

**Wolf Advisory Group Meeting Notes**  
December 13, 2015  
Spokane

**WAG Members:** Bob Aegerter, Dan McKinley, Dan Paul, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Jack Field, Janey Howe, Lisa Stone, Mark Pidgeon, Molly Linville, Nick Martinez, Paula Swedeen, Shawn Cantrell, Tim Coleman, Tom Davis, Tom Erskine

**WDFW Staff:** Donny Martorello, Nate Pamplin, Scott Becker, Candace Bennett, Steve Pozzanghera, Ellen Heilhecker, Trent Roussin, Kevin Robinette, Matthew Trendera

**Third Party Neutral:** Francine Madden

**Additional Attendees:** Jay Keyne, Brian Bean, Suzanne Stone, Larry Schoen, Kim Thorburn, Hilary Zaranek

**Welcome and Overview:** The third party neutral welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made all around. The topic of conflict transformation and how it can lead to positive change and societal benefit was discussed.

The third party neutral went over her role throughout the entire process, including meeting with the entire Wildlife Program of WDFW and meeting with the larger constituency of communities throughout Washington State. She also met with the Fish & Wildlife Commission. It is all a part of a diverse population being able to work constructively together to solve the wolf issue. She shared two messages, one from each side of the issue, that brought focus on the human element and how the divide between the two sides can melt quickly, as it is only geographical.

**WDFW Update:** Trent gave a brief update on WDFW actions since the last WAG meeting. There has been some tracking progress in areas with snow. There have been some mortalities since the last WAG meeting. It is not known from which pack the mortalities occurred. However, a new pack, the Loup Loup pack, has been discovered. There appears to be about six animals in that pack.

Captures have been scheduled, but due to weather have not happened. Aerial captures have been postponed until the first of the year.

The Loup Loup pack is believed to have been in the area before the fires, rather than being dispersed into the area during the fires. The Skagit wolf is still dispersing, but is slowing down due to the weather at this point. It is collared, and left the Teanaway pack earlier this fall. The collar should last at least through the summer.

The Profanity pack is doing well. There are a lot of tracks, but rarely any sightings.

There is a lot of focus on the Cascades lately, but there hasn't been any luck yet. Snow should help. There is also always some focus on the northeast corner of Washington.

The Annual Report, featuring minimum counts of wolves and packs in the state, will be compiled after December 31. The report should be available in early March. Aerial flights and telemetry captures help with these counts.

A question was asked about a range rider on an allotment past the grazing dates. This was due to straggler cattle being on the allotment still.

A question was asked regarding Department staff members and how they will be able to keep up as wolf populations grow. Idaho was referenced as an example. WDFW is currently looking at alternate monitoring efforts.

**Fundamentals of Process Design:** The third party neutral led the group in a discussion of the fundamentals of process design. Some of this process has been decided at previous WAG meetings. A good process creates space and opportunity for a good outcome. If relationships are fractured due to any process, that makes it a bad process. The ability to work together well into the future is essential. A process must be good for that particular situation as well. Some processes are good for some issues and bad for other issues. Process is context specific.

Before you start a process, it is good to meet with individuals. After individuals, it goes to same-side groups. Internal conflict does exist between same-side groups. This fuels the external conflict. A blame frame of mind can develop easily, but blame drives groups more toward destructive conflict. A positively centered process is designed to get at the identity-level conflict without hitting it head on. WAG needs to figure out how to make decisions together without making them win/lose, or having an unsavory compromise. There needs to be togetherness.

There can be greater connectivity between the Fish & Wildlife Commission (policy setting body) and WAG (policy advice-giving body). Adding the Commission component will eliminate the disconnect in any decision-making process and prevent conflict. Conflict transformation is as much about preventing conflict as it is about transforming or reconciling it.

Dignity and respect foster trust, which then allows truth. A genuine dialogue allows for free choice, which leads to commitments. Getting everyone to commit to what is created is essential. That means everyone gets a fair representation and it is much more inclusive.

Bringing science into the discussion can be tricky, as that is what a lot of WAG decisions will be based on going forward. Every WAG member wants to trust the science. The issue comes from different studies being done, with different science being trusted by different groups and individuals. It can be tough to trust science that comes from a source you don't trust.

A voting process on especially divisive issues can create conflict down the road. The decision process needs to be handled in a way that can be supported by all. Consensus can be great, but it also can have challenges. Sometimes diverse views are not welcome. Someone may feel unsafe with the decision. A consensus building process can lower the decision down to the lowest common denominator. Another issue with consensus is that any one person can decide to have the most power.

Another model of decision making is called sufficient consensus. This process has everyone either agree with the decision or be able to live with it. Those who don't, a small minority, can live with it. The value of moving forward together as a group is greater than the resistance to that decision.

A question was asked wanting a greater explanation at the difference between consensus and sufficient consensus. Consensus is everyone agreeing. Sufficient consensus has someone willing to support the decision even though he or she may not agree with it. WAG will need to decide on the type of process they wish to use going forward and they will need to define it for themselves.

The third party neutral called attention to having feedback loops throughout any process. WAG already has something like this in place, as members can contact the third party neutral or WDFW between meetings and throughout processes.

Looking for bright spots – where things are already working - that are already in the system is good to do as well.

People do not own solutions that they were not a part of creating. If a member feels like a solution is being imposed, it will not be accepted. For example, laws can be put in place, but that does not mean people will follow them. WDFW was commended for changing the approach to WAG to give members a more open and inclusive decision-making venue. It is incredibly important that each member is part of creating the process and the decisions.

There was a question regarding the decision-making models. Could a group have different models depending on the content? While it is possible, depending on the group, it is generally a good idea to have one decision-making process. However, if it has evolved over time, it can work. However, it would be good to check with members to make sure they are all on board, as resentment can build.

Another question/comment asked if criteria could be created to allow standing back (in a sufficient consensus model) with an understanding that an issue could be revisited at a later date.

