

Wolf Advisory Group
November 20, 2019
Meeting Notes

McIntosh Ranch
7820 US-97
Ellensburg, WA 98926

WAG members: Diane Gallegos, Dave Duncan, Paula Swedeen, Samee Charriere, Nick Martinez, Bill Kemp, Andy Hover, Dan Paul, Jessica Kelley

WDFW staff members: Donny Martorello, Rob Geddis, Julia Smith, Dan Brinson, Ben Maletzke, Ellen Heilhecker, Joe Bridges, Scott McCorquodale, Annemarie Prince, Maci Yungdahl

US Fish and Wildlife Service: Gregg Kurz

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

Fish and Wildlife Commission: Molly Linville, Jim Anderson

Welcome and check in

Rob welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the agenda for the day.

Changes/Adds:

Addition of Annemarie discussing ungulate monitoring update.

Dept. provides updates

Recent court events:

A few weeks ago, we had an event in Thurston County court regarding OPT, Togo, Smackout in 2018. There were three claims: two claims with State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and one claim with the kill permit. The kill permit claim was dismissed. After the oral arguments in court hearing on the SEPA claims, the judge ruled in favor of SEPA.

Question

Can you dive into the claims against the department?

Answer

One was related to additional SEPA around the plan and one related to the checklist around the protocol (threshold determination).

Remaining claim on the Administrative Procedures Acts (APA).

Litigation for OPT 2019. Nothing to report since last meeting.

Lethal Removal Effects:

Lethal is something we think about. When we think about the authorization, we think about the impacts to wolf population. When the wolf plan was being developed, we built a model using other bordering states' demographic data. We did different scenarios to determine the different levels of wolf removal. We wanted to know how this would jeopardize wolf recovery. A few years ago, we ran the model again for different management options with lethal removal. Again, to determine if lethal removal is going to jeopardize wolf recovery. During the last two years when we think about lethal removal, we look at the mortality levels both in state and bordering states and use the model to help make a determination.

This next phase is to use the demographic data from Washington and plug it into a new model. This would be a new project and we would potentially contract it out to a university population ecologist. Hoping to incorporate new data into the model.

Comment

If we take collar data and build a habitat model from scratch, then we can look at recovery as well as lethal removal effects. We will be able to see behind the curtain and compare our models to those of other states

Question

Is there a timeline for this?

Answer

Hoping for less than a year.

Question

Is there any discussion on which wolves in a pack being removed will be significant?

Answer

Yes, there is a discussion. In the modeling, we are able to assume the worst. The scenario we could use is to remove 30 percent of the wolves every four years and the worst case is removing the breeding females. We don't have the ability to discern the different animals on the landscape, so we need to be able to see what the worst possible outcome could be.

Comment

When a breeding wolf is removed, we get the district team together to determine the impact on the specific pack.

Question

Is habitat loss, human growth, etc. included in this?

Answer

Those are hard to incorporate into the model given the current landscape. Hoping to include habitat model with the new research. So far, the only research that currently exists is from Yellowstone and/or other bordering states, both of which are different than Washington.

Comment

The model has dual purpose. What is the status of wolf population? But also, to ask more questions using different scenarios. We can plug in what we have already done to be able to see what it looks like in the future. One question we can look at is, "are dispersal numbers changed by lethal removal"? The key thing here is you don't want to have just one measuring tool available. You will want to use multiple measurements to make the best decision for the future.

Gov.'s letter:

There is a level of frustration with lethal removal from the Governor. Calling out that the removal of four wolves the morning before the court case had a part of things. Susewind had a conversation with the governor. We have since then communicated to the governor what the expectations with this are, what the role of WAG in this is, engagement for forest service, and an update on December 1st. Reaction: In our response, this is very hard for the environmental community, but also hard for the rancher community. We wanted to call both sides out in our response. I was very nervous when I saw the letter. I thought this would have a great impact on everything we have worked towards in leveling the power in these situations. I thought about it and having the governor's office included will be good. Part of this is what the change will look like on the landscape and what the guidance from WAG will look like. I like that it pushes towards working collaboratively as a group to come to a decision. We are all looking for less conflict in our future, but this will not happen by December 1st. We will share an update before then. What this looks like for the 2020 grazing will come out closer to the spring including deterrence measures, range riding, non-lethals, protocols, etc. We are missing a help line with the governor's office and hoping to gain that here.

Comment

Wolf subcommittee of the commission. We had a conversation about the letter. Whether or not we will send our own letter in response. Our perception is that the department had all the things to use but didn't. So, we had conversation around this initial feeling, and decided not to write a letter. Our response is that we support the department and the WAG members, and we understand that the letter might seem like a poke, but we support you.

Comment/Question

I appreciated the governor's letter pushing us to do what we have already discussed in WAG. Thinking outside the box and get creative. Where are we at in conversations with the Forest Service?

Answer

We have met with them. They reached out and wanted to be here but couldn't. New members do take time getting them up to speed on everything. We have talked with them about them reaching out to the producers to get their understanding before we start making decisions. We don't want the producers thinking that the state will dive in without including them. We are waiting to hear back from the Forest Service.

Comment

In the wolf update regarding this subject, I deeply appreciated the success story that was incorporated. It was nice to see something positive.

Comment/Question

WDFW and WAG have not educated the Governor properly. Wolf populations should remain strong. What has created the problems we have?

Answer

When I read the letter, it felt like we were already doing some of the things it stated. So, it was more of how do we improve those things? How do we go from where we are at to where something that will work for everyone on this issue? Fewer wolves dying and fewer cows dying.

Comment

The Governor's office should have sent a liaison to WAG before they sent the letter. We sit here and talk about the issues in the letter, but we have already been talking about them.

Comment

The person in the Governor's office who wrote the letter is incredibly supportive of what we are doing. She has come to a WAG meeting in the past, and she is well informed of everything that is discussed. They do know what we do and deeply appreciate what we do here at WAG. The letter could have been so much worse than what it was, given the reactions that I have seen. It could've been more destructive. Everyone is under a lot of pressure and we continue to cross paths.

Comment

I disagreed with that; the letter showed that the plan wasn't working. I don't think that's true; I think that we are learning, and it may need to be tweaked.

Comment

One of the opportunities that we have is a funding opportunity. In the Department's budget for wolf, the size piece for non-lethal is something we have to go ask for. We need this funding to be ongoing to maintain the status quo for non-lethal.

Comment

The funding cuts have really been felt in the Southeast and I feel like the money has gone to the Northeast for non-lethal.

Develop protocol recommendations

Introduction into the conversation by Rob

We have some tools to use. Projection, hard copies of the changes. I think the main thing to address is chronic depredation.

Comment

One thing that bothers me is that we are calling in chronic depredation zones and it is also the chronic killing zones of wolves. Can we include both sides? Maybe conflict zones or conflict hotspot or chronic conflict zones instead?

Comment

The word implies one thing. We need to think about what we need to do to manage these spots regardless. Everything is focused on today. I think the problems are much deeper than the chronic zones.

Comment

Chronic Conflict Zones is the new term instead of Chronic Depredation Zones.

Comment

It would be helpful to review what we did last meeting for a refresher on what changes were made to the protocols.

Action

Handed out the paper copies of the changes that were made to the protocol from last meeting.

Break

Suggestion

Let's go through the protocol and familiarizing ourselves with what the changes are. Not to dive in too deep into why it should/shouldn't be there.

Question

Does the yellow highlighted text contain changes from all last three meetings, or just the last meeting?

Answer

There were 24 elements on the wall last meeting that were prioritized. We took the notes and put them into the protocol and highlighted the changes. There are some things that have been agreed upon.

Comment

I don't think there was any substantive agreement. I think there are areas that we didn't talk about and we need to address them. Are we going to review the questions from last meeting? I'm confused on what we are doing. My concern is that we have had a WAG meeting since this last revision, and there were lots of questions.

Comment

Yes, we came out with a lot of questions from the last meeting. We didn't reflect those questions from the last meeting in August here in this revision. However, we do have those questions available.

Comment

You are correct. There hasn't been any revision since July 18th.

Comment

We made no consensus changes in the August meeting, so they were not included here in the revisions.

Comment

I don't know how you feel, but it has been so long since we have dived into the protocol. I feel that we need to go into both the questions and revisions.

Comment/Question

I thought the consensus was that the Department was going to go back and make revisions.

Answer

Yes, this revision reflects that last stuff approved.

Comment/Question

Two meetings ago, we had a big discussion about several different points in the protocol. At the end of the meeting we said, "hey Department, take everything we have discussed and put it in the protocol." Did we have the protocol at the last meeting?

Comment

No, we did not get to review the highlighted language in the new revisions last meeting.

Question

Shouldn't we go through the highlighted portions to look at the language?

Question

Presuming there were questions, can you provide the questions and answers from last meeting?

Answer

I am not aware of work being done to answer those questions, but I have the questions.

Comment

I feel that we should go through the protocol only once and make the decisions as we go.

Comment

It seems that we should do the overview of the revision and then put the questions up. Then after we have looked at those two things, then we prioritize where we need to start after we have all the information.

Comment

I think going through this would be like beating a dead horse. I think we need to go through the questions and hard issues first before going through the protocol.

Comment

Understanding. We review the protocol and review the questions and then continue forward.

Comment

You say we are refreshing our memory. This protocol is not our memory. This is what the Department took from our memory/notes and put it into writing. This is new. I think we should put the questions up.

Comment

I think that the previous clarification is correct. I don't think that WAG went through the protocol and determined what was put in writing is accurate and agreed upon.

Comment

Let's all get a base line with reviewing protocol and questions. Then go through and make decisions for each.

SMALL BREAK to get the questions up on the screen.

Comment

These questions include topics from several past meetings not just Moses Lake. I have included all-encompassing issues that may not have been fully addressed or are unresolved. Unresolved protocol topics and unresolved conflict topics.

Action

Rob started to read through the questions.

Question

Can we take this slower? (Proceeds to read the first question.) Are we relating the questions to protocol?

Answer/Question

Question A corresponds to page 5. Do we want to dig in that deep?

Comment

There are two paths. Review and then discuss or just discuss every point.

Comment

Review and then discuss later is the choice made from the group.

Action

Continued review of questions by Rob and Donny points where each question is referred to in the protocol for reference.

