

Wolf Advisory Group Conference Call

November 6, 2015 | 7-9am

Notes

Call Purpose: Information sharing on WDFW's program for Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for Livestock (DPCA-L)

Participating Members and Staff:

WDFW: Donny Martorello, Stephanie Simek, Jay Shepherd

WAG: Diane Gallegos, Molly Linville, Dan McKinley, Paula Swedeen, Shawn Cantrell, Tom Davis, Janey Howe, and others who may have joined the conference call after participation was noted.

Facilitated by: Francine Madden

Francine: Welcome to everyone. This call was scheduled at the last WAG meeting in order to prepare for the December meeting, to ensure that everyone has the information they need to make recommendations around the cooperative agreements/DPCA-Ls.

Call objectives:

- WAG has a basis for making decisions,
- WDFW gets feedback about what they need to prepare for next meeting, and
- WAG/WDFW have a shared sense of what everyone wants to cover at the next WAG meeting.

Donny and Stephanie: Overview and Background of DCPAs

Stephanie: This initiative began with crop damage agreements that already existed for deer and elk. WDFW followed that agreement as a template, then created agreements with preventative measures relevant to wolves. The first DCPA-L happened in 2012, but people were slow to engage. WDFW tried to target efforts in areas where wolves were known to be present but made it broadly open to encourage engagement. In January 2013, WDFW sought buy-in from WAG. The department did not want people to be forced to sign an agreement in order to receive compensation; just wanted people to understand non-lethal tools. Developed cost-share approach to off-set financial losses that producers might incur. Tools included: range riders, sanitation, fencing, guard animals. First year had 15-19 agreements across the state, some in areas with wolves, some not. Increase in second year to around 30-33 contracts. Contracts were annual (written each year). Started to gain momentum, now have about 43 producers on contract, including some who've participated for multiple years.

Question: For those who didn't continue, were there common themes for why not?

Stephanie/Answer: Some felt it was not enough of a benefit, or felt they could manage on their own. However, WDFW did not follow-up with them because they did not want to pressure them. In hindsight, it would be good to know why. Tried to be as flexible as possible, see if it was something people wanted to engage in.

Stephanie: Have been involved with DCPA-Ls for 3 years, looking at long-term sustainability and improvements now. Contract has changed slightly over the 3 years. WDFW does a follow-up

checklist with a producer each time an invoice is submitted. Would like to make DCPA-Ls a more effective tool for everyone. Refer to maps that Donny sent for locations. Quite a few agreement locations are within wolf territories, but some are outside. In 2012-2013, worked with producers to use tools before wolves were on the landscape. WDFW received good support from cattlemen in some areas. Klickitat County is a good example of success, with support from cattlemen's association.

Question: In Klickitat, how are people engaged in the process there feeling, given that wolves aren't there yet?

Answer: Interest is high there and WDFW and producers have worked well together. Because it's further away from areas with wolves, those contracts were only up to \$5,000 (other areas up to \$10,000). These efforts are not just about wolves, but maintaining logs, keeping track of herds, noting the presence of other carnivores. It goes beyond wolves. Range riders also keep logs, which WDFW has been trying to make consistent in order to gather data on man hours, etc. Need to refine the range rider logs if want to move forward with that.

Question: Is the department tracking conflict calls related to other carnivores?

Answer: Law enforcement takes all the dangerous wildlife calls, but conflict staff also receive calls and maintain logs (primarily on cougars and bears). Have just started collecting information through a single system, Wildcom.

Question: Can you draw any broad conclusions about the demographics of people who've entered into the agreements?

Answer: Mostly cattle producers, and several large sheep producers. Have generally been large producers on public allotments, maybe with some private pastures. With hobby farmers, WDFW tends to provide technical assistance (not DCPA-Ls); DCPA-Ls are for full producers. If a hobby farm is in an area with high potential for conflict, WDFW might do more with them. But WDFW also targeted their approach, so the information on demographics may need to be taken with that caveat.

Donny: One of the purposes of the cooperative agreement program is to get non-lethal preventatives on the ground, but it also builds connections and develops long-term relationships between WDFW and producers. WDFW has seen an increase in participation each year, and that's positive. As Stephanie said, the contract language has been evolving and that's why people might hear that the contract has changed. This is the first big review of the DCPA-L program, and it's great that WAG is taking this on. The department wants to give people complete information to review. Last biennial, WDFW spent about \$650,000 and still have that approximate level of funding. That's a big portion of the budget, about 25% of the total wolf budget, and is indicative of how important the department feels this is. WDFW hopes to continue the use of DCPA-Ls.

Three systems are needed to be addressed at this point:

- 1) Develop criteria to prioritize resource use. Are we putting resources where risk is the highest? Have we covered the high risk areas first?
- 2) Quality control of non-lethals on the landscape. High quality. Consistent application of the tools is needed. Are they being implemented in the way that was hoped?

