

Wolf Advisory Group Meeting Notes
July 6, 2016
Spokane

WAG Members: Bob Aegerter, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Jack Field, Janey Howe, Lisa Stone, Paula Swedeen, Tom Davis, Mark Pigeon

WDFW Staff: Donny Martorello, Anis Aoude, Kevin Robinette, Robert Waddell, Ellen Heilhecker, Candace Bennet, Tara Meyer, Steve Pozzanghera, Jay Shepherd, Trent Roussin, Joey McCanna, Matthew Trendera

Third Party Neutral: Francine Madden

Welcome and Overview: The third party neutral welcomed everyone and gave a quick overview of the agenda. She also explained how the meeting would be conducted for members of the public who may not have attended previous meetings.

WDFW Update 1: Donny provided a WDFW update on wolf management. There have been a number of captures already this year (updates provided on the emailing list). Staff members have also began processing direct and indirect claims. There are many parts to processing those claims, and Donny said WDFW would love to have a team of stakeholders to help out as well. The goal is to make it efficient, work with assessors, and hopefully make the program stronger all around.

The department is working on an ungulate assessment. Staff members are looking at different ungulate populations throughout the state and their relationship with predators on the ground.

Donny also told the members how Wildlife Services are being used by the Department right now. They are helping with implementing captures and nonlethal management tools, but are not involved in any lethal protocol or anything like that.

Donny brought up some small parts of the lethal protocol that could/should be changed. The language in regards to DPCA-Ls changed to include "up to 50%." There was another area that hasn't been changed yet. This was in the four confirmed depredations language. The document left out "within a pack." Donny asked if WAG is okay with him making those small changes without checking in first, but then inform WAG about it after the fact. Everyone was in agreement.

On the protocol, there are other parts of wolf management that are not included or addressed in the protocol. Donny asked about the expectation of WAG in regards to those other aspects. If something catches the Department's attention, how should they inform WAG?

Comment: It kind of depends on where that is happening. We would like to know so we can support the Department in those situations. Day to day activities don't need to be relayed, but if something is bubbling up, it would be nice to be aware of those situations.

Comment: It would be helpful to know what the suggested language is on those small updates. That ensures precision.

Comment: An email update for those situations would be appreciated as well.

If the Department sees an emerging issue, they will inform WAG of it. Likewise, if a WAG member notices something, it would be good to relay that information. This then becomes the responsibility of everyone to say that those topics need more attention.

Steve gave an update and overview for the Wild Future Initiative, which is a program being implemented by WDFW. He passed out drafts of the Wild Future fact sheets for everyone to see. Feedback from the public during the listening sessions last year provided a lot of good ideas, including increased access, more enforcement officers on the ground, simpler communication and regulations, greater outreach efforts, and more abundant fish and wildlife in Washington.

Population growth, climate change, fire frequency, a diverse public, and a need for WDFW to move beyond a hunter and fisherman based budget.

Some general goals for WDFW moving forward include trying to address those new goals by shaping actual proposals to the public feedback. There are four areas of focus, and WDFW has generated a set of four fact sheets. These fact sheets are available online, and the website allows the public to comment on them. Outreach will also be conducted with individual stakeholder groups. The next round of public meetings will begin soon as well.

Steve gave a brief overview for each of the four fact sheets. Steve emphasized that these plans outlined in the fact sheets, and the money it will take to follow through with these plans, are mostly to keep up with necessary land stewardship and wildlife management actions. He also outlined the next steps in the process, including getting approval from the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the legislative process as a whole. Proposals will need to be submitted to the Governor's Office by the third week of September.

This initiative will be a six year process spread over multiple bienniums. We can't create a new future within one biennium.

Steve mentioned again that this information is available on the WDFW website and encouraged everyone in attendance to go there for more information.

Outreach on Protocol for Lethal Removal: Francine went around the room and asked members what they have been doing so far to inform and educate others about the protocol for lethal removal.

Jack has spoken with a number of producers and met with the Department. People seem to be fairly agreeable with the protocol as it is. There seems to be cautious optimism as we see how things unfold during the grazing season.

Jason has had meetings in Pomeroy (55 people) and Clarkston, as well as two in the Blue Mountains.

Dan said social media has been used to spread the word, and press releases have been put out nationally. There have been local press releases as well (Spokesman Review). There will be an article in the national magazine that praises WAG members and their user groups for wanting to work together.

The Columbian has denied efforts until wolves appear on the west side of the state. Tom has also worked with the Washington Trails Association, but it's in the beginning stages.

WDFW staff members have worked with user groups throughout the state, as well as individual producers. Folks have read it and feedback has been limited.

Jay said feedback that has been received has reflected misunderstanding with the protocol. The protocol seems to need more clarity. The assurance isn't there right now. There was also a feel that this could push things underground. The northeast area of the state is the model, and getting acceptance there will affect management statewide. The demand for working together is increasing exponentially. This feedback highlights the fact that this is a work in progress.

There is some frustration coming out of the most recent event, where it was difficult to tell which pack was guilty. Feedback for Tom has been similar to Jay's. Response has been mixed.

Diane said feedback has been mixed from folks, with some calling her a wolf murderer for being a WAG member, and others saying that if the vote was unanimous, she must have felt it was fair. She said there was also a lot of discussion on who would be doing the lethal removal and what methods would be used.

Land ownership came up in some feedback, and how rules should be different depending on who owns the land.

The feedback for Lisa seemed to be everyone kind of waiting for something to happen to see what action occurs.

Janey said feedback has been variable on her end.

Donny said it has been unusually quiet. The narrative and protocol is online, and some media coverage has been conducted. He checked in with a few elected officials and county commissioners. General feedback is cautious optimism. People have to make it real for them.

Bob said he has shared with the Sierra Club and other groups. General feedback has been rational, with questions about land ownership and more. Others don't want to kill any wolves.

Trent said conversations have been had, and making others aware of how decisions were reached in the WAG meeting has been his focus so far.

Paula has worked with the Washington Wolf Collaborative since the decision on the protocol. One question is around the federal land / non-federal land issue, which is recurring. Making the language more clear is essential. How you let producers know what appropriate deterrence measures are is a good topic for discussion.

Mark has reached out to his organizations, and feedback has been "wait and see." This is a work in progress, and much more work needs to be done.

Dave Duncan has spoken with a lot of hunter and producer groups. Overall, they feel that an accomplishment has been made. There is some disagreement about the agreement, but overall the feedback has been positive.

Joey said there have been questions regarding range riders through DPCA-Ls, and also questions regarding packs that attack multiple producers.

Don said feedback has been that most everyone he's spoken with has hated it. Being subjected to multiple depredations discourages them, and they are fairly tense. Four seemed like too much.

Comment: There is some misinformation out there regarding Wildlife Services and what they are actually doing in the state.

