

Wolf Advisory Group Conference Call
February 2, 2016

Meeting Notes

WAG Participants: Shawn Cantrell, Tim Coleman, Don Dashiell, Tom Davis, Diane Gallegos, Janey Howe, Molly Linville, Lisa Stone, Paula Swedeen, Dave Duncan (additional participants may have joined the call after roll call)

WDFW Participants: Donny Martorello, Stephanie Simek, Candace Bennett, Jason Earl, Ellen Heilhecker, Joey McCanna, Steve Pozzanghera, Anis Aoude, Matthew Peterson, Tammy Conklin, Trent Roussin, Matthew Trenda, Jay Shepherd

Third Party Neutral: Francine Madden

Introductions and Welcome: The third party neutral welcomed everyone to the call and conducted a roll call. She outlined the goals for the call, which include outlining a process for nonlethal and lethal control discussions in advance of the upcoming grazing season. This particular call will cover the DPCA-Ls and the processes currently in place.

The main issue for this call is criteria for DPCAs and ranking each for effectiveness (depending on the unique situations for each livestock producer).

Donny outlined the purpose of the DPCAs and went over what the process currently looks like. Donny thanked WAG members for taking this issue on and putting it in their list of priorities. The overall purpose of the DPCA program is for mutual learning and relationship building with livestock producers and implementing effective deterrence measures to minimize depredations.

In the December meeting, addressing definitions for high quality non-lethal tools and identifying high priority areas was discussed. As a result of that and an early January capacity building workshop, it was decided to create an internal, ongoing wolf task team. They were able to map out a strategy and tackle the DPCA issue. They have worked over the last month on different parts of the issue in an effort to give it more shape and share with the WAG members.

The third party neutral asked WDFW staff members to share nuances and concerns they may have encountered in the field.

Candace said that one of the biggest things was prioritizing producers. It's also important to think about the producers who have already started on this process. Time is a concern, and incorporating everyone's ideas could be a challenge. When prioritizing does occur, is it based

on science or is it perception from the ground? How to back the prioritization so it is based on science is a concern.

Jason expressed another concern that there may not be enough information in the Blues to move forward confidently with any action, as the focus has been in the northern part of the state.

Ellen (Region 2) mentioned that another concern is ranking producers based on the size of the livestock herd and the land area. This could be a roadblock down the road. Across the board cuts to the DPCA would be not as effective, especially in the western part of the state where wolves are still federally listed. She advised keeping the funding where it is.

Joey (Region 1) echoed the previous issues and highlighted ranking of the risk. It's very hard to rank, and discussions have been ongoing on the most effective techniques to do so. Identifying the risk ties directly into ranking. Also, especially in the Blues, a lot of contracts were signed right at the beginning, and those folks should not be forgotten. Cutting funding would not allow them to do the things they need to do, so funding is very important. We also do not want to put producers against each other in the field.

Trent (Statewide Wolf Biologist) mentioned that mapping of the risk has a ton of potential issues involved. Mapping risk on collared packs could be easier, but packs that aren't collared are more difficult. Pack size and other factors play a role as well. It is agreed that something else should be included, but it is not certain what that should be.

Jay (Region 1) said that selling the contracts can be a challenge in the first place since it is typically "post-wolf." They are starting to gain acceptance, but there are still issues involved. Nonlethal techniques are not being spread effectively, and he isn't sure how to improve that exactly with a limited budget. He expressed that hard choices will have to be made with the growing wolf population and the limited nonlethal spread on the landscape. Ranking is also in this area where tough choices will need to be made.

Stephanie (HQ) expressed gratitude to the rest of the field staff members and deferred to them on the issues involved.

Matthew and Tammy (Region 5) did not have anything to add at this time.

Donny thanked the WDFW field staff members who spoke and expressed that he appreciated all of the hard work they put in to get the DPCA project ready before deadlines he set. He did add that what we are hearing today is kind of a middle ground from the conversations they had during internal discussions. Finding a balancing point is the main goal, and all sides are currently being considered. This is a check-in, in terms of meeting the Feb. 15 deadline, but this is also going to be an ongoing issue years into the future. He also sees this as a good opportunity to make adjustments and better prepare for the future, including how to work

within funding constraints, non-lethals, and consistency. Performance measures are also going to be a focus in the coming months.