3) Performance measures. How many range rider days, how many rag boxes, how much fence? Do assessment to look for efficiencies to in turn generate improvements. Example: Perhaps give the highest level of funding and repeated renewals for producers in areas of highest conflict. WDFW doesn't want to exclude anyone, but wants to be strategic.

Question: What does WAG need from the department to weigh in on this?

Answer: Knowing a bit more about the demographics of who has participated, who has declined to participate will help WAG figure out how to prioritize and improve. Other key factors that will help WAG figure out how to help the department improve the program would also be useful. Are you looking for an understanding of why people don't participate?

Answer: That's more secondary. People might not have been interested in entering into an agreement with the government. Demographic data might be skewed toward the groups that WDFW targeted and the people who were willing to talk to the department. Was hard to build trust at first, and WDFW mostly wanted to get tools out on the landscape. Maybe focus should be on why people are participating and not why they aren't.

Response: Analytics might show who is not being reached and perhaps the need for a different strategy/tool with those people.

Question: Does Jay have on the ground perspective on what's working well, what needs to be improved?

Answer: That's a hard question to answer. NE Washington has a sample size of 5 producers with allotments (2 private, 3 federal) and a few hobbyists who are participating in the program. People who aren't working with us don't want to sign on the dotted line, don't want to work with WDFW. How do we get around this lack of trust, resistance to the government? Knowing why people don't want to participate is important. Some don't want to be "subsidized" so trying to work on wording. The same 4-5 people have been involved forever. Some go away because they were disgruntled, or felt it was too much hassle. Livestock production is a secondary job for a lot of people. Have tried hard to get info about the cooperative agreements out. How can we develop an approach that isn't an affront to people's sovereignty? Perhaps something like the Blackfoot Challenge.

Donny: In the beginning, part of the goal was to get non-lethals on the ground and build trust, but DCPA-Ls are not the only way to do that. At the last WAG meeting, we reviewed the checklist that doesn't require a signature, but gets non-lethals on the ground. Jay has thought about pack-level deterrents. WDFW would like to have a spectrum of ways to get non-lethals on the ground and develop relationships. Maybe a program like an agricultural extension or Blackfoot Challenge that's there for those who want to use it would be useful.

Question: There are places where there's a lot of interest in DCPA-Ls. How do we make sure there are adequate resources for those places? Are there ways to target producers in the Blues? From the conflict specialist perspective, what gaps are occurring in hotspot areas? In places where people do want DCPAs, what can we do to help them?

Donny/Answer: In that particular area, a lot of people have shown interest and WDFW is trying to build relationships, trying to encourage that interest. Contracts in that area have mostly

been up to \$10,000. If there's a single, smaller-size pack, what's the right level and type of tools that are best for that scenario? Have we addressed the highest risk and put our resources toward that? Can we connect with producers who are outside of the highest risk areas? Don't know all the levels of risk and all the levels of demographics.

Question: Is part of the risk assessment whether the number of packs/wolves will increase?

Answer: That's a good point. There could be more in the habitat there. Blues will probably be constantly occupied. If they're already doing certain things, but we want to add one or two more tools, how can we do that?

Question: I have had concerns with this approach, but am less concerned now than initially. Part of the concern is that in the NE corner of the state there are the most wolves and the fewest contracts. Perhaps it would be helpful for WAG to see the language of the contracts. Are there other ways to extend beyond the 4-5 landowners where Jay is? We don't want to restrict help just because people don't have a contract. We could probably do more, maybe get away from a contract completely if there's no social tolerance for it in the place where there's the most potential for conflict. How do we assist landowners in the NE corner?

Stephanie/Answer: Started using range riders that work multiple properties to address that issue. In the Blues, people were used to other forms of a contract with the department. Range riders assist at multiple levels without people feeling like they need to commit to a contract. WFDW agrees that we need other ways to provide assistance. A DCPA-L contract only provides for cost sharing; WDFW can still provide assistance without a contract. Even without a contract people are still eligible for compensation, advice, anything else WDFW can provide.

Donny: I will send out copy of the current agreement so people can see the language.

Comment: WAG is a statewide advisory group, not a local group, and there are cultural differences between producers in the NE and the rest of the state. From a conflict transformation perspective, people in the NE need to be asked what they think would work.

Comment: Would prefer to get out in front of potential problems rather than react. Deterrents could be helpful to other predators as well. If a tool keeps other carnivore at bay or keeps producers better tracking livestock, that is still a win.

Comment: That's an important point. There are multiple predators, cultures, factors, and threats on the landscape, so this is bigger and more complex than a single species.

Jay: There are other reasons to have people on the landscape providing husbandry, riparian restoration, etc. that are beneficial. Maybe that's a way to increase cooperation, dovetail funding.

Range riders are a large piece of the existing contracts there.

One approach to getting the program on the landscape may be going to the groups in those places and asking them what it would take to get them involved, then collaborate on an approach that is palatable. Ask for feedback structured as 'what would work?' Have started doing this, but will do more. People want to know what they can do.