Question

Can you go back and highlight in red which questions are not in the protocol vs. which questions are in the protocol?

Action

Proceeded to highlight those that are not in the protocol while we go through review of questions.

Question (referring to 1i in the question document on screen)

Was this question intended to apply to department contracted range riders or all range riders?

Answer

Just to department contracted range riders.

Question

Can we cross reference those that are highlighted yellow in the protocol with those that do not have a question on the list? There are things that we need to go back and forth on that may not be in the list of questions, but in the protocol.

Comment

I took these and put them into the sections, and now mine are scattered everywhere. It's confusing to look at the whole list rather than look at the protocol and where the questions fit within the protocol under a specific question.

Question

We have not established a goal yet. Is the goal at the end of these two days, to have the protocol discussion complete?

Comment

Thought about this a lot. The last meeting, the stresses where very high because it was sent out to the group. I think we need to discuss each issue, but I don't think that this will be finished by the end of this meeting. I don't want this conversation to extend three more WAG meetings, but I would like to leave here with some parts unhighlighted.

Comment

There is still space to have discussion on the July knowledge. I am assuming we will not be done with the protocol by the end of this meeting.

Comment

Elements of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). There were elements that we agreed upon and elements that we are struggling with. When we are done with the EIS, then I think we can look into this? There isn't a lot of difference between the Eastern protocol vs. Western protocol. There are also different elements we are considering for post recovery. We should go through those elements and then talk about the protocol. Just my approach to problem solving.

Comment/Question

Going back to the goal. Do we want to set a target date to be done with the protocol? Maybe by January meeting would be a goal?

Comment

I thought we have talked about that. I think that about every time we have come to a conclusion, it is because we have a deadline to meet. I agree that we need to have a deadline put in place. I thought we could have it wrapped up by January so the conflict specialists would have time to evaluate the new protocol before it's put in place.

Comment

I support January at the goal. I would like to honor the time at the end of tomorrow for the wolf recovery discussion. We want to have the update of post recovery.

Comment

I would push back that we have another looming grazing season coming up that we need a protocol for, so I am less inclined to discuss the post recovery tomorrow if we are not done with the protocol. Our progress on the protocol will determine if we have the post recovery discussion.

Comment

This will probably be best resolved in the EIS discussion. There are areas that I am uncomfortable with and one big problem is how everything lines up in the end (EIS will sum this up).

Comment

I see what you are saying. I have some worries about trying to work on EIS now. We are trying to come up with protocol for the next grazing season. The post delisting plan won't go into effect for a few years. While I like trying to have protocol and plan be similar, trying to have more variables to solve for is a concern. The population is not recovered yet. The recovery plan is for statewide and I think it's too soon to mix with the protocol. It might be too intricate to discuss while we are discussing the protocol. Too much overlap and too early. I would like to keep them separate.

Comment

I was put on representing hunting group. We spend all of our time talking about livestock wolf interactions. I do think it is important because it is what everyone sees. But what public in majority does not see, is the declining deer populations. People think deer decline is due to more wolves. They are putting the issues on wolves. It seems like we are always putting out the fire and not discussing the deer aspect. If we are setting a goal, I want to make sure that everyone's issues will be discussed. There is a strong population of the public that believe the decline in hunting is due to increase in wolves. We need to discuss the mule deer and white tail plan as well.

Question

Tomorrow at noon, can we do a process check in and see where we are?

Comment

You have been good at reminding us that we need to discuss the ungulate populations. My comment is if we can keep the protocol and post recovery discussion separate. However, I do think we need to incorporate more discussion into the ungulate discussion.

Comment

The post recovery plan is different than the issues that are going on right now. I am okay with pushing the post recovery plan off. We need to start talking about the livestock depredation and ungulate decline. If we don't discuss it, then by the time we get to the post recovery, there will be a large portion of the public upset. We need to discuss the herd management plans.

Comment

We need WAG's guidance to manage. All of these issues do bleed together. The question for WAG is, "when there is conflict this summer, can we use the current protocol?" How important are the changes? If we get to the post recovery plan, then great! But it is on a longer timeline than the protocol.

Question

What specifically are you wanting to get from us tomorrow regarding post recovery?

Answer

I have some elements to present and I want to know what elements go forward, go away, split, and how to prioritize those elements.

Question

Is that in a document?

Answer

Yes.

Comment/Question

Then maybe we could get the document and start looking into it? If we can keep the 3pm discussion tomorrow for sure, then I would like that.

Comment

January 1 as a goal. Make sure to include the ungulate discussion. Also look into the EIS and how they line up with the protocol and post recovery.

Comment

We should review and finalize the yellow highlighted text, look at unanswered questions, and discuss the new proposals so the Department can incorporate them into the protocol for the January meeting.

Lunch

Develop protocol recommendations

Comment

There are 24 elements that we have worked through. Then we came back and identified specific elements that the Department has incorporated into the protocol (highlighted text). We have flip charts that are referenced to each change if needed.

Action

Going in order of the protocol Donny gives an overview of each change.

Comment

If we didn't read the email with the protocol attached, then that's our own fault. I think we should discuss each one as we go.

Comment

We will be going through them individually and discussing them instead of just an overview.

Lines 12-16 in protocol:

Comment

First sentence, I think we have learned that the director doesn't have to follow the protocol if he doesn't have to.

Question

Doesn't this also inform those who don't know that?

Answer

Yes.

Question

Protocol is a broad strategy for managing conflict between wolves and livestock. It says conservative and restrictive. Will people be confused between this meaning lethal removal or not for the focus?

Comment

I don't know if it applies to all. I think it applies to lethal.

Comment

My sense is that it applies to wolf conservation broadly. Not equivalent to a rule or law. It calls out just guidance, not just lethal removal portion.

Question

Are you saying that you read this as, “in areas where the regional component is met, then you can be less restrictive in lethal removal and less restrictive in non-lethal?”

Comment

It could. We would like to stay close to the protocol, but it is just a guidance document. Not to be confused with a requirement. 2019 says nonlethal tools are required.

Comment

Why put two maybes in there? The first sentence says to do lethal removal.

Comment

In the areas where it is a recovery region and below the recovery objective, the director is more likely to be more conservative in those areas. That’s why recognizing that if the director operates outside of the plan, he is thinking about the biological side of things.

Comment

The protocol should not require inside knowledge. If you didn’t have inside knowledge from WAG, then would this make sense to you? Without the knowledge, it can be seen as directed towards lethal removal.

Question

Okanagan county is on the western edge of high wolf population. If you have three depredations in a ten-month period. Could the director take lethal action?

Answer

Yes, he could.

Comment

“WDFW values the input from WAG will follow all applicable laws when making determinations” as an example of language. I know we have hammered this out, but does this mean that being less restrictive could mean in the NE region we could have less than three non-lethals?

Comment

This is our road map and we need to do our best to follow the protocol, but there are situations where we may need to step outside of the plan. There are a variety of things that could be outside of the roadmap. We need to make this speak clearly that this is guidance. The language below or above this paragraph is something from 2017. We used different terms for this section.

Comment

I think this is more of a concrete focus on lethal. Not non-lethal. I get uncomfortable when we start saying less non-lethal. I don’t think it puts anyone in a good position.

Comment

I can quote him, but this isn’t all reliable. The wolf plan spells out the need for non-lethals.

Comment

There is a ton of intended language that points out non-lethals. It is not the intent in having flexibility. I think the intent is if there is a chronic depredation situation. Not around reducing non-lethals. Even after recovery, non-lethals are still important. I don't think the intent is to say no non-lethals.

Comment

Get rid of the example. Take the first sentence of that paragraph and move it to the end of the paragraph above.

Comment

Keep first sentence and drop example because there could be too many interpretations.

Comment

Excellent idea. To put it in front of public, maybe include reference to laws.

Action

Voting on the change. Going to leave the reference to the 2019 bill so it can bring the public into our perspective. YES, on all accounts.

Lines 20-21 in protocol:

Comment/Question

Sustainable prey base. Can you define that?

Comment

Here it is just calling it out as a value listed with the others. On page 56, it dives in deeper to discuss this.

Comment

Add in the change of "as defined within the management plans."

Question

If we do that here, then do we need to define others as well?

Comment

I refute my suggestion about the definition.

Comment

Need to vote around the room. Comment to say "providing" instead of "conserving" because it implies that we currently have a sustainable prey base.

Comment

If there isn't already a sustainable prey base, then what actions are we taking?

Comment

This portion may mean that we cut back hunting, changes genetics, etc., which is outside of wolf related.

Comment

This paragraph is really about the diversity of what is out there. It's more capturing how different we think.

Question

What's the issue with using providing and conserving instead of just providing?

Comment

Maybe use "manage for" instead of the previous suggestions.

Action

Vote around the room.

Comment

I am not comfortable with it. I am getting tired of words. I guess we can change these words, but I don't think these words will create actions. We have had the same words for eight years.

Comment

I think the value trying to be captured isn't about hunting. I think the risk of conflict goes along with the up and down with management.

Comment

I am concerned about the follow through with the words in this document.

Comment

Based on above, is it okay to move on to the next section? Are you okay with us moving on?

Comment

I agree with the words and agree with moving on, but we haven't addressed the whole protocol as a whole and I am frustrated with that.

Action

Change is supported for using "manage for".

Lines 139-140 in protocol:

Comment

Before it felt like a statement. But this is actually from a published paper and is pulling from the scientific paper.

Comment

After reading this, that paper must go further into identifying the factors that increase risk.

Question

Maybe she could give a quick overview of what she found (paper above).

Action

Zoe gives a quick overview of the paper. She did a risk modeling project. This looked at the areas of increased risk in the state. More livestock, more wolves, the history in the areas, etc. In the context of the paper, the way to address these risks is adaptive management.

Comment

In the last version of the protocol we didn't really cite references, so we wanted to incorporate that here.

Comment

I don't want to redefine minimizing livestock conflicts. Looking at what is causing this should be separated from minimizing livestock depredations.

Comment

I would say that that sentence is good. If ungulate population is a factor, then that's good its incorporated.

Comment

It seems that it is defining livestock depredations.

Comment

It seems like your trying to cite research. What if we just use models to suggest instead of trying to define livestock depredations. More general statement.

Comment

"Minimizing wolf livestock conflicts (among other things) involves..." as a language example. Again, more simplified and general.

