

Wolf Advisory Group Meeting Notes
February 1, 2017
Thurston County Fairgrounds Heritage Hall

WAG Members: Bob Aegeter, Shawn Cantrell, Tim Coleman, Don Dashiell, Tom Davis, Dave Duncan, Tom Erskine, Diane Gallegos, Molly Linville, Dan Paul, Mark Pidgeon, Lisa Stone, Paula Swedeen

WDFW Staff: Donny Martorello, Scott Becker, Candace Bennett, Joseph Bridges, Tammy Conklin, John Cotton, Jason Earl, Ellen Heilhecker, Todd Jacobsen, Joey McCanna, Tara Meyer, Steve Pozzanghera, Trent Roussin, Stephanie Simek, Kile Westerman, Steven Wetzell, Robert Waddell, Bruce Botka, Matthew Trendera

Third Party Neutral: Francine Madden

Welcome/Overview: The third party neutral welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave an overview of the agenda for both days. She thanked everyone for the hard work they have done in their communities through this process.

WDFW Director Jim Unsworth briefly spoke about wolf management in Washington and said that he appreciates the work WAG has done and will continue to do. Washington is finding its own way in regards to wolf management, and he is excited about that. Wolf populations will continue to increase, and conflicts will continue to occur, but dealing with those facts and figuring out how we will live with wolves is the big challenge.

The Wildlife Program Assistant Director, Eric Gardner, echoed the sentiments from the Director. The way WAG came together and stuck together through the challenges of 2016 was incredible, and he hopes that cohesion remains as the protocol is revised and WAG moves forward with wolf management. One challenge from him to WAG is to recognize that there is a whole public on the outside that is watching and looking, and they were not a part of the communication process. How WAG responds to those challenges is incredibly important.

The third party neutral reiterated that WAG is one group, while Washington State is home to millions. Reaching out to those citizens is incredibly important, and that work is ceaseless. WAG members have done a great job and have worked tirelessly so far, and she encouraged them to continue those efforts.

Everything WAG does is adaptive. The third party neutral reviewed the decision-making process for the WAG, which is sufficient consensus. The goal is to understand others and have those deeper conversations so decisions are understood from all angles. It is incredibly hard work, but WAG should be commended for what they are doing.

WDFW Updates: Department staff gave an overview of public comments heard during the morning public comment session. There was a lot of good dialogue at each station, and the level of participation and contributions from the public were appreciated.

Some ideas that arose from the session:

- Smaller, public forums throughout the state
- Creation of an internship program with livestock producers
- Equal accountability on all sides
- Extreme views on either side will/could harm wolf recovery
- Wolves learn fast, and after four depredations they are already habituated
- Do nonlethal measures have a limited "shelf life?"
- Uncertainty with funding
- Is there a legislative mechanism for people to fund conservation programs within the agency?
- Additional communication and outreach (community engagement)
- Population modeling should take into account habitat loss due to human population
- Investigate possible benefits of ecotourism
- Review USFS public grazing policy
- Research dynamic between wolves and elk with hoof disease
- Revamp website so wolf information is more accessible

This is good information for the WAG and the department to have.

Donny gave a WDFW update to the group. WDFW is meeting with U.S. Forest Service on coordination when active den and rendezvous sites are discovered, data sharing, and sanitation.

WDFW recently captured more wolves and put out additional collars. Winter surveys are continuing, and the annual report will be available sometime around mid-March. Documenting consistent sign of multiple individuals takes time. More research will need to be done before any declaration of new packs can be determined.

A large predator/prey study has just been kicked off by the department. This is Washington's biggest effort ever on a predator/prey project. More information will be coming as the study continues. It's a major effort, and will take at least a year to even get off the ground. Usable results probably won't be available for a few years.

Science panel review of the recent and relevant literature around wolf-livestock conflicts will be conducted by the department and the Commission. This will present opportunities to incorporate science into the protocol, as well as additional opportunities into the future.

Lessons Learned: WDFW presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission after the Profanity Peak report was released last month. There have also been internal wolf team meetings about the protocol and what direction WDFW wants to go. Are the goals the same as they have

always been? Improving communication with WAG and with the public is something that matters. Not just putting negative information out there, but the positives as well. A monthly update may be good for this. Striking the balance between information being provided and staff and producer safety is essential. Safety issues are still there and the department takes them very seriously. What can the department do to communicate the safety aspect to the public? It is about keeping people safe. We do not want communications to generate fear.

The internal wolf team will make efforts to slow things down and provide a space for decision-making. It will operate as a group.

Comment: We seem to learn valuable lessons after each event. Are these the same lessons or are they helping into the future?

That's a good comment, and it's probably a little of both.

Comment: The website needs to be revamped or people will stop going there for information. Once we lose them, we don't get them back.

The department has hired an outside vendor to do a complete website redesign and that process is in the beginning phases. It is just getting underway. Potential short term fixes should be discussed as well, but the project should deliver a full, revamped website by mid-2018.

Break

Lethal Removal Protocol Revision: WAG members brainstormed all areas and ideas for revision in regards to the protocol.

These ideas included:

- Number of depredations: start incremental removal at one depredation (mortality)
- Address current one size fits all protocol and look at different areas
 - o Consider size of land, public/private, etc.
- Firming up definitions
 - o Incremental
 - o Sanitation
 - o Human presence
 - o Range riders (parameters, what counts or qualifies)
 - o Night herding or penning
- Consideration of probable depredations
- Target individual wolf sooner so it doesn't turn to a change in pack behavior
 - o Correct I.D.
 - o What tools can be used?
- Past depredations (pack history)
- Remove wolves sooner

- Stay on track to accomplish and fulfill the goals of the wolf plan
 - o WAG's assignment is to move forward with the wolf plan
 - o Some subjects should be debated outside this group
- Livestock have to be in defensible situations
- Revisit husbandry
- Annual risk assessment (WDFW plays role?)
- Revisiting requirements for preventative measures prior to going to lethal
 - o Human presence/dogs in place at beginning of season (required)
 - In places where it's applicable
 - o Burden on producers – WAG and department ensures adequate resources
 - WAG, legislature, stakeholders, and WDFW play roles
- Discussion over lowering the threshold is going to be a difficult one
 - o Reviewing everything known is essential for that
- Communication between field and Olympia HQ for department staff
 - o Stop and go during the operation that led to things that could have been avoided
- Is sanitation plus one the right standard?
 - o May need to be adjusted for different landscapes
- Better communication, transparency, and public outreach/engagement
 - o Timelines
 - o Took a long time to get that post-report out
- Nonlethal document to outline what's expected, goals, and policies
 - o Separate protocol for preventative measures
 - o Checklist for producers has been in place a long time
- Give WAG a heads up on major news/events coming out
 - o Important that there isn't too much communication or it becomes a public safety issue for staff in the field
- Fixed and variable costs will raise as the wolf population increases
- Need to get word out to the public about nonlethal methods working
 - o On website and post report
- Most wolf packs do not depredate (communicate that)
- Pictures don't help in the report
- Real time depredation reports (similar to Oregon)
 - o Summary of the depredation more readily available
- Revisiting threshold for lethal consideration
- Methods used for lethal removal
 - o Reduce suffering of the animals
 - o Do conditions play a role?
- Package of documentation that happens in real time
 - o Summary of depredation
 - o Describing how the requirements of the protocol apply to that situation
 - How does department determine that?
 - o More information provides more confidence for the public
 - o Not a huge report (staff time)

- Webpage and monthly wolf update similar to Arizona
- Issue of full pack removal
- Grazing practices
- Messaging and how to get it right
- Blackfoot challenge example

There was a lot of conversation around how the current protocol was “terrible.” WAG and department staff discussed what was meant by saying that. Upon completion of the protocol last year, everyone seemed comfortable moving forward. Were there successful aspects of the protocol? There were some depredations that did not lead to lethal due to protocol actions. The disaster aspect refers to folks thinking that too many cows were killed and too many wolves were killed. While the situation wasn’t the best, it could have been worse if the current protocol was not in place. Overall, though it created angst, putting it in place was the right thing.