Donny said Wildlife Services will not be contracted for lethal removal, if that protocol is needed this year. That timeframe is questionable on if or when Wildlife Services will have the capacity to participate in lethal removal. Donny will make sure WAG members know when that point comes. Methods would be approved by WDFW, and include use of a helicopter (if available), trapping with gripping traps, or pursuing from the ground. After trapping, the action would be carried out under the American Veterinary approved methods for humane euthanasia.

What outreach is still needed: There may need to be additional explanation or some other means of communication to ensure understanding by the general public, and especially

producers. A bullet pointed list, or a fact sheet of some kind, could help with this. Clarity is essential in this case.

Donny said that while it's important to get the information to as many Washingtonians as possible, it is absolutely essential that producers in the state are not only informed of the protocol, but also understand it completely.

Jack recommended the Department create a one page fact sheet that outlines main points and includes contact information for conflict staff members.

Other recommendations include guest editorials (700 words), ads in newspapers, etc.

Joey said that there will probably always be folks "off the grid."

Tara recommended working with law enforcement and updating them completely as well. That could go a long way.

A 700-word editorial could be completed in about a week.

Get information to Ag Extension, NRCS/Conservation District, and USFS, as well as Wildlife Services.

Diane said there should also be work within the Department to ensure all conflict specialists are on the same page.

Donny brought up that while forming the protocol, it was discussed that translating it the public may be a challenge due to them not being there and watching how the discussions went. The public did not have those conversations.

Dave said that some of the folks he spoke with are not living with wolves yet, so they do not have that same understanding. It could be different when they are affected.

It was mentioned that the vast majority of residents are not represented by the groups here, and getting the message out to them should be a priority as well. That is a population of 5-6 million people. A basic education on the change of landscape within Washington State could help out. A coalition formed by the groups represented here could be more effective than WDFW with that message. This is recruitment and retention for the best interest of the state.

Additional media needs to be included, as those publications are then part of the public record.

Paula suggested that conflict specialists write down those gray areas that may not be covered by the protocol. That will give WAG more time to think about them and could result in improvements.

Break

Financial Resources: The Department gave an overview on the resources available and where that funding comes from.

The third party neutral spoke of the work they are doing. WAG and all user groups represented on it operate at a statewide level, and recognizing that, the limits that come with that, and the options available is essential. Going forward, how will WAG balance working with government when perception may not be good. Incorporating principles on how to move forward is a good strategy.

WAG is already operating under a mission, vision, and purpose. This would be creating principles to go alongside those. Balancing and empowering the diverse perspectives of Washington State is important as WAG moves forward.

Setting goals and plans of action, as well as ways of measuring those goals, is important as well.

Donny gave an overview of WDFW's budget and where it comes from. He covered planned expenditures for the wolf budget and included activities associated with each expenditure category. There are many different parts to the budget.

The range rider category is in regards to the contract range riders who are contracted with WDFW.

DPCA funding is \$1.1 million this biennium. WDFW has about \$60,000 left right now. That means about 6-12 new contracts can be done until the next biennium. New money comes in during the next biennium.

Pittman-Robertson (PR) funds have been used to cover a portion of the DPCAs for the first time this biennium. PR funds also help cover the conflict and carnivore sections.

Question: Is there a list of people ready to sign up using that last \$60,000 for DPCA?

There has been some strong interest in the Blue Mountains. If you are not in a confirmed pack area, you do not qualify for a DPCA, but a contract range rider is more flexible.

Is WDFW prepared to justify the PR funds to the people who put into the PR fund? DPCAs do not deal with wildlife, but with producers. From a hunter's standpoint, that money should be going to manage wildlife instead of helping producers. I don't think any dollars should be taken out of that column, but reallocating the PR dollars and filling that money in from elsewhere may be a better route.

DPCAs are revised on a WDFW fiscal year standpoint, and some folks do not renew their signups. This opens up some funds.

The topic of range rider contracts was discussed. There are nine or ten range riders contracted this season, and WDFW is maxed out. No other range riders can be contracted due to funding. There is also a training component. WDFW will work with user groups in efforts to fund additional range riders and training.

Dave said that range riders are an area where additional funding will be needed.

What happens when a contract range rider doesn't spend the whole contract?

When we can, we do carryover, but often that money goes somewhere else to address overages. You can usually only rollover one time.

Can you contract for less and hire more range riders?

That picture becomes clearer as the end of the biennium approaches.

WDFW contracts are comparable to those offered in the private sector. The daily rate is the same for each range rider.

Donny said WDFW will not have a lot of rollover into the next biennium. There is very little stability in those funding sources. WDFW will build on the base, and then include any additional knowledge as it comes in.

One area that jumps out is that conflict specialists' time will go up dramatically as wolves spread throughout the state. Conflict specialists in the eastern third spend almost all of their time on wolves during the summer, and a lot of time on wolves during other times of the year.

There will be some challenges with budget needs as we move into the future.

Collars take a lot of that conflict budget, but WDFW is already looking into less expensive collars. It's important to remember that WDFW won't be able to collar every pack as more and more packs appear.

Jack asked how you can tell a guilty pack if there is no collar in the pack. You can identify a pack without a collar, and Jack encouraged the Department to get that message out.

With a solid range rider program and strong monitoring, it is possible to identify and track a pack without having a collar in that pack.

Jack asked about getting information to Washington producers when an Oregon wolf crosses over the border. There is a lag period right now where producers feel that not much can be done.

Jack also asked where the base came from in regards to cost for lethal removal. Donny said it is a placeholder.

Donny said that long-term, the Department will have to have a plan moving forward. Budget planning, particularly now, can be difficult, but in five years, that funding might not be there.

Dave said it's important to have some kind of budget, some kind of plan, some form of reality. Can we make the protocol work money-wise? Dave isn't comfortable until we know how we are going to fund the plans set forward by WAG. We really need to come up with some firm numbers.

Paula said it's important to remember that wolves are currently in the most producer-rich part of the state. In other parts of the state, interactions with major producers could go down. It may not play out the same way in other parts of the state.

Anis said that what Donny has put together is a very high look at the budget, and WDFW will know more in the coming months when everything is paid. There will a cost regardless when it comes to wolves moving throughout the state. It may be more people time instead, but the costs will be there.

Donny said you have to ask the questions as well, including does this meet the needs of Washington's diverse populations? Also, does this meet the needs of recovering an endangered species in Washington? It's also important to remember that wolves are one of many species recovering in Washington, and the Department is working to recover a lot of species. Is this amount for wolves too much in the long term? Is it taking away from other species?

A strategic plan for five years out, with an agreement on the numbers used, could be very beneficial for management practices over that time span. Who should do that planning? It could be just the Department, but it could also be WAG or a subcommittee of WAG. Are there creative ways to mobilize a source throughout the state to fund these actions? Are there creative ways to grow that funding source instead of dealing with a shrinking pie for a growing issue?