Comment

I like the one of being specific and quoting it right.

Question

Is this a direct quotation of the paper?

Answer

No, this is paraphrased.

Question

What where the adaptive management techniques?

Answer

Non-lethals, lethals, everything we are talking about today. This was a sentence from the discussion part of the paper, not really the conclusion portions of the paper.

Comment

Generally, I rarely found it a good idea to use the word "minimizing." The only way you have minimized wolf livestock is making sure they are not in the same place at the same time. Maybe use mitigate? Don't use minimize, so you don't have to define it.

Comment

We are in a section of expectations. Adaptive management at a local scale can be an important factor.

Comment

I think you have to define or identify the factors.

Comment

I would like to roll us back. The original intent of adding this in here is to incorporate the scientific research need. If there is a different sentence to use, then maybe use a different sentence.

Comment

I think that sentence is fragmented to fit that paragraph. I agree with providing the research, but I don't think it belongs there.

Comment

I think it's important to have that statement, but maybe not in that spot in the protocol.

Comment

"Reducing wolf livestock..." instead of using "minimizing." Might be a better option.

Comment

Maybe use "mitigate" instead.

Comment

I want a word that indicates we are decreasing the factors.

Comment

What is stated there is pretty broad. Here's a statement that we are making, and the citation is where the research was done.

Comment

I am frustrated that we are diving in so deep on a sentence that is not a policy statement. It is just a sentence from a scientific paper. Change it to reduce and maybe move it to a different location in the protocol? Let's get past this.

Question

Why was this sentence put in here?

Answer

To show that there is research that backs this up. Also, to show that there is evidence and it strengthens the document.

Comment

I agree that it may fit better elsewhere in the protocol.

Comment

I thought this was supporting the paragraph. I think this should stay in the document, but I don't care where.

Action

Vote on moving this sentence elsewhere. Agreed upon that it will be moved.

Lines 159-160 in protocol:

Comment

The only way this works for me is if the game management plans are such that the prey base is incorporated into the total number of animals on the landscape. The Department should know that the hunting community wants a surplus of game. If the total number of animals taken by wolves is not added to the game management plan, then it will not be accurate.

Comment

That will come before the commission. We couldn't say that because of this protocol, the game will be managed differently.

Comment

The objectives were added to the game management plan.

Comment

We need to take into account the wolf portion of the game management plan and how that plays into the protocol.

Action

Annemarie gives an overview of ungulates:

Whitetail deer in district one is our bread and butter as far as hunted species. The plan is well expired, and we are planning to rewrite it. We are planning to build a stakeholder group to do this. Hoping to have public review of plan in 2020.

Other things: Predator prey research project. Going into final year of captures and going to deploy white tail deer, mule deer and elk collars.

Concerns over the ungulate populations in Kettles has been a concern, so I brought some figures. She shows a figure of harvest for ungulates. We can't fly for counts because there are too many trees, so we are looking for some better ways to measure deer populations. This year we chose to eliminate female harvest of white tail deer to help bring up the population. Colville tribes fly surveys for counts during winter range but I cannot share that data with you. WSU had a deer project focusing on nutritional value of the forest with various treatments. Forage availability increases with 50% of the coverage taken away. They have been putting cameras out to test the population/occupancy in those areas (no final report). We have seen the decline in harvest, we responded to the decline. There are projects going on to try to help.

Question

When you respond with reducing antlerless, did you do an emergency rule?

Answer

No, it wasn't an emergency rule.

Comment/Question

Thank you for the update. I am wondering if you have a sense of trends with mule deer population and moose population?

Comment

We don't have anything except for harvest for mule deer. We can't break it down to just mule deer given the licensing structure that we have. For moose we can get a better look, but we can't narrow further than district level. The take home from a student's research was that the moose we were catching were in terrible condition and we overshot our initial thoughts.

Comment

I like the idea of holding a stakeholder group for the deer management plan.

Action

All voted to leave lines 159-160 as written for next revision.

Line 167 in protocol:

Question

This includes not just death right?

Answer

Yes.

Comment

This is something that I don't really want to discuss until later, but overall there is no way you can have enough compensation to handle livestock conflicts. You won't get me to nod my head to the compensation piece because I don't agree with it. We are not happy with the compensation program that exists today.

Question

Are you supportive of this being the Department's role?

Comment

I would prefer it be independent and maybe this doesn't need to be in the protocol at all.

Comment

The last version didn't have any word about compensation. Compensation has lots of variables. Right now, we have a WAC and RCW that supports the compensation program.

Comment

That's the problem is that the public thinks that there is a big compensation, but there isn't.

Comment

Everywhere I go, the first question is compensation. The answer is yes, but then there is the "but" that comes in.

Comment

I look at this piece being communication. We do have compensation program in place. I feel that the producer should have the option to participate. If we don't put this in the protocol, then we aren't communicating. I would be resentful if I was in their shoes and know that it wasn't communicated.

Comment

The current compensation plan does not work. I think we could come up with a better compensation plan, but right now it just doesn't work. I think we should get a third party involved in this complicated issue.

Question

Are there producers that receive compensation?

Answer

Yes. And maybe we use wording to encourage the program.

Comment

What this is saying is that there is state law stating that the Department has a compensation program. Since it is in the law, then we need to include it because it's the Department's responsibility to cite the law.

Comment

Use language of "provide and promote a meaningful compensation program." More of a notification that it is there.

Comment

Maybe a "comprehensive compensation program" instead of "meaningful."

Comment

It is in the section of Department's role. This wasn't in the protocol before. Is there another place to put this notification in? More of an informational piece rather than a role, so that it isn't implying that it is perfect but that we can improve it.

Comment

Yeah, I like that.

Comment

Right now, it is just stating a fact.

Comment

We've seen this before in past protocols. Folks read this differently and it can be interpreted as we do have a program, but they think we don't. Do we pluck this from this section, work on it, and then plug it back in?

Comment

Maybe put in under a general information section so it doesn't imply that it is good, bad, etc. Just to provide the information to the public that the Department does administer compensation.

Comment

It's the general public that pays for all the costs, and I don't think we want to go there.

Comment

I see this as a trigger bullet for you. My community wants to know that there is a compensation program in place currently. Just because it is on this list doesn't mean that it is perfect, it is just stating that it is in law.

Comment

It does trigger me. I don't think it belongs in this section.

Comment

The RCW was written in 1996. It wasn't just written to compensate those conflicts with wolves, it was written to compensate everything. People that have things happen to livestock, can be compensated. It is just a statement.

Comment

I didn't realize that we were turning people down for compensation.

Comment

That doesn't apply here. It is more the disclosure piece that is preventing this.

Comment

It is really more the disclosure piece. The producers don't want their information given out.

Comment

Indirect claims, we don't get a lot. Usually just direct claims.

Comment

It sounds like it's not a resource issue, but more of different issue with the disclosure of information piece.

Comment

Maybe we are trying to ask too much with the protocol? We aren't concerned about the words, but mainly the complexity of the entire issue. However, we can't talk about the entire issue right now, so that in itself could be an issue.

Comment

We have some members here that are part of the compensation committee. Maybe those folks can put a little more context into this to help with this bullet?

Comment

There is too much fear of the future with this one, it is too tough to agree with this one. I don't like what it implies by being in this section.

Comment

I am feeling great concern that we are getting stuck on things like this. There's going to be other things in this protocol. If we drew out the symbolic importance of each one, then we won't come to an agreement on the protocol. We could spend days on each part. If we go to this depth on the conflict, then we are not going to accomplish our goal here. It feels like we are never going to get through this. If I were to go to this depth on several other things, then the question becomes, "do we even need to look at this protocol?"

Comment

The point I think that is trying to be made is that there is a lack of management for the compensation program. This program is a hard process to get through. Compensation programs are band aids for the lack of management on this section. I think it needs to be in here. I feel the concern on the issues of the program, however.

Comment

I think we can get to an agreement with this protocol. I really like the idea of including those from the compensation committee to provide some more context to this bullet.

Comment

It is hard to say no don't put that in there when it is just stating the law.

Break

Question

Process question. How does it get accepted into moving on?

Comment

Looking back. It's all draft and then do one final consensus at the end. It feels that this is just a "yes this needs more work" or "yes we are comfortable with this" answer for each highlighted portion.

Comment

It is important to realize that this is our workbook and not the over arching plan for wolves. We are putting a lot of weight on this one document, but when we just have a sentence that states the law of something that exists, there may not need to be this much discussion. Let's just keep moving forward through this playbook so we can get to the recovery plan later.

Comment

We have already gone through these items last meeting, so there has already been a discussion.

Final Verdict

We need some incorporation from the committee to provide some context. Still need to work on this one.

Line 211 in protocol:

Vote is that we are all good with this.

Lines 251-299 in protocol:

Coming back to it.

Lines 353-354 in protocol:

Need to come back to it.

Lines 443-445 in protocol:

Vote is we all agree with the change.

Lines 503-504 in protocol:

Vote is we all agree with the change.

Lines 530-532 in protocol:

Need to come back to it.

Lines 571-592 in protocol:

Need to come back to it.

Lines 251-299 in protocol:

Comment

Contract range riding is defined differently than what my hired range rider does currently. That needs to be separated out so that my employee and the contracted range rider do not have the same requirements.

Question

Who pays the person that rides for you?

Answer

I do, personally. I can't justify the Department telling me how to have a range rider.

Comment

What about having a statement to differentiate the two: WDFW contracted and private?

Question

Is it a cost share agreement or is it 100% you paying for it?

Comment

My solution is to put contract range riding in the first bullet. When you get to line 267 state that would be the private range rider, not WDFW contracted range rider.

Question

Is that true across the board for all range riders? Or would those duties change across producers?

Comment

I ask the same thing.

Comment

Denied by producer. It could change depending on producer.

Comment

What is it that we are after here? Lets just look at the range rider umbrella. Here are the duties of a range rider and the things they would do as they interact with cattle. I think we want to hear how it actually works on the landscape, but we need some clarity around this so range riding can be as effective as it can be. To be the most effective, here is what this would look like. Landscape could play a role in the different duties that occur.

Comment

Is this an appropriate time to make additions? What about having some sort of duty that if it is a WDFW contracted range rider than maybe have some sort of report for findings to track the efforts for all those listed. Can you go more into depth with removing dead sick animals?