If too many cows and too many wolves were killed, it may be good to act sooner. If you act sooner, fewer losses will be seen on both sides.

It’s important to put the use of the protocol in perspective. We are moving the right way, and it is a process, but we are in a better place than we would have been otherwise. It is impossible to prove prevention. There are success stories, but the attention goes to the negative. There were huge improvements.

WAG discussed comments made during the operation and how some comments landed as personal attacks directed towards WAG and the department, even though they were not intended as such. The trust built between WAG members and the department is incredibly important.

Comment: Full pack removal was the wrong thing to say during the operation. I was very happy with what the department did, and how they did it. The biggest win throughout all of this was how the department handled everything. The only complaint I have is the use of full pack removal language. Messaging is huge. It could start a fire on all sides.

Department staff agreed that messaging is key to future operations. Full pack removal is the language included in the wolf plan, but as has been learned so far, that is rarely possible due to terrain and other logistics.

Comment: I have a fear that this WAG will want to micromanage what the department does, and we shouldn’t be doing that.

Comment: I don’t feel like there was a bad flow of information during the operation. Acting sooner may be the best direction for wolf recovery. A few culprits can be removed so the others don’t get punished for it. One confirmed depredation that ends in mortality is a good place to start.

Comment: We haven't discussed the successes as much, but if the protocol had been one confirmed, we would have moved forward with lethal removal in three packs instead of one. Instead, that did not happen.

Comment: If we know the risk is there, we need to prepare and act ahead of time. I would be supportive of the one depredation protocol, but not at this point. Washington is still recovering its wolf population. What further techniques can we use to deter depredation? That's what we should be discussing.

Comment: It's not about numbers. While ranching, if I want to get to one hundred cattle, I don't keep the culls just to get there faster. Also, public lands aren't just one block. State, federal, and private lands are patchworks throughout the state.

Comment: This goes back a ways, but I agree that WAG should not micromanage the department. My advice would be to maybe give them a little more latitude. There may be areas where we have a collared wolf that is known as a problem issue, while other situations may not call for action that early.

Comment: There needs to be an examination of the science around conducting lethal removal after one confirmed depredation. That literature is being reviewed right now. Is there any of that information that can be brought forward for that discussion. There is anecdotal evidence that supports both positions, and we all come to this conversation with our biases.

Comment: There are range riders who believe that certain wolves are losing their fear of man. What could that mean for the future? Being more creative might be the answer. There seems to be a tremendous burden on one area of the state, and we need to take a hard look at that. The original wolf group, back in 2008, stated that one area should not bare the brunt of wolf management issues. This affects social issues as well.

Break

Department biologists introduced themselves around the room. WAG asked them questions about wolf management in regards to the available literature.

Question: Do wolves become habituated to cows, and could they switch back?

Answer: It's unlikely that they ever "prey-switch," and even when they prey on livestock, they still consume natural prey as well. If they see something on the landscape enough times, they might go test it out to see what happens. It's a game of probability. Large packs, with more wolves, have a higher probability of causing problems than small packs. However, there are plenty of examples of small packs causing trouble and large packs that don't cause any trouble.

It's important to remember that up to 90% of hunting attempts end in failure for wolves. Sometimes they get kicked in the head and some wolves have even learned to avoid cows because of the risk of injuries.

Question: Are they out hunting every day, and how often do they make kills?

Answer: I think that's highly variable. Obviously, the larger the pack, the more calories they have to consume. Even in those packs where livestock are killed, the majority of their prey includes wild ungulates.

Question: Based on what you know, how would you change the protocol?

Answer: It's such a challenge and it's so variable. No protocol is going to fit everything, and sometimes I worry we want to control things that we have no control over. We're always thinking about the situation every step of the way, and I don't know that a protocol can incorporate all of those things.

The lethal component is only one piece of our broader toolbox. We try to deploy those tools in areas where they can be most effective. The protocol is not about numbers. It's about reducing the damage. It's refreshing to know that WAG is struggling with a few of the same things the department is struggling with.

Something to think about is that there's only so much money and so many resources. It affects family lives and marital lives, and we are right at the cusp right now where people will start evaporating. We need to still allow our staff to have family lives. Everybody involved is running into these stresses. This has been missing in the protocol.

WDFW ideas for revisions for protocol

- Work/life balance
- Incremental (what it means and how it occurs)
- Is lethal removal protocol even the right name?
 - o It's a tool in a toolbox
 - o We don't spend enough time on the positives
 - o Wolf-livestock management protocol could be the name
- Probable depredations should count when confirmed
- Option to start lethal earlier
- Minimize the potential for recurrent depredations while continuing to promote wolf recovery
- Never say "full wolf recovery" again

Comment/Question: There are a lot of indicators that can tell you wolves are preying on cattle. It isn't just when a dead cow is found.

Answer: It's hard to say an indicator is absolute proof. Correlation does not equal causation, and it's incredibly difficult to say when an indicator is only there because of wolves. There is a spectrum, and that's when we go in and assess what is going on. Monitoring cattle behavior is incredibly important.

Comment: The producer from Profanity Peak ended up short about 70 head after the operation. They would typically expect a loss of four animals, on average.

Comment: The signs from cougar and other factors just aren't there. When you have a history of one percent losses over an extended period of time, and then one year when those losses exponentially raise, something is going on.

Comment: A lot of variables go into what makes different livestock vulnerable. There is science out there that says a certain amount of depredations occur that are not found. The reality, when considering the protocol, is that the first four may not actually be the first four. What is the goal of this protocol?

Question: In regards to going to lethal sooner, what is the evidence that lethal intervention works? And what is the evidence that going to lethal earlier helps? We need to dive as deep as possible into those questions. We need to unpack why depredations continued after lethal was implemented. Why would going sooner be effective? What needs to be on the ground already? Laying out a clear, solid plan that is backed up by the scientific literature that also addresses the literature that disagrees is the only way we could move forward with that conversation. The politics would be way too difficult in that situation.

Answer: Wolves are the most researched animal on the whole planet. There is very little on lethal control, and even less that is applicable. There is a constant battle between studies that say different things. Pack size and history also play factors. In Montana and Idaho, while there isn't evidence that wolf populations are decreasing, pack size has declined. Since public hunting was implemented, depredations have gone down, which also indicates that acting sooner could limit conflict. Managing wolves in other parts is easier, due to terrain and livestock being in open areas.

