

Pilot Projects (Creative Solutions) for Special Focus Areas (SFAs) for recurrent conflict mitigation

The main goals of the below list are to 1) positively engage the community and staff working on human-wildlife conflict to build long-lasting durable relationships, 2) to explore creative long-term and viable solutions surrounding wolves in northeast Washington, and 3) promote work that utilizes the experience of staff, encourages collaboration across programs, and with external partners.

The development of each deterrent was a collaborative process with both internal and external staff and partners. The focus of these deterrents is meant to be piloted in areas of chronic depredations of northeast Washington and in collaboration with external partners to create solutions not yet widely deployed. These projects are initially being tested by WDFW to compare different deterrents and their effectiveness. Expansion of these deterrents will be explored shortly, applied as needed, or eventually provided as options for external stakeholder groups/NGOs/producers to implement once deemed viable and feasible. For timelines, ongoing indicates projects that already have value and will be evaluated for agency fit and cost; one-year projects are being examined for effectiveness in northeast Washington.

1. Reflective collars and bells for cattle

Purpose: One of the most time-consuming activities for range riders is locating cattle. One of those ways we have tried to address this is through the purchase of reflective collars and bells that are placed on cattle. We would like to compare the cost versus effectiveness of bells versus cattle VHF ear tags on collars. We have already deployed about 150 collars to nine producers. The bells are made by a local high school.

Timeline: Ongoing project timeline, collars already deployed. This is an expansion of a smaller project.

2. VHF ear tags for cattle

Purpose: One of the most time-consuming activities for range riders is locating cattle. One way we have tried to address this is through the purchase of reflective collars and bells (see 1). We would also like to try VHF tags on collared cattle (depending on herd size, collar lead cows). VHF ear tags will be used as a more cost-effective way to test if bells or VHF tracking of cattle is a viable option. Staff already have several receivers but will need to purchase additional antenna.

Timeline: One-year project timeline. Funds approved, waiting on ear tags from WSU.

3. VHF notification beacons

Purpose: In other countries, portable beacons are used to alert (via email or text) when animals (cattle or carnivores) leave or enter a designated area. These portable beacons can be used on large grazing settings in situations to exclude or confine cattle to desired areas.

Conversely, if carnivores are collared, the frequencies can be used in the same fashion.

Timeline: One-year project timeline. Funds approved, working with developer.

4. Deterrent stockpiles for community use

Purpose: Currently, there is not a large stockpile of deterrents (fladry, fox lights, flood lights, etc.) dispersed throughout the district for use by livestock producers, other NGOs, and WDFW. This total includes 60 foxlights, eight sections fladry, 10 spotlights, airhorns, and batteries for foxlights.

Timeline: One-year project timeline. Stockpiles available during 2020.

5. InReach GPS

Purpose: To allow for timely response to depredations, availability of real time communication to range riders while in the field without cell service and providing online real time downloadable track logs. This is a safety feature for remote areas where we have had severe injuries to riders in the past. Also, these devices address previously identified concerns with accountability for range riders and promotes a more interactive approach between range riders, program administrators, and producers.

Timeline: One-year project timeline. Units purchased and deployed in 2020.

6. Cattle ear tags – pilot

Purpose: This is part of a pilot project for ear tags that collect information on cattle biometrics including stress. Stress can be an indicator of disturbance (e.g., carnivore, other novel disturbance). This package includes 25 ear tags, a reader, and one-year of application subscription.

Timeline: One-year project timeline. Funding approved, working with developer for deployment.

7. Post-grazing season cattle detection flights

Purpose: To provide an alternative for detecting unaccounted cattle on USFS grazing allotments after the annual grazing season has ended. Once producers have made a concerted effort to locate and gather unaccounted cattle from their respective allotments, they will provide WDFW staff with their list of unaccounted cattle by the end of each season. WDFW staff will compile a tally of all the cattle in the District 1 that were unaccounted for. During routine wildlife survey flights after the first substantial snowstorm, WDFW staff will spend time looking in grazing areas for livestock. By waiting for decent snow accumulation, observers will be more apt to detect cattle on the landscape. This will help reduce the likelihood of cattle on the allotments throughout the winter that may be susceptible to wolf depredation. By trying to find unaccounted cattle, wolves may be less likely to become

habituated with preying on livestock. This will also help reduce the number of indirect claims that WDFW pays for livestock loss each year.

Timeline: To be determined

8. Hunter reporting on public lands

Purpose: Through coordination with the USFS, WDFW staff will place signs at strategic locations on USFS lands that notify hunters and recreators to keep an eye out for unaccounted cattle and instruct them to report their observations to either the USFS or WDFW Conflict staff. Since hunters and recreators are already on the landscape and since they greatly outnumber government employees, they are more likely to detect unaccounted cattle. This will help reduce the amount of cattle that are left on allotments throughout the winter that may be susceptible to wolf depredation. By trying to find these cattle, wolves may be less likely to become habituated with preying on livestock. This will also help reduce the number of indirect claims that WDFW pays for livestock loss each year.

Timeline: To be determined