One member commented that she felt the group was at a point already where they could make a decision together, and reviewing this process feels almost like a step back.

The third party neutral agreed that the group has made amazing progress, but the decision-making process has never been decided upon. While some decisions have been made, putting that process in place will help the group going forward, especially as more serious issues arise.

Another comment agreed that the members have come to work well together, but that she didn't think they were quite there for making a decision on a serious issue.

Conflict will arise within the group, so having a process in place and building that trust with each other is critical to working through those challenges.

**\*Break\***

**WAG & WDFW Decisions on Process Design:** The first question was “What is the mission/vision of WAG?” The group gave their suggestions on the mission of WAG and what they wanted WAG to accomplish.

Suggestions included:

- A diverse group of stakeholders to implement the policy of the Wolf Conservation and Management Plan.
  - One comment added “to advise the Department” to the middle of the previous statement
- Help producers achieve a goal in a changing world and maintain viable business.
- Improving the quality of the discussion, decision-making, and public knowledge around wolves, apex predators, and endangered species.
  - Foster public consensus on the wolf management issue.
- Deal with real world tangible decisions that stakeholders will count on.
  - For example, the individual producer plans.
- Achieve and/or maintain healthy populations of wolves and wild ungulates while minimizing livestock losses.
  - Questions: What does “losses” mean (money or animals)? Why minimize when the goal should be to eliminate losses entirely?
- Need to include rural communities in the plan.
  - Resilient, vibrant rural communities
- Keep livestock community whole, hunting community whole, etc. Each community can be put in there.
- There should be a goal to attain a balance.
- Incorporate best available science.
- Advising WDFW, Commission, and legislators so they can make it happen.
- Create a framework of dynamic and adaptive strategies to help the Department achieve the goals of the Wolf Conservation and Management Plan.
  - Wildlife, social, and economic issues.
- Make wolves no longer an issue so there is no resentment.
- The mission does and should go beyond the plan.
- Think long term, beyond the plan.
- Addressing underlying and identity social conflicts is the only way to accomplish the goals set out by WAG.
- Cannot ignore the social conflicts occurring. Getting state citizens to understand a lifestyle they may not live needs to be a main focus of WAG as well.
- The previous entry can tie into the outreach component of WAG. The ability to reach out within the communities and interest groups, as well as across interest groups, can help WDFW provide information. So much of the wolf issue is based on ignorance or misinformation. Providing the correct information can be huge.
- Giving voice and balancing power across the state.
- Land management is important as well.
- Advise the Department on wolf conservation and management strategies that meet the needs of environmental, livestock producer, hunting, and rural communities, as well as balancing power and fostering peace.

- What does balancing power mean? All perspectives are welcomed and heard. Equal voice. Creating understanding – allows for greater understanding between groups. Money is spent on conservation and not lawyers. Honors diversity.

There was a request that the four goals of the Wolf Conservation and Management Plan be listed out as well.

- Restore and maintain a wolf population that is viable, sustainable, and well-distributed
- Manage wolf-livestock conflicts to minimize livestock losses while not impacting wolf populations (group agreed it needs to be broader).
- Maintain healthy, robust ungulate populations that provide abundant prey for wolves and other predators, as well as ample harvest opportunities for hunters.
- Develop public understanding of the conservation and management needs of wolves and ungulates in Washington, thereby promoting the public's coexistence with the species.

One comment was made that suggested concise mission statement, followed by goals, then followed by strategies.

One comment was made that value of WAG comes from the diversity. The guidance that comes from WAG is the important part. The guidance influences the decisions made, but WAG does not make those decisions.

The third party neutral pointed out that the direction the members were going now was going to limit them to what WAG was years ago. In the past three meetings, WAG has defined and accomplished several goals that went outside the Management Plan.

One comment agreed and said the mission does and should go beyond the wolf plan. These thoughts need to be long term, beyond the plan.

Next Question: How will WAG make decisions together? What is the decision-making process?

Voting was discussed among the group, as was a super-majority vote. A sufficient consensus was also brought up and discussed among the group.

A question was asked about whether or not the decisions made by this group were binding to the Commission. The answer was no. However, it can be more influential and carry a lot more weight to have consensus among the advisory group. Giving everyone voice and coming to a consensus carries much more weight to the Commission.

The Commission wants interaction with WAG just as much as WAG wants interaction with the Commission. Not only will this help with Commission items, but it will also help WDFW with decisions as well.

The third-party neutral reiterated that valuing each individual in the group can give more weight to that final decision, and can also help ensure everyone who made that decision backs the decision completely. Without the decision-making process, the group can and probably will take a step back from how far they've come.

Having clear goals is going to help with a decision to go forward as well. However, the decision-making process still needs to be defined.

Sufficient consensus was discussed more thoroughly as the question was considered.

The Commissioners present explained that it may be harder to make a decision with a super-majority, rather than a sufficient consensus, because it is known that the minority is out there and they do not agree at all. With a sufficient consensus, the Commission will know that the decision is supported, even if a minority does not agree with it entirely.

The topic was brought up that WAG should take action sooner rather than later.

Nate emphasized the importance of process when presenting policy decisions to the Commission and to the Legislature.

Another comment said that when you don't define this decision-process, decisions tend to take much longer. Some decisions can take years to get to because there is no process instigated.

The group decided that sufficient consensus was the decision-making process they wanted to use. They then worked to define what that meant to them. Is it a number or a strong sentiment by some?

Recommendations:

- Anything over 50%
- Only one standing aside
- Less about the number and more about the degree of disagreement
- If the people standing aside are from the same "side" that is a concern.
- Fine not defining the number, but the "same side" pull is a concern. Sufficient means seeing every aspect and every angle of that concern.
- Sufficiently discussed.
- Variance on bench
- Quality of dialogue is fully realized
- People standing aside need to state their case. They only stand aside after a full discussion.
- Only 3 standing aside (maximum), but not 3 on same side
- Allow people to disagree, but not block the decision
- Don't define a number. Ensure everyone's feelings are addressed.
- A second for a maximum of one standing aside.
- One per interest group.
- Sufficiently discussed was seconded.
- Can you live with it means the process was good, all voices were heard, and there was not such opposition that you would have to go and work actively against the outcome.
- Number at one or two. Only two if the two are in different groups.
- Strongly recommended that there be a minimum number, but not committed to what that number might be (0-3 was the range provided).

