

**PROPOSAL TO ADDRESS OUTSTANDING WWG ISSUES
DEVELOPED BY GO4 FOR WWG CONSIDERATION AT THE MAY 21, 2008 MEETING**

I. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

- 1. Whether to include “and outbuildings”**
- 2. Off primary homestead [Location/Timing]**
- 3. Take on public land**

A revised version of Table 7 can be found on the next page. Significant changes since the last version (at the March 28 meeting) include:

1. This Plan focuses on wolf management and conservation strategies while the species is listed in WA. Thus, Phase V has been eliminated as Phase IV is a transition period and there will be a new management plan when Phase V is reached. Phase V in the original table was essentially blank.
2. Lethal take of wolves involved in chronic depredation has been expanded to allow producers to shoot wolves with a permit on private land at the Threatened Phase (II) and on private land and public allotments at the Sensitive Phase (Phase III). The language in the Plan has been revised to reflect this change.
3. Lethal take of wolves caught in the act of attacking has been expanded to encompass the area within 150 yards of a residence (defined as the house where the landowner lives) at both the Endangered and Threatened phases (Phases I and II). It is assumed that observations of a wolf actively attacking anywhere would be very rare when population levels are low. Wolves caught in the act of attacking would be allowed at the Sensitive Phase on private land and anywhere at delisting (Phase IV).
4. Lethal take when harassing has been removed from Table 7. This management tool is unacceptable to the Conservation Caucus as it is one of the reasons wolves were extirpated in WA in the first place. Non-lethal management tools are available to discourage wolves harassing livestock.
5. Compensation was removed from Table 7 as this is not a management tool.

Need clarification of “public allotments” from WDFW

Table 7. Possible management options to address wolf-livestock depredation during wolf recovery phases.

Management Option	<u>Endangered</u> Phase I	<u>Threatened</u> Phase II	<u>Sensitive</u> Phase III	<u>Special Status/Big Game</u> Phase IV
Wolf location information to livestock owners	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed
Non-injurious harassment	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed
Non-lethal injurious harassment	Allowed with a permit from WDFW	Allowed with a permit from WDFW	Allowed with a permit from WDFW	Allowed with a permit from WDFW
Lethal take for wolves involved in <u>chronic depredation</u> (≥ 2 incidents in a 12-month period)	Allowed anywhere by state/fed agents	Allowed anywhere by state/fed agents & <u>on private lands by livestock owners with a permit</u>	Allowed anywhere by state/fed agents & <u>on private lands & public allotments by livestock owners with a permit</u>	Allowed anywhere by state/fed agents & <u>anywhere by livestock owners with a permit</u>
Lethal take of wolves in the <u>act of attacking</u> (rescind if used inappropriately or >2 incidents statewide annually).	Allowed by livestock owners within 150 yards of residence (defined as the house where the landowner lives)	Allowed by livestock owners within 150 yards of residence	Allowed by livestock owners on private land	Allowed by livestock owners anywhere
Hunting	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Limited (special permit)
Funding/assistance for the development of proactive non-lethal management tools	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

¹ This Plan is intended to direct management while the wolf is listed as endangered, threatened, or sensitive in Washington. Once the wolf is delisted it is assumed that a new management plan will be developed that may include more liberal tools for livestock producers to control wolves. Game status does not imply a general hunt immediately upon delisting.

4. Transition more quickly in Eastern Region [Contingency if no translocation]

The WWG had extensive discussion on how to achieve two primary goals:

- 1) a conservation strategy that results in the reestablishment of a naturally reproducing and viable wolf population distributed in a significant portion of the species' former range in Washington; and
- 2) management of wolf-livestock conflicts in a way that gives livestock owners who are experiencing losses tools to minimize future losses, while not negatively impacting the recovery or long-term perpetuation of sustainable wolf populations.

There is broad support and recognition within the WWG that translocation is a key management tool to ensure that both primary goals are achieved. Translocation is an essential part of a 'negotiated package' that the WWG developed. This package contains carefully balanced strategies and management tools to achieve key objectives.

There are strong concerns among WWG members if translocation is precluded for any reason including the following:

- 1) The carefully crafted 'package' would now be unbalanced in ways that adversely affect achieving primary goals.
- 2) Barriers to the natural dispersal of wolves into the Cascades may result in increasing conflict with livestock in eastern Washington and delayed recovery.
- 3) Eastern Washington would unfairly bear the costs and challenges of wolf recovery.

Therefore, if translocation is removed from the management tools available to WDFW, the Commission/WDFW shall immediately reconvene the WWG (to the extent possible with the original membership) to advise WDFW on how to manage for wolves without this critical tool in order to address those concerns.