WAG discussed human presence and when that is needed on the ground. In Profanity Peak, the constant human presence was not there until after the first depredation was confirmed. However, when and how much can be covered everywhere? What is the cutoff date? Actual range riding, and not just folks out randomly, can be out early in the season, which is much more effective at preventing conflicts.

Comment: In some cases, there are five people out there all night long, and they are still seeing losses. What do you do next in that situation? As a department, we need something in place, hopefully by March, that gives us a guide.

Comment: That is a situation where it would be much easier to sell that for lethal removal. That is a producer who has done everything, and the protocol should accommodate that producer.

Question: Do you feel as though having to wait for all four confirmed depredations hindered the actions?

Comment: It's that flexibility to think about probable depredations. If it's in a string of ongoing depredations and there's already a confirmed depredation, the ability to factor that in with the probable would be beneficial. If the pattern is there, and those are just the ones we are aware of, then being able to factor that in would be beneficial. It doesn't necessarily mean going to lethal sooner, but it could. Some probable depredations are clearly unrelated, for example.

Comment: The idea of probable means something different to different people. Does it mean 50 percent probable or 90 percent probable? One of the department's goals is to clarify what is meant by probable. Probable is very different from unknown. It goes back to our messaging and making sure each term is understood by everyone. There needs to be consistency in standards across WDFW. It's important to make sure that one conflict specialist's probable looks like every other conflict specialist's probable.

Travis (USFS): I just wanted to address the initial question of concerns or thoughts that might have come up when reading the protocol. When I first read the protocol, I just thought that it heaped an incredible burden on the conflict staff. People are unable to keep up, and applying that protocol to the part of the state where most of the wolf packs are is almost impossible. Also, that direction of sanitation plus one doesn't quite align with what we would have permittees deal with.

Department staff discussed the goal of the lethal protocol. It was clear that the message was not relayed as well as it should have been to the public. The goal is to reduce depredations. Instead, what was heard was that the department is doing full pack removal. What department staff came up with was that the goal should be **to minimize the potential for recurrent depredations while continuing to promote wolf recovery**. If we are ever in a situation where we are thinking about lethal removal, but that would also impact wolf recovery goals, we probably aren't going to kill that wolf. The goal of wolf recovery seems to be forgotten quite often.

There will always be a risk out there. If we can minimize that risk while also promoting wolf recovery, we succeed. If our goal is to stop depredations, that sets us up for failure, because we will never stop it completely. Lethal is just a part of the management toolbox. Deterrent measures are management tools. Lethal is a management tool. We need to get back to that goal.

The discussion on what probable means continued. When staff is doing an investigation, if they are going to confirm, they take hours to do a forensic investigation. The basis for confirmed is, will it stand up in court? Every situation is different. It's on a case by case basis, but you look for certain things. You aren't always guaranteed to have each item though.

When the notification comes in, staff arrives at the scene. It's not only looking at the dead animal. Staff is also asking questions. When was the last time this animal was seen? Has anything strange been going on lately? Staff makes note of all of these pieces. As the conversation is going on, everything around the area is examined. This includes tracks, blood, the surrounding environment, etc. Then the investigation starts. Is there hemorrhaging? Is there bruising? Was the carcass flipped? Pictures are taken throughout this entire process. After all of that, you check if wolves have been in the area recently. You check collar data, but not until you are all the way done. Is the range rider there to confirm wolf presence? You do not need collar data to confirm a wolf kill. These investigations take hours, and some can take even longer. You make no presumption before the investigation starts. This is very rarely not a team. It's always at least two people. There are also comparisons to other cases.

The cases are not sequential. You don't find someone guilty if you can't prove it 100 percent. These depredations are no different from that.

Comment: We need more than the goal right now, because right now the other items on the list lead to killing wolves sooner.

Answer: We are serious about wolf recovery. The goal is not to kill wolves sooner. The goal is to kill **fewer** wolves.

Comment: That's true, but this is what we're going to hear. This looks and sounds like a protocol to kill wolves sooner. We need something concrete behind the goal. What else is different about the protocol that emphasizes the nonlethal methods in the public's eye?

Answer: That's why we talked about the fact that we don't want it to be a lethal removal protocol. We want to pay equal amounts of attention to using the nonlethal methods as we do to lethal. We want to emphasize when the nonlethal methods work as well.

Comment: I wanted to echo that the goal is to kill fewer wolves. Is it doable to look at the challenges associated with that? Terrain, cost, etc.

Comment: Department staff also needs to discuss the stop/start methods and the strategy to approach the incremental removals.

Answer: You want to get things to slow down as much as possible so you can create that space. But when you're in it, you need time to wait and see if the lethal removal worked. We've discussed having multiple actions going on at the same time. We may be jumping between different packs. You need to go in, take action, then sit back and wait to see if it had any effect. Full pack removal does not happen very often. In many cases, you are able to stop it with incremental removal. What makes it difficult is that these things are random. They vary between packs and within packs. Pack dynamics can have huge impacts on the landscape.

Comment: We get a lot of folks saying they want to use the science. In my mind, the science is talking about populations instead of the individual. If there is no data in existence for going in quickly, then if we think the population can sustain it, then maybe Washington State needs to create that data. If we are waiting for data that doesn't exist, we are never going to try it. What if we try it, then wait and see if it helps, and if that leads to benefits for the entire population, then I think we need to discuss that.

Comment: The only response I have to that is there are also papers that just say laying the traps is enough to deter wolves and change their behavior. A lot of the public looks at the value and ethic of the individual.

Comment: But then why are we potentially harming the population to save the individual?

Comment: We like discussing science with wolf management, but the challenge is that it's a social issue and not a science or biology issue. You can find science that supports every competing viewpoint in this room. Nobody can answer the question of what the best science might be. From a management perspective, we are more concerned about populations, especially in the recovery phase. The biggest challenge is the social part of it, and wildlife managers went to school to manage wildlife and not people, but quickly realized it's always about managing people.

Comment: Sometimes we can go into a lethal protocol, but not remove any wolves. The actual operation may be all it takes to deter the pack from depredating. The goal is to change that behavior.

Comment: I want to be able to prove that a certain tool is the most effective, but because of that variability, we just can't say that about any given method.

Comment: I think this group has agreed numerous times that the goal is to minimize depredations and promote wolf recovery. Could we look at the data we have already accumulated in Washington? We have some data that we could perhaps use to judge whether or not going to lethal more quickly might work. We are doing something similar in Oregon right now. The data may inform. It also might not help at all, but I think it's worth looking at as we move forward.

Comment: What the department is asking for is that trust aspect. The key is having the WAG involved and having them there with us. If we think we need to be somewhere, we want the WAG there with us.

Comment: It will be extremely hard to go back with this to the environmental community.

Comment: We talk a lot about social tolerance for wolves, and that is incredibly important. However, that social tolerance for killing wolves needs to have equal conversation. How do we communicate to the public the work that we are doing here? How do we deal with that social tolerance piece and the growing number of people who do care about that individual animal? That needs to be discussed.

Comment: The difficult issue is painting that correctly, and it could be construed incorrectly on both sides. It's tough, and that discussion needs to happen so we can communicate it accurately and effectively.

Public Comment

I wanted to say the session in the morning was incredibly helpful. The staff is enormously knowledgeable about these things. I encourage the WAG to keep doing that session in the morning. That helps us place decisions in context. I think the statement that no group should have to bare the full brunt of wolf recovery should be taken as the most important thing. Perhaps the State could contribute there. My last thought is that transparency is important, and having more information on the website would be helpful.

