



State of Washington  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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November 27, 2019

The Honorable Jay Inslee  
Washington State Governor  
Post Office Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee:

Wolf conservation and management are a top priority for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department), and we take this responsibility seriously. The level of wolf-livestock conflict in the Kettle Range of northeast Washington is greatly impacting many, including ranching and environmental communities, as well as the Department. Consistent with your letter dated September 30, 2019, we all share the perspective that something has to change to reduce the loss of both wolves and livestock in this area.

Per your September 30 letter, I am writing to provide an update on the Department's preparations for the 2020 grazing season and the implementation of proactive, non-lethal tools to mitigate wolf-livestock conflict. Outlined below are three key processes underway specifically related to your requests.

1. The Department's Wolf Advisory Group (WAG) – comprised of Washington stakeholders of diverse backgrounds – recently met and discussed revisions to the wolf-livestock interaction protocol, which, along with the 2011 Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, guides the Department on addressing wolf-livestock conflict. The WAG is specifically focusing on the chronic conflict in the Kettle Range of northeastern Washington and working on an approach that reinforces the use of proactive, non-lethal tools; recommends a plan tailored to individual livestock operations; and advises an outcome if plans are not implemented. The WAG has set a target date for completion of the protocol revision for late January.
2. Collaboration with land managers is critically important to reducing wolf-livestock conflict. The Department has met twice with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in the last six weeks, which included both local staff from the Colville National Forest as well as regional staff based in Portland. In line with the WAG process, the focus is on the near-term chronic conflict in the Kettle Range and approaches during the 2020 grazing season that reinforce proactive, non-lethal tools (such as range riding) as well as long-term

grazing options that benefit wolves, livestock, and producers. USFS is also working directly with the livestock producers who utilize public forest lands for grazing in the Kettle Range in preparation for the 2020 grazing season. USFS is supportive of the Department's recommendations to use range riders on grazing allotments in the Kettle Range.

3. Department staff will also meet with USFS staff and livestock producers in the Kettle Range at the upcoming coordination meeting in preparation for the 2020 grazing season.

This spring, these three processes will culminate to form an implementation plan for proactive, non-lethal deterrence of wolf-livestock conflict in the Kettle Range. That plan is expected to include a combination of improving the efficacy of existing tools and incorporating previously unused tools to increase our ability to prevent conflict and will be consistent with statutory requirements (including ESHB 2097). You will be provided with a final report of that plan, expectations, accountability, and performance measures by May 1, 2020.

Two critically important tools for mitigating wolf-livestock conflict are the use of range riders (to monitor livestock on dispersed, rangeland grazing settings) and cost-share contracts between the Department and livestock producers (for the implementation of tools such as fencing, scare devices, and additional ranch staff to monitor livestock). The current funding to support these efforts comes from a surcharge on personalized license plates and state general funds. The funding need has steadily increased as livestock producers become increasingly receptive to implementing non-lethal deterrence methods. The general fund-state portion has been provided to the Department as a series of one-time allocations for the past several legislative sessions, which makes planning for, recruiting, and maintaining range riders and cost-share contracts difficult. As of last grazing season, there was more interest in range riding and cost-share contracts than the Department's available funding could support.

In addition to that critical funding for non-lethal tools, there are other funding needs that would greatly benefit our collective ability to prevent wolf-livestock conflict; these are related to maintaining Department wildlife conflict specialist staff in the Kettle Range area, bolstering conflict mitigation services (e.g., compensation, wolf population monitoring), and stakeholder engagement. Please see the enclosed budget decision package detailing this funding need. We ask that you include these needs in the Governor's supplemental proposed budget and in future budget planning for the 2021-2023 biennium.

Thank you for your concern and attention to wolf conservation and management in our state, one of the Department's top priorities. Your request was to increase our reliance on non-lethal tools and significantly reduce the need for lethal removal of wolves, and we sincerely believe the best way to do that is to develop willing, collaborative, and lasting partnerships at the community level with livestock producers in the heart of what is now core wolf habitat. Plans recommended at any level of government are only true solutions if they are perceived to be beneficial to the recipients, and if they are based on our shared, common goals intended to bring Washington together around wolf issues.

The Honorable Jay Inslee

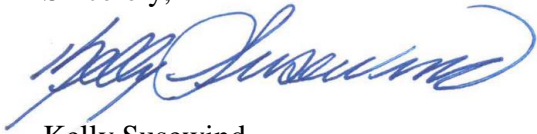
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The Department will continue regular communications with JT Austin to ensure the best path forward. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your interest and engagement on this important wildlife conservation and management issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kelly Susewind", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Kelly Susewind

Director

Enclosure