedeen, Samee Charriere

WDFW staff members: Dan Brinson, Donny Martorello, Joey McCanna, Scott McCorquodale, Annemarie Prince, Trent Roussin, Candace Bennett, Julia Smith, Dan Brinson, Ben Maletzke, Steve Pozzanghera, Ellen Heilhecker, Eric Gardner, Staci Lehman, Grant Samsill, Jeff Wade, Melia Devivo, Brian Kertson

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

US Forest Service: Robert Garcia

Welcome and check in

Rob welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Comment

Whatever is done on the management side of wolves and how that impacts producers, if it impacts their ability to make a living, those are just more pressures on our farmers and ranchers.

One thing he said that has come out of conversations with the ranching industry is that ranchers and producers are bearing more of the responsibility of wolf management than they should. He feels there is an imbalance in seeing ranchers, ungulates and wolves all thrive.

Comment

Dave Duncan said he has talked with livestock people across the state on range riding and it can't be defined without making changes to the protocol. He thinks an industry can get their thoughts on paper and that would let us move forward faster than what we have been doing.

Question

Are you asking that we hold off on our conversation about range riders at this meeting, take a couple weeks to get something on paper, and bring it back for the May meeting?

Answer

Because there are sections of the protocol document that we are concerned about, the group talking about range riders were not comfortable moving forward today.

What we need is to get industry buy-in and that's difficult without some other changes.

Comment

Appreciate that answer but concern is that there is a lack of clarity for expectations of range riding. Can

see where you would be frustrated but concerned about making sure have time to communicate what the expectations are when it comes to range riding.

Question

Not sure what referring to; what other “things?”

Answer

It varies by who you ask but an underlying concern remains the responsibility of the Department to manage wildlife. Concerned it continues to be placed on livestock producers through either a choice or a lack of action to manage wolves. A conversation about who’s responsibility it is and what the Department would do differently is needed.

Question

That seems like something that needs to be addressed but the range riding definition is a very different thing we’re working on. Feels like holding one issue hostage for another issue.

Comment

I believe we’re still working on a model where we work on an element, find the “soft cohesion” point, then go to the next element but hold all of those in draft. When get to the spot where you’ve found cohesion, you move to the next item. You don’t agree on all items until you get to the end.

Comment

Want to point out that the range riding issue is important in reducing livestock and wolf mortalities. Fourteen cows and 21 wolves died. Range riding could improve number of wolves killed last year. Encourages others to trust the process.

Question

I’m still not clear on what that means on pieces of the protocol? I am worried about the timing. Before the meeting looked at the notes and have been working on this protocol revision for a year. Need to work through the issues while still making progress in other areas of the document.

Answer

Believe we’re talking about a couple types of range riders- NGO and Livestock Producer range riders are close to the same definition. Department range riders are a different story. There has to be more responsibility on the Department’s range riders to manage wolves and less responsibility on the livestock producers. Doesn’t think the industry can come to one definition for range rider.

Comment

Maybe chronic conflict areas should use WDFW contracted range riders or those deployed through ag grants.

Question

If I look through the bulleted points of what range rider’s essential duties are, just about all of them pertain to husbandry. Are there items on that list that shouldn’t be part of a producer’s responsibility?

Comment

Need some sort of standardized system.

Comment

It costs more to verify your losses through the compensation program than to take the loss of a cow. The hired man should coordinate with the department when they see a problem. Range riders aren't going to read the protocol to determine which kind of range rider they are.

Comment

I struggle with the whole range rider program concept. I hear where the livestock community is coming from. We went off the tracks on range riding. It's a bunch of livestock husbandry techniques that reduce the risk to livestock from predators. It shouldn't matter who carries them out. It doesn't mean that we don't want to do wolf-centric things too. We do, but that doesn't fall under range rider protocol.

Break

Comment

One of our original goals was collars for wolves. We hit bottom on two things, collars on wolves and trust in the Department. Those were the two things I was hoping we could do by massaging this protocol through an upward trend in those two things.

Comment

There's a lot of negativity about what the government can and can't do. There's a distrust in government. The problem is that where we've been having some of these chronic depredations, they wouldn't accept help so that wouldn't work. We need a standardized system.