Comment

It takes time to get dead/sick animals off the landscape. The range rider is to tell the producer and the producer goes out on the landscape to get the animal. It clearly spells out what is required of a range rider later in the protocol, so maybe that is of value to read.

Comment

Seems like the language should match the RFQ. Maybe state 'some duties can include' for language so that the producer can decide.

Comment

Couple things. What is the intent of this language? I get why producers overseeing would be sensitive to these words. This is setting an ideal expectation, not stating the things required to do to qualify for compensation. If the point is to let the public know what is expected rather than state the regulation, then is this a general description or a requirement to show you did the deterrence activity. Communication and education or requirement?

Comment

The definition of range rider is spelled out in the range rider contract. Get rid of this section and make it consistent of other documents to match contracted range riders. Not to include other personally hired range riders.

Comment

Range riding is occurring at the expectation for it to be effective is what I am hearing. Quality range riding is important to us. My preference is not to state expectation for just WDFW contracted and not all range riders. Maybe to state that this is a guidance and not the expectation. Also, maybe reword these duties to fit the actual duties in how they work. Everywhere your feeling uncomfortable with this wording, share with us so we can change it. I am hoping that this is the general statement of what range riders do while having the flexibility for different landscapes.

Comment

Its different with the WDFW contracted range rider rather than a producer's hired range rider. Contracted is different than a personal employee when going through the checklist. There is only one box to check on the form during a depredation that asks if there was range riding. This form does not differentiate between WDFW contracted and producer hired.

Comment

Back in July when this was generated there were several inconsistencies with range riding. I feel that there should be requirements for contracted WDFW.

Comment

There are requirements.

Comment

RFQ works only for WDFW contracted range riders, not for private range riders.

Question

What if we use the term WDFW Contracted Range Riders? Or publicly funded range riders?

Comment

I think they need to be split up. Contracted and Privately hired.

Comment

I wonder if we could add something like, "these are expectations that publicly funded must follow, but privately hired range rider duties may differ."

Comment/Question

If you want to check the box on the form for a depredation, then would your current range riding count? You don't want to be told how to manage your employees, but how do we know that the range riding conducted is accurate?

Comment

We do fill out a log showing the presence of range riding on the landscape.

Comment/Question

Do you feel that it is worth laying out those expectations ahead of time?

Comment

What if we can pull together the essence of range riding so that no matter what you may call yourself, as a range rider it would apply and then split out the two separately for other duties. Someone needs to be held responsible for dead and sick animals.

Comment

The purpose of describing what range riding is vs. human presence is that we want to be comparing apples to apples. There are some things that would only apply to certain types of range riders.

Comment

Maybe not divide this by who's paying the bill, but these duties are what makes the tool of range riding effective. These are the things that we have learned that are effective in wolf-livestock conflict. This is extremely important to have the effectiveness of the tool and the things that can be laid out. I don't think it should be split up because it can get confusing in the field.

Comment

A proposal may be, a list of what all range riders may do. Then refer to the fact that a WDFW contracted range riders are special and a little different. First list is what everyone agrees that a range rider should do. Then list the additional duties of a WDFW contracted range rider as x, y, z.

Action

Current RFQ is put up that states what a range rider's job is.

Comment

After looking at the RFQ, I am okay with this being part of my private range rider employee.

Question

Is this the summary we are looking at?

Comment

Yes, this is just the summary. The detail is down below in the RFQ. Maybe we should add some more to this summary if it is added to the protocol? Maybe some of the components could differ for the different type of range rider.

Comment

Is this the near daily routine? We need to provide context to this description.

Comment

Then maybe we just cite the law and they can read what I turn in at the end of the year for range riding.

Comment

There is a certain level of comfort that we have to have to be able to mark that box on the depredation form that the range riding has been sufficient. This gives us the information to put in our playbook to help us determine what the guidelines where to make the determination in the field. I don't want the vague language either, but we need to have a base line of what range riding is so we have a reference and something to compare to.

Comment

Who's paying for it does need to come into play. A producer is using their own money to protect a public resource when they hire a range rider.

Comment

If we put it in here that there is a requirement for range riding, then who's paying for it? I am paying for it. Putting specific numbers on things when you're not the one footing the bill is easy.

Comment

Can't just put a number on the number of days for range riding because producers differ.

Comment

Range riding is most effective as a preventative, not as a reactionary. Both public and private need to determine a base line for consistency. Bring in some science to back this up.

Comment

There's a cost to range riding and there is a cost to removing wolves. If we are going to check a box toward lethal removal, we want to be sure that the non-lethals have been sufficiently used on the landscape. We want to confidently be able to check the box on range riding.

Comment

Range riding is a valuable tool on these large landscapes. Range riding on private ground is important. We need to figure out how this will work for both WDFW contracted and private.

Comment

I think of this as the list of activities that a range rider can do to be effective. The Department should work with the producer on the frequency of those activities instead of just a number. We can say it's an effective tool, but maybe not a number.

Question

Can you put the RFQ in a more readable format for tomorrow?

Comment

I agree that this is a positive subject to work on. Can we reframe it as a partnership because of the two funding paths for range rider types? There is a lot of both public and private in the game. The “who’s paying more” fight could come into play. Both sides have a lot of say in the game and have an important role.

Comment

I have some suggestions for language changes that are not highlighted currently. I will send them via email or hard copy.

Public Comment

Public comment #1

My name is Zoe Hanley and I have worked with many of you. I have taken a position with Defenders of Wildlife that will work with conflict with wolves in both Oregon and Washington. Right now the non-lethal portion is what I am working on and I want to say thank you.

Check out

Everyone checked out around the room.

Meeting adjourned for the day

Wolf Advisory Group

November 21, 2019

Meeting Notes

McIntosh Ranch

7820 US-97

Ellensburg, WA 98926

WAG members: Diane Gallegos, Dave Duncan, Paula Swedeen, Samee Charriere, Tim Coleman, Tom Davis, Nick Martinez, Bill Kemp, Andy Hover, Dan Paul, Jessica Kelley

WDFW staff members: Donny Martorello, Rob Geddis, Julia Smith, Dan Brinson, Ben Maletzke, Annemarie Prince, Stacy Lehman, Scott McCorquodale, Maci Yungdahl

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

USDA Wildlife Services: Wade Carlson

Fish and Wildlife Commission: Jim Anderson

Welcome and check in

Rob welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the agenda for the day.

Comment

I would like to discuss the range rider and wolf livestock topic again. I would like to discuss the efficiency of range riding and document that discussion.

Develop protocol recommendations

Comment

Yesterday we talked about having the list in the protocol be the core activities for range riders. Too much detail in the protocol may bog it down a bit, but we need to remember that it is public facing.

Comment

I would feel good that range riding is not spelled out to a specific number of days that they will be on the range.

Comment

I would like for the range rider to be able to show the work that is happening out there. When a depredation happens, we need to be able to show that range riding happened and for it to have some consistency. This is the basics of what we consider range riding and it's good to have this documented for a base line. We would like to have the key functions of what a range rider does so we can confidently be able to check that box.

Comment

You may have a range rider for one allotment, but the allotment may be huge. If a range rider works five days a week, it may not mean that a specific pasture or cattle group is getting the full five days of range riding. Range riding may appear like it is high frequency, but it is actually spread out.

Question

So how do we make range riding effective and have those areas covered?

Comment

We need to make sure that between the WDFW contracted range rider and producer's range rider are strategic in their planning of the week depending on collar data, location of cattle, etc. It would be hard to put the details of range riding in the protocol because it is so intricate.

Comment

My understanding is that the range riders working (WDFW, NGO, Producer) are working constantly. There is the need to be adaptive on the landscape. Depending on the behavior of the cows, range riders need to be adaptive if we are thinking of the flexibility in the number of days.

Comment

I wouldn't get caught up between the contract and the vendor, because it may change. There are details that may differ depending on contract.

Question

Do we have a lot of packs where multiple packs overlap one allotment? Does range riding in one part of an allotment make a higher risk in other areas?

Comment

Wolves are dispersed throughout the allotments and it can change frequently

Comment

Going to the financial piece. It could be about \$50,000 a year for a hired hand, in order to have multiple range riders hired we need to think of the money part of it. It is public money and it gets used for range riding.

Comment

We would rather spend money towards range riding rather than lethal removal.

Comment/Question

Do you talk with your Conflict Specialist to discuss range riding? If we are paying for the range rider, then that would kind of make us the boss in a sense. Taking advice from the Conflict Specialist is important.

Comment

The Conflict Specialist is only really on the landscape for four days a month, whereas we are on the landscape four days a week. He is only really out there if we need him for a situation. If we want to make more details for range riding, then we need to put it in the contract (DPCA-L), not the protocol.

Comment

I am wondering if we could put language in the protocol that states for the producer to work with the Conflict Specialist regarding the specifics of range riding and have more of a general statement to range riding.

Comment

I am confused because I have never done range riding and it is hard to try to figure out what does and doesn't work. It's mostly defined as protecting, guarding, and moving livestock away from wolves thereby minimizing wolf-livestock conflict. It is not about changing wolf behavior. How do we approach this changing wolf pack behavior? I think we need to stick to the original goal of keeping the wolves away from the cattle rather than the cattle away from the hungry wolves. I think we need to do some rewording of the protocol to reach our main goal. It's more the wording, but we really need to change the wolf pack behavior.

Comment

What we have observed in working with range riders is that some of the activity is wolf focused. So, if there is a pattern on where the wolves are located, then we focus on chasing the wolves away. I think it is still a good idea to focus on the cattle behavior as well. How do you figure out how to time where and when to be out there range riding? Maybe look for some more patterning to be able to figure out where range riders need to focus.

Comment

I agree with a lot of what you are saying. But we need to get that down in writing. Is it that we are trying to keep the cattle away from the wolves, not the wolves away from the cattle. I think that a lot of things in this document are incorrect, so we need to rewrite it. We need to change pack behavior and I agree that it starts with looking at the patterns of the cattle to determine where the problem areas are with wolves. It's not black and white. We can't write it in the way that it is the producer's responsibility to keep cattle away from wolves.