The flipside of looking for more money is to look for efficiencies and save money in places. There are methods that could be simplified and made more efficient. That could get a better product on the landscape, and get people to work together better as well. It could save time and effort. Jay suggested a range rider license plate.

Diane asked how a federal delisting may affect the budget. Is there any assistance that would come from USFWS?

Donny did not think any federal money would come over. If wolves are federally delisted, the funding source would probably not be affected. It is definitely a conversation WDFW should have with USFWS.

One thing to look at if we are moving forward with a sort of five year plan is how other states have been impacted. We may be able to learn from those other states.

Paula said that Montana is still looking at Washington as a model, and they may be interested in taking on techniques that will require increases in funding. The interest in using nonlethal methods has gone up, and so costs have also gone up.

Donny wondered if a plan moves forward, what does that look like as a balance? Some money can be moved around. Where that money fits is largely based on the needs of the stakeholders. A diverse group could help with that categorization as the next biennium approaches.

Joey suggested it may be helpful to look at what was spent the last fiscal year and base projections on those figures.

The third party neutral asked the Department to give everyone an estimate on where they see the wolf population in five years. What does that picture look like?

In 2021, Donny said projections indicate recovery goals will be nearly met, if not completely met. Wolves should be in every recovery zone.

Diane asked about those projections being run with true Washington numbers instead of data from outside of Washington.

Donny said while it uses data outside Washington, we are tracking very close to where we thought we would be.

The third party neutral clarified the five year question, indicating that it would be good for WAG members to leave with some idea of a goal or projection for the next five years. That will help with the current meeting and with ideas for the future.

Steve said he noticed two things happening, one to make midstream adjustments with the current biennium. Some specific questions could be served up to help shape the dialogue, in regards to moving funds around. Second, there is an opportunity to think strategically moving into the next biennium and beyond.

The third party neutral asked what they wanted to do here and now, as the 15-17 adjustment could be done later, when figures are available in September. Meanwhile, WAG can get started on the future planning today and tomorrow.

Paula said it appears the budget will need to grow for a little while, and efficiencies can be implemented as well. Outreach to the public would also help with implementing the spending of more money. Finding other sources of funding is a goal as well.

For funding:

- What do we want to keep?
- What do we want to change (make more efficient)?
- What do we want to examine more?

Dan said he wouldn't feel comfortable having that conversation. It would be a departmental exercise. After the department conducted it, if they wanted to bring that to WAG to talk about it and get input, that would be great.

Tara said that perhaps the efficiency aspect could be an internal discussion, but as WAG, creative ideas could come from anyone.

Jack said that it would be good to wait for September until WDFW can show WAG the numbers. However, it looks like an increase will definitely be needed. If folks wanted it, they now need to be asked to pay for it.

Anis said WDFW feels uncomfortable spending so much on wolves. In the long run, it will be impossible to maintain this funding. Other states with more wolves than Washington spend less than Washington. The model is not working as effectively as it could, and WDFW is asking WAG to help develop a more efficient process. WDFW doesn't spend this much on any other species, listed or not. It seems unfair to those other species.

Donny said it is hard to envision the budget going up, because there are so many other species that the department works with. However, if the diverse stakeholders support that increase, and help find that extra money, then it would be the responsibility of the department to move forward there.

Paula talked about the questions, including how to meet and achieve goals with limited resources. Also, those states that have spent less money also experienced controversy. Social tolerance is part of the reason Washington is spending more money. There is a demand to act on this issue. However, we should try to be as efficient as possible in spending that money.

Scott agreed with Anis. Oregon spent less money, is a similar state, and has about the same amount of wolves. Washington can succeed without spending so much money.

Jack asked what the population objective is for wolves, as well as ungulate populations.

Ungulate plans have been completed, though there is no wolf post-delisting plan at the moment. That will be the next big issue for WAG to discuss.

Tom asked the Department to provide specifics on what regions need to conduct wolf management methods (range riders, nonlethal deterrents, etc.). This would then allow him to help with those decisions.

Diane said she didn't expect, after wolves are delisted, that we would have the costs of captures, collars, and other efforts. In the short term, do the conflict specialists have what they need to do their jobs as effectively as possible today, if there was a conflict?

Conflict specialists have the materials needed, but do not have information on the number of DPCAs they can provide, or the number of range riders they can max out. That is a work in progress.

Donny said that constantly increasing funds to meet the needs, which are growing every year, will be a real challenge. It could be impossible to maintain that method as we move into the future.

Paula asked about looking further into what Oregon does, because she is curious about how much money they spend. She said she doesn't think Oregon has as many conflict specialists, and does not conduct as much follow-up or relationship building, which definitely pays off. What do their programs look like compared to Washington's? She complimented the conflict specialists and the work they do.

Dan agreed that studying the models from other states would be beneficial. He encouraged moving the PR funds out of wolf management. If hunters know that by giving money they will help the ungulate populations, they will give it willingly. How we present this issue of other sources of funding could influence the level of support we get.

Public Comment Period

First Comment: The first commenter brought up habituation, and wanted to know how WDFW is dealing with habituation, and what the role of WAG is in habituation. He is seeing more potential with that, and more of it in general. An example is a recent Huckleberry wolf. Stevens is densely populated. It's going to be a huge problem, and he asked that WAG help with dealing with it. On the protocol, he appreciated that the group agreed to review the protocol as years go on. The term "within a pack" was neglected. They don't know which pack to attribute the recently confirmed depredation. The two suspected packs were once one pack. He asks that WAG reconsider putting in "within a pack" and leaving it out. He suggested wait until the next depredation occurs, then we would know which pack was guilty. The number in the protocol, four, is a huge problem. It is a social aspect that got us there. When lethal was first put in the management plan, there was no number. Now it's four confirmed. If you count the number of

animals that can't be confirmed, you may find yourself at 20. A lot of producers feel an eye for an eye is the best method. The social message being sent is that wolves are valued more than livestock. Producers are looking for adequate relief, and are using a range of options. You can't start at four before you deal with an offending pack or wolf. It's too big of a loss. He encouraged the group to revisit that number in the protocol. It isn't all about the money. It tears up producers when they lose animals, whether it's a cougar, wolf, or other cause. That has a social aspect that may not have gotten into the conversation. Please add that to the list.