I've been involved with this issue since about 2012. It's been frustrating because I've seen conflict take a huge step back instead of going forward. I came here today to try to move the agenda towards post-delisting management. I feel it's gone down the line far enough that talking about protocols all the time has been an unfair burden on producers. Using producers as the vehicle for these protocols is not right. You should talk about what the underlying issue is, and that is post-delisting management. People want to know how many are enough and what you are going to do with them after they are recovered. I still don't know if people on WAG care that there are wolves in northeast Washington. It would be helpful to start at the beginning and talk about post-delisting management and let that be a guide for management with livestock. Numbering the packs instead of naming them would be a good idea as well.

I am in a completely different space than the previous comment. I feel like there isn't much support for wolves as a species, and I think they hold a special place in our state. I was hoping there would be more discussion about wolf recovery today. We do care about wolves across the state.

I think if you are killing a wolf after the first depredation, how would you know which wolf to kill? Out of the pack, how do you decide which wolf to kill? If you randomly choose a wolf, you may kill one that didn't do anything. It will be very difficult to get the public behind this method if you say the science isn't there to back you up. You need scientific basis.

You have to show that killing a wolf has more effect on pack behavior than nonlethal deterrents. I don't like that we are back talking about when to kill wolves. I want to hear a whole lot of talk about how to prevent this. I think that I am really angry at the department for

killing wolves last year, and I don't trust them at all. I don't think the deterrents were there. I want to see the data. I will remain angry unless I see the data. Teachers have to set the tone from the first day. They don't wait a month to see who the bad kids are. The same applies here. I don't know what killing a wolf will accomplish, especially if you don't know which one you are killing. It seems indiscriminate to the public. The public wants to see the very best deterrents. No one trusts the department and it's going to take a lot of accountability to get it back. I want to see GPS on range riders. No one is talking about the chronic rancher. We have some chronic ranchers who need help with depredations. You may need to try a different sort of cow. Your timeline is off. We want to see a draft of the new protocol before the WAG or department accepts it. There is a lot of talk that needs to be done about prevention.

For those in the department, especially those on the ground with me, I say thank you. I want to get it to where we don't have full pack removal. While you all are going to go back and have your meals tonight, my children are out with the herd protecting them from wolves. Everyone in here is making decisions about northeastern Washington. Families are falling apart because of this stuff. We don't see our families for months. There is more at stake here than just a wolf and a cow. It's human lives. If that's not important to you, you need to look in the mirror.

I want to commend everyone for living with whatever discomfort this is causing you. It's not easy and it's worth doing. We all have a right to talk. We are still in the USA and we still have a right to talk.

I'm still learning new things every day, and it's exciting because I like learning new things. Everybody does pay for what's going on with wolves. We are all taxpayers. It's been said, but the random killing of the first wolf you see could result in the wrong wolf. You may increase depredation if you disrupt the pack. The problem is how to distinguish individual wolves. That may not ever be figured out. There really has to be that period afterwards to let it settle down after lethal removal takes place and I didn't think that happened in 2016. I'm also curious why we don't seem to have the breeding pairs in Washington. I don't see a lot of breeding going on. They appear prolific at times, but not so much now.

I've learned so much and I think it has been an eye-opening experience. I think it would be helpful to have these meetings broadcast over the internet. This could help those future wildlife managers in class understand managing people. Humanizing humans is important. Something like an option to Skype in would be impactful. We have the technology, so why not use it.

I'm someone who cares a lot about wildlife protection, and just coming here has helped me have more compassion for ranchers too, and I am grateful for the opportunity. It's good to remember that wolves are important aspects of the ecosystem and contribute services to us that we might not even be conscious of, for example keeping prey populations down.

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Third Party Neutral: Francine Madden

Welcome/Overview: The third party neutral welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave an overview of the agenda for the day. Everyone checked in around the room, and there was some reflection on the conversation from the day before. There is a new name for the protocol, which is the Wolf-Livestock Management Protocol. This will make it easier to acknowledge the positives of the protocol, as there are many.

The shift in name is good, but it has to be accompanied by a focus on the other tools. It may be seen by the public as hiding lethal or burying it, even though that is not the case. The WAG members agreed that hiding lethal is not the intent of the department.

It can be frustrating to jump over the nonlethal methods and overlook them to focus on lethal. Department staff doesn't focus on lethal until it is the only option left. Everything else is focused on first. The new name is not trying to disguise it, but to include everything involved.

Reality (history/now) on the Ground: There is so much change happening on the landscape, but it feels like another piece that is not being acknowledged or understood as much as it could be. These are moving at lightning speed, in producer terms.

A contract range rider gave an account of what that evolution looks like on the landscape and how it might look moving forward.

Last year, everyone was still trying to recover from fires. There was nothing normal about it. There was one rider in the Profanity Peak area before the grazing season commenced. The grazing season started, and in just a few weeks problems occurred. After that, there were at least five of us on the ground at any given time. We rode into different areas and spread out over time. At one point we had 11 or 12 people, some on horseback and some on foot, and that is how the whole summer went. We really did do everything we could, from night watches to driving loud vehicles to shooting at dusk to make noise. We built campfires and even urinated

in places to put out our scent. Some of it worked and some of it didn't. There is no cell phone signal or communication in some of those areas.

After the grazing season, you still have stray cattle out and some that live there full time. There are homes in that area too, so the cattle are near a home. We've watched the remaining wolves throughout the fall, and spend a lot of time monitoring their activity. This is an all week project. At any point in time, there is someone out with the herd. We aren't giving up or stopping or looking for an excuse to shoot wolves. We are out there trying to prevent conflicts. I don't agree with shooting wolves. However, I've had wolves 20 feet away that were not afraid of me. That fear was gone. This is a management issue that has to be attacked 12 months out of the year. If we are going to give everything of ourselves, every single day, we are doing it to keep wolves and cattle from coming together.

Sometimes we'll actually put them in calving areas, and those are about five acres in size. We do that to deal with not only wolves, but also coyotes. However, when we first bring them off the range, we're still running them on 400 acres, which is smaller than the allotments, but is still a large area. Within a day I can locate the majority of those cattle. We had one Profanity wolf right on our land though, and that's private land down there. It's still a large area and the cattle spread out, and I do know that's a concern.

Comment: Is it better to have someone out right when they are released on the grazing allotment? There is that difference between the allotments and the other areas, right?

That is correct. There was a much larger effort last year after depredation #1. However, there were riders out before that.

Comment: My understanding was that it was one allotment, and not others.

That is correct. However, that was last year. We have an effort ride now, and as soon as the snow breaks, we will have people hitting the riding trails. Not all of those allotments are ran in the same way every year. This year, it will be different. You won't see cattle in the exact same places as last year. I will have at least a few people out on the ranges a little heavier than usual as soon as the snow breaks. That way, when you do have turnout, people will be familiar with the terrain.

Comment: Every decision I ever made when on my ranch was made while thinking about quality of life. I hear what you've told us, and I can't believe you and your family are able to do that. That doesn't sound like a good quality of life.

