

**Wolf Advisory Group Conference Call**  
**February 29, 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, Jack Field, Dan Paul, Nick Martinez, Dan McKinley (additional participants may have joined after roll call)

**WDFW Participants:** Donny Martorello, Anis Aoude, Candace Bennett, Jay Shepherd, Joey McCanna, Steve Pozzanghera, Ellen Heilhecker, Scott Becker, Bruce Botka, Matthew Trendera

**Third Party Neutral:** Francine Madden

**Introductions and Welcome:** The third party neutral welcomed everyone to the call and took roll. She outlined the goals for the call.

The main three topics included internal learning and sharing, external outreach, and how WDFW incorporates science into decision making. After each section, the floor would open for WAG to comment. By laying the foundation during this call, they will be able to move forward with these discussions at future WAG meetings.

Donny outlined that they wanted to do most of this as a group discussion and encouraged everyone to give input.

**Internal Learning and Sharing:** Donny started with internal learning and sharing. Some of the first things WDFW did when wolves started appearing on the landscape were seek advice from outside experts. They also had some public meetings with those outside experts. There was also an annual meeting every year where federal and state agencies, tribes, and outside experts, met to discuss data and wolf management over a two day period.

In the early depredation investigations, outside experts were contacted and the depredation report was shared with them. That is still available today. Some staff members were also sent out of state for training, including Jay Shepherd.

Jay went over what the outside training entailed. He and other Department staff members attended training and learned about carcass disposal and other management methods. This was around 2012-2013. Staff members have also gone to Idaho to look at nonlethal activities.

Jay also mentioned that the outside expert participated in outreach projects with individual producers while he was here. There was also an outreach project in Goldendale to move that knowledge forward and get ahead of the game in that area.

Donny said that there have been specialist guest speaking events that featured additional outside experts. Liz Bradley, Wolf Specialist at Montana Fish and Parks, was one of those guest speakers. At the WDFW Program School, Wildlife Services had a presentation on guarding dogs as well.

Scott Becker discussed a trapping class that was offered to several WDFW staff members. It was classroom oriented.

Candace outlined internal workshops that are conducted at least once per year (they try for twice per year) that cover everything from depredations to deer and elk conflict.

Donny talked about the internal wolf team that is currently being put together at WDFW. This was mentioned during the last conference call, but Donny wanted to keep folks updated. This group will have representation from Olympia, Regions, and the local landscape level. This will incorporate the diverse work force at WDFW. The group will be focused, with a lot of members from the northeast part of the state at first, but others will be added to over time.

The floor was then opened for WAG member input.

Tom asked if these reports (deer and elk damage reports, etc.) are available online at all.

Donny said that it is on there in different ways. Some of the notes turn up in the data on the website. Summaries and papers are available online as well. There is not, however, a single report for every training.

**Science and how it is used to make decisions:** The discussion then moved on to how science is used to make decisions. Anis discussed how different people are more informed in different areas. Peer papers are forwarded to folks so they stay up to speed on things. Each staff member attends conferences to keep up to date on the latest information as well. Science is always changing, and new things are always being discovered. It is a mutual learning environment. If the public wants to know who the expert is, asking the staff members on the ground is the best way to go. If they do not know the answer, they can find it by getting in touch with the relevant Department staff member or finding the information from an outside expert.

As far as science philosophy, WDFW wants to use the best science available to advise management. Looking at the literature, what is working in other places, and common sense decisions to weigh the best options is the best way to go. Often, the Department digests and watches new things for a while before moving forward. This whole field is still evolving, especially the nonlethal methods. WDFW wants to be a part of that.

Donny added an example about the DPCAs, which included a form that had eight or nine different things that played into what might be a risk for depredation. That is an example of

where WDFW looked at the science and used it to inform management. But it is not a direct line. There is also experience that needs to be taken into account.

The third party neutral asked if there was an institutional place where these updated papers are kept.

Donny said that they all have their own papers on the shelf. There are also two locations on the web where those papers are kept. There is the WDFW SharePoint site, and there is a WDFW Publications page that goes over the study and what it did. That is available on the website for anyone to see.

The floor was opened for WAG comments and questions.

Paula asked about the complex picture painted by the science. She wanted to know if there are discussion groups or study groups that go over the current research, including contradictions in results. She wanted there to be a conversation about that science and how to implement it on the ground.

Donny said that was a great point, and something that is improving over time. As an agency moves forward with a large body of information, the goal is to make sense of it and implement it effectively. Putting the wolf team together so the dialogue and discussion happens in a group atmosphere is a good step in that direction. That is the goal of the wolf team.