Comment

Good range riding does cost a lot of money. At least so far, the legislature is willing to spend some money on it because it keeps the controversy around wolves down, where otherwise it may not. In general, we agree that it is a good investment, but there is also that efficiency of how we are spending money. My concern is that the producers that are applying for DPCA-L are not getting the amount of money to be able to cover those costs and I didn't realize that the cost shares may not be as beneficial to the producer. I don't know if the producers are getting the resources that they need to have good range riding.

Comment

We had looked very closely at how we were distributing the funds across the landscape. It seems that we had more money going to places that didn't seem to have as many pack numbers or problems, so we decided to come up with a formula that helped us shift the money to those spots that had more conflict potential. But once we did that, we have learned that backing off on the resources may have created more potential for a conflict in areas that we pulled money from. We needed to come up with a way to distribute the money across the landscape, so maybe it's something we need to reevaluate.

Comment

I do believe we need to discuss the frequency piece in range riding.

Comment

There was a fair amount of money that went to Southeast Washington because the producers there wanted to work with the Department. Then it all went to Northeast Washington to those producers that didn't want to work with the Department because of all the conflicts. It made us lose trust and reliability in the Department.

Comment

When we first started with DPCA-L's, we started in areas that didn't have wolf-livestock conflict. Now we have multiple areas with conflict, so we decided to give the money to the areas with more conflicts. This created a lot of Departmental internal conflict and we have decided to think about each pack area and where there has been more conflict history in order to distribute more of the money. Then Murphy's Law kicked in and we have a conflict flare up somewhere else that didn't fit the criteria.

Comment

I feel like there are people thinking there is a lot of money going towards wolf-livestock conflict, but there isn't. Most of the range riding is privately funded.

Comment

There has been about \$500,000 spent on non-lethals in the past and last year it was about \$900,000 spent. We have seen a shift in how the money has been divided and spent.

Question

Can those WDFW contracted range riders cover multiple allotments?

Comment

They might be able to, but the producers will be the best to make that call. They may split up the duties between the range riders depending on the conflicts.

Comment

As a result of this conversation, I see the need to be more detailed on what range riding means within the DPCA-L. Not just list range riding, but to spell out what a range rider does. When we are cost sharing with a range rider, then we're providing some funding so they can maybe hire more people or for them to have the capacity to be able to do more on the landscape. My understanding is that we are helping with the producer to be able to do more. The money for range riding has dropped, but I realize we weren't communicating well with the producer on the "why."

Comment

We did hire a range rider to do just range riding, but he does do more than just range riding. When the money went from \$10,000 to \$2,000, we had to look at if we can keep the range rider at that point.

Comment

For range riding, is it moving cattle from wolves or wolves from cattle. The goal is to reduce the conflict or interaction between wolves and cattle. The purpose of range riding is to reduce those interactions regardless of how. Some of the wording does need to change because it can point for range rider to do one specific thing. Maybe change some wording.

Comment

It has been four years since we wrote the original plan with the goal of changing wolf pack behavior. I don't think that it is a realistic goal and I don't think it has happened. The goal of reducing wolf-livestock contact makes a lot of sense to me. I don't think we should be looking at changing pack behavior, but more the contact focus between the two. For the biologists, have you seen pack behavior change?

Comment

There have been some cases where pack behavior has changed. Smackout is a good example. There were several non-lethals and lethal removal. It is difficult to tell a pack behavior with only one collar. For example, with OPT being so involved with the cattle, it is hard to change that behavior. In Grouse Flats, we have removed one individual and haven't had any issues. Whether this changes pack behavior, I can't really say for sure. If you shoot a wolf off of a carcass with other wolves around, there may be some learning that occurs. But that doesn't really happen in the field. The actual removal of a wolf from a pack is more a disruption to the pack rather than teaching them a lesson to stay away from cattle.

Comment

I feel like we have learned a lot in the last four years with this document, but I don't think changing pack behavior is working. I think the goal is to reduce contact.

Comment

Where do we go from here? Are we thinking about diving into the protocol or other ideas? Are there folks that want to take the language from the protocol, RFQ, DPCA-L, and circulate ideas through email for the next meeting. Maybe do this one off the meeting and outside of this through email. So maybe we can resolve this one that way.

Comment

If range riding is really important, then you need to look at the financial piece. A range rider for six months out of the year, that's 17 range riders out there doing the range riding for the entire Eastern half of the state. We need to come to terms with is this right?

Comment

We have an appetite from the Governor and Legislature. Maybe there is opportunity out there to increase the money pot.

Comment

Two fronts, with WDFW buying land and making it public. Then you have funds being used for range riding, but then what about agriculture funds. Then there is the hunting aspect where the funding goes away for the management and creates a dwindling hunting opportunity.

Comment

If you take range riding from areas without conflict and put them to areas with conflict, then we aren't having the proactive measures, they're more reactive. The goals of the plan need to be looked at while incorporating the negative stimuli. The main idea is to keep wolves away from livestock. I don't want to add duties for the range riders, but we have been doing this for several years and we haven't gotten a "lessons learned" in six-eight years. We need to have this so we can inform those that don't do the range riding. We need to have the lessons learned for range riding. I would like to have more information so we can look at more variables on this issue.

Comment

I have searched for literature on range riding, but there is little out there on range riding. With the collection of GPS track logs from the range rider, I hope to see more information around where range riders are deployed related to depredations, conflict, etc. I agree that more research for range riding is needed.

Comment

I wasn't looking for research. Out of the public money we are spending on this, what are the lessons learned. Is it working or is it not working? Is it working in certain areas and not others? What are the details from what we have already done? I don't want to research literature. I want to see how public money is being used.

Comment

On the report, I agree wholeheartedly. 4-5 years ago, WDFW and Conservation NW had a meeting with all the range riders in the state to have this very discussion on lessons learned. Maybe we should have this kind of meeting again? Maybe have something written up from this meeting. With this aligned with the logs from range riders, we could come up with good data. In addition to the lessons learned, I think a research project is needed on this subject. There was a paper that came out of Montana that tried to examine range riding, but I don't think it was an official scientific paper. I think we need to continue to have adaptive management, but I think that involves research. Maybe have continuous feedback on range riding start between the key players to have that dialogue.

Comment

I wasn't asking for a research project. We have people in the field that could answer our questions. How can we learn more from these folks on the duties? I would love to go to a seminar with all the range riders to understand how our money is being used, what has worked, hasn't worked, etc. We need this information to come back to us if we are going to be able to make good decisions. We don't need to give WSU thousands of dollars to do the study, when we already have people in the field. Adaptable management is to make a decision, study it and then determine how to move forward. We haven't been doing that with range riding.

Action

Voting for a subcommittee to work on the range riding language piece. Committee is built and it is discussed how/who it will include.

Break

Develop protocol recommendations

Action

Discussed the game plan for the subcommittee referring to the range rider discussion.

Question

Is the subcommittee going to discuss range riding and human presence?

Action

Going to have the group list concerns regarding human presence and then the subcommittee will make changes. Rob listed the concerns on the flipchart.

Comment

What does increased human presence mean? Define it.

Comment

We don't want animals habituated, so we don't want increased human presence.

Comment

We need to lay out what we mean by human presence. Lay out the distinction on the difference between range riding and human presence. Two different ideas. Need clear language in this section.

Comment

Negative stimuli. We have the fladry and fencing, but some other examples are needed.

Question

When a range riding is running a four-wheeler to check for sign is that considered range riding or human presence?

Comment

I would say no, given the OPT example where riding logging roads was just human presence.

Comment

It is all in context. We may need to change the word for intent. If human presence is invoking something negative, then we may need to discuss something different. This is how to protect cattle in a confined space, more positive and not negative.

Comment

Is the thought that range riding is on public lands and human presence is on private lands? Definition of the scale of this difference.

Comment

Human presence is usually when risk is high (birthing/calving). Range riding is usually when cows are not as vulnerable.

Comment

I have a whole section that could be considered vulnerable, but it would be hard to tie human presence vs range riding by acres.

Comment

Conservation NW has focused on keeping more range riders on the calving grounds and it has worked.

Comment

It isn't just calving grounds; it is more than that.

Action

Discussion around a deadline for this language for the subcommittee. December 15th is the decided date.

Lines 571-592 in protocol:

Comment

What does this mean to us? What are people's perspectives today?

Comment

Due to the Governor's letter, I believe we need to have this discussion regardless.

Action

Decided to start on page 10 first and come back to lines 571-592.

Lines 353-354 in protocol:

Comment

Following the first depredation, I think every pack needs a collar.

Comment

The packs that have had higher depredations need to be a higher priority. There doesn't need to be a collar in every pack, but there needs to be collars in those with a history of depredations. The cost of getting collars out is about \$10,000 and it is very difficult to catch them, so there is a need to prioritize. Keeping the collars in the packs are very difficult due to lethal removal, dispersers, etc.

Comment

Packs that have a higher likelihood of wolf-livestock interaction should have a collar rather than those who have a much lower likelihood of being in an interaction with cattle.

Comment

A pack that is not by cattle doesn't need to have a collar for preventative measures, but a pack closer to cattle needs to have a collar.

Comment

I agree.

Comment

You want to be able to get the data now rather than after the depredation. The trigger of having the depredation to start the collaring can start the trapping which can act as a preventative measure.

Comment

Most of our packs overlap with livestock, but reality is that we can't have a collar in every pack. It's not that an area is lower priority than others, but we need to consider where the history of conflict or potential for conflict. If a surprise pack comes up with a conflict, then we need to try to deploy resources to get a collar out there. We need to have the flexibility to be able to respond to that.

Comment

This statement read on its own does reflect those conflicts. This is in the section of conflict tools. Maybe add language stating that we can use this as a preventative measure as well as use the priority of depredation history to alleviate the conflict discussion here.

Comment/Question

Maybe take out the trigger of "after the first depredation." How long was it to get the collar out on Grouse Flats after the depredation?

Answer

About two years.

Comment

This is not a quick process, so there may be more depredations in that time frame. The concern is that when it comes to producers, the money is not an issue but when it is the Department, it is about the money.

Comment

In the plan, it is about wolf recovery. There is no reason to fly Southeast WA because there hasn't been a depredation. Maybe if there is just a sighting of a wolf, then go do more research to determine if there is a pack rather than waiting for the depredation to occur.

Comment

This is just one thing that is listed among other bullets in this section. To only have one bullet in the subsection of pack monitoring seems weird. Maybe include more into that?