To us this is a quality of life. I get to come home every night and do things with my family. It's all about your perception. For us, life is pretty good. The numbers do get tight sometimes, but there is community support, and it's hard to do, but that's the way it has to be done.

Comment: In your mind, is this sustainable for the long term? How often are you trying to get a look at the cows?

A lot of that depends on what we're seeing in the herd itself, what signs we're seeing, and what we're hearing on the ground. We're trying to stay off of collar data so much, because that is unsustainable long term. That gets you in a reactive mindset, rather than a proactive one. I would like to get eyes on each herd daily, and I think that's appropriate where we are. You literally cannot go anywhere in northeast Washington without seeing wolves or sign of wolves. All of that goes into account when I think about it.

Comment: What you're describing is educational and revealing, and I hope everyone in this room is hearing this. Us asking for quality human presence is a huge investment. I just wanted to acknowledge being fully aware of that cost. I wanted to ask that if the money was there, do you think you could find the people to do that work? There are two aspects of this issue: funding and personnel. With funding, I'm optimistic, but the personnel issue is one that needs to be discussed.

I do believe there are enough people with the right mindset to do it. I also think it will take time to filter those folks out. This is not your average job. This is going back to a way of life that hasn't been needed for generations. I've spent nights where I slept on the ground because I knew I wouldn't make it home. You can't just jump on a horse and start doing it. It takes time and dedication and effort. I think we have those people, but we have to have the funding. Not many of these cowboys make much money. If you tell them you're going to pay them, and then they have to wait too long, they will move on. If we don't put effort into a long term look, you guys could be meeting once every month and you'll just be running in circles.

Comment: Is there receptivity in the area that allows for giving a range rider program a shot?

Yes, as long as it's handled right. There is a lot of distrust in the department right now, and many ranchers are not willing to enter an agreement. Understanding where they are coming from is essential. If you start telling them that things are going to be taken away from them, they will do what they feel they have to do.

Comment: What do you think is a good approach to honor that spirit and that outlook? How does WAG get to where they want to go while honoring the culture of that community?

I want to start with something a little negative. I want to say I really commend the department staff. However, when the news came out that the department was going to remove the entire pack, and then the department wasn't able to do that, trust was broken. It's a habitual rotation. Can we do better? Yes. Have we done better? Yes. It has to be community-based, and there has to be people that they trust, who are kept in those places. We want to start something this year that is community-based so the people up there keep seeing faces that they trust. This will enable the conflict staff to have the discussions that need to be had. They need to take the time

to get to know these folks on a personal level. I am concerned that we will have at least two packs causing trouble this year. The signs all point that way. If I'm wrong, I owe you all a tofu dinner. Producers are even afraid to report some things because they are worried that their names will get out and that they will receive death threats. Let's not make this into a government issue. Let's make this a community that helps each other.

Comment: What does the community feel like when deterrents are in a protocol? Does it feel like it's trying to send a message or that it's too much government? Does the independence get threatened? By us talking about it in an official protocol, does that already start us off on a bad note?

It does, and it's not like we don't bother our neighbors, but I don't want to put my problems on them and they don't want to put their problems on me. There's even concern with hazing wolves sometimes, because they don't want to put those wolves on their neighbor's allotment. I'd like to get away from allotments and look more at packs. When requirements are there on top of another requirement that USFS already has in their plan, it becomes a joke. We're trying to change in a dynamic world, and we are already doing all of the requirements we can. We are adjusting, but what does it mean to have sanitation plus one? Range riding is getting more respect because it is looked at in a different light. The doubts come because ranchers don't want just anybody coming in on the cattle. They want someone they can trust.

Comment: The frustration with producers not wanting to talk to the department, I've been thinking, is because we come in and make demands. Could we break those barriers down if we stacked those things by year?

Part of building that trust is showing up at 2:00 in the morning, and that will wear on you. Your life is never your own. When it starts ringing though, that's when you know you're making headway. If they're building a fence, maybe offer to help. Bring a sandwich. Then while you're building that fence, bring up other options. Be sure to tell the truth (for example, some methods work for a bit but don't work indefinitely). The issue comes up because nothing is going on during department business hours. Are you able to answer your phone in the weird hours? That is necessary to build that trust. You don't build trust with words, you build it with action.

Comment: Why don't some producers want to call? It's because they don't want their names in the newspapers.

To increase receptivity with producers and deterrents:

- Bring a sandwich (fix a fence with producer)
- Find a trusted local person
- Have a community-based and pack-based approach
- Respect local cultures of independence
- Recognize producers are motivated to protect livestock
 - Accountability to their operation is already there for most producers

- Accountability is very important
- Trust is essential when discussing accountability on the ground
- Policing feels disrespectful

Comment: It may be good to research something like Oregon, where there are county-based committees that take that accountability aspect into account. I'm wondering if we might consider something similar in Washington to disperse funds, etc. I'm also glad that the issue of requirements came up. I've struggled long and hard with that issue, and I really understand how having things coming from WAG would not go over well. However, my motivation for putting that out there is that the world has such an interest in wolves. We as the entire WAG are incredibly vulnerable. The upset in the environmental community nearly tore us apart. It protects all of us if those requirements are there. This is why it's a huge conundrum, because I completely understand that having those requirements does not build trust on the ground. There is a really unfortunate lack of empathy for producers and the struggles they have. We've got these two different cultures, and how do we bridge that divide?

The first thing I want to say is that you took that step by taking the time to talk in a place where I was comfortable. You could envision what I was talking about. We came from a common place then. For those who aren't willing to come at it from a point of understanding, I guess they are left behind. I'm done trying to sway the extremists on either side. I know that is incredibly difficult, especially for you all representing the environmental groups. For me, the answer is that those extremists are part of the problem.

Comment: I think a lot of the mistrust at the beginning came from the department not managing wildlife, but trying to manage the people. It's about ranchers knowing how to manage the livestock. The level of trust got better when it got focused on managing the wildlife. The people who are managing their places don't need WAG or the department to tell them how to do their part. I don't think a county-based group is realistic. No one up there has the time to stop to go to a meeting.

When I say community-based, it's within the community and it's talking to producers while you're helping them out. It's going out to them.

Comment: It's not about having a meeting or anything like that. It's about having those resources available at a local level. They don't have to wait for those resources. It's there. It's based in that community. It's less formal as well.

Comment: One constructive criticism on the report we put out was that all of this information was not included. We need to get that out there because it definitely helps the community. Just focusing on the lethal aspect wasn't as effective.

I'll be honest that I don't know how to do that. I don't know how to get that information out to the public. It's not just about that final moment. The time and effort that goes into every aspect of

this needs to be respected. But that fear is still there. My one-year-old grandson's life was threatened. We have to find that balance that keeps staff safe, that keeps us safe, and that gets the information out to the public. And I know that I'm not the only one who got the death threats. What makes me sadder is that some of those threats went against the environmental community from within the environmental community.

Comment: It's difficult because there's no way to say that the work being done saved however many wolves. There has to be a way to talk about those positive messages more though.

Comment: I think we are in a completely different place than we were at the beginning of wolf recovery in Washington State. Miscommunication and the fact that there wasn't a great plan in place started us off slow. The broader community is still back there at the start. We need to do a better job of communicating, and I think we all share that responsibility. I think we have got to come up with a way to do more with communication. However, that is difficult, because people do have a right to privacy, and I don't think it will serve wolves to have ranchers in the spotlight.