- Getting to a unified message, and supporting that message, is key.
- Three was seconded.
- Recognize that people have limitations within their organizations, but they should not take action against the outcome and should work to convince their organizations to behave the same way.

There was further discussion on sufficient consensus. Concerns were brought up, and concerns were addressed by other members of WAG.

The third party neutral offered to take the comments so far and work on a definition and present it back to the group where the likely direction would be that sufficient consensus meant a maximum number of three were not in agreement (as long as they were all not on the same side) but would support the decision for the sake of the group's progress. Also, those three agree not to take action against the outcome outside WAG and would work to convince their organizations to behave the same way. WAG agreed. Also, it was noted that it is important to give a voice to those members who may be absent for a meeting due to life events and other issues that may come up.

The third party neutral thanked the members for their input.

**Public Comment:** There were a few public comments:

- One member thanked WAG for allowing the public to attend. He expressed his concern that he didn't see the members close to being able to making a decision. He understood there is a lot of work and it is painful, but he recommended a week long retreat to get everything worked out. He mentioned the legislature and public reaction as things to be aware of going forward. He advised WAG thinks a lot bigger than what they are right now. Maybe there is a bigger issue that could be tackled, and wanted WAG to look at wildlife as a whole instead of just wolves.

- Another comment echoed the previous comment. There seems to be a huge spotlight on Washington, and other states are going to see how Washington handles things. There is a little mystery to this group, so communication is key. She felt it was good to come and listen to the discussion, as there is now much more transparency. She praised the group for working closely together and talking about everything. She criticized having the meeting on a Sunday and Monday instead of over the whole weekend.

One question asked whether or not WDFW shares with the group what happens with wolves throughout the state.

Donny emphasized that WDFW shares not only with WAG members, but with all of the public. WAG updates are sent out on a mailing list and anyone interested in that news can get on the mailing list. There is also time taken each meeting to give updates on captures and other wolf events.

**Meeting Adjourned**

**Wolf Advisory Group Meeting Notes**  
December 14, 2015  
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**WAG Members:** Bob Aegerter, Dan McKinley, Dan Paul, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Jack Field, Janey Howe, Lisa Stone, Mark Pidgeon, Molly Linville, Nick Martinez, Paula Swedeen, Shawn Cantrell, Tim Coleman, Tom Erskine

**WDFW Staff:** Donny Martorello, Nate Pamplin, Kevin Robinette, Steve Pozzanghera, Scott Becker, Trent Roussin, Ellen Heilhecker, Scott Raisley, Candace Bennett, Matthew Trendera

**Third Party Neutral:** Francine Madden

**Additional Attendees:** Rob McCoy, Kaitlyn Burnworth, Hilary Zaranek, Brian Bean, Lawrence Schoen, Suzanne Stone, Jay Keyne

**Welcome and Overview:** The third party neutral welcomed everyone to the meeting and congratulated the group on getting through the process stage during the previous day's action. She also introduced guest speakers Rob McCoy and Katelyn, who gave perspectives on wolf recolonization and hunting from the Makah perspective.

Brian Bean, Hilary Zaranek, Larry Shoen, and Suzanne Stone were also introduced as guest contributors. She outlined the rest of the meeting agenda as well, including DPCAs and other decision-making tasks.

Over the last several months, WAG members have heard from individuals across three main stakeholder groups in wolf conservation and management: livestock producers, environmentalists, and hunters. During this WAG meeting, WAG members heard the voice of diverse hunters. Below are the key learnings and perspectives expressed by WAG members about what they heard from the three hunters who presented.

**Key Learnings/Perspectives from the Hunter's Voice:** WAG and Department staff members shared key learnings from the hunting voice presentations.

Key learnings/perspectives included:

- Dad/daughter connection is special (family)
- Importance of families bonding together
- Experiencing nature, especially with young adults
- Hunting as a gateway to conservation. It soon becomes a way of life
- Being reminded about the contributions of hunters to conservation throughout history
- Getting youth involved
- Tribal subsistence hunting – high numbers
- Respect for the experience from hunters
- Role of hunting in conservation, and that sense of urgency as people drop out of hunting (where will that funding come from?)

- Hunters being aware of how they are portrayed publically. There are many shows out there that do more harm than good in portraying hunting.
- Concern about the rise in messaging around killing, not experience. How do we move it back to the passion?
- One person did not learn anything new. Public hunting has a poor reputation, and improving the public hunting reputation is a key issue.
- How Cecil impacted public perception.
- The dynamic and balance from a tribal perspective (cultural and spiritual impacts, as well as impacts to ungulate populations), and how coexistence is essential.
- We have National Parks and Wilderness Areas because of hunters, and there is no hunting in these places.
- Human population growth impacting wildlife.
- Hunters take responsibility for the animals they harvest.
- Common goals are the same, and the differences are the approaches to those goals.
- Youth engagement
- Hunting is an opportunity to connect with the natural world
- Concern that hunting is becoming more of a sport than a relationship with nature.
- Value of predators undermined, as they are seen as competition.
- Be careful not to assume that we know what is going on. Research is valuable and ecological systems are complex.
- Hard to value resources if you don't see them (get people outdoors among those animals)
- Concern over illegal activities and bad behavior
- Need more ethical, responsible behavior
- Hopeful about bringing in more youths
- Get back to the original purpose of conservation in hunting and stop with the "kill is the endgame" mentality.
- Predators: heavy control or light touch on management? What role to predators play (competitors or key role to ecosystem)?
- Key to management is good data and good numbers, as well as mutual understanding
- Different perspectives group members have all seeing the same program
- Recognizing that culturally, this is a part of all of us.
- Need more public awareness and need to do a better job at getting the right message out to the public.
- Hunting community is another leg on the conservation stool. Without them, it all tips over.
- Landowner liability with hunters on the land. This needs to be addressed to ethical hunters can stay on the landscape.
- We've been here before with species, and now we are just in another phase of the process.