Comment

I agree with that. We may not fly an area unless we have a collar. It is a priority to try to find more packs, but we use trail cams and other resources to find the pack first. We use the collar to find the animal to hopefully collar more. I would rather try to move the resources around to get a collar out during certain times of year that we may use the capacity to do that. Wolves are smart.

Comment

I am feeling a little defensive because sometimes staff don't feel very appreciated with their work. There is a team out there that works several hours, and we end up needing to tell them to go home to their families. We don't need to have collars out, but we put collars out for you. Our staff are trying so hard and we will never be able to collar all packs because it is a very hard task. Our staff carry this heavy on their shoulders, and they don't feel appreciated for the work they do.

Comment

Priority overall in funding. If we need more people out there to get these wolves collared, then we need to move some money around to make that happen. If we are going to try to do preventative measures with collaring and the team isn't big enough, then we need to build a bigger team. It may not be prioritizing packs, but maybe its building a bigger team.

Comment

We talk so much trust within this room, and we need trust to move forward. A lot of folks like biologists deserve and need trust. Your statewide wolf specialist has a big job and has voices coming at them from all sides. It would be nice for everyone to have more trust in our biologist. Our wolf specialist and his team deserve your trust.

Comment

Collars can be useful, but they are not the only thing that prevents conflicts. It is one tool in the toolbox. The data is not real time and is actually behind. I am afraid of the reliance on collars as a deterrence measure.

Comment

Proposal to have staff put these thoughts into words and then come back to discuss this.

Comment

Should the concept in this statement stay in the protocol? If so, then add more language to provide context, but if not, then take the concept out.

Action

Conversation back and forth through several members and they came to the conclusion that the roles of WDFW pack monitoring needs to have more bullets under it that includes more than collaring. Need to detail out priorities as well.

Comment

The way this reads is that it is reacting to a problem, whereas, the document is about preventing the problem.

Comment/Question

We feel that our comments were taken as derogatory. The statement for range riders that they need to have their duties laid out in detail, but when we are talking about the biologists' duties it is argued that the duties are not laid out in detail. That's where the trust comes in. If we are okay with spelling something out, then we expect the Department to be okay with spelling out in detail on your part. We need to get to a part where we are all on the same playing field and spell out things in detail across the board. It doesn't come down to me not trusting the staff member, it comes down to me wanting to see the same priorities laid out by the Department as we lay out priorities for the range rider. Are you going to put those priorities out by the Department?

Answer

Yes.

Comment

Okay, then that will fix this issue.

Comment

We not only need collaring for preventative, but we need collaring for wolf behavior. Once you have a depredated pack, it is critical to have this to determine if they really are killing more cattle.

Action

There is discussion about what the agenda will be for the afternoon. Going to have Julia talk about post-recovery before we break for lunch.

Introduction to presentation:

The Post-Recovery Plan is not the 2020 Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol. This is a plan for years away and is a different conversation. Even though issues may overlap, they are still separate. This is also not the periodic status review that may recommend a change in listing status for wolves. It is for years out once wolves are recovered. It is not a statement that wolves should be delisted, it is just a plan to have in place for when they are recovered and delisted. It is the Department's duty to manage wildlife in this state, so it is our job to come up with a plan for after recovery. We are starting this conversation now because we know it will take a long time to finalize this.

Question

What is WAG's role in this discussion?

Answer

I think you have all done a lot of that work before I came here, so I would like your help.

Question

Like feedback?

Answer

It is whatever you want it to be. The more you are engaged in each portion of this, the better. When we put together that big timeline a long time ago, those are the things we will want to discuss. We are in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) stage right now.

Comment

I do expect for us to look at the elements and break it down into more detail to come to an agreement. In the EIS, there are spots that are not in agreement, so we want to try to have that for this plan. Hoping to bring in the public component here as well.

Comment

I propose that we revisit what WAG's role is later on and just hear what Julia has to say right now.

Question

Where does the down listing piece fit in to this?

Answer

This plan is when wolves are recovered. So, our current plan incorporates the process of down listing, but this is after they are down listed. I think listing status is for a different conversation written in the recovery plan, not the post-recovery plan.

Action

Slides were put up on projector and gone through.

Discussion on handout for post-recovery update:

Comment

Any EIS has different elements that make up different alternatives to take when moving forward with the plan. This was built with all of the elements from the 2011 Wolf Recovery Plan. Then I added in new elements that I thought would be important in developing this post-recovery plan. Julia refers to three questions on flipchart (elements questions). Elements are more where action is driven. Wolf impacts on other species, environment, etc. will be included.

Question

We have cougars and bears in this state. Is this a similar structure to those plans?

Answer

We don't have a conservation plan for cougars and bears because those are addressed in the game management plan. They were never endangered so they don't really have their own plan.

Comment

I think there should be consistency in the management plans between wolf, cougar, and bear, as far as the elements that they contain.

Comment

Other states have those plans and I see your point. The status quo is no action/change. We didn't change any of these elements from the original plan, so we want your feedback as to the changes of the elements. Then make some changes and reevaluate.

Comment

Wolves are different because they are federally listed right now. Part of how we show the federal entities how we are conserving and managing wolves is our management plans. This is an important part of federal listing. It's important for each to state to inform the federal entities on what we are doing to protect this species that was once endangered. Also, these elements are directly pulled from the old plan.

Comment

When we look at lethal control, looking back at cougars. If a cougar is eating my llama, then I can go take care of it. Why can't we loop all these lethal control points (11-15 on handout) be combined into just stating the RCW that covers this.

Question

How are the comments coming into play?

Answer

Once I have analyzed the comments, then those topics derived from the comments will be the topics that we focus on.

Comment

Right now it is about the table of contents being complete, not diving into the context of each element.

Comment

Why is the regions element on it? Well, that is a good question. So that is something that needs to be determined if we need to keep it, lose it, talk about, etc.

Comment

This is a great preview. But I need a different headspace outside of working on the protocol to work on this.

Comment

Don't think that all alternatives have to be different. They can be the same or similar. I agree with you for this meeting that we may not need to dig in deep right now, but in future meetings I would like to dive into it.

Question

Would this document reverse the caught in the act?

Answer

The caught in the act is a in WAC, so it may be different in a post recovery world vs. right now where they are endangered.

Question

Does this WAC belong in the document?

Answer

Yes.

Comment

I didn't like the idea that there aren't management plans for all other species and now we are going to have one for wolves.

Comment

There were herd plans, species plans, and an EIS for bears. In the time it takes for plans, there is not enough time for each species. So, we decided to have a chapter for each species in the overall Game Management Plan. Wolves are different because they are starting as endangered, not like cougars and bears where they are a game animal to start.

Question

Can you describe the development of the alternatives?

Answer

I think we are still trying to figure that out internally. Think about what makes sense for wolves. Then once all the alternatives are put together, we can then decide through conversation where the alternatives will be born. It's not cut and dry.

Comment

You've had scoping and now you're in alternative phase. Are you guys going to design where the public can weigh in on this phase of the process? If the WAG becomes the conduit for the public, that is a huge weight on our shoulders.

Comment

I don't see our next open public phase until there is a draft EIS. I think more of a stakeholder group, WAG, etc. until draft.

Comment

How do we take a standard SEPA process and make it better? Taking a public process through WAG, Commission, meeting with organizations, communities to discuss this. There will be more official public meetings after the first draft EIS. Then determine if there needs to be another draft EIS or supplemental.

Comment

We have gone back and forth on the alternatives to determine the differences. The negotiation in 2011 was more the plan or no plan. We want to have a plan that strikes the cohesion among groups and continue conversation to determine all the alternatives. Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) is the decision maker on this. What's in scope for their decision is the range of alternatives and elements. They can mix and match elements and alternatives. We want the FWC to see that discussion and cohesion on alternatives so that they only really make small tweaks to this.

Lunch

Develop protocol recommendations

Lines 571-592 in protocol:

Comment

This is all new language. Something we have avoided having in the protocol in the past, but I think they are good. They have built in flexibility. Spelling out range riding and collaring, I think on the prime depredation zones, assigning a WDFW contracted range rider to this area would be important.

Comment

It's been brought up that this is the playbook for 2020. Is this going to happen again in 2021 or is this document the long-term document? If this is just the 2020, then some things may not need to be involved.

Comment

When this was crafted it was a living document that flowed. I think that the hope is that we can solidify parts of this.

Comment

We see this as a multiple year guiding document, and not just for 2020. As we move forward with this, we are not wanting to come back to it each year. Maybe dropping the word play in playbook might be a good option.

Comment

Is "Game Plan" in same boat? ... Laughter.

Comment

So, were not in the fourth quarter? ... Laughter.

Comment

If the original protocol didn't work, then let's find out why and address it.

Question

In the intent with WDFW contracted range riding, are we making a difference between public and private lands?

Answer

No, I was looking more for those conflict zones.

Comment

I think we should look into the difference between public and private property, and dealing with chronic zones.

Comment

Because lethal removal can happen on both public and private. This means we would tell a private owner they need to have a WDFW contracted range rider.

Comment

This is only in certain situations when these chronic zones appear. This gives us one tool to use.

Comment

A little caution on this suggestion. If we want the range riders to do certain activities, then we want livestock producers' buy in on this decision. Also, the private range riders may be a better option than bringing in the WDFW contracted range rider because they already know the land, cows, etc.

Comment

I am feeling the need for specificity. The next chronic area could be somewhere other than public grazing. What's the guidance for different kinds of chronic areas? If this is just guidance, then it needs to trigger more than just range riders.

Comment

There is no way I would come to an agreement with WDFW contracted range riders being forced on private property. Private property rights are as important as air a lot of times. Public lands, I understand where there could be a WDFW contracted range rider brought in. But if you start bringing that into private property, there's no way.

Comment

I agree that personal range riders may do a better job, and what if there is already a range rider doing the work and then what are we going to do. We can't put a deterrence out there that has already been in place. If you have a pack gone and new pack come in and depredate, then we need to look to the question of why are they depredating?

Comment

This is called the Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol and we are talking about chronic depredation zones. We need to get to the causation to the issue. What's causing these zones to appear? Maybe the cause might be different from zone to zone.