II. COMPENSATION

5. Confirmed/probable

6. Lost

7. Weight loss

In order to achieve the Washington Wolf Conservation and Management Plan goal of ensuring a self-sustaining population of gray wolves in the state and encouraging social tolerance for their presence by reducing and addressing conflicts, a compensation program to address the loss of livestock due to wolf depredation must be included in the management plan. As such, WDFW shall implement a compensation program as follows:

1. On Public Land and large blocks of Private Land (100 acres or more):
 - Confirmed Depredation - For any livestock confirmed to have been killed by a wolf, the owner shall receive two times the current market value for the animal.
 - Probable Depredation - For any livestock documented as a probable kill by a wolf, the owner shall receive one and one half times the current market value for the animal.
2. On small blocks of Private Land of (less than 100 acres):
 - Confirmed Depredation - For any livestock confirmed to have been killed by a wolf, the owner shall receive one times the current market value for the animal
 - Probable Depredation - For any livestock documented as a probable kill by a wolf, the owner shall receive one half of the current market value for the animal.

Indirect Compensation

Additionally, WDFW shall develop an indirect compensation program for areas where wolves are present and at least two depredations have occurred. The purpose of this program would be to compensate producers in these areas for the loss of livestock when there is no direct evidence of depredation. The program would be available to livestock owners who can demonstrate a loss ratio in excess of historic losses (most recent 5 years) for the year in question. Compensation would be based on 100 percent of the value of the difference between the loss ratio and the demonstrated loss by the livestock owner multiplied by the market price for the equivalent number of animals that would have historically returned.

This program must establish a high degree of accountability and verifiability, minimize the problems that have occurred with other wolf compensation programs, avoid creating a costly new bureaucracy, be as low cost as possible, be implementable, and simple to understand and use. If such a program cannot be developed meeting these conditions, WDFW shall work with stakeholders to determine the need for an alternative compensation program. Compensation under these two programs may not be additive or redundant.

Phasing Out

Compensation for confirmed and probable may begin to be phased out upon delisting from sensitive depending on the type of management tools authorized and flexibility of control options

available to livestock owners. It is assumed that a new management plan will accompany the delisting and the need for continued compensation will be evaluated at that time.

III. TRANSLOCATION

8. Translocation Trigger

There is broad recognition among WWG members that translocation is an essential proactive management tool to address potential problems with natural dispersal and help reduce wolf/livestock conflict, especially as populations increase in Eastern Washington. There are a number of procedural steps to sequentially complete before an actual translocation could be attempted.

The first requirement is to conduct a feasibility study and develop an implementation plan addressing the details of how a translocation effort could potentially be pursued. The second requirement is to involve the public in a SEPA and/or NEPA effort that would among other issues review and critique the feasibility study and implementation plan. Following completion of SEPA and/or NEPA, there will likely be a need to construct a fenced area/ holding pen release site that would facilitate a 'soft release' of wolves. Experience in other recovery areas has shown that a carefully designed 'soft release' of wolves (which includes overwintering and successful breeding within the enclosure) increases the probability that wolves will establish and remain in the release area. With completion of these preliminary steps, an actual translocation could be pursued during a subsequent fall effort.

WWG members recognize that these sequential steps will take time to complete, and have developed the following timetable to ensure that this important management tool is addressed and available in a timely manner. WWG members recommend that the initial requirement to conduct a translocation feasibility study and develop an implementation plan begin with approval and funding of the Washington Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. Funding to conduct the feasibility study and implementation plan would be among the initial higher priority items for funding support during the early stages of plan implementation. SEPA and/or NEPA would be initiated following completion of the feasibility study and implementation plan AND the documented establishment of 2 wolf pack territories in Eastern Washington, with at least one of the two wolf packs containing a breeding pair. Successful completion of SEPA and/or NEPA would then lead to construction of the fenced holding pen release site. The actual translocation would then occur, as needed, when biological conditions were most favorable to ensure that the translocation objectives will be achieved.

IV. DISTRIBUTION

9. Map

There are three recovery regions shown in Figure 4 on page 35. The western boundary of the Eastern Washington Region is consistent with the federal delisting boundary in part to reduce confusion on the ground.

V. TIMING/TRANSITIONS

10. Transition to Phase IV [Acceleration approach]

Transition from the Sensitive designation to Phase IV would occur whenever one of the following scenarios are reached:

- 15 breeding pairs have successfully established in Washington for 3 consecutive years; or
- 18 breeding pairs are documented during a calendar year in Washington.