**Lessons Learned in Range Riding – Deterrence Measures:** Hilary Zaranek, from a cattle operation in Montana, and Brain Bean, a sheep producer in Idaho, gave a presentation on coexisting with wolves in their states.

Brian started with sheep management. On the sheep side, a lot of progress has been made on the behavior and tools used to manage sheep. Nonlethal, preemptive actions are used. The goal is to implement the tools to prevent any depredation, as losses can add up very quickly. Brian has been dealing with wolves for 13 years. The tools require training and need to be practiced. It is

not as simple as just listing them out and doing them. They also need to be rotated to avoid habituation. Wolves are very intelligent and will test things often, and losing livestock is hard. No one wants to lose livestock.

Using multiple tools is better than using one at a time. The combination of tools, paired with rotations, can be effective. The number one deterrent is human presence. Doubling herders is important. Urinating around the bed ground can be effective as well. Guard dogs can also be used. Different breeds can be more effective as well. Brian uses five guard dogs at a time, but there are economic costs with that, as those dogs need to be fed. Fladry and turbo fladry can be used as well to keep wolves out of the bed ground at night. An alternative to fladry is having two herders. Herders can alternate in wolf country, with one staying with the herd and one going up. Turbo fladry is being used less, as alternative methods are very effective as well. Herders are staying closer too. Communication is key to effective herding.

Sometimes wolves will bypass the herd to go for a carcass. Removing a carcass is very important, but for many sheep herders that is impossible. There has been an idea to get a helicopter up to help with removing carcasses.

There are also foxlights and turbo flashlights that can be used instead of turbo fladry. The lights can be put up at a certain height and they discharge randomly as it gets dark outside. They also have models that are solar powered and use multiple colors of light to be even more annoying to wolves.

How do you use them though? There are many factors. How many lights to use, which way the wind is blowing, how many wolves are around, when and where the wolves may arrive, etc.

Loud music and noisemakers can even be used, though wolves can become habituated quickly to that. Rotation and practice is very important. Communication is also very important.

Messages between herders range in severity, including all is well, wolves howling, wolves on the perimeter, and wolves are present right now and it is an emergency. The main message is that all of these things working together are necessary to preventing depredations.

How many nights are you spending in a bed ground?

Most of the time it is just one night. There have been cases where there have been more, but those were special circumstances and they got special permission.

Is it an arms race with these methods?

That question was not quite as relevant early on, as they were provided collar and telemetry data. At that point, it was less likely to be ambushed. Now, state management is at the forefront, and there is a hunting season. There is a concern that the data would be used inappropriately for hunting seasons, facilitating non-fair chase harvest, which none of us want. There has been some movement toward methods that would at least allow them to know when they might be in trouble.

Is there a constant movement to do more?

If we were out on the desert, we have two or three guard dogs, and we will go to five or six maximum if necessary. Any more, and the dogs beat up each other. The guard dogs will fight to the death. The dogs are bigger than the wolves, but they are dealing with an expert predator. If you have two guard dogs against eight wolves, it will be no contest. As we get to wolf country, there are a number of measures employed, or at least immediately on hand to be employed. Preparation is key.

What do you pay for your dogs?

In the past, Defenders of Wildlife helped. We also breed our own, intentional or not. We also lose dogs. There is a replenishment that is necessary, and they have to be trained to be effective as well. They live with the sheep and are indoctrinated into the herd.

Can you talk a little about the Wood River Wolf project? Is it a constant fight, with all hands on deck at all times?

Brian said he would love to address that if there was time at the end of the discussion, as the Wood River Wolf project is extremely beneficial.

What agencies have you contacted for assistance?

It can be a number of them. It could be USFS, APHIS, or even others. The amount of money available to support projects other than lethal control is a minimal amount.

Have your herders ever taken a wolf?

They have not. Our herders are unarmed, and we thought long and hard about that before we decided to go that direction. While there is of course concern about the safety of our employees, they remain unarmed. It is very important to us that we maintain integrity in our approach. It is not an issue of legality, but we do not allow it.

Hilary was next and spoke about range riding and the cattle perspective. In Montana, the way things panned out was that after the voting, a lot of livestock producers felt like the losers. There was not a trusting relationship like here between all of you. What you are doing in Washington is really great and you are on the right track, because everyone does need a voice.

Hilary started on lethal removal. Montana fully supports lethal removal across the board, and it takes very little to have a lot of wolves harvested. There are few limits and liberal hunting seasons. In my experience, when wolves have a healthy fear of humans and those boundaries are set, it does help those wolves on the landscape survive.

Boundaries need to be set, and it does not take wolves long to realize where is safe and where is not. Lethal removal, from that stand point, is very beneficial, as there have now been fewer

wolves killed and fewer depredations after a few hunting seasons. There is a commitment to making it work. We trust that we all tried to make it work, and that means when lethal removal is used, it is fully supported.

However, lethal removal alone does not work. All that happened was one wolf would be killed and another would just take its place. What we needed was to come together as a community and decide how to manage wolves instead of approaching them with only lethal removal. There needed to be responsibility and the landscape needed to be looked at in order for us to figure out what was needed to be successful in wolf management.

The goal with wolves and bears was to minimize livestock losses due to depredation. No matter how you feel about wolves, everyone could agree that livestock losses were undesirable. However, they needed to accept there would be losses to wolves and livestock. They came up with three tools to use on the ranch/landscape. The three were range riders, electric fencing, and the removal of carcasses. Sometimes these work and sometimes things do not work as well as we would like.

Human presence is important, but strategic human presence can be even more important. Going out to check on cattle during strategic timeframes helps with hazing and preventing livestock depredations. Hazing opportunities are few, but they do have serious value, as it creates a negative relationship between the human and the wolves. They feel their hazing efforts, especially during calving seasons, has been very significant.