Question: If people have been using guard animals, for example, how easy is it for them to find information about how to use that tool for wolves? How easy is it for people to get information on how to adapt to wolves?

Answer: It's easy to find information, but not easy to have confidence in its accuracy. Also, a predator may act differently on a different landscape. It's a challenge to get up to speed.

Jay: Non-lethals also act differently on different landscapes. Within a single county, it depends on what your operation looks like, whether you use open range, what the landscape looks like. Online information may be generic and it might be more useful to look at the specific scenario. It is hard to find a source of information that is universally applicable.

Donny: Is the open range allotment the highest need/highest risk? If you could apply these things, what's the biggest need you'd try to address?

Answer: Looking from a probability standpoint, focus on Forest Service open range. Sanitation is minor. Aug, Sept, Oct depredation events will continue to cause conflict. The goal of talking to local cattlemen's associations is to figure out how can we collaborate at that scale to coexist.

Donny: We're really thankful that WAG is taking this on. This is timely for WDFW. If WAG wants to weigh in on more than criteria, WDFW is also looking at specific items within the contract, including compensation. The compensation element has been included within the contract since the beginning, originating in the deer/elk damage contract. The crop damage contract waved eligibility for compensation later on, but that feels like it's not applicable for livestock the way it was for crops. WDFW is willing to revise that, but has not done so yet. The department will look at everything that's on the table before revisions are made.

Question: Is there anything else that needs to be considered for December? Any other aspects or topics?

Question: Do we know what the budget will be in the next year or so?

Answer: Yes, we have around \$650,000 biennially.

Jay: There's no realistic incentive for people to look at the agreement or checklist. If people are in favor of lethal control or state protection of private property, they don't feel like that's happening. They feel it's more stick than carrot.

Comment: I still think, on principle, the checklist is an important tool. We need an alternative for people who don't want to sign the contract. We need to be able to demonstrate what a landowner has done, justify actions that need to be taken. Could we make it more acceptable to some folks?

Jay: It's hard to fill out a checklist for someone else. People don't want someone else on their allotments. They don't want cattle being stirred up. It would be hard to do it accurately for people who are uncooperative. You could take some actions at the pack-level because there are multiple operations within a pack territory. Broader actions get people to talk across ownerships. We are trying to make good ideas fit into the local reality.

Comment: This is an issue for all of you. The reality on the ground looks different in different places. Incentives may need to vary.

Question: Of all of these issues that have been raised, what do you think we need to work on in December regarding cooperative agreements or receptivity to those agreements?

Answer: Maybe we focus on ways that we make it easier for landowners to find information, at least in the short-term, if there's resistance to working with the government.

Answer: Social tolerance is not increasing, so we need to be able to address that. Let's continue a conversation about how to look for different ways, reach out to policymakers or people of influence in communities that are not receptive.

Question: What is the constraint on supply versus demand? If there will be more people wanting these than can be involved, we could talk more about that. What is the scale of the cooperative agreements problem? Are there more people who want these than we can help?

Donny/Answer: We could get more clarification on that. There may have been dialogues that I'm not aware of. Half of the \$650,000 is available each fiscal year. We are seeing an increase in demand, and the budget doesn't go up. The cooperative agreement initiatives may require a combination of tools, duration. If we revisit the feedback loop, the kinds of criteria, and quality control, we can improve and maybe there will be more participation. I will send out list of active and up-and-coming contracts. Hopefully demand will not exceed supply.

Question: There's a lot of range riders out there. How can we get all of them together to share their knowledge and experience with different audiences? It would be great to take advantage of their experience.

Donny/Answer: Quality control is important with this, too. Are all of these range riders doing the same things in the same way? Are there differences in interpretation on what a range rider is?

Response: Range riders are not hired by the department, they are hired by the producer. WDFW can try to influence them, but they are not department employees. There will be variability, but it's something we can work on.

Question: Other thoughts on topics for December?

Answer: There is a huge disconnect between game wardens and biologists. Game wardens have a great reputation in our area. But we need to have a common response when game wardens are contacted regarding an issue/problem.

Question: This is regarding department response in terms of timeliness? Consistency?

Answer: Yes, consistency. Example: Game warden could not tell someone how to dispose of goat carcasses. We need real help, consistency in help, and further resources so that a situation doesn't happen again.

Question: Final concerns or opportunities?

Donny: Thank you very much to WAG. We appreciate the help before the next grazing season.

Recap: Additional information that WAG needs: 1) Language of the agreements, including before and after if possible. 2) Specifics on how supply and demand will converge. 3) Analytics on who is participating in the agreements.

Conclusion: Thank you for the rich and diverse dialogue. You create a larger whole that is bigger than the sum of its parts. For those who can make it to the walk the land next week, please join us. Looking forward to seeing all of you in December. Contact me with any follow up questions and concerns. Thank you to the department for your openness.