The addition of the second option for this transition is to address the concern that breeding pair numbers at this level could significantly increase within a 3-year period by introducing more flexibility. In the scenario that 18 wolf breeding pairs are documented during any year, the WDFW will initiate transition at that point and not wait until a 3-year period concludes.

11. Cap/major impacts

12. Designation Phase IV – Delisted (“Big Game” or “Special Status”)

The “special status/big game” designation is an acceptable name for Phase IV with the understanding that hunting would only be on a limited permit basis during Phase IV.

Just prior to wolves reaching the population level for moving from Sensitive (Phase III) to Phase IV, WDFW would prepare a proposal to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission to reclassify them from nongame to a game species. Simultaneously, WDFW would develop a game management plan to outline management under this new status including harvest levels. WDFW does this for all game species including other predators such as bear and cougar. One of the key components of a game management plan is to establish a population goal for the species (in this case wolves). While this is not a “cap,” it is ideally the wolf population level that is a viable/sustainable while also allowing hunting. Other issues addressed in the plan would include where and when wolf depredation would occur to reduce impacts on ungulate herds and livestock, as well as the relative density of wolves in an area. It is likely the wolf harvest would be focused in areas of highest conflicts to reduce the need for agency management and compensation.

The game management plan will also include development of harvest strategies. As wolves remain near the sensitive trigger it is very likely that wolves would be harvested on a limited permit-only basis much as is done for species such as bighorn sheep and moose. As numbers begin to reach population goals it likely there would be a more general season on wolves.

Additional Issue: Numbers of Breeding Pairs

Throughout the WWG deliberations the issue of numbers of breeding pairs, as triggers for moving from one listing designation to another, was a point of significant deliberation. Originally WDFW suggested the WWG consider not including specific numbers in this version but rather wait for breeding pairs to arrive in the State and allow for application of the management tools being developed by the WWG before setting numbers.

The WWG members all indicated they would like to include specific numbers and requested WDFW give them a starting place for conversations. WDFW researched other State plans and applied their understanding of wildlife biology to the question and included the numbers 8 (for transitioning from endangered to threatened) and 15 (for transitioning from threatened to sensitive) in a draft as a starting place for the WWG's consideration.

Eventually, the WWG collectively settled on an approach that called for 6 (for transitioning from endangered to threatened), 12 (for transitioning from threatened to sensitive), and then agreed on adding the additional trigger of 15 (for transitioning from sensitive to 'Phase IV') [NOTE: the transition from one listing designation to another also requires that number, at a minimum, of breeding pairs be in place for 3 years; though there are exceptions as laid out in Sections X and Y; and distribution across three regions as laid out in Section Z].

The deliberation around numbers was a negotiation where each participant attempted to balance their own interests with everyone else's in the group. The final numbers included in this plan were not viewed as 'ideal' by anyone on the WWG, however, these numbers represented the balance point between the different interests around the table.

For the conservation community, the numbers were ones that could be seen as ecologically defensible, though by no means the results they would include if they were the only ones writing the plan. For the livestock community, these numbers, combined with the corresponding increasing management flexibility and the compensation program, gave them an understanding of what the goals were and a level of certainty with how conflicts would be addressed; though clearly they were higher than those the livestock community would include if they were the only ones writing the plan. WWG members ultimately recognized that having certainty around a set of numbers they could live with, along with the other specific components of the package that each party viewed as desirable, made more sense than deferring the decision to others. The group further understood that to obtain the necessary external support (e.g., legislative) for funding and operation of the plan, their final product needed to be supported by a cross section of interests.

Throughout the process some WWG members, representing the livestock/industry community, indicated they would be hard pressed to agree to the 6/12/15 numbers. At the end of the deliberations, while they were able to live with the rest of the package, these individuals indicated they needed to submit a minority report on the numbers and proposed an alternate set of 3/6/8 [see Appendix X for more detail]. However, the package agreed to by the group is based upon the 6/12/15 numbers and if those numbers are changed as a result of the peer review, public review, and other agency processes, the agreement around other components of the plan will no longer necessarily stand up.

Additional Issue: Distribution of Breeding Paris Across Conservation Regions

The Group of Four was asked to make a proposal regarding Table 3, Possible options identified to date for distribution of breeding pairs, on Page 41 of the May 2 Working Draft. The group deliberated and agreed that the most flexible approach would be preferable and recommends the table look as follows:

Table 3. Distribution of breeding pairs across conservation regions required for moving from one listing designation to another

Conservation Region	# Breeding Pairs		
	6	12	15
Eastern Washington	2	2	2
North Cascades	2	2	2
Southern Cascades/NW Coast	2	5	5
Anywhere in the state		3	6