The contracts and handouts were then gone over one by one. The first worksheet was the livestock site evaluation form. There was originally a sheet with more detail and other factors involved, but the comfort level was not there. This list was where WDFW landed. These are the items staff members are thinking about. With the understanding that the budget constraints are there, staff members can give a qualitative description and make those decisions on the ground. Getting the science involved is certainly important, and other items cannot be forgotten as well, such as type of livestock, allotment type, and the number of livestock. A community approach, where producers would sort of team up together (for example, in hiring a range rider), was also discussed. Federal listing status is also a major factor in management, as is documenting the tools already in place.

Intensity of use is another factor when evaluating risk, but, like other areas where getting too detailed may not be a good idea, WDFW stepped back from that and did not make it a rigid option. The conflict specialist is informed on it though, and will use the information in evaluating each situation.

The sensitive data sharing policy is also in play.

Stephanie added that the type of operation needs to be included as well.

Donny also added that it is important to not forget those relationships already formed when changing these criteria. The goal is to foster relationships, not damage relationships. This issue could occur anywhere in the state.

The third party neutral opened the floor up to the WAG members for comment.

Diane asked if it was all Game Division staff members who put these forms together. It was not. It was a group effort from all of those included today on the phone. It was a mix of field staff members and other staff members. Diane appreciated the additional information Donny provided. She said she would usually expect to see a purpose statement on a form such as this. She also wanted to know about the agreements in Klickitat County, where there is not really a wolf population in place yet.

Donny thanked her for the purpose statement idea. WDFW has already made steps in the process agreement and has not turned anyone away in Klickitat. One discussion that took place, however, was that as the course correction is implemented, it goes slowly. Folks will have ample notice (for example, letting them know that contracts may change for next year, but will not be affected for the remainder of this year). Also, new people signing up will have all of the information.

Shawn asked for clarification on what the goal and purpose of the forms is. Is it for the future or is it for right now? Either way, this form will help make those determinations when it comes to ranking risk and other assessments. What is the plan for this playing out?

Donny thanked Shawn for the question. The expectation is for new folks signing up after Feb. 15, this form will be put in place when evaluating. Each one will be assessed, and consistency is key. This means that conflict specialists will need to communicate. However, tying everything to a specific score is not where WDFW is right now. The main goal is to be as consistent as possible around the state.

Stephanie echoed what Donny said. WDFW recognizes that there are pits we want to avoid, and this is something that is a work-in-progress as they go. WDFW is not in a position where they want to turn people away, but it may look different this year. Establishing some sort of criteria is important as we move into the future with more wolves and limited funds.

Jay mentioned that they are there when making choices, as funding is already limited.

Dave Duncan expressed that the bulk of the money should be spent where the problems are, meaning the northeast. However, contracts were signed in Kittitas County and carcass removal is about the only thing they can do at this time.

Donny outlined the no-cost agreements in that case, where the Department would help with carcass removal and other areas. They are still working out the details in those contracts, and there is potential for new ideas in them.

Stephanie agreed that the carcass removal areas are very important and discussions are currently ongoing in determining actions for those contracts. There may be potential to contract with a carcass-removal company, or even for the addition of a new compost site.

Dave Duncan asked if local producers should get together with WDFW and discuss options.

Stephanie said absolutely. Work with the conflict staff members in your area. Communication is important, and the more cooperation that occurs, the better off we will all be in the long run.

The third party neutral asked if Dave needed anything else from the Department for this situation. Dave said he knows how to move forward at this time and will continue working closely with the Department.

Don Dashiell said that the sanitation piece is a bit overblown. There are not dead animals laying all over the place. He has yet to see anything except coyotes, eagles, or ravens cleaning them up. They don't seem to attract wolves at all, and he thinks those resources (funds and time) could be placed in other areas. He asked for more information on whether those carcasses do attract wolves at all.

Dave agreed with Don, but mentioned that there is not much else to do as a nonlethal action in that area.