Second comment: The second commenter said he would echo the first commenter. He thinks it's good to pay attention to northeast Washington, and it's good to listen to Jay Shepherd. He has concerns in addition to the first commenter in regards to the numbers in the protocol. It's a concern that the range where lethal removal may be utilized is somewhere between four and infinity. That should make the conflict specialists uncomfortable. This could lead to very ugly discussions later on. It puts the conflict specialists in a compromising position. Another concern about the protocol is when two packs are depredating at the same time. There is not enough time to deal with both packs in that scenario. Is it based in reality to ask that of the conflict specialists? The mention of sanitation made him think about how other entities are not requiring picking up carcasses, but instead looking at a more targeted approach. It won't be required because it doesn't seem to be effective. What makes an impression on wolves is pursuing the animal and killing it. USFS's goal with sanitation is to target carcasses in areas where livestock gather (water troughs, etc.), rather than every carcass. This is a new approach to the grazing plan. He said the reality that is being experienced in northeast Washington is that recovery is going well, and when WDFW doesn't have a protocol that fits that reality, people may be more prone to taking action themselves.

Third comment: The third commenter said that on the question of where we'll be in five years, it's pretty well documented that wolves reproduce at a rate of 30-40% per year. A budget is just a plan, and when you come out with a plan you know things are going to change. That's why the conversation is steering towards department representatives. They have the best information, and they know things will change. Once those funding sources are found, you have to prioritize.

Day 1 Meeting Adjourned

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Third Party Neutral: Francine Madden

Welcome and Check in: The third party neutral welcomed everyone to the second day of the meeting. She gave an overview of the agenda for the second day.

Financial Resources Continued: The group continued discussions on WDFW's financial resources, with a focus on three specific areas, including what to keep (stability), what to add (innovation), and what to eliminate or change (efficiency). The goal is to get those resources in alignment with where WAG wants to go.

Stability: What to keep or need to increase to ensure security and meet current expectations. These options/priorities depend on funding, and could include changes to improve.

Innovation: What needs to be added? These include ideas/opportunities that will lead to long term efficiency and coexistence.

Efficiency: Where are efficiencies possible and socially acceptable in Washington? Could include changes or outright eliminations?

Question: How do we truly do this with any valuable input if we don't know where WDFW stands on the final budget for the most recent biennium.

Comment: I think we have enough information and a general idea of what was spent.

Question: Do we? I couldn't get a for sure answer yesterday.

The third party neutral said WAG members may not have the fine-tuned details, but they can think about what, over the next five years, the priorities of the people are, so the Department can think about areas to focus moving forward. What is the information needed? This is not a final discussion. This is defining a starting point, and making changes as more information comes into play.

Comment: Personally, I would like WDFW to close out the year, figure out shortfalls, and then have us come up with ideas. I think both sides of this argument are correct, so I'm going to sit in the middle and try to add something where I can. I do like the idea of attacking the problem.

Donny said that WDFW has that feeling right now as well, as the year hasn't been closed out yet. This discussion, however, will still help tremendously, as the agency will have those ideas to take back.

Comment: The funds spent over the last fiscal year are the best indication of priorities for the Department. It's frustrating that we don't have that level of detail. Hopefully having staff in the breakout groups will help with that.

Joey mentioned that habituation, paying range riders, and processing claims are topics that could be discussed as well. Those three things are serious things for field staff.

Comment: Agreed with Joey.

Comment: Two of those issues fit with the stability and efficiency piece, which are included in the budget discussion. We already know there will be an increased demand for services with a lower budget. I'm not saying we shouldn't discuss the topics you mentioned, but I think we can do both.

Anis said he wasn't sure how WAG could help with the internal processes in regards to efficiencies and other processes. He said he did think tackling these issues is important because the Department wants to know where peoples' values are and where to focus efforts.

Comment: Those categories are very vague. They only give the starting point, not the status of how things have gone so far. Some ideas we come up with may be valuable, but most may not apply at all.

Comment: This comes down to leadership process versus management process. The management process, such as habituation, falls under the leadership process, and WAG should look at those topics. What are ways we can be getting communication out? I think it's critical that we look at those issues.

Comment: I am all for discussing those areas, but I'm not the person to ask about budget processes. I don't feel like I would be adding anything.

Range rider payment is a concern, which is why WAG should be discussing this issue.

Jay said that what he meant by efficiencies included the question of are there better ways to get people on the landscape and get that human presence out there?

Question: Donny, where are we in straightening out the claims process?

Comment: It's starting right now. That process is getting up and running. The general claims process is being tackled immediately.

The third party neutral asked the group about changing the agenda slightly. Part of the morning would be focused on the three categories, and what information is still needed. Getting a start on that topic and then waiting for that additional information. After that, the group could go to habituation or to the compensation piece.

Comment: That sounds fine, and I think it would be good to clarify whether or not there should be a subcommittee for compensation or a discussion for the entire WAG.

The agenda adjusted to include a breakout to discuss habituation and compensation first, then move to the breakout groups to focus on the three categories.

Joey said those discussions would help field staff moving through this season.

Habituation: Joey and Jay discussed how habituation is a real problem that is being seen on the ground right now. Certain pack members have been behaving in concerning manners and becoming habituated in certain neighborhoods. Given how the Ruby Creek wolf kind of took over the radar, it is a major concern even though these wolves may not yet be habituated. This is a time consuming process, and will consume the Cascades on the west side once recovery reaches that area. The main goal is to get out ahead of it. Using collar data at night is one method that helps monitoring.

How to address these issues without people feeling like they have to address it themselves is the question. How do you not have that happen? With Ruby Creek, it dragged on forever due to not having an efficient process. We need to be more proactive. Outreach versus resistance.

Question: What would conflict staff like to see as a solution? How do we get there?

It's a real challenge with wolves, because to train an animal not to do something, you have to catch it doing the thing you don't want it doing. Otherwise they won't know what they are supposed to be learning.

Wolves are not as visible as some other species. I don't have a solution for habituation of wolves, but it is a real issue.

Comment: I'll be the bad guy and throw it out there – Shoot habituated wolves. There, it's out there. That is the solution Yellowstone came up with.

Educating people is important as well. For example, containing their dogs overnight is very important.

Comment: There are a lot of things people can do to prevent a problem, and jumping to shooting is something I can't agree with. Those animals need to know that they need to stay away from people. How do we get the word out on basic actions, such as feeding an animal is killing that animal, getting close to that animal is not okay, etc.

Training people may be easier than training wolves at this point. We can't say location equals habituation. However, this could develop into habituation. To effectively train a wolf, you have to be in the right place at the right time, every time. You have to be within 30 yards to shoot rubber bullets. Hazing a wolf is incredibly tense.

Comment: Rural areas have that food source there, and people let their dogs run around, and it's not fair to the wildlife.

Comment: There is an opportunity right now to establish a habituation protocol and figure out a method to get out ahead of this issue, because it will come up again down the road. It may not be the right protocol, but we can learn and adapt it and figure out what does and doesn't work. Let's take this opportunity and learn.

Comment: I've heard that it will be difficult for Department staff to stay out in the area for monitoring, but that there may be a viable solution with local volunteers. Are the issues associated with that quickly overcome? We also want to take the time to determine if there are steps we can take first, try them, and review that. From a social acceptance perspective, we want to get good information out to the public.