**External Outreach:** Donny outlined outreach methods used by WDFW. The website is a big outreach tool, including recent additions like the wolf chronologies. Brochures are also available to producers. Annual reports and news releases are included as well. WAG updates have also become an effective outreach tool, even though they weren't initially designed that way. That's been a great tool for WDFW to provide outreach to the general public.

One on one contact is also important. Conflict specialists meeting with producers builds relationships, and that is ongoing all the time. It takes a lot of effort to build those relationships. Conflict specialists also attend US Forest Service allotment meetings, as well as conservation meetings throughout the state. Presentations are also done to the Fish and Wildlife Commission each year.

Bi-monthly calls are conducted with northeastern Washington representatives. Scattered public meetings are also conducted to inform the public.

Donny said WDFW recognizes that there is a difference between just going to a meeting and actually engaging on something. He said that sometimes it can seem like WDFW is just attending. That can occur until receptivity grows and the relationships grow over time.

WDFW is putting together meetings and trainings with producers around the state. Getting the new DPCA out on the landscape and getting expectations on nonlethals on the landscape for producers is a priority.

Getting producers an advanced notice of what is required for indirect and direct compensation. A brochure is being created right now with that information on it. Updating the website with a more up-to-date Q&A is going on right now as well.

Joey mentioned that staff members also attend a lot of Cattleman's meetings to give updates and presentations. They meet with sheep producers as well. In school education is also conducted that outlines nonlethal management practices.

Jay mentioned that one on one meetings with producers and the USFS will start this year. They've also attended county commissioner meetings.

Candace said she also does a monthly update of all the wolf sightings, camera work, and reported depredations for Spokane County Cattleman, the Huckleberry area, and other interested parties.

The third party neutral opened the floor for WAG comments at this time.

Diane asked how WDFW determines what the message is for these outreach presentations.

Joey said that all the conflict specialists talk to each other all the time. Also, a lot of the presentations are shared between the conflict specialists, keeping the message consistent.

Diane asked about the process to determine what that consistent message is going to be. Is it informal at this time?

Donny mentioned that consistency is one of the biggest needs for the Department. WDFW is looking for a more formal process to determine what that message is.

Candace said that while consistency is good if you are addressing the same audience, but there needs to be flexibility depending on the audience. She presents to everyone from 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders to professionals at county meetings. So while the common theme might be the same, the presentation is going to have to adapt.

Diane thanked Candace and said that she agrees, but definitely wants that consistent overall message from the Department.

Jay said that his hope with the wolf group is to formally figure out what WDFW wants that to look like now and into the future.

The third party neutral asked if there were any areas where there seems to be needs going forward that need to be addressed.

Donny talked about consistency being a concern for WDFW. They want to develop that consistency from area to area in outreach. Receptivity, which is related to outreach, is also a priority. Developing and moving forward with expectations and making those consistent. Outreach that is proactive and not reactive. Donny wants the outreach to not only be about crisis situations, but also the positive side of wolf management.

Joey said that one of his goals with the internal working group is to get that consistency from Region to Region, as responses have varied at times. No matter where something happens in the state, he wants the same action from the Department. Having a plan before something happens is important.

Diane asked about how WAG can best support the Department with outreach. Outreach has been done on wolves for 33 years. Consistent messaging so everyone, not just WDFW, can give that same message is important.

Bruce talked about the website and how much information is on there. Recommendations for what the website can look like would be more than welcome. Any feedback that can help improve the website and help make that message more consistent would be welcome.

Donny agreed with Diane and reiterated that a consistent message from all involved would be very beneficial. Moving forward, that will be something to dive into.

Anis asked about how the WAG members would like to receive outreach. WDFW continues to mention the website, but some feedback has said that the website is not the best place.

Donny agreed with Anis, but added that it would be good to know how many producers are receptive and how many are not. How does WDFW show that progress that a larger audience is being reached all the time.

Tom asked if there was an active realignment process from the top down about defining the overall message as a whole.

Donny said that the process is less defined, but his perception is that a lot of time has been put into other protocols (checklist, DPCA, nonlethal methods, etc.). WDFW hasn't quite gotten to an overall outreach plan that has multiple layers. It is on the horizon though, as the group wants that comprehensive plan. There are a lot of different audiences and a lot of different targets for outreach, including libraries, producers, schools, etc.

The third party neutral asked about hunters, and what the goals were to reach them. Is there a need for more outreach in that hunting community?

Donny said there is definitely a need and outreach to the hunting public is a priority. But also mentioned the critical need for outreach to producers at this time.