Jay said that it tends to be site-specific. He has seen it happen and he has seen areas where it does not happen. Where it is needed, however, it can be very effective as a nonlethal method.

Don added that in his area, there is an easily accessible compost site, which does make it easier to perform that action.

Paula said she appreciated the discussion from Department staff members on the difficulty of creating an assessment program. She wanted to know if there are any plans for communication or information sharing with other places who may have done studies already. There could be a good body of information already out there. For example, WSU has a couple ongoing studies.

Stephanie spoke briefly on the two studies ongoing at WSU. As they are still in the works, WDFW wants to come up with something this year to learn from and assess. That being said, communication is absolutely ongoing, and incorporating what WDFW finds this year with those studies is only going to strengthen the approach as they move into the future.

Diane asked about the funding, including what money is there per year, what costs are involved, etc. It would help her to have a financial outline in the future. It would be nice to send that out to WAG members for a reference.

Donny said they have some room for producers to sign up this year. WDFW has not hit that maximum yet. If next year's numbers are exactly the same, there may be more room, but they expect more interest next year. The hard numbers can be sent out to WAG. WDFW is working with the legislature on funding, and while it is a long process, that process is in place.

Janey mentioned that with the increase in population, available funds will decrease. She asked if anyone is exploring additional funding options besides the legislature. There may be money from larger conservation groups, but she hasn't looked into it herself yet.

Donny said not yet, though those discussions have been ongoing.

Stephanie said that to this point, WDFW has utilized the available funds, including federal and from donations from places like Conservation Northwest. Additional avenues are being talked about, as planning for the future is important.

Shawn had thoughts on the site evaluation form itself. He said a couple things that may help include noting the description of the pasture type (forested, mountainous, etc.) and if there are additional carnivores in the area (coyote, cougar, bear, etc.)

Donny went over the DPCA contract and gave an overview of changes made. A few big edits include changing "Landowner" to "Producer," listing parcel numbers and GPS coordinates, and striking out anything related to compensation, as it is a separate, independent process. This is a draft at the moment, and additional clarification will be provided as WDFW moves forward with the process.

Stephanie agreed and echoed that additional edits are going to be made for clarification. She also asked WAG for opinions, as they wish to include any additional suggestions they may have.

Paula brought up the legal description, as several producers have multiple areas, and it seems like multiple boxes should be provided.

Stephanie said that the data system where these are entered does allow for separate entries and those will be part of the contract as an attachment.

Shawn wanted to clarify that the whole range of these operations is considered. Shawn wants to be sure that the form is able to capture that.

Stephanie said that is correct, and the producer will work with conflict specialists.

Paula asked if these include private and public land at the same time.

Jay said that is true. The contract involves the producer and protecting that producer's cattle. It assumes that if there is a need at the home ranch, that will be covered as well.

Donny said that the process time is something to consider as well. Validating the contract, getting it signed, and entering it into the database takes time, and the Department is working on methods to streamline that process.

Diane said she understood taking compensation out, but wondered about the inclusion of lethal action in the contract. She wondered why it was in the document. To her it doesn't fit with the document.

Stephanie agreed and said that it is one thing that they would need to address. It was a holdover from contract language involving deer and elk conflicts. That is one thing that will be addressed in future iterations.

Joey echoed that the process is a very long process. As the year goes on and something occurs (fires, etc.), the contract must be revised to include the areas where the producer may have had to move.

Tom asked about the proactive measures, where reduced weight gain and reduced pregnancy rates have been removed. He wanted to know why those were removed and how they will be handled in the future.

Donny said that direct depredations from wolves are included in the WAC, and now the indirect issues, such as weight loss, are included in WAC as well. That process step is stated in WAC, so they are not necessary in the contract.

Tom suggested that the WAC should be sighted in the contract, for reference for those interested.

Donny mentioned that WDFW is also putting out a one to two page document that outlines this process and the reference material involved.

Paula asked if the contracts office is part of the streamlining process.

Stephanie said that WDFW has been working with the contracts and the finance office in an effort to improve the process. They are fully aware of the issues and everyone involved is looking for the best steps for improvement.