It is also important to have someone out there reporting accurately what is going on with the herds. What they want is a body out there as much as possible. There needs to be accurate information in order to know what action to take going forward. Responding the wrong way to the wrong problem is not helping anybody.

There is a compensation program in Montana, which is very helpful. Ranchers want to find carcasses and know what happened because it benefits them in the long run. They want their herders not to focus on predators (certainly be aware though), but to focus on what they can control. This means focusing on the cattle to make them less vulnerable to predation. What you do is different in each different landscape.

The goal is to get cattle to behave more like bison by bunching up or gathering together to defend themselves against predators. Bison populations are exploding right now. Bison are not easy prey. Cattle are much more like bison and are able to defend themselves if you allow them to exhibit their natural behavioral instincts and strategies. Other species, like elk, panic and run. They don't want the cattle to panic and run. Bison stand their ground and are extremely successful in defending themselves from depredation that way.

The riders should get the babies with the moms and the moms with other moms. One question is how large the herd should be. The herd does not need to be too large, as wolves will weigh the cost and benefit of standing against a fighting prey, and will typically choose to run off.

Electric fence is used where it is able to be done. It doesn't work on all terrains. However, in every herd confined within an electric fence, there have been no depredations. It doesn't necessarily work by keeping wolves out, but by keeping the cattle inside.

The last tool is carcass removal. They only removed one carcass this year, and tweaked the process a little. The first goal was to get rid of carcass sites, as they attracted predators. Using time and space a little differently can prevent predators from being right on top of a herd.

The goal with carcass removal is to minimize the encounter rate. The challenge is that out on an open range, it is very difficult to move a carcass down a narrow trail, across wide distances, and then find somewhere to put the carcass.

What kind of numbers are you talking about?

It completely depends on the area the cattle are on. They don't really base it on the number of cows. They base it on the terrain involved. Cows are visual creatures, and will keep themselves gathered if they can see each other. They get separated easily when visibility is down.

How does that work with USFS utilization?

Where most of these producers are operating, ranchers are restricted a little, but the Forest Service folks have been interested in working with the producers for restoration and grazing projects. Many of the producers are concerned with conservation and want to work on those landscapes. The Forest Service is accommodating due to the actions they have taken in the past. One-bite grazing needs are utilized as well.

The only time the resource has been depleted is when they have poorly managed it.

How close are you guys operating to Yellowstone?

Three miles.

Could you explain the mindset of the producers? This isn't something that producers automatically accept.

You're right, as it is taking a long time. What we tried at the beginning was to come together as groups of people and trust in friendships and personal relationships, rather than how we felt about predators and other practices. Through those personal channels, and by bringing in outside speakers and community events, those relationships grew. Once the results became visible, there was no question for the producers involved that it was the better way to go. There wasn't a lot of resistance after the learning curve was conquered. The majority of people were hesitant, but it has caught on more as friends and family join together and grow with these methods.

What is your definition of range rider? There is a challenge from the livestock perspective to explain what that means and what other nonlethal activities mean as well.

Range riders two goals are increasing *strategic* human presence and handling cattle in a way that increases the herd mentality, or at least keeps calves with mothers at all times. The third thing would be the tracking and monitoring of animals. They found early morning and between 5-10 p.m. to be the most effective times.

How expensive does this get? Has anyone surprised you by coming in after the success was visible?

Grants and donations contributed to the funding initially, as well as multiple NGOs and ranchers. Ranchers have taken on more responsibility and costs as the years have gone on. Once the learning curve and initial investment has been overcome, those things should make life easier and bring costs way down. Once these methods are in place, ranchers find it easier to weather challenges. The main issue is that initial investment and learning curve.

The program was met with some real resistance from folks who had always been friends. However, the folks who want to stay in that angry place are the ones losing. No one is threatening them or wanting to convert them. These folks are just feeling threatened by change.

Brian commented that costs are lower with a range riding program like the one Hilary is in charge of, rather than letting everyone do it themselves. However, it takes everyone cooperating completely.

### **Individual Pilot Plan for Sheep Producer “M”:**

Producer M and a WAG member presented information obtained from the November 11 WAG meeting. At an earlier WAG meeting, there was discussion of coming together to work directly with a producer on developing a plan.

The third party neutral reviewed the pilot plan process with the group, reading the principles, benefits, and goals outlined by WAG during the previous meeting.

The considerations for the plan included [**note – the specific agreement for pilot plan for producer M is summarized at the end of this section**]:

- Range rider with telemetry who maintains communication with full time herder similar to how they coordinated during last year’s grazing season
- Multiple tools changing often
- Maintain an adaptable plan with the option for ramping up if and as it looks like depredations may start to occur and/or in the event they do start to occur. The goal is to, as best as possible, start ramp up before depredations actually start.
- Identify risks (weak spots) and target them
- Expectation of some loss, just not catastrophic
- Openness/receptivity to try tools....
- Start before the grazing season and before problems occur
- Willing to ramp up at first sign of trouble

During the previous meeting, those ideas were discussed thoroughly and defined. See meeting handouts from the November 11 WAG meeting for further details.

A WAG member expressed that she was impressed with what she saw on the producer's property, as several nonlethal actions were already in place. The producer uses range riders, and expressed how he defines range rider on his property. There are guard dogs, herding dogs, and one herder. Sometimes there is a second herder. Foxlights are not being used yet. Turbo fladry was tried a few years ago, but was not as effective on that land. Attempts have been made, and results have varied so far.

Members of the conservation community met with the producer and agreed that the producer was already doing a lot of what they might expect as far as nonlethal actions go. It was agreed that things should be decided upon before an issue came along, as that would be a bad time to come in with new ideas. Increasing human presence was discussed, as well as foxlights, fladry, and the issue that USFWS takes the lead in this particular area. The difficulty of the terrain in removing carcasses was also discussed, and using lime was suggested as a deterrent. Other services were also present at the November 11 meeting, providing a variety of additional perspectives on making an even higher quality operation.