Comment

I wonder if the place that we put specifics in is in a couple process requirements. I think some sort of assessment process to determine why a specific zone appears in the first place. Rapid assessment tool used by those that are involved in the situation at hand. Try to determine if there are elements that could continue on to the next year and cause this zone to continue. Another process piece is to put a plan together to look at trying to prevent this from happening again in the next year. So have assessment and then build a plan to put in place for each zone. Then have a lessons learned after the plan is carried out (another assessment).

Comment

Private property concern makes a lot of sense to me. However, I do want to point out that range riding may have come across as a punishment. Whereas, I was trying to get it out as a tool concept to use. The reason I chose the WDFW contracted range rider is because they have the GPS component. Actual range riding, not just riding the roads was a comment made by a specialist. The public wants to know that actual range riding is happening. This is on public property.

Comment

Going way back in the WAG process. What does implementation of deterrence tools look like? We did a customized deterrence plan for the season on a sheep producers' operation. Maybe we sit down and bolster the tools at hand to determine a better deterrence plan for each operation. It's not just range riding, but include other measures to create a complete plan.

Comment

The GPS thing, if every single range rider (private, public) had a 24hr GPS with them. Do you think it would help formulate a better plan for the range rider program?

Comment

I think the GPS is more of a retrospective thing. It is something to look back on and keep track of where the efforts have been compared to the depredations. It won't give you immediate answers.

Comment

The GPS thing came up a few years ago. It had gotten a lot of backfire against the idea of GPS for range riders. It was from the system that we are able to incorporate GPS with range riders now.

Question

If the private guy you hired and the WDFW contracted range rider provided a GPS, would you be apposed to that? And why?

Comment

Yes, I would be opposed. And it's because it's none of our business. He is doing his job.

Comment

Maybe it is the public's business to know where the range riding has been if lethal removal has happened for three years, then it should be incorporated.

Comment

Root causes of depredation. How will we ever know the root cause? I think we may never know what the cause is of depredation. Even if we did an entire research project on it, I think we may still disagree on the competing hypothesis of the cause of depredations. Given that we may not have the answers, how does the Department proceed with lethal removal in a chronic zone situation and what is the threshold? Some producers may feel that some things may come across as a punishment and some may feel otherwise. How do we deal with this?

Comment

I really like looking at the causation for each zone. This whole discussion has been about the tools without knowing what the cause is. (A quote is read.) That's my response. We need to take a shot in responding to a cause rather than applying tools without knowing the cause.

Comment

I agree with finding out the cause. I think we need to figure out the predator prey base and ungulate population is vs wolf population. If we don't look towards the ungulate prey base, then the predators will continue to knock out the prey base and then they will look to cattle. I think we need to look at the chronic area at a local level for all the predators and prey. First step is surveying that area to see what is in that area to try to determine what may be causing the zone.

Comment

Back to the GPS. It is a trust issue. Looking back at the points it can leave the door wide open for explanation on what the range rider did wrong.

Comment

Talking about failure of a range rider, if you have a big allotment then maybe we need to look at how many range riders are needed to be effective? If it won't be effective, then we can make the inference that another tool may be used.

Comment

A lot of conversations between conflict specialists on the deterrence plans does happen. We always set expectations, then the Department fails to meet them and then the Department gets dinged. On the ungulate issue, it is really hard to formalize something along the lines of surveys because it is so difficult to survey ungulates.

Comment

These are chronic zones. Summers have gone by, dollars spent, year after year. This is not the typical problems that happen all the time. This is a very unique situation we are talking about and I want to make sure we are reminded of that. We have gotten to this place and we need to find a way out of it. No one wants to use more resources, spend more time, etc. But this is kind of the doom's day scenario.

Comment

We got to the point of talking about this because of a certain situation that has been hard on everyone. And the public just not understanding. There is an expectation on us to come up with a solution to make sure that this situation does not happen again. There is a massive breakdown in trust from what happened in OPT. Things came down to the public not knowing what's going on and the Department not sure of the lethals being used. Because this is so public, not being able to know what was happening on the ground is the most important when these situations happen. It makes it hard to defend when we don't have the documentation. Is it different tools? Is it ungulate surveys? Not sure, but we need something to fix it. We need to address what happened and try to make sure that kind of situation does not happen again.

GPS: I wanted to note that I supervise the person that runs the range rider program. They decided that they wanted to use the GPS system. They were getting paid for this, so they wanted to show proof of what was going on. It wasn't data intensive, but it showed the day to day locations they were at. It's just one type of range riding, not all range riding. The service is providing the money from the public for the service of range riding and if there were any questions, the documentation of GPS is good to have as proof of what was happening.

Comment

How do we thread all this together? I think we all want to understand the causation, but I don't think we will know the cause in a short period of time. Whatever we do, we need to have the capacity to do. We already have a subcommittee come together, so lets bolster that conversation. There is a thread that links this together. Thread in more money for surveys, bolster the plan, bolster range riding. If we come up with a plan, then who is going to be a part of that?

Comment

The root cause thing and the ungulate piece is really important. Predator-prey studies are very difficult. The longest study done took 50 years. It would be a good read because there are still many unanswered questions on the causation piece. In order to do the study, we may not be able to answer the questions we need to with this research.

What happens when the owner of those private resources, range riders, etc. and there is a zone, what do we do as a Department?

The Department is still responsible for wolves regardless of everything else. So how do we proceed? The protocol gives us guidance in most cases, but this may give us a chance to delve into that.

Question

What are the 2020 zones?

Answer

Kettles, OPT, and Togo.

Comment/Question

What are we going to do in these areas? Remove cattle or wolves, do nothing, or somewhere in between. Before the grazing season? During?

Comment

The most important reason to define the cause is to prevent it from not only happening in this area, but to determine it for other areas as well. We do need to study the wildlife the best we can. We moved cattle and wolves moved to the cattle, so maybe there is a protein problem in the area. Since there is an over abundance of wolves that will continue to occupy the area. We continue to try to talk about solutions, but we need to try to identify the problem. Even if we can't 100% identify it. If we determine the cause, then we may be able to fix this somewhere else. Even if we kill the wolves, its not hurting the population, but the public sees it that way.

Comment

I think coming up with a plan is good. The question of "why do wolves go after livestock instead of natural prey" has been out there a long time with lots of research. Sometimes chronic depredation zones appear for other reasons than ungulate populations. There could be other drivers of this. While you are trying to figure out the "why," there is also the "what do you do about it?" There can be the near-term responses that can be used. We are going to still have to use some tools if cattle are still going to be in wolf zones. There are studies that show cattle and wolves can be close and cattle not seen as prey. I was in a meeting with a range rider that came up with lots of ideas and things they could do differently in certain situations, so range riders are definitely those who need to be included in the conversations. When you get the information from those on the ground, it may be useful. It's starting to feel like we can solve this right away by trying to find the root cause, but maybe we can look to the practical experience for immediate answers.

Comment

I get that there are infinite perceptions and could be different views on range riders used could be seen as punishment. But also removing wolves could be seen as a punishment. We don't authorize lethal if non-lethals are not already in place. I don't think the conservation public has the stomach to be told that this producer chose not to use range riding, so some sort of range riding transparency should be put in place.

Comment

Immediately following year two of what is starting to develop into a chronic area, land managers, producers, etc. sit down and look at some possibilities or alternatives to move forward. Understanding that the producers could chose to participate. I need to see some more creativity in solutions.

Comment

There is only so far we can go in this conversation. There has to be dialogue with the producers in the area involved. We have done removals in the kettles repeatedly which becomes management. There are other areas for management of predators for the ungulate side of things, so maybe we look more at the counts of ungulates. Here are the expectations going into the grazing season, what if the producer doesn't agree and then how do we proceed? If the plan going into the grazing season of the chronic zone doesn't work, where do we go from there, what is the outcome?

Question

Using thermal technology, could we use that to know the number of large animals on the landscape? What is the cost?

Answer

I don't know the cost. It wouldn't be unreasonable to fly that. The tribes do that and so maybe that could be an option.

Comment

If changes are made, it takes time to see if those changes will have an effect. Change takes time. Having alternatives is good, but those are specific to the producer and they need to have a choice. If the producer wants to choose not to do the alternatives and the Department can't do lethal, then what if the neighbor experiences a loss and is doing everything right; then they are punished by not being able to have the lethal option.

Comment

A chronic zone gives us an opportunity to think outside of the box. Maybe include supplemental feed for wolves? Roadkill, etc. Maybe using electronic devices to haze wolves. Dog whistles? Do those apply to wolves? Let's not forget to be creative. "Bolster crazy idea process"

Comment

I don't want to discount that low ungulate population is causing the chronic zone in the kettles, but I am skeptical. Because wolves keep coming back, spend time in the winter to be able to den and raise pups and survive because there is a good protein source. If there wasn't prey there during the wintertime, then they wouldn't be there. During the grazing season, they are mostly eating deer. If we are going to diagnose what is happening in the kettles, then I think it is something other than the ungulate population dropping. That being said, I do think we need to monitor the ungulate population.

What if the producer decides not to do the alternatives? I don't know what to do with that, but we need to think about that if they chose not to do certain things, then the public will have a lot to say about that. If we don't come up with a solution to this producer decision, then the public and legislature will decide it for us. I hope there is a way at some point in time we can get over it and come together by knowing that we all need each other in some way.

Comment

We are all tasked with being here for our constituents. This is creating a policy that can be followed by everyone. If you refuse to do this, then you have failed this responsibility.

Question

How many years have we had collar data?

Answer

10 years or so.

Comment

I think you'll find that the ungulates have moved from the wolf populated areas down to the human populated areas and the wolves have followed. I think we need to take a look at the data and determine what the wolves have done over the last ten years because I think we could learn a lot from it. This discussion is hard for me to take when the problem comes down to livestock being on the landscape which makes it the producer's problem.

Comment

Evolution has produced a wolf. The risk factor of prey base is a factor. We don't really understand the "why" behind a wolf choosing to take a cow over a deer.

Comment

A producers' state of mind after a chronic zone appears may have lack of trust in the Department on doing their part. The decisions need to be made between the producer and the Department for moving forward.

Comment

After reading the wolf plan, something happened that created this group and then the protocol appeared. We keep raising the bar for each element. We need to change the dynamic from what's going on. I understand the statement of using public money to kill wolves, but then you have the other side of it that states we have a plan saying if x happens the y will happen. Maybe we should look at what isn't working, have the legislature look at funding for different ideas, rather than continuing to raise the bar.