Donny added that while there isn't much to report yet, that is certainly on the radar.

Joey added that working with wolves is only one part of the job for conflict specialists. He wanted to remind everyone of that aspect.

Paula wanted to emphasize that she asked the question to know about the other parts of the system. She said she knows how much effort is involved from the field staff members and expressed her appreciation of the work they do.

Donny then went over the nonlethal expectations page. He started with the checklist language, and it was then circulated through the wolf task team for comments. This is the last thing they worked on before this call, and additional improvements can be made. He also included outreach materials and resource guides to further assist producers and others. Performance measures were talked about, and having the ability to check-in and ask if those expectations were met is important.

The third party neutral asked for comments on the range rider section. There were none.

Also none for domestic sheep herders, guard dogs, den and rendezvous sites, sick or injured livestock, or any of the other measures.

Shawn had one question regarding the importance of training when it comes to using nonlethal measures. Training doesn't seem to be mentioned in the list.

Donny said that it hasn't been mapped out yet on how to address those particular needs. As the DPCA-L is applied, it will depend on the producer. They may only have one thing listed in the contract, for example. As that need is identified, trainings or other means may be needed to be made available. The evaluation, however, will have to take place and each producer will be a unique case.

Jay said that it is a two-way street as well. Producers teach staff members just as much as staff members teach producers. Being flexible is essential.

Don Dashiell said that he didn't think WDFW needed to assess the efforts on the guard dog side. The producer is probably the one who identifies whether or not the guard dogs are doing the job effectively.

Donny said that as these DPCA-Ls evolve, that language will be included. Providing training for those folks who do want to attend or do need it will be necessary. Tailoring these to each specific producer and each specific environment is important as well, because not everything will work for everyone.

Joey said that a riff can be felt within field staff members when it comes to checking as many boxes as possible. There have been instances where instructions have come down after an event that have caused frustration.

Paula asked if providing written comments would be okay.

Donny said absolutely, and would like all WAG members to do so if they would like. The sooner those comments could be provided, the better. Getting them by Friday would be the best, as WDFW wants this completed by Feb. 15.

Diane asked about llamas out with sheep and other livestock.

Candace said that there are not many places where those types are utilized.

Don said while it isn't unheard of, it's not as common.

Jay said cougars are known to target llamas, so they probably would not be as effective.

The third party neutral moved the group toward the outreach materials.

Donny went over the outreach materials, identifying that they don't quite meet the needs. WDFW is not locked into these by any means, but they provide an example of some of the pieces that may be included to strengthen the outreach.

Diane mentioned that there should be an involved conversation with the WAG regarding outreach.

Dave Duncan expressed that there are many unworkable things in some of these materials, especially the "Living with wolves and livestock" section. Dave totally objects to the document as written.

Stephanie clarified that these are not the documents being sent out. There are suggestions and ideas on how to approach the outreach aspect. This is the starting point, and Stephanie, along with conflict staff members, is restructuring this information. They want to work with the WAG on what materials to send out and how to go about doing it. There is a lot more thought that needs to go into these materials.

Dave said that as a marketing tool, these materials fail entirely. They will turn everyone off to the goals of the Department.

Diane agreed with Dave and expressed again that the WAG should give input, as that is where the most value will come.

The third party neutral reiterated that these materials are not the ones to be used, and that input from cattleman and WAG will be necessary moving forward. Donny will send out these first steps again to ensure all members get them.

She asked for any other general feedback, including comments and concerns, from WAG members and Department staff members. She asked Jay if he could give an update on the Dirty Shirt incident that occurred recently.

She thanked the folks who have contributed to the poll for the next conference call, and said that the reason these calls are important is so that the meeting in March can move forward with recognizing the diverse spectrum of people in Washington and planning outreach actions to address them. Also, to aid in and allow time for the discussion in March on lethal strategies.