A WAG member said that conservation folks agreed that the producer was already using many nonlethal tools that they would expect. If there was an increase in wolf presence, there would be an immediate ramp-up with the use of foxlights and an additional range rider could be added to increase human presence. Those foxlights would need to be readily available. There would need to be good communication. Also, a ramp-up of other human presence was recommended. The producer would get to decide who those humans were. The producer would work with WDFW in the event of a crisis, and WAG would discuss the events afterward to talk about what worked and what did not.

If depredations continued after the ramping-up, the conservation community would be comfortable with additional options for management. It is difficult because right now USFWS is the lead, so only relocation is possible. The commitment would come from the conservation representatives to communicate to stakeholders that the producer had implemented the nonlethal actions in the correct way.

There would also need to be at-the-ready resources available from WDFW. This would help with ensuring action is taken as soon as possible.

The group clarified a depredation event is defined as a single event (one depredation event equates to one day) that may include multiple animals. Three separate events would be three separate days.

The WAG members agreed that they want to plan what actions to take in advance, so a crisis does not make multiple people submit input out there. This would save time and give a clear direction for the producer.

If wolves are delisted federally, and a ramp up is happening, and there have been three separate events on three separate days, the environmental side would go with the state, and hope they would look at where they are in recovery, as well as other tools. Knowing that they would have a producer who has been a trusted partner in working with everyone, you want to use the tools that are most appropriate at our disposal.

What the environmental side has said is that they will be supportive of that producer, no matter what actions need to take place, including a management action after three depredation events.

A WAG member brought up that we need to know what the vision is from WDFW and what tools are at our disposal, and they do not seem to be present at the moment. The third-party neutral acknowledged this frustration. The WAG member noted that you can only get producers to the table so many times before they don't want to bother anymore and suggested the group focus on one path forward, rather than the few branches all at once. There are not enough resources to decide on everything.

WDFW talked about the ramp-up process, and what that will mean with the amount of funding and staff available. The third party neutral expressed that it is important for everyone to know if those resources are there and what they are.

WDFW does not have the staff to have unlimited resources. WDFW has the same funding base as last biennium for DPCA-Ls and contracted range riders. Is that going to be a lift that is provided, in that it is used to get those nonlethals out on the landscape before an issue occurs?

The third-party neutral said that the group needs to know if WDFW has the resources to support the pilot project during that ramp-up. WDFW said that they do. There have been experiences that have told us that the level of ramp-up seen in the past is probably not sustainable as we move forward. This year, with the Teanaway pack, it felt like a more sustainable action, and that is a level that the Department can support. They have the funding to do that. What does that look like? **[note – the specific agreement for pilot plan for producer M is summarized at the end of this section]**

- Depredations have occurred
- A range rider would be available (the challenge here is that it is difficult to find a range rider)
- Fladry, foxlights, logistics training, and air horns are all available and will be made available in this pilot program
- It meets the needs of the producer

Do you have a path right now for hiring range riders?

Yes we have a path right now.

Do you have funding for foxlights, fladry, etc. if the producer experiences a depredation?

Yes, we have the funding. We want to proactive, not reactive in this process.

A question was raised about how long that ramp-up should go. Does ramping down occur or is it expected that the ramp-up becomes the new norm? There is always a need, and being strategic is the method that should be used.

There was a comment that there may be key stakeholders not in the room at the moment. A lot of this event would involve grazing management and animal husbandry. The Washington Department of Agriculture should be involved, as should the Washington Extension Service and the USFS and BLM. This affects those entities as well. Thinking longer term and exposing people to these concepts may be worth considering, and those entities should really be in the room.

Another comment was made that ranchers are looking for a kind of assurance. While this original concept is a pilot example, there is no way that the state can support what you are suggesting as wolf populations grow and issues increase. Each of those DPCA-Ls needs to be something all sides can trust in. When it comes time to take action, that trust is going to play a huge part.

The third-party neutral emphasized that this is a step in building a core that is strongly supportive.

There was a concern about how to classify a depredation. What happens if the ramp-up does not occur in time and another depredation occurs?

To address the concern, it was voiced that as long as additional efforts are enacted, it would count as a new depredation.

The whole purpose is to avoid more dead animals.

What we want to avoid is that condition where the producer continually has to do one more thing.

The deterrents need to be where the sheep are located. This includes the foxlights, possible fladry, air horns, etc. We want to be preemptive, you want all of those tools put in practice in an organized way. Assess the situation, select the tool suite, and implement those tools. Acting based on the information available can keep depredations from occurring in the first place. Thinking about providing the stuff after a depredation means you lost. Is there a severity component as well (regarding how many sheep are lost at once)?

Timing and knowing when and where to use the tools also plays a major part in how effective they can be. Conflict specialists are an incredible resource, and they are an advantage that Washington has right now. One thing Oregon has are mini-versions of WAG that evaluate different issues in the communities. The goal should be to get to that point where the energy and resources used are sustainable for this process.

Trusting that those tools work is a major part of that sustainability. A training protocol could be a practical solution for trusting in these tools. The Department and some NGOs are involved in range rider training every year.

The producer should have those foxlights on hand when he needs them, not afterwards. Also, if there is an opportunity to experiment with other methods if possible and practice with the tools.

During the ramp up stage, the producer noted that they will be trying everything, so that would be fine.

Some tools that may be more difficult to implement may be perfect for the situation, depending on where the herd happens to be located. Don't be too prescriptive and figure out what is going to work before the effort is implemented. That will help with being proactive.

When talking about what is sustainable into the future, we want to talk about our greatest risk. This particular producer should be a higher priority, due to him being the largest sheep producer in the state, and given the region of recovery. The beauty of this pilot program is that we are working with a producer and already developing a trusting relationship with him. We want to make sure we really have our act together when handling any situations that arise. So what is not sustainable about this?