Diane brought up that it sort of resembles the living with carnivores message from a few years back. Developing that consistent message for what to do when encountering a wolf would be good as well.

Molly said that the interaction with the Enforcement officers is a big factor as well. Ensuring the consistency goes through Enforcement is important, because many producers know the Enforcement officer but not the conflict specialist.

Jay said that they really need to improve the communication between Wildlife Program and Enforcement. It isn't as good as it could be right now.

Paula brought up the Hunter Education program, and recommended that Dave Whipple should be a part of the wolf team. Getting the message out to hunters should be a concern of the Hunter Education program.

Donny acknowledged to need for outreach to new hunters via hunters education and added the messaging to current hunters. That is a big audience, and consistent messaging is important. That expertise in outreach is necessary to be effective with that large user groups.

Many hunters are not a part of those hunting groups, and getting the message to them should be a priority as well.

Dan said that those classes that go over poaching and other hunting areas could be used as an extended arm about wolf management. A lot of hunters and non-hunters go to the Eyes in the Woods meetings, and outreach could be effective there.

Donny said that an opportunity should be made out of the ungulate assessment. The first draft will be available in the next couple months. That will be an opportunity to get the message out there about current ungulate populations and could even serve to get a message on wolf management out there as well.

Candace brought up hikers, and how they are also out in the woods. Washington has very good trails associations that could provide an outreach opportunity.

The third party neutral encouraged everyone to continue to think about ideas and keep them for future meetings. Addressing gaps and filling needs is essential for outreach, and working with the Department and making recommendations is important.

Janey said the including wolf knowledge in Hunter Education could be a good idea. Making it not wolf-focused, but predator-focused, might be good.

Janey also mentioned the weekly reports and wondered if there could be more about wolves in those reports. Right now there is some information, but more could be added on monitoring and other work.

Dan McKinley asked if WDFW would be attending the summit about the perception of hunting in Washington and Oregon. Having a representative there could be effective, especially since wolves will probably come up.

Donny asked Dan to forward him the information.

Janey mentioned the Spokane Bighorn Sportsman Show, and recommended someone be there in attendance as well.

Candace said that WDFW has a booth and will be making presentations.

Dan mentioned that there will be a Mule Deer summit on the 12<sup>th</sup> in Omak. It won't be just about hunting, but about mule deer overall, including habitat, predators, etc. Those kinds of things would be great for outreach as well.

**Additional WAG Business:** The third party neutral asked about the group's thoughts on two processes, including what they think about the frequency of meetings. She acknowledged that people are very busy with other responsibilities.

The group discussed how often meetings should occur. There were several recommendations, including once every month, grouping meetings in certain times of the year to better fit schedules, and juggling locations to better fit travel needs.

A recommendation was made to open up a phone line to call in. There was some disagreement here, as it is very difficult. Participation is very limited for those on the phone. The value of the face to face interaction cannot be measured. One reason the group is doing so well is because of that face to face interaction.

The third party neutral then asked about the minimum participation needed for a WAG meeting to count as an official WAG meeting. She asked for thoughts on the official measurement and what that should look like.

Diane said that it should be a pretty high bar in order to mesh well with the sufficient consensus agreement that was decided upon at the last WAG meeting. The group agreed that sufficient consensus meant only three members, all from different stakeholder groups, could disagree with a final decision.

Paula agreed with Diane that it is important to include that sufficient consensus agreement. Most everyone should be there and each major stakeholder group should be represented. However, if some members are not there, sufficient consensus is not possible. Meetings should not be put on hold for that reason.

Diane said that she didn't mean to say that meetings would be put on hold, but that decisions reached would have to be taken to those members who were unable to attend.

The third party neutral said that decisions are not finalized in a single meeting, but the quorum gives flexibility.

Paula wondered if quorum is even needed, since if members are not present, decisions cannot be finalized until those members are informed.

The third party neutral reiterated that they need to think about what an official meeting looks like. From a decision-making standpoint, it may not be worthwhile to have a quorum, but from what it takes to make an official meeting, a quorum is necessary. WAG is under a lot of scrutiny, so having that defined line is important.

Tom asked if this call was an official meeting. Donny said it was. He brought up subcommittees and how they can be effective in bringing ideas forward to the larger group.

The third party neutral recommended the group pick up this discussion at the next in-person meeting. She said she would take the ideas presented, put together a rough quorum, and have the members dissect it at the next meeting. The members agreed with that plan. The next meeting is in Olympia.

**Meeting Adjourned**