Comment: This is a circular discussion, but it's important. We have fragmented habitats throughout the state, and people who live in those areas. Shooting habituated wolves isn't socially acceptable, but we do need to take a hard look here, because what effect would that have on recovery?

Candace said that Jay has dealt with this situation before, and has valuable experience. The resources are here. We are not the first state to have wolves. Yellowstone has a 12-page protocol that spells out tasks clearly. Other states have dealt with this too. It seems like we do a lot of reactive work so far. It sounds like we might have a situation here that is similar to one we had before.

Question: Is something like a personal contract with locals something that could work in the future?

It could, but that is once again throwing money at the problem. One thing to remember is that this should be considered in the lethal removal protocol.

Comment: This may be something to discuss at the September meeting (the personal contract idea).

Question: For WDFW, those of you who have looked at it, would it be appropriate to get us that Yellowstone plan and discuss it further in September?

Well, we wanted to get something out now, since this situation is here right now. It's possible both things can happen, but something today is needed for this season.

Are working dogs and domestic dogs handled differently?

Yes, they are treated differently. The problem is there is no solution at this time for habituation.

Question: What about fining those who put dogs out at night?

The Enforcement of that would cost a lot.

Donny had a couple reactions to the discussions. He said he does think WDFW has the expertise to handle this situation. He would be looking to those staff members for answers. They will be the first to know when there is a habituation case and when that animal needs to be removed. Working on the other stuff, like outreach, could help address the issue before anything happens.

The third party neutral reminded the group that when talking about educating folks, they are dealing with people. Changing a habit is really hard for people. She heard people asking for change and an enforcement of rules, but people don't change easy, so keeping that in mind is essential.

Comment: I said we might want to go outside the state simply because when I asked, nobody here seemed to have a plan.

Donny said it was important for staff to know where these user groups may stand before moving forward with any management actions, which is why staff is listening right now.

Comment: I would remind folks that this is a listed species. What are the key messages that we can support with the Department? How do we get that message out?

The solution for dealing with habituated wolves is typically not a good one, which is why we wanted to discuss it with WAG. Educating people that there are things they can do to protect their dogs, etc. Every single out of state reference we called, when dealing with habituated wolves, suggested killing the wolf. That was the answer.

Comment: There was a third suggestion for killing habituated wolves, due to how dangerous they can become. There are two groups, producers and hunters, affected by wolves right now. The silent majority are losing things every day. Telling people that this has to go both ways, and not caving to the vocal minorities should be considered. To have another 12-page protocol to go through is not the answer. We have to have the guts to say that this is an issue and that is how it has to be.

The third party neutral said this is a very hard issue, and she had to push back a little. There are two pieces that make the Department a little nervous with lethal control. One is killing wolves, and the other is a change in perspective. It's important to not place blame.

The point is what the protocol will look like. What we are trying to do is be proactive before the issue arrives. What does this group want before lethal is considered? Conflict staff is not as trusted on the ground. We need to have the leadership from this group behind us.

Question: This is more complex for WDFW as well, since the wolves are in more populated areas.

It does make it difficult at times. It is a shift in perspective with the public, because letting dogs run free is an issue.

Joey said that hazing has been tried, and it doesn't work. Articles in the newspapers do not work as well. Once a wolf is habituated, lethal removal should be there.

Dave said that while his cows are dear to him, we are dealing with human life with this issue, and human life should be far more valued than his cows.

Comment: People who support the wolves in the state are not just a vocal minority. There are a lot of them in the state. You can't avoid the emotion of lethally removing wolves. The environmental community in general has come a long way in wanting to have that conversation. We work really hard to ensure those who support wolves in the state are willing to work with producers and hunters.

Question: Is there a list conflict staff go through when speaking with the public on this?

Answer: There are points of the conversation that are covered. The degree of protection from wolves at night, containment at night, and others are discussed.

Comment: Maybe we should define the three steps owners should take to protect those animals.

Comment: The problem comes from when others don't take the steps and the wolves become habituated. Their neighbors, who may be doing everything, are still affected. There is still a danger there.

Comment: We can't separate those cases. You can't pick and choose. You have to protect human safety. At some point you have to say it's a lost cause, and the Department needs to act.

Comment: It's cost effective to take these steps with preventative measures.

Jay said it would be good to develop a protocol like they did with lethal removal.

The third party neutral said they need to have some sort of group point that they get to today. They have an emerging situation happening right now, while outreach and other parts are a much more long term focus.

Donny said it would help WDFW to define when an animal is counted as habituated. That definition would help with on the ground actions. It would be to define habituation, because the moment habituation is confirmed, that wolf would need to be lethally removed. There needs to be recognition in WAG.

Comment: On the outreach part, that is something that WAG can put together. Some sort of standard for that would be something everyone could get engaged with. It would be something simple that could go out to the public and make sense. This may work better as time goes on. Volunteers could help and take on some of the work.

Comment: I second that notion, that WAG could put something together.

Comment: Short term I'm not sure what we can accomplish, but long term, putting some sort of protocol together would be a good idea. To me though, seeing a wolf every day doesn't necessarily mean it's a habituated wolf. Sometimes that just indicates coexistence. We want to make sure we have a good definition of habituation before we move forward.

Comment: We are talking about human safety, and it's important that we remember that right now. These are wolves that are in peoples' backyards, not wolves in allotments or the woods or elsewhere. We need to find a way to reach out to every person with a dog in the backyard. How do you reach the non-producer who has a dog and wants to continue to enjoy a certain way of life?

Break

The group continued the discussion on habituation. Donny said during the break he felt a real nervousness from everyone in the group about developing a protocol for habituation so quickly. It might be beneficial to slow down a little and get more information before finalizing anything.

Comment: I think we should commit to a study and protocol for habituation of wolves and public safety, and I think we can get there. Really, all we have to do today is tell conflict staff to do the best you can until we can get a protocol. Hopefully, they won't have to do something in the next few months, but if they do have to, WAG members should have their backs.

Question: What does it mean to have their backs?

Comment: If they need to remove a wolf for public safety, WAG members can support the action until a protocol is finalized.

Donny said that knowing WAG would support wildlife conflict, they would now go and meet with conflict staff, determine needs and resources, and take a proactive approach. Getting those folks the resources they need is a top priority.

Jay said he thinks they have time to develop a final strategy. He doesn't think the wolves are habituated yet in the current case. Right now, monitoring and keeping WAG informed are the actions to take. He did not think a problem would arise during the break between now and the next WAG meeting.

Comment: I would be more comfortable having WDFW's back if we can agree upon a definition of habituation. At that point, if it does escalate and we've been informed on the situation, we can get there. We don't have to do a whole protocol, but having that definition would be a huge benefit for the group.