Comment: The conundrum we face in the environmental community is that there is a value on centralized law. When people don't feel like there is an even playing field, they focus on that lethal aspect. How do we bring that trust back to our community? How do we get that message across?

For now, at least, messaging to those individuals we trust in those communities is the path forward. In the long run, it makes everyone's life better. Working together and building that trust is the way to go.

Comment: Everything shared today is about the culture and trust. It shows why a government employee coming in without having a relationship in place just isn't going to work. You have to develop that relationship before requests can go in.

Comment: We have a big perception problem right now and it needs to be addressed. How do we lift the whole system up? There are some folks who don't have the resources. There is a whole wide world out there that is not in this room, and we have to be able to get that trust out there as well. How do we honor both cultures?

So do we focus on last year or on the path forward for this year?

Comment: We need to focus on this year and how we are moving forward.

Comment: This isn't a spectator sport. This should be more like Idaho where the department can manage the wildlife.

Comment: When we are talking about real time, it's about documentation and a way of how to document locally available resources and other aspects of management. It doesn't mean monitoring every action.

(Everyone agreed to this clarification).

Comment: We need to bypass the idea of wolves and cows being managed separately if we are moving forward. We are in WAG because we can't separate them. Part of livestock management is deterrents against wolves.

I don't manage livestock "for the wolf." It's for the land, climate, predators, etc. The wolf isn't my specific thought, even though they are a part of it. When those deterrents don't work, it's expected that the department comes in and manages to minimize wolf depredations.

Comment: The way things are phrased can have an impact, and it's important to think about those things while in this setting. It is easy for some to take things out of context. I also think this session has been valuable, but there also needs to be some acknowledgement of the feelings for those on the west side.

Break

The range rider said that the message he wants to get out is that the rancher side supports wolf recovery. Everything they are doing is an attempt to prevent poaching and other threats to wolf recovery. We want to have these communications and the recovery effort continue. If there was any offense, that was not the intent.

Comment: Wolf issues extend beyond our borders and those battles carry over. Those people don't understand what Washington is trying to do. A lot of this cultural outreach takes time, but there is still pressure to firm up definitions now. We need to revisit the timeframe of triggering lethal and we need to take last year's plan and make it more robust for this year.

Comment: I need to hear from department staff and possibly some producers that it is acceptable and understandable that we have clear expectations of preventatives before we go to lethal. I have the utmost respect for every producer I've met, and my organization has been there from the beginning working to build those relationships. We have always recognized that it is unfair for producers to take the burden on themselves. But in order for us to keep doing this, we need to hear back that there are clear expectations of preventatives on the ground before lethal. We nearly got crushed emotionally and financially, and if we don't hear back from this group about clear expectations, I don't think I can stay here. It's about protecting WAG, protecting producers, and protecting department staff. We need that to move forward.

Comment: I wish we would have gotten a full presentation from department staff yesterday, and even a broader evaluation of Profanity Peak. If a range rider had been out from the very

beginning, would that have been more effective than sanitation plus one? I want to have something to take back to our community so we have something in place by April 1.

Comment: I have such respect for the culture and needs from the producer side, and I value what they do so much. However, I need to hear acknowledgement that there is a very large community in western Washington as well, and that culture needs to be valued too. Both sides want to be understood and respected. I hear that one on one with you, but the communities do not. They only hear the bluster, and that is what characterizes that community. How do we get that acknowledgement both ways?

Comment: I wanted to clarify the real time thing. It's not to keep track of the range riders. It was mostly around depredations. I know very well that there are different sides to raising livestock. There are a whole lot of people who care about range management. It has to change and adapt, and we want to help with that change. I'm here because I believe in this process, and ditto to what my colleagues have said.

Comment: I will be associated in the previous remarks. We're losing sight of the broader environment in which we are working. We're facing a crisis in biological diversity.

Holistic Management Protocol

- Goal/objectives
- Requirements for deterrents
- Risk assessment
- Flexibility on number
- Probable depredations
- Definitions
- Methods of killing
- Incremental removal
- Allotment grazing
- Financial

What clear expectations can provide for what the environmental community needs while also not being too demanding on the producer level.

Comment: Just wanted to start by saying yes, clear expectations are needed. Staff cannot operate without that. Renaming the protocol is the first step around more information and more clarity about what's in the toolbox.

What should we have been doing that maybe we didn't do that is realistic and would be accepted in that community?

The very first thing is getting people on the ground early. We're on the ground now, for example. We have to have that communication with the people working on the ground, and

then we have to be responsible. When spring hits, we have to be ready to go. June is too late. July is definitely too late. The issue comes when some producers won't have time to do so. On the ground early, before turnout is the best way. A good portion of producers are just two fulltime people on the go all the time. This is a new thing that is being asked, and the range rider is the one who will do it. He will make contact with these producers and offer assistance.

Is having people on the ground early a reasonable expectation? It seems that shifting it to this is an expectation, with accountability, and that will work out for us.

Having that methodology in place everywhere where there could be an issue is probably unrealistic. If this is going to be our standard, it may be too late in the calendar year. Is this going to be everywhere? There is too much land area. I don't think we have the manpower.

Is it reality to have the expectations in place? It can't be having to have x, y, and z. We have to be realistic about the variability of the landscape, the resources available, and the manpower.

What I don't want is to say that we can't do everything everywhere so let's not do anything. I know that's not what you're saying. So now, I want to know how we prioritize. Let's take the information we know, for instance with Profanity, Dirty Shirt, and Smackout, and prioritize those risk areas. We are not advocating for a one size fits all approach. After the prioritization occurs in areas where we can make a difference, we can worry about acquiring additional resources.

What if the clear expectations included something on the ground before turnout in high risk areas? Does that get to the realistic piece that has been brought up?

I think we are overestimating the threat. Wolves are going to kill cows. We can reduce the chances, and I think that's a good goal, but we shouldn't have to be out there at 3:00 in the morning. The risk is not there. What does us being out there at that hour do to the equation? From the wolf biology perspective, I don't see the need. If we want to be preventative, and we want to prioritize being preventative, I think we need to focus on management areas of concern. We have packs in the Cascades living with livestock, but we are not talking about it. The northeast is not the only place this is occurring.

I wanted to respond to the department's concerns. I get that we can't have that Cadillac version everywhere. However, I think there are the pieces of a good system in place. DPCAs are there, contract range riders are in place. I completely agree that we need to be putting resources in areas of need. I have to say though that it feels like you guys are tone deaf. If this isn't in place, the social system is going to blow up again. We have to put something together that prepares us as much as possible. Yes I agree that not every wolf everywhere is going to cause a problem. But we have to have something in place. I do think the money is out there. The legislature is there and willing to spend money.

I was not questioning the fact that we need something in place. I just wanted to say that we don't need 20 people in one spot. We can spread them out. More people is not better. It may actually cause issues in the future.

We've discussed high risk areas and trying to focus there. We've had that in place, and then all of a sudden something blows up in another area.

What would northeastern staff say in regards to where they want to be in the next year? What does that look like?

It's trying to get the producer or someone from the family out on the ground. We cannot find enough range riders. Through the application process, they are not there. We need a certain sort of person to be a range rider. Also, what qualifies that range rider? Is it four days a week? Five?