Comment

All the creativity is in what we wrote in the protocol. We have had the innovation talk, but there really hasn't been any action. Really all we are talking about is ensuring that we are having a range rider out there. This feels like it is talking about a range rider being added during a chronic zone situation. At what point is enough, enough.

Comment

Sometimes the implementation doesn't happen the way you planned for. We may be troubled by the question on if range riding has happened in the area the way it should happen. It's not that the concept of range riding is new, we've covered this ground. We would like to see range riding proactively as we all envisioned back in 2017 on the large allotments. Imagine what it would be like if we didn't have range riding and the Department decided to remove wolves. What's new here is, "what happens when there is a breakdown in what we have going on?"

Comment

I feel that it was broken down in that the Department doesn't trust the quality of range riding that is going on, yet the range riding box is checked on the depredation form stating that it occurred. How can we be confident in that?

Break

Develop protocol recommendations

Comment

Wanted to add that after the two years of chronic depredations throw in the range rider. It's almost liked a forest fire, if it gets to big they bring in the special forces. What if we have a special range rider with more experience to bring in? (Two stories were told regarding the thought that wolves go where the food is.) I also really like the idea of thermal usage.

Question

Is anything that you have heard here helping you for the response to the Governor's letter?

Answer

Yes, it is helping. I am starting to understand the conundrum around range riding, cost, and how we include other folks. I think we are now finding our way through this. Our ability to tackle these issues without attacking each other is incredibly powerful. The Department is in this 100% with you. We have the ability here to talk towards a solution, and we know it is easy to snap back to war. We are all in.

Question

Does everyone feel like this piece is tolerable?

Comment

No, I don't think it is tolerable. I like what is written here, however we need prescription. We need guidance on this and more description on this piece.

Comment

I don't like the last sentence in the first paragraph. Line 576.

Comment

Sounds like we need some directives. Range riding has been thrown out as a directive on public lands. What else?

Comment

I am comfortable with this section. However, range riding can't be a directive, it needs to be negotiated.

Comment

Fine with rewording/removing last sentence there in the first paragraph. There is only so far we can go without having the actual conversation with the producers. We need to have the perspectives of the producers. Maybe there is a fourth paragraph or something to broaden the conversation including the producers, or maybe it points to a process that would take place with the producers.

Question

Do you see that fourth paragraph as having direction and to channel funding to be able to do something creative in these zones?

Comment/Answer

We need to bridge this process with the process that includes the producers. Yes, that would be helpful to achieve this.

Comment

I would have a really hard time signing a contract to do the same non-lethals that haven't worked for the last three years. Just because we put another name out there for this zone, why are we putting more scrutiny on the zone. When we need to just ramp up the non-lethals. I don't think we need to put more attention on this.

Comment

We are talking about this strictly on public lands. What if there is somewhere between a range rider or human presence that a person could be out on public lands that has nothing to do with the cattle but could potentially keep the wolves away. Maybe a contracted person from the Department that is not a range rider can do this?

I am willing to be a middle ground for the bridge between the process with producers and the process here.

Comment

I am hearing that we need permission to do the WAG work based on specific families.

Comment

Say two years from now the cause isn't range riding, but the cause is fall calving.

Comment

It seems strange that there are representatives here on the WAG to represent a group of people, but we feel the need to bring in other folks. I feel that we need to look at this more of a universal subject rather than looking at one situation.

Comment

Yes, what is causing us to have this conversation is from one issue. Wanting to make sure that whatever happens next year to do something different to break the cycle is what we want to do. But I hear that it shouldn't be optional measures that happen. We risk losing legitimacy, Department risks losing legitimacy. I hear from others that WAG is seen as just a social buffer for the Department. We can't walk out of this room with something that says we maybe will do something different. The Governor says we can't. We need to come up with something different that will happen. We need each other to make this change. I would like to get to a place where the dialogue is that we can't tell the producers what to do no matter where the wolves are. I want to try to change the dialogue. This is an advisory document to the Department. There is enough knowledge to know that range riding was not done to the extent that it should have. If range riding is a tool that is appropriate in that specific instance, then we need to make sure that happens. I feel we need to ask that that is filled from the producers point.

Comment

Is it possible to address this zone as an individual case and also come up with a more general on the other hand. I feel like there is an elephant in the room and the specific case needs to be discussed elsewhere.

Comment

I really like the idea of the State bringing in someone different from a range rider and human presence that doesn't mess with the cattle to be able to minimize the livestock interactions. Having someone in between takes the pressure off the livestock industry and brings something new to the picture. I would be in favor of the State bringing someone in to try to eliminate the issue on public land that isn't part of the livestock industry. That way the blame won't be on the livestock industry

when it doesn't work. Depending on the situation on the ground may determine how many of these types of folks will be needed. In the specific instance, the cattle are more dispersed.

Comment

The situation that we are talking about here is about the situation in Kettles. Yes, there is that call log stating that we don't think range riding has worked. Range riding has not worked in this specific instance because it just hasn't. We haven't had the definition of range riding before, so that is why we needed this to be added. 20 miles in a day a wolf can travel so we are always going to be behind.

Comment

Data points haven't worked either.

Comment

Member reads off a section from a Spokesman article.

Comment

There was a depredation at least within 150 yards from where those huckleberry pickers were.

Comment

I think you are referring to the second to last sentence stating that there needs to be an outcome. A requirement is to put a plan together, so if the outcome of that plan doesn't happen, then what happens next. (implementation)

The elephant in the room is that:

- 1) being able to document and be transparent on range riding
- 2) what does a range rider do? We don't want to dilute that
- 3) moving the producer's cattle. Producers don't trust others moving their cattle, so the department range rider could be exactly between the range rider and human presence without going against the producers wishes.

Comment

The producer doesn't have to okay you to be on the allotment, only to okay you to move his cattle, so I don't think you need that conversation.

Comment

If the producer doesn't want a certain person being out in the area, then the range rider doesn't feel comfortable being out there. Maybe keeping it simple and having a conversation with the producer and range rider about it.

Comment

If I had land as a producer and had issues with wolves harassing my cattle, what would you suggest?

Comment

Range rider as written in the protocol.

Comment

So, if I follow the range riding as written in the protocol it will take care of my issue.

Comment

There is a good chance because range riding is just a tool in the toolbox to use and we need to make sure we use it well.

Comment

I think we can all agree on having something in between range riding and human presence. I am volunteering to market this to the producers to see if it is a possibility. Maybe we can put it in the future for chronic conflict zones.

Comment

What I have been told about when range riding works well is when the range rider and the producer have a good relationship. When producers are comfortable with a range rider moving cattle, but themselves or employee can move them; a cross relationship can happen. Having a range rider go out there as a buffer without permission from the producer to be able to communicate back to the producer what is going on. I don't want to lose sight of when the relationship between the producer and range rider is good, it works well. When we get into this situation, the Department in consultation with the producer will come up with a plan that will address the things that haven't worked the prior year. When lethal removal is put on the table, at the very least the producer needs to work with the Department to come up with the plan.

Comment

I have a tendency to build the mountain. It wasn't very long ago that this particular producer had more range riders on the allotment than anywhere in the state. There are several other processes going on locally that are trying to build those relationships. I think that the community members, landowners, and producers are having conversations about this very subject.

Public Comment

Public comment #1

As a taxpayer of the state. I don't want my money going to lethal removal of wolves. From my experience, it seems like most of the problems are coming from one producer and I think that's where the focus needs to be.

Public comment #2

Letting the local conversations happen. I hear a couple of you say that there needs to be a dialogue with the producers and the State. Why can't that happen before the next grazing season? That way it can be figured out how this is going to work.

Protocol recommendations continued

Comment

You have to build trust slowly. There is a trust level that has to happen. If we can start to market this new concept, then maybe we can build this trust and partnership over time. I don't think we will ever get through the concept of having someone else move a producer's cattle. I think this can be done with the new concept. If we go in and try to put on directives, I don't think it will work. One is having someone else move their cattle. Pay the family and train the family to do the work for this new concept. They are very nervous as to where their future is, so offering something to just walk through before we run to get there would be good.

Comment

For me it feels like a broken record. Building trust, see how it works out. I am hopeful but I am leaving this meeting feeling very unhopeful about this coming grazing season. I never leave feeling this way, but I feel uncomfortable about where we are at right now. I feel like we have gone the same route for many years without any luck.

Comment

I feel the same pit in my stomach. If we have a repeat of last year, this will be taken away from us. We will not be the decision makers in this. A repeat will not work. I am optimistic, but I have the pit.

Comment

I also have a pit in my stomach. But clearly identifying and defining a process to follow will help us get there.

Comment

Even at the end of the day. We are still letting one or two families/producers define how we move forward. If the producer doesn't do those things, then what is the consequence.

Comment

We still need to discuss what will happen if a producer doesn't do those things.

Comment

I understand and agree with the assessment that this producer is feeling nervous. They are being asked to do things. With the lack of change, it will be very hard. All of this is leading to an arc of change that feels slow and frustrating, but I think we are going from a sense that they are dictating where we are going, to we are having more dialogue in the matter. You can look at this from their perspective and it has been terrible for them. This needs to be baby steps. We are doing this dance, but I think we need to just keep trying to push through and move forward. I think there is a desire to have accommodations on all sides. The beauty of this is that we are helping drive this whole process forward.

Comment

I believe we can get this particular family on board. I have a knot in my gut about the depredations, but the request to get the family on board I think is possible. It is going to be tough with what is happening on the ground, but I think we can do it. I do have a knot around trying to solve the problem.

Comment

With the recent news release about a range rider and their needs, I think the changes are happening and I think everything is moving outside of this room alongside the movement within the room.

Comment

Checked in with some of the group members who are working on the range rider language. The plan is that they will have that by December 15th. All the other sections discussed; the Department will have changes made by the 15th as well.

Question

What about the most recent conversation?

Comment

I need to think about this a bit, but there may be a different timeline for that. Maybe some questions to ask are, “what are the implications to not doing the plan?”

Comment

I think there is a need to have a plan put in place, what happens if the plan isn't followed.

Check out

Everyone checked out around the room.

Meeting adjourned