Comment: There is a definition in the wolf plan.

Comment: I appreciate that having your back includes the opportunity to assist.

Diane read the habituation definition as written in the wolf plan. It is very similar to Yellowstone's definition.

Every wolf living in that area has a level of habituation, but the key is determining at what level the habituation is no longer acceptable.

Comment: In chapter 7 of the wolf plan, habituation is discussed in more detail. There are some pieces in the wolf plan that discuss close encounters with wolves.

Joey asked what the expectations were for the WAG in preventing habituation.

The third party neutral said that there are limits to actions, so maybe first informing the group of what actions are being taken right now within the realms of reality. After that, getting feedback from WAG can happen. You can also include what you want to do but may not have the resources for right now.

Joey said a personal services contract would be good to have, but is an unfulfilled idea right now. WDFW wanted it to be on the table, but financial constraints make it difficult. This is one idea, not a solution.

Question: Would that person's actions include things like going through the habituation list?

Jay said that this is just one suggestion. WDFW has been out encouraging people to do their own hazing. Moving the wolves away so the first, initial contact with humans is a negative for the wolves would put fear in them and help to keep them away.

Trent said encouraging folks to do their own hazing seems like a better idea than the contract idea. If we already know it won't work, why get a contract to perform that action. You cannot safely haze an animal at night.

Donny highlighted that WAG missed a step here. WDFW has not had a healthy dialogue on this issue yet, which has made this discussion a little tense. He just wanted to call that out.

Comment: I was under the impression this wolf is already habituated.

Joey said the wolf is not habituation yet, but the risk is there.

Comment: In this area, most wolves would pass through to find the resources they need, but this particular wolf did not. It stayed in the area. Local law enforcement would have some responsibility as well.

Comment: If the Department deems an animal is a threat to public safety, they have a responsibility to take care of that animal. They have to take action if human safety is involved. However, I will say again that getting information out there is essential. There are so many myths out there, and I think we have a responsibility to prevent a problem. They may not listen, but we need to try.

Comment: My idea of what we're saying when we talk about having WDFW's back is that this is not the group that micromanages the Department. We agree that it's a crisis, and we want the Department to act. In a crisis, we don't want to micromanage.

Comment: A crisis fund may be a resource to provide for conflict staff. This would allow those actions to happen without taking too long. I would love to see that process shorten up so WDFW can do what needs to be done. I want conflict staff to have the tools they need to do the job.

Question: Has the Association of Counties discussed public safety in regards to wolves?

Comment: I don't know if the counties have, but others have had that discussion. I would encourage the Department meet with local law enforcement to ensure everyone is in that loop.

Comment: Where does WDFW fall on the idea of personal responsibility? When do you tell the public that they need to take responsibility to their actions? It seems like we are avoiding the issue of personal responsibility. In my opinion, this issue, or at least parts, should fall on the property owner. Right now we're talking about micromanaging every single landowner. Animals learn, and we can learn too.

Joey said the education portion is going on now, but landowners can choose to do it or not. However, if habituation is confirmed, that responsibility falls to WDFW. We have to take care of it.

Ellen said the group and the groups they represent could help with general outreach. The one-on-one meetings could still be handled by conflict staff. Informing the general public on basic information, such as not feeding wildlife, is a good role for those organizations.

The third party neutral asked what WDFW needed from the group today.

Joey said that habituation definition is in the wolf plan already, and if something meets that definition, staff will run it up the chain.

Comment: I do think we need to find a "trigger point" before we leave here.

Scott said there is a difference between being habituated and still acting wild while living close to neighborhoods. Working with different agencies is a good step as well. Wolves should be managed similarly to bears. Proximity does not always equate habituation.

Question: Where does proximity change to habituation? What is that point?

Trent said it's more complicated than it sounds. It could be 30-40 yards, and the wolf is not increasing distance with aversive behavior.

Donny said he is not comfortable with this conversation. Let us go back, think through this more, and put something together. We want to postpone this one, because developing something on the fly is not a good way to go. If something does happen, we would communicate with local sheriff's offices and make connections with counties.

The third party neutral agreed and reviewed the next steps in the process for setting a protocol. Having internal WDFW discussions to define where they believe the trigger point is and define what the next steps are. This includes making sure conflict staff has the resources needed. Currently, conflict staff members are communicating with landowners on attractants and dog

containment. Are other resources out there, on top of the qualified people and knowledge already within WDFW? The Department will communicate results with WAG.

Steve said the idea that proximity does not always equal habituation needs to be a talking point for the group and internal WDFW discussions. Right now, Stevens County would say they have a habituated wolf, while others would not necessarily agree.

Comment: I'm concerned about setting precedents that cost more money than we have. Budget constraints should be considered during these discussions as well.

Comment: When developing a protocol, it really needs to be on the agenda, so members have a chance to prepare.

Range Rider Compensation: Joey echoed Anis' initial comment that compensation for range riders needs to be an internal conversation, but speaking with a range rider during the break, it took 60 days to get paid after submitting hours.

Other Compensation: Jack said the compensation plan needs a lot of work. It needs to be timely, and it is not right now. The Department has added steps and outside appraisers who do not understand the industry.

Comment: It shouldn't take any time at all. Maybe a cow has to be appraised, but that process should still be far more efficient. The average of the contemporary group, when you sell it, with a receipt, should be enough. A producer brings the receipt in, divide it by the number of animals, and the money is provided right there. Any assistance doesn't have to be an appraiser. It can be the Livestock Review Board. It should be a simple process and it's not right now.

Donny said he agrees with that sentiment. It's a step in the WAC that is in place right now. The way the WAC is crafted requires an independent assessor. Adding the assessor adds time and cost to the whole process.

Comment: It may take changing the WAC to streamline the process. Some payments have taken two years to process, and that is not right. There needs to be trust, and there needs to be a protocol. Trust is being ruined because of the process as it is now.

Comment: I want to figure out where the problem is here. Is it internal, is it needing to change the WAC, or is it somewhere else? Who are we needing to target here?

Candace said it will take all of those things. There are WACs that restrict the process, and there is an internal component that is not working. We have tried to move with this, but the trust has been destroyed and so have relationships. She did say the LRB is a good step in the right direction. There are many different components, and paperwork adds up. The direct side of the process is not effective as it is. It needs a lot of work in all of those aspects.

Comment: Rather than theory, we have an example here that could explain what happened and all of the steps that went into it.

Comment: In Asotin County, there are added steps, including an insurance process. Producers have to prove they didn't get insurance money.