I think we do have the tools (checklist). However, the checklist wasn't good enough. Then we refined it to include other things. Then we refined it to include sanitation plus one. We tell producers to utilize tools, sometimes with assistance from department staff and sometimes on their own. With the DPCAs, they have to send in an invoice saying they did these things. It's not our job to tell them how to manage their herd. It is our job to assist. We can't be there every minute of every day. If the problem is the execution of the tools, maybe this isn't the group we need to talk to. I'm not sure what the issue is here, and I need help understanding it.

Let me start by saying I'm sorry it feels like you're hearing your work isn't good enough. It's not department staff not doing enough work. You are all exceptional. In this case, there were the tools that seemed most appropriate, and that was putting people on the ground. We hear repeatedly that range riding and human presence is the best thing we can do. On the allotments that had the most depredations, they didn't get to it quick enough. You have this massive public interest in how wolves are managed in this state, and you add onto that the idea that we can share public land for multiple uses, and so the demand is that if you are killing wolves, you better have tried to stop the depredations using the best available resources. I think there can be flexibility about the time spent. I cannot say, as a WAG member, that it's okay to go lethal without that expectation. All I'm asking is that human presence be there at the beginning of the grazing season where it's appropriate. I'm not talking about areas where it's not needed. It's where it's appropriate to have one.

It might be good to consider where range riding is even available as well. Those people aren't there yet.

We have to set up a pipeline or an apprentice program in that case.

What's been our level of range riders on the ground? What does that look like?

In Smackout, we have the most proactive range rider producers in the state, and they had depredations this year. That is with extensive range riding. There is all this presence out there, and it still happens. Say something happens, the first questions will be, "Was there enough done?"

I think there is a recognition that no deterrent measure is bullet proof.

Absolutely. All I'm saying is that we need that out there to try. If those are out there, and they don't work, the lethal step is easier to get to.

What I don't want to see is that if there's a range rider out there, working as hard as possible or as hard as needed, and something does happen, I don't want folks to ask why there weren't more range riders out there.

I find it hard to believe that you all represent the "massive" populations. There are a bunch of people along I-5 who don't care at all.

I need to push back a little on that. There is a large constituency out there who are wolf advocates.

There is a large group of people who care enough, and who pay close enough attention, that it will blow up. Death threats were made this time.

I just wanted to clarify that when I say be out there early, it means to look at potential areas of concern and put more effort there. I'm not saying we have to be everywhere, but we have to be in those spots and we need to be there early. We will not prevent depredations. Quit getting wrapped up in the words and get the mission done.

I just get offended when people don't acknowledge that range riders and conflict staff are out there doing great things. We have success stories that we need to point out and we are not. Because things have not blown up there, we aren't focusing there. We can't overlook those spots. We can't just focus on the northeast. We have multiple models at work and we are focusing on one.

There are a lot of success things happening, but people do not want to make it public.

In all seriousness, that might be why they are success stories.

There are all these other things that need to happen. This is really hard for everyone going through this. It is hard to get cultural integration. It is really really hard. Acknowledge that fact.

The further we go, we see more challenges that come at us. If we go way down into the weeds, we are going to get torn apart. How do we keep us together? We may come up with an answer,

but the public may and will have a different response. So that is something we will need to address as well. How do we communicate the nature of the science to the public as well? We need to raise up to the bigger picture. If we don't do that, I don't see how we can be successful long term.

I feel as though the department staff knows what they want to see, but we WAG members do not know. I would love to have a presentation from the department on the adjustments they would like to see, and then let WAG discuss those. I want something that all of us agree is practical. I want to hear that we are providing support to producers. I want to move towards training and making tools available and making these things work at a community level. What would the department want the protocol to look like? How would they put it together to have those expectations but also honor the cultural aspect and make that system move to a positive place. We are willing to do whatever is needed to get that support, but we need to know these things.

Could we have a conference call with visuals where department staff provides that presentation for the WAG so we are closer to taking action in March?

All members agreed that it was a good plan.

One thing I heard back from my community regards incremental take. Let's define what that means.

Never say full pack removal. Incremental means minimizing loss and implementing a behavioral change. It includes actions up to lethal action and pause for evaluation. The pause could remain even if an additional depredation occurs. Incremental could eventually result in full pack removal. Lethal may also be a success with zero wolves killed.

It's about behavior change in the wolf. I think we should look at the goal being that instead. Change what is going on is the goal.

My worry that even though we put forward that zero wolves killed could be a success, the public will not acknowledge that. If lethal is approved and wolves are not killed, people may react negatively.

The idea is to make ranchers whole while also keeping wolves on the landscape. The idea is to keep them from preying on livestock. This is not retribution killing. Lethal removal is not a retaliatory action. If producers are not having livestock killed by wolves, then that is good for everyone. I think that could help answer a ton of questions on all sides. Changing the message to lead with the goal, and being clear about the goal and expectation, is essential.

The goal is to change pack behavior to minimize the potential for recurrent depredations in order to promote wolf recovery.

Flexibility on Number: It was decided that this topic would be built into the presentation from the department that will be included in the next conference call.

Prevention

I think getting a sense about what every community needs is going to help us more than going through the list on the board.

What are the concerns around sanitation plus one? It would be helpful to have background on why these items in the protocol didn't work.

I think I've heard things about how sanitation isn't exactly that important. I've heard that sanitation isn't necessarily the highest priority on larger operations, and maybe those resources should be put into other things, such as human presence. In smaller operations, that sanitation might be more important. It's instead of doing everything, we look at what makes sense on the ground.

Talking about the relationship between the checklist and the protocol will be necessary. If there's a way to pull the checklist into the protocol, we could do that.

If there is no human presence on the ground in areas where it's been deemed it's the most important nonlethal action, and there is a depredation, then the first depredation shouldn't count.

Before we go down this rabbit hole, we need to define what these terms mean. What does range rider mean? What does sanitation mean?

We do have starter definitions in the checklist and on the DPCA-Ls. We can go from there.

We can really focus on getting preventative range riders on the land in those areas with the biggest potential for issues.

When there is a depredation, the department should show up with their toolbox and evaluate what is appropriate for the given situation.

What is the minimum size of an area that would be appropriate to put a range rider on?

That's an unanswerable question.

It would be nice to go to a case by case basis on what is appropriate as deterrent measures. A case by case seems like it's the most effective. If we could get to the point where the department

comes, sees what is being done, and either says it's adequate and determines it is not adequate. It is kind of a stamp of approval.

Deterrence plans need to be tailored to variables and conditions on the land. You want to use the ones that are most likely to be effective. They should also be in place before turnout. What if we require x number of tools, with what they are depending on the conditions, etc.

Why don't we tie the range riders to the pack instead of the producer? Those producers who already have riders in place would just get the extra protection.

We have a lot of packs, so where do you put your riders?

What if it was high-risk packs? What if there was a range rider for every one of those packs.

If it's the department's determination that a person is needed in those pack areas, then yes.

I'm deeply concerned right now. It's a good idea, but we can't just grab 25 range riders to do this. A more realistic approach is to get reality from the folks on the ground. What does the next year look like, and what do we expect that to require? If we set that expectation, I'm worried it will set us up for failure.