The pilot program is perfect, but expanding this to every producer in the state is not realistic.

The producer looks at the pilot program as developing trust and getting everyone on the same page. The point is for everyone to be talking about the same thing.

The problems with ramping down is that it is very hard to ramp down, due to the fact that ramping up generally occurs, at least in the northeast, when removal is close.

The agreement is everything they are already doing, consistent with last year, being on top of everything, and having foxlights ready. If it looks like depredations might occur, ramp up should begin before depredations happen, at the first sign of risk. There will also be additional human presence and another range rider ready to go. Training of the herder would occur. The point is that the environmental community should not be saying "Have you tried...?" throughout the process. Foxlights should be used when wolves are close. Should depredations occur, human presence should be deployed immediately. After three depredation events, the full toolbox to stop the wolves is available and is at the USFWS/WDFW discretion. Everyone is supportive of whatever action is taken. Sometime after the crisis, the group will discuss lessons learned and look into adaptive management.

WAG members all agreed to this plan. One member had one caveat, that there should be a list of the tools to help prevent the "Did you try...?" questions.

In summary, the agreement for pilot plan for producer M, WAG agreed that the producer would continue the use and implementation of high quality non-lethal measures as last year, such as one herder, one range rider with telemetry equipment and locations of collared wolves, guard and herding dogs, and removal of any sheep carcasses when feasible. The herder and range rider will also be in frequent communication.

The Department is responsible for getting fox lights to the producer before grazing season, so they are available for practice and for immediate deployment at the first sign of danger, be that a depredation or threat of a depredation. The Department will also provide an “on-call” range rider, likely within a day or two, if a depredation occurs or there is an imminent threat of a depredation, similar to last year.

The producer will notify the local Department Conflict Specialist if there is increased wolf presence near the sheep, a depredation, or threat of a depredation. The producer and WDFW will determine needs for additional human presence during a potential ramp up. The producer also noted that he was receptive to WDFW involvement throughout any crisis or pre-crisis period.

The details of this agreement will be included in the producer’s DPCA-L.

**DPCA-Ls:** WDFW went over what they need from WAG in order to get these cooperative agreements out. The Department wants to get them out as soon as possible. The Department is looking for suggestions and advice on criteria for prioritizing the cost-share component of DPCA-L’s, high-quality nonlethal methods, a performance feedback loop, and to review a first draft before it gets sent out the door to producers.

Jack asked about prioritizing, and wanted to make sure it addressed the dollars, but not the agreements.

WDFW agreed and wanted to ensure that this affected those agreements that deal with cost-share.

The third-party neutral wanted to point out that for many individuals, it is the certainty that matters rather than the dollar amount. We want to ensure people are not being left out, even if that funding is limited.

WDFW said that the performance aspect of the agreement should look at whether or not the Department achieved what they wanted to achieve. None of the producers want to lose any livestock, and WDFW wants to be there to support them in their goals and help them achieve what they want to achieve. The performance evaluation piece can wait until the next meeting.

Jack asked if it would be a benefit to have a requirement for those producers who sign an agreement to meet with their local WDFW conflict specialist, go through a workshop on what options are available to them, and start building a relationship with those who wish to give support.

Most agreed with that sentiment, and one comment did say it shouldn’t matter if it is a workshop or more of an individual thing. However, it would definitely be a benefit to have that involved in some capacity.

Another comment said that producers should certainly be informed of the tools available to them, as some do not know what options are available. Hilary said that some of the workshops, like what Jack mentioned, have been very well-received in Montana. She believes it can be incredibly beneficial. If you want to be proactive, doing those things before there is an issue is a good thing. People are interested in these things.

Are there basic principles of the toolbox that should be addressed each time, with more of an individual approach as needed? All of this goes under the “quality” and awareness pieces of the DPCA-Ls.

WAG split into two groups, with one group focused on the criteria for who gets funding and how to build trust and inclusion, especially for those who do not receive monetary distribution, and the other focused on high quality nonlethal methods and receptivity involved in those areas. The groups met for 20 minutes, then brought the main ideas of the discussions back to the larger group.

The first group to present was the criteria and funding group. The conversation went over some of the challenges and the initiatives that may be required. It took courage to sign up for these agreements, but now some will be funded and some will not be funded. The transition needs to be handled carefully. Prioritizing the risk, so the money goes to the highest risk areas, is also essential. It can also be a community-based operation, where communities can work together. We will also want to come up with a way to reward those folks who are courageous and want to join in early. This means early in the process, not just before grazing seasons. If it is decided they do not qualify for that funding, they should still be rewarded somehow. One way to address this would be that community-based model. We want to grow a system that does not have a monitoring effort or process control in place that sets up failure. Making it community-based can deter those problems. Community engagement can then help determine how that money is spent, and communities can decide what to do if some producers do not follow the agreements. It turns into more of a self-policing operation, letting WDFW be less-engaged. The method of prioritizing risk will need to be evaluated.

Montana has a list of criteria that must be met for producers to get those funds, and prioritizing does take place. The application can inform these folks about those criteria and they can see if they qualify.

Should there also be a prioritization in regards to protecting wolves? For example, in areas where recovery is not going well, should money be pushed in that direction?

WDFW mentioned that folks in this room have been working hard on getting this out there to be used. Now, if WDFW goes out and says some producers won't qualify, there could be trust issues that develop. For this process to be successful, everyone needs to understand it and agree with it. It has to be marketable.

Budget limitations do create problems, so making sure we stay connected with the legislature and making sure we can raise enough funds to cover these agreements is essential.

If we sign a contract, we need to be prepared to deliver.

The other group, on quality nonlethal methods, went next. There would need to be clarity of expectations, and definition of methods. Definitions should be clear and written into forms. There should be individual conversations, as well as workshops. However, it was undecided if those workshops should be required or not. It needs to be determined who would deliver the nonlethal methods (WSU extension, Wildlife Services, or other). Should there be a broader sense of workshops, or a manual that could be developed by someone with the Department to hand out. And, should it be mandatory to read the manual before any contract is signed? We need to figure out how it is decided which tools are appropriate, as not every tool is good for each producer or situation. It would be important to have high quality contracts that feature an assessment of each operation to figure out which tools are appropriate, and also forms a baseline of what they need to do and what tools are appropriate. We can then come back with recommendations. Suzanne has a form that be shared with WDFW.