Comment: It's been nearly two years since the first depredation on the sheep. Everything happened, and after counting, we were about 300 short. We waited until we sheared and got a shearing count, which matched with the 300 head short. Then the process started. We provided the amount the sheep were worth. It was said that we needed an appraiser. An appraiser would cost \$300, and the Department couldn't pay it, so we offered to pay it. The Department recommended using Jay Shepherd, who is great at his job but hasn't run a sheep operation. Interactions with the FSA happened as well, and that took a lot of time. The FSA said the loss was not big enough, so we went back to the Department. The appraiser did the work, and the Department paid. I was paid for the confirmed depredations, and the figure offered for the unconfirmed was out there. They took off 50 under normal losses, which was fine. It came out to about \$216 a piece, but we sold ewes and lambs at higher rates. We have receipts for \$300 apiece and \$250 apiece, meaning they were way off on the figures. We had a decision to make at that point to take the money and run or pursue this more. It has destroyed relationships, this process, and it needs to be fixed. This is real world, and there are consequences.

Comment: What were you hoping for on a fair price?

We were thinking \$250 per head was a bargain. The price is on the receipt. What we sold them for should be enough.

Donny said it's also beyond the cost of the animal. When that situation hit, the price of the trucks, grass, hay, and employees adds up as well. All the WACs speak to is the value of the animals, and it leaves those other factors out. The only part WDFW can get to is the value of the animal. Sales receipts should be enough, and if no receipts are available, only then should the assessor be included. WAC updates are needed.

Question: Can WACs be changed quickly? For example, by the next Commission meeting.

Donny said he would like to sit down with conflict specialists and some producers who have been through this to discuss changes needed.

Comment: I think the Livestock Review Board can do the job on this.

Comment: On assessing the value of the animal, I'm not sure any of us on the LRB qualified to do that. Using receipts is great, and having a backup plan with an appraiser when no receipt is available is good. If appraisers are not appraising things accurately, that's a problem.

Donny introduced Robert to the group. Processing claims will be a part of Robert's responsibilities.

Robert said the LRB is a very real positive step for producers, and the members do care a lot about doing right by producers. He is new to the Department, but is learning a lot.

Comment: If the Department needs someone to appraise, there are four operations that are highly respected throughout the state, located in accessible areas in multiple regions.

Break for Lunch

The group continued with the compensation discussion.

Comment: There was a situation with deer destroying crops. The Department has a program for that, and in this situation the producer verified the losses with a certified crop appraiser, and the Department representative slashed the amount by about 70%. There is an annoying taste that comes with going through the process and then having the amount arbitrarily slashed.

Robert said that he works with that representative, and that person does not slash amounts arbitrarily. That person is just following the rules.

Comment: So there are rule changes and edits that need to be made. There is also a sense of local and cultural emotional responses that need to be addressed. Communication between Olympia and the producers can be improved.

Comment: There are very few issues that get me riled up as much as compensation. The greatest concern with this is the relationship building factor. Something like this can come along and ruin relationships that have taken months to build up. I think a change is necessary.

Steve said there may have been a review period of about five years that was adopted by the legislature. Looking at that response after the five-year period could be beneficial.

Comment: With all due respect, we can't wait. The folks I've spoken with have given me the impression that we are out of time.

Comment: The last time the rules were opened and we went through that process, it left a bad taste. Concerns were ignored by staff and the Commission.

Donny wanted to clarify claims. The Department handles the claims as a private basis. We don't want individuals harassed, so we don't announce those claims. It's not that we want to hide anything, but we don't want those individuals harassed.

There should be a deeper dive by WDFW internally to discover what these processes need to look like. Are members willing to work with the Department to help determine those final details? Working with a subset of the WAG could be beneficial.

Comment: We've had this same exact dialogue numerous times, so unless something actually happens, this would be a waste of time.

The third party neutral asked what would give a sense that something changed.

Comment: Emailing a draft of language by next Friday. We need to eliminate the FSA requirement, among many other things. As it is right now, it is unacceptable. This can be done in a week.

Question: How could the department write a check without that FSA requirement?

A notarized agreement that says no additional funds will be sought. It's the state's responsibility to pay for damages caused by the state's wildlife. The FSA process is tedious. Losses aren't big enough, or something else comes up. The FSA has no obligation to pay producers for a loss. If 300 sheep don't meet the disaster definition for them, I would hate to have one that does.

Donny pointed out that getting indirect across the finish line was priority, and it has just happened. This compensation issue is next in line. There were some things that had to get off the plate, including the protocol for lethal removal and others, but this issue is the next project. Now is the time to sit down with a portion of WAG and figure out what that compensation draft language looks like. Let's get that meeting on the calendar and get an agenda set for what we want to get done in that first meeting.

Question: Is there a local FSA rep? I'm frustrated, as a taxpayer, that this process isn't working and compensation isn't being granted in those cases.

FSA didn't ask or volunteer. It was sort of forced by several different factors, and that is why the process is so convoluted.

Donny said it would be helpful for WDFW to sit down and meet about this issue. It would be up to the WAG though.

Comment: If we are going to have a sit down, let's have the draft language and a meeting by next Friday.

Comment: This does not have to wait until September. Funding is not the issue, and we can whip this out. It should be much simpler.

Donny said the Commission process, where a draft is created and other communities comment on it, is not as productive as this WAG process dialogue. We can create that language together, rather than attempting ourselves to make every interest group happy.

Comment: Why not invite certain members to the office, sit down and draft some language, and maybe send it around to WAG once quickly. After that, start the Commission process. Get to the point where there is some language that is acceptable, with the understanding that the process still needs to happen. Also, you can pinpoint any challenges in the process and identify any changes that are made. All of us want this, because we don't want those producers to feel betrayed after so much good work has been done with this group.

Donny said the Commission process is one where the issue has to get queued up before the draft can even be created. You need a 101, a 102, a Commission meeting, etc. The entire process can be accomplished in about three months, as long as everything goes smoothly. The statutes, however, are the authorizing environment for the WACs. There may be some WACs that cannot be changed due to the authorizing environment. We first need to look at that relationship between statute and WAC.

Comment: Part of this is supposed to be trust. The way this particular issue is going, that trust is being broken and so are those relationships.

Question: How was Jay able to get the one successful case through smoothly?

Jay said there isn't any particular reason why that one went smoothly. That producer kept meticulous records, and that went a long way towards making the process easier. That level of record keeping is not shared by a lot of people. It's above what people are ready for.

Comment: If there is a sit down, it would highlight those areas that can be changed now in WACs and others that may take a legislative process. If there is any value in having more contributions, however minor they may be, in this sit down meeting, please reach out and let us know.

Pushing legislation through is much easier when the topic is addressed by all user groups.

Having a process that sometimes goes fast and other times goes slow translates to unfairness. Even if it's slow, is it still worthwhile?

Comment: As broken as the system is, it's better to put your attention elsewhere.

The third party neutral said there needs to be a sense of action as quickly as possible. There is an internal process and an external process that need to be discussed. After that, Donny, Jack, and Tom will sit out and put some language together sometime next week. Donny will get

words on paper first. After the language, getting that issue on the Commission agenda is top priority. If there is a legislative fix need in there, that will also be teased out.