I'm worried we are putting range riders out there to monitor wolves, and that is not what range riders are supposed to do. They monitor livestock. The human presence keeps on cows, and with good livestock husbandry, that is the most effective way to minimize depredations.

The department has to have buy-in from producers. We have to also think long term goals for where we want range riders to be on the landscape.

It is also essential to have well-trained range riders. We have to recognize that a strange person in the herd can sometimes be more hindrance than help.

I'm wondering if we can figure out how to problem solve and find the steps that would need to happen for a range rider program. How do we support you in the department to get to this goal? Also, what do we do about this upcoming grazing season? If it isn't requiring range riders on every risk area, what else can we do?

Trying to get that local thing going, and having clear expectations across the landscape, is at least planning for future endeavors.

Salary for the range riders is also an issue, as the positions are seasonal. That money is not sustainable.

Give me a budget estimate, and I will fight until my dying breath to get that necessary funding from the legislature. We can also raise money outside of that setting.

Is this going to be clear enough to address that question of, "Was enough done?"

It's not there quite yet, but if we're setting up an impossible expectation by having human presence be a requirement, what else can we do to get there? What is a realistic thing that can be done?

We need a program to develop range rider training.

I don't see the difference between sanitation plus one and using two measures. If anything, this is more flexible. I feel like we just keep reinventing what we already have. We also need to separate where we are today and what our plans are for the long term. Another issue is where different responsibilities should be housed. That's where other organizations could help the department.

We have to focus on what the reality is for this coming year and what we can do about it. We'll have range riders who work for producers in certain areas, and we will also have floating range riders. How we interpret those is also important. Size of pack, size of herd, location, etc. Something that is clear, saying what we can actually accomplish, may be the best way forward.

If you could do an analysis and say soon (in the next few weeks) if you need more money for contract range riders, then we can do our best to get that funding for you. If we just move forward with what we have this year, that's risky, because my sense is it's not as much as we would like.

The department is happy to provide information, but we have to be very careful about messaging around requests. WDFW already has a budget ask on range riders and DPCA-Ls.

Legislation and conservation districts are also factors.

A risk assessment plus human and gap analysis could be included in the department's report, as well as concerns about limits on human presence.

The third party neutral stated that though it has been very hard over the past two days, she wanted to acknowledge that a lot has been done. Progress is being made, and WAG members are getting a sense of parameters to work within. She gave an overview of every topic discussed and the progress made so far. She reiterated that this is a very difficult process, but the WAG is moving forward.

If we are here at the end of March, that is too late in the year. Folks need to discuss these issues with their communities. We can't minimize that other stakeholders are waiting for this as well.

What if a draft went out with items discussed today, cultivating certain aspects and made with an eye toward the future? If you had that to take back to the communities, does that feel like something you could get comments and feedback on?

There has to be something about preventatives in there as well. I'm talking about how we get the public to understand this very difficult aspect. We need a clear plan on how these things will get covered. It seems really hard to sell to our community. There are some things in this outline that will hit really hard for us.

It feels too early to put something like that on paper. There are some major discussions that still need to happen before that part is ready.

Small subgroups will be put together before the March meeting to dissect the aspects that need to be discussed more.

The team will discuss a target date for the conference call.

Donny stated that it's important to remember that the folks in the field are the ones who have to carry out whatever is decided upon, and they are already overworked. Keep them in mind as we move forward.

Everyone went around the room for a final check in.

Public Comment

I've been sober for 32 years now, and the reason is that in the steps of AA, we make a list of all persons we harmed and try to make amends to them. I owe an apology to Wolf Haven in particular. I said things I would take back if it were possible. It's much harder than I thought. It's more layered than I thought. Thank you so much to Wolf Haven for everything you've done.

I wish the public could have more significant input. We squeeze out what we can. The wolves were federally delisted in 2011, but it was not because recovery was achieved. It was a political move and had nothing to do with science. I think we should look at acceptable losses. We need to find out what that threshold is. The goal should be to shape wolf behavior, not just change it. I would like to see lethal removal tied to nonlethal methods as a direct connection. Everyone says this is a new endeavor, and wolves are also new to the state and are just trying to do the best they can.

I want to commend the department. No matter what they do, people think it isn't right. I think this is a great opportunity to hear from "real" people. I think it's wonderful what you're doing. I understand the people problem, and it's getting increasingly barbaric out there in the way we

talk to each other. To see the WAG come together and tackle this with respect and listening and understanding and learning is just wonderful for me to see. I had a germ of idea, and you may have tried this, but there are colleges all around those areas. College kids can spend a summer or two summers, and that might be an opportunity for some kind of internship. That would be an adventure and a learning experience. Thank you for your work and I really appreciate it. As a citizen, I want to thank you.

After a couple days here, and listening to the staff in particular, I really appreciate how much thought and effort you put into all of this. My biggest concern going forward in this is that it's obvious from listening to the staff that there is science, but there is some art to this as well. I'm concerned about how some things get done without putting the people in the field in too small of a box. Are we willing to defend a policy that, to be effective, can't be very specific? That's a big hurdle.

I appreciate what the department is doing, and I never thought I would say that about the department. I would trust the range rider very much. I just like him very much. I am really frustrated at the timeline. I think you are behind and I think this meeting should have happened in November or December. I hope this doesn't happen next year. The most hopeful thing I heard was that lethal removal could be successful without killing a wolf. I'm worried about acceptable loss. You may have a calf killed once in a while, but I think that can be acceptable. Wolves shouldn't be killed due to one mistake. As we stumble through this process, calves and wolves are dying, and that's why I'm here. Those calves are trying to survive as well. None of them knows what to do. And yet, we can stumble through and it's not lethal for any of you. It's always the animals that suffer when people make mistakes, and I'm here for them.

I want to express my gratitude to all of you in those chairs. It means so much to me, as a member of the public, to see how much you are willing to invest in this. I know there are others who share that view. I hope we can do a better job of connecting you all to that. I also want to say don't underestimate those inner city wolf lovers. They are tough, and there's a lot of love for you, so we need to open those doors. All I'm hearing is that there aren't enough resources. We can get there. Culture is self-sustaining once it gets going. It feels very uphill, and I encourage you to keep going. Let me know how we can help you.

I too want to echo that sentiment. I'm an inner city wolf advocate. Reach out to us. You have no idea about the passion and love we have for this environment. If we can help build those bridges and save lives, you would be shocked at how many people would be willing to help. Believe, there are a lot of us that would go above and beyond for animals. We understand that it's a business and you are trying to make a living, but understand that as human population grows, we have to make an effort to preserve those wild things. Biodiversity is integral to our survival. Wolves have a place. They don't follow the rules necessarily, but they are there and they are important. There are bigger pictures. Reach out and you may find friends where you thought there were foes. The value of wolves to me is immeasurable.

You guys have a story to tell, and I think everybody in the room is aware that wolf recovery is happening. You in this group took a big risk last year, and it came back to bite some of you hard. I just wanted to thank you all for going out on the limb. And this year you will come back and make changes, hopefully making it better. You have really great stories to tell, and you haven't quite told it yet to the public. There are people who have a vested interest in making you look bad. It will be worth the time and effort from the group to maybe make a video together that can come out and tell that story. We are trying to make a positive impact. You have to tell that story, because no one else can. You are all doing a great job. Donny, you are so lucky with the group of professionals that you work with.

Meeting Adjourned