Who is controlling the definition of the methods?

The idea was that WAG would be doing that.

Shawn asked if WDFW got what they needed from WAG.

Donny said yes, and WDFW would be working to get an agreement out early in the new year for the group to review and comment on. Donny shared that there was a carryover portion from the crop damage agreements that said if the contract was signed, there could be no claim. That language does not fit with the DPCA-Ls, and WDFW would like to pull that language out. It doesn't fit with the intent of these agreements. The idea would be to pull all that out and not have that compensation language in the agreements. Compensation would be determined by the facts on the ground, and not the level of nonlethal methods being used. Another meeting will be conducted regarding this process.

It was brought up that it would be beneficial for multiple members of WAG to have meetings in Olympia while the Legislative session is going on, which would then allow all members to participate. All agreed. The next meeting is scheduled for February 1 and 2, in Olympia.

### **Public Comment**

The first public comment thanked WDFW for the increase in quota on cougars. He cautioned that WAG may face something like that in the future. He said that he didn't like to hear nonlethal so much, and thinks lethal should be used more often. The word depredation is only used with livestock, but it's never used with ungulates. He wanted to hear more discussion on that. He also wanted grazing rights to be brought up as well. It is a privilege for these landowners, yet the state is implemented with managing the wildlife. All that was discussed was livestock, and not wildlife. He wanted to point out that domestic sheep are detrimental to bighorn sheep.

The second public comment pointed out that lethal actions have been used in the past. This public commenter pointed out that processes were discussed a lot during this meeting. Everyone

must be honest with their agendas, and they must be willing to compromise. It is a concern that many will not show their true agenda. It is also a concern that some ranchers wouldn't take compensation for the damages incurred. Some ranchers won't take compensation in order to push their agendas forward. The goal is to be honest. He asked if there was some compensation for wolves, and the answer was yes. The other question was if there were other carnivore depredations that were compensated, and the answer was that, for the state, cougar used to be, and the program is in place but is not currently funded.

Some of the public members got into a discussion amongst themselves at this point.

A third comment from a farmer in Lincoln County expressed that wolves have caused damage to his area. There was also damage from bighorn sheep. He said they have more wolves coming into the area, and elk have moved to protect themselves. The hunting is getting worse as a result of this. He expressed a lack of appreciation for having wolves allowed in eastern Washington. He wanted to know how many of the members got paid for wolf management. He said he is not against wolves per se, but when there is a conflict that costs money and causes damage, he doesn't see where the benefit of wolves comes from. He said game animal populations have declined and that will have an impact on hunting numbers and he thinks it is a lose/lose situation.

A fourth public comment thanked the WAG members for what they were doing, as she sees progress. She wanted to say she sees value in the long term effort put forth. However, what you just heard from a previous comment is the reason ranchers do not want to participate in the process. She has immense respect for all WAG members involved. It can be hard when decisions take longer than we might like, but she has hope that there will be value and progress that affects the long term. As WAG does go through the DPCA-L, she wanted to ask that WAG is not punitive with those who may not be as far along as the members may want them to be. Please give ranchers time as well. She also wanted to commend the group for staying committed, even if some members may not agree with the direction a decision goes. That says a lot about the commitment and the trust the members share with one another. She has a lot of faith in this process. She advised that WAG members keep things flexible. She also said that she appreciated the discussion and decision on "how decisions are made." She especially liked the part about not opposing or actively advocating for group decisions outside the room or outside WAG.

The third party neutral thanked the representative for her support throughout the entire process.

A fifth public comment thanked WAG for being open to the public and for having Shane Mahoney speak the night before. He also thanked everyone for their time. It's going to be a long road ahead. He has friends within the Department as well, and admires them for their commitment. His concern comes from the increase in predators and the decrease in game animals in the state. His taxidermy business has lost business due to the decrease in game populations. He does not think that Washington is managing wolves. He does not approve the special consideration the wolf is receiving. He wants to regionally delist the wolf, and move the efforts of conservation to the caribou. He does not approve that the direction seems to be all about cattle. The deer and elk are not being discussed, and that is a problem. Wolves are killing his business.

A sixth public comment thanked the WAG for being open to the public and thanked them for being allowed to speak. As an outsider, he wanted to come to a meeting and see what it would be like. He was initially put off by the lighthearted engagement on the first day, but then realized after talking to another member of the public that this was progress toward WAG being able to work together, because he has been to meetings where they were very contentious. He thinks now that it is working, as members are getting along with each other. There have to be some solutions that come out of this group, and the communication is good to see. There is a sense of urgency. Washington can be a deciding factor in how wolves are managed in the lower 48 states. He said the group is doing a fine job, but unless these decisions are made, there may be actions taken that are extreme in either direction. He mentioned the Wood River Wolf plan, and that it is working because there is a want to do something about it. There is a desire to find a solution. He also said it is not our problems that define us, but what we do for a solution. He thinks range riding will be one of the most useful tools moving forward with wolf management. It fosters social tolerance.

A seventh public comment mentioned the importance of education and teaching when dealing with this issue. We have to work together, and WAG is doing a great job.

An eighth public comment encouraged WAG to continue doing what they are doing right here. More and more people are going to come in and scrutinize the process. The problems can be accelerated due to circumstances. Economics for the small rural communities are going to face challenges. Wolves are here today, and solutions must be decided upon. He advised the WAG to take what they agree on and go forward. Information needs to be shared and understood. Dynamics change, and what we have today needs to be addressed. He mentioned again that the group is doing a great job so far, and encouraged them again to continue with the process. Stay engaged, care, and listen to each other.

**Meeting Adjourned**