Donny said WDFW will try to get this finished as quickly as possible by putting in through the emergency Commission process. There are no guarantees there, however. Donny will meet with the Wildlife Program AD this week, and then send draft language to Tom and Jack in preparation for the meeting.

Question: If we know the FSA will reject a claim, is it possible to skip that step and streamline the process?

Yes, as long as the producer indicates they will inform us if compensation is granted from another entity.

Comment: Eliminating FSA from the process entirely is the best action for this issue.

The third party neutral wanted to acknowledge that the WAG is dealing with really hard issues within a system that has been in destructive conflict for a lot of years. As you are changing things, you have this backlog of needs that need to be fixed. On top of that, you have dynamic things that are constantly evolving and new things on the horizon. Recognize the fact that you have to patient with yourselves and each other. Recognize that you will get there.

Comment: It's much easier to be patient when you are taking steps. Seeing that action goes a long way to sustained success.

Replacing WAG Members: The third party neutral asked how members wanted to handle bringing new members on after other members leave. Donny gave a short overview of how the advisory group process has worked in the past.

If there is a vacancy now, there is an announcement and folks will apply. After going through applications, a sit down internally will occur, and final decisions are made. There is then a visit with the Director, and the Director makes the appointment. It's similar to recruiting for a job position.

Within that, Donny asked WAG what balance they are looking for, and to consider location and background.

Since the vacancy on WAG occurred, there have been three or four applications passed along to Donny.

Comment: Just as a point, if the vacancy is from the hunting community, replace it with a hunter, and so on depending on the spot.

Comment: I feel it's the Department's responsibility to make those appointments, and I don't want to be any part of any sub-groups or anything like that.

Comment: I agree with that, and that new person needs to be somehow gotten up to speed. Is there a way to do that? It's critical, especially in this group, that the chemistry between everyone be maintained. One person can bring it down.

Question: Will there be an opportunity to make recommendations or discourage an appointment if Donny brings names forward?

Comment: That seems important if our opinion is asked.

Comment: I feel like the Department should have a standard orientation for every advisory group that has to deal with fish and wildlife.

Comment: It might be good to have a small group, with at least one person from each "side" given the opportunity to speak with the new person, just to convey the importance of the relationships within the group. I think we've also gotten to the point as a group where we are blurring some of those lines in regards to the "sides."

Comment: I think there is a vetting process that needs to be done. Getting up to speed is less important than getting the right people on the WAG. New members will have the responsibility to get themselves up to speed as well.

Comment: I agree that this falls to the responsibility of the Director and the agency. Is it implied that the agency is unable to vet people? I think if the Department doesn't know a person, they will call and ask about that person.

Comment: If WDFW comes to us with questions, we should be able to advise. We will have a different perspective than WDFW will on the candidates.

Donny said the Director will still appoint people, but we forward a name. So who is the we? Is that WAG? Is that just the agency? Also, how do we make WAG reach a bigger community? Is there a model where a subset of WAG members and some externals run the vetting process?

Comment: I really like the idea of members of the WAG and possibly some other folks interviewing candidates.

After a question, the third party neutral said she would not be comfortable being a part of that orientation. She could sit in on any training or update, in the role of providing an orientation, but she does not get a vote.

Comment: I am uncomfortable having WAG members in any formal capacity of interviewing. I don't distrust anyone, but feel it would be inappropriate to have a formal role. I do think it's appropriate for agency staff to call us and ask if they have questions about particular candidates. The formal setting makes me uncomfortable.

The third party neutral said the current atmosphere of WAG is not luck, but a change in the process that brought out the good in people.

Comment: I want to bring up that I am bias, and there are members on the WAG right now that I would have said no to originally. I don't trust myself to choose. I would trust the process of the Department in selecting members, because whatever process they used to choose us worked fine.

Comment: I think the group runs a real issue of transparency outside of it, and if there is any impression of a subgroup that is choosing members, it could give a negative perception.

Comment: Sometimes more important than the person selected are the questions that are asked.

Steve: I just wanted the group to know that you are unlike every other advisory group that WDFW has, in a positive way. To have input from members, that would run separate than every other group we have. A formal process would be inconsistent with what WDFW has said we would go about forming advisory group. However, again, this group is unique. Recognize that.

Comment: I think it's also important to have regional representation. For example, a producer from southwest Washington would be very beneficial.

Comment: We do have some outliers in regards to representing the three stakeholder groups. Two of our members don't represent, necessarily, any stakeholder group. Could we replace members from clear groups with members who are not necessarily representing one of the groups?

Comment: Creating a shorter line to those communities we want to reach could be something we think about as well. For example, the southwest and the northeast areas of the state could be better represented. This ties in with regional representation.

Comment: Make sure the new candidate is prepared for that time commitment, and do we have an expectation for attendance?

Ideas

- The Department appoints the person
- Updates provided on the process and other items

- The new appointment should be from the “same side” as the person leaving
- WDFW provides standard orientation for new members
- One person from each “side” talks to the candidates
- Diverse subset of WAG interview/vets potential candidates
- Person leaving can recommend someone to replace him/her
- Informal versus formal vetting
- Just meet the unknowns?
- External people in the vetting process?

The overview is that the Department should handle the formal aspect. The most important thing is to get the person oriented and up to speed on values, goals, and expectations. The vacancy should come from the same “side,” but also thinking about communities that should be engaged. The WAG’s role is as informal information gathering. WAG can also recruit people to apply and give guidance informally. The informal consists of the Department checking in if they feel like they need to. It will still be the Department’s decision. A new member comes in and agrees to the criterion (ground rules, sufficient consensus, mission, vision, etc.) that was decided on by WAG originally.

Public Comment

First Comment: The first public commenter was a business owner who said some of the questions asked (five year plan, etc.) are tough to ask when we aren’t even sure what we are doing in July or through the grazing season. Range riders are a fantastic tool, but we need more people on the ground. Some of these issues, like compensation, need to be taken care of before long. If these logistical issues are not met, we won’t be worrying about five years from now. I would like to see all of this unfold as nicely as possible. I think we really need to address these logistic problems as soon as possible. Sometimes WAG, in my opinion, can be talking about “how to fight the fire while the fire is burning down the woods.” Don’t ignore the social tolerance we’ve been cultivating to worry more about this lethal protocol.

Question: You do speak with a lot of producers, and we know the protocol is not perfect, but it was developed with so many things in mind. The more critique I hear, the more protective I get. If you could share that message that we acknowledge the protocol may not be perfect, but we are moving forward.

Answer: I can definitely share that moving forward, and I know it’s in the beginning stages. It’s just tough when you are on the ground. I don’t mean the critique in a negative way, I just worry about that culture.

Meeting Adjourned