Jay gave an overview of the Dirty Shirt incident. On the evening of Jan. 25, five wolves surrounded a Great Pyrenees dog. The dog did not need vet care. The next morning (Jan. 26), Department staff members responded to the scene, spending a couple hours there looking things over. Wolves were definitely involved, and fully engaged the great pyramise. The German shepherd mix was also fully engaged by two wolves. There was a non-physical confrontation. There appeared to be four to five wolves, with possibly a couple more on the side. Collar data showed that the pack was in the area (or at least the collared wolf was there). There was a blood spot at the area. It was not enough blood to come from a bullet wound or physical animal confrontation. The owner did shoot three or four times above the confrontation as a scare tactic. The wolves moved away in the direction they approached.

It is breeding season for wolves, and the blood could be from the breeding female.

Donny said that the method used to communicate as fast as possible may have made it seem like the Department did not take this seriously, as email updates can sometimes do that. The email was meant to be a quick update only including the details. Donny wanted to express that WDFW takes the incident very seriously, acknowledges how alarming it was for the residents, and will work to the best of their ability to prevent future incidents like this.

Jay echoed Donny's sentiment, and said that the animal owner understood that day that WDFW took it very seriously. This incident could have been seconds away from the loss of a dog. It was full engagement, and it was pure luck that the resident was in the right spot to do the right thing.

Diane applauded the owner's actions.

Steve said that what was being responded to was an initial report of an attack situation, and rumors arose of wolves being shot. Steve felt the need to pass that information on and let the recipients know that updates would come as more information was available. He expressed a host of lessons learned by the Department. There were some concerns that this was a purposeful attempt by WDFW to minimize the situation. That is not the case, and the Department continues to keep a close eye on the situation. Discussions will also be had about the steps for moving forward.

Diane asked how the wolves behaved after the shots.

Steve said there were three shots, the first being over the head of the dog, and the next two over the heads of the wolves. The wolves then ran off and have not returned.

Shawn asked about the surrounding area. Was livestock in the area, for example? Is livestock at risk right now?

Jay said there are livestock areas up and down the valley. This guard dog was guarding property. At the moment, it is probably medium risk to livestock. It is less risk than open grazing, but there is some level of risk, particularly to the east.

Don said that his initial response to the report was a reaction to him feeling as if the message had been filtered to minimize the seriousness of the situation. He does appreciate that the Department takes the situation seriously. He does not think the wolves immediately scattered, and feels they have been desensitized to nonlethal means. They didn't move too far, but only a few hundred yards away. He wanted to view this as an additional depredation by that pack, and considerations should be taken to do something about them.

Jay said that he met for a few hours with the household Friday. He wouldn't say that the pack is desensitized to hazing at this time. To have the pack turn and get out of sight is a good sign. They were a quarter mile away, but they were heading away. They were not directly hazed last year. They tend to get out of sight and forget about it.

Joey said that Steve was the messenger, but he was the one who sent the message out. It was not an effort to play the situation down, but was an effort to get the right people the information as soon as possible.

Diane said that it is very important, for that reason, that the information that goes out is clinical. There is such a broad group involved, which is why you should want the communication to the public to be clinical, and that shouldn't speak to how people feel about those involved.

Steve reiterated that the Department will move on and learn from this experience. The message could have been different and worded in a much better way to avoid the situation that arose. Hopefully there is a better understanding that there was no attempt to control messaging and it was an attempt to get that information out as quickly as possible.

Jay said that the report is a draft, and after meeting with the household for six hours, it needs to be updated. It is difficult to get the story clear at first. Revisiting the issue is important. The report is also supposed to be clinical and include just the facts. Also, this incident was definitely an attack.

Diane wanted to clarify that this was not considered a depredation.

Don Dashiell said that they consider it a depredation.

Shawn said that what constitutes a depredation needs to be discussed at future WAG meetings, but under the current plan, it was his understanding that this does not count as a depredation.

Donny said that he respects and acknowledges the views of County Commissioners. That said, under the wolf management plan, this incident is not a depredation. While it was certainly an imminent attack, it does not meet the definition of a depredation under the Plan.

Donny thanked everyone for the input, and indicated WDFW would be working hard to meet the deadline. If WAG members have any comments to add, please provide them by Friday to give the Department time to finish before that deadline. All materials will be provided to WAG.

The third party neutral reminded everyone to sign up for the next call, and thanked everyone for their time.

Meeting Adjourned