Comment

I thought our last meeting, we did a good job. I thought we had a good document. And I thought the Department was going to tidy things up and bring it back today to discuss. I'd like to refocus on that.

Comment

We need to park it in that draft page and move forward.

Comment

Range riding isn't a term unique to Washington. I wish that by the end of this call we could go through essential duties that we all agree are roles of a range rider.

Comment

I would like to hear from WAG members who haven't spoken today.

Comment

I thought we were be going through this draft and trying to wrap it up today. I understand there are a lot of issues in there but I really think we need to try to finalize this draft.

Comment

We have a proposal to put up the range riding section and go through it. Any objections to that?

Comment

There's just no way I can ratify it as-is. It basically has to be ratified by the cattle industry. It's not going to get resolved today. I'm very disappointed the group would not want to receive industry changes in the protocol that might move us forward toward building more trust and tolerance for wolves on the landscape. I'd like to know what the conservation community would like to see in the protocol. No matter what happens today I cannot ratify it.

Comment

My understanding wasn't to actually ratify anything today but to gain more of an understanding of the pieces that need more work. I do want to hear what your industry has to say about what would work for them. My interest is to have you point out what wouldn't work to help move our understanding along.

Comment

I really like the version the Department sent out that combined A and B, with some minor tweaks. The idea that this is being used as a block in the collaborative process to me I feel injured and like my time is being wasted. On the conservation side, I feel like we have bent over backwards to try to understand and use the language of the livestock producers. I like what the Department did combining these two.

Question

We could go over the language in there but there's still space to go back to the communities to figure out where that language needs to come from from each of those groups. Can we go over what we have and make sure that space is available to take it out and bring it back.

Comment

I don't have the authority to try to massage this thing any further. The group can do whatever they want to do, I'm just out of the discussion.

Question

If taking this back to your community to get input not possible because of pent up frustration?

Comment

My personal feeling is that we have to get closer and have no "must haves" and "will dos" included in it.

Comment

This is going to take some time and patience to work through and rebuild a sense of trust in the industry. I have submitted comments on the protocol and gotten crickets. No acknowledgement.

Comment

I know that the team I work with, we give it 110% effort to incorporate your comments into the latest of what is coming out. I'm feeling equally frustrated you feel your voice isn't being heard. Let us know if

you don't see your comments being recognized.

Comment

In the past we haven't submitted comments individually. That may be why they didn't get included, there was the expectation they would get addressed here.

Comment

That process is different than what we've done in the past and that is confusing. Francine pushed deadlines. I wonder if we can ask the producer community to go back and write up the range riding language to reflect specifically what they want to see to give us all something we can work with. Maybe the goal of the May meeting is to look at those two pieces.

Comment

It's going to be a little tough to get feedback from producers in a week.

Comment

The Department is committed to the WAG format.

Comment

Sharing documents back and forth with edits is a common practice. I was not led to believe that was inappropriate. As for if we could provide you with meaningful comments in less than a week's time, I just don't feel it's realistic.

Comment

There are edits in the document I don't remember discussing in the WAG meeting. You have come into this meeting saying you're not ready with the range riding language. I'm hearing you say you can't do that by May 6.

Comment

If we as a group do not sign off on the whole protocol, they function off the old protocol.

Comment

Maybe we could get to a point where that is good enough this year and open up the rest of the protocol for next year.

Comment

I get what you're saying. My concern is if we simply highlight our areas of concern we will end up potentially with a conversation much like what we've had today, instead of giving you something concrete.

Comment

We said we would get a response to the governor by May 1. That has changed with the pandemic but it's not going to be a lot later than that. I shared that with Capital Press. I've reached out to the governor's office and heard back that that is acceptable.

Comment

We have a meeting scheduled for next week. We've heard from the producer community that getting edits by then isn't realistic. And so I don't have the answer. How do we best use May 6 and 7.

Comment

I am not aware of any articles that came out in Capital Press. One of your comments you just made just made us aware of your range riding items you're rolling out. That concerns me because we can't even decide on a definition for range riding and you're already making plans for this year. You have to go forward, I understand that.

Comment

It's a capacity issue. It's not moving forward on a different set of duties. It's to provide that lift of capacity so those range riding options are there, available on the landscape.

Check out

Everyone checked out around the room.

Meeting adjourned for the day