

Wolf Advisory Group

March 31, 2020

Meeting Notes

Online Meeting

WAG members: Diane Gallegos, Dave Duncan, Lisa Stone, Paula Swedeen, Samee Charriere, Tim Coleman, Tom Davis, Bill Kemp, Jess Kayser, Jessica Kelley, Lynn Okita, Dan Paul, Andy Hover, Don Dashiell

WDFW staff members: Donny Martorello, Julia Smith, Dan Brinson, Annemarie Prince, Ben Maletzke, Joey McCanna, Ellen Heilhecker, Eric Gardner, Steve Pozzanghera, Staci Lehman, Trent Roussin, Grant Samsill, Jeff Wade, Scott McCorquodale, Melia Devivo, Brian Kertson, Maci Yungdahl

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

US Forest Service: Robert Garcia

Welcome and check in

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

Review agenda and make any adjustments

Rob presents the agenda to the group.

Comment

I have some concern over the process and being able to do two days' worth of difficult conversation via Zoom as well as some staff not being able to attend until later today.

I think we need to focus on just the critical items to get done for this grazing season.

Comment

If we need to change the lift and visit the priority items, then we can.

Updates: data sharing, collaring wolves, post-recovery planning

Data sharing update

Comment

The need to have a standard set of questions to determine what is working and what isn't. We worked on that and asked for feedback along the way. We are trying to find what meets everyone's need in the data share program. We have tried to improve the usability of the program for the end user by working with our GIS staff. We have talked about the timing of the changes in relation to the upcoming grazing season.

Comment

We did a bunch of intakes recently and there has been some process change stuff. We wanted to reach out to staff again because our information is now outdated. We want to make sure that we don't rush the changes and we do them correctly.

Question

Can staff remind us what the status quo is currently? I remember there being quite a bit of discussion and hearing concerns around not opening the data sharing until July. What kind of process steps have been put in place around this concern?

Answer

In terms of the data displayed, it is the raw points as they are collected by the GPS collared wolves. There are three layers: section, raw point, heat map. The blackout period is the status quo one that starts early April and opens in early July. If the data suggests there is a den site somewhere, then we are communicating that to the conflict specialists. Adding the forest layer and allotment boundaries are now part of the map (may not quite be updated just yet).

Comment

Those that graze their cattle in an allotment do get access to the data in their area if there is a collared pack. They will receive the data after the blackout period.

Comment

From the producer side of the world, we are going in blind without access to the data during the blackout period. You've got to do something to make it more manageable for producers to be able to manage their cattle. What are you doing to make this more workable for the producers?

Comment

The critical thing here is that the producers know where there is a den site. We make sure that is communicated. We want producers to not fly blind, so they hear from us if we know there is a den site in their area.

Comment

Our conflict staff are working regularly with the producers during this blackout period to address any concerns and communicate any areas where there is high wolf use. There is a lot of focus on den sites, but there also is the communication about more than just den sites: wolf activity and cattle activity on the landscape.

Comment

I agree. Plenty of these packs do not have collars, but we will always be able to read the signs on the ground to communicate to the producers where the activity centers are on the ground.

Comment

Again, I wish we had producers from the NE on the call. It is going to be your staff and their ability to reach out to the producers. Some folks would rather not have to go through department staff to determine the activity on the ground. Also, there may not be enough staff to communicate effectively. I don't see why we aren't trying to get this data to the producers sooner. Is there any work to try to open the data to the producers in an earlier setting?

Comment

Where is the bottleneck? If there is one, then it is who is sending that information. Yes, all of that is on the table including the blackout period. We are currently in the blackout period and that will remain this Spring. We have brought on two more staff members in the area to be able to help cover the gaps in staffing in the NE. There are several folks such as the county wildlife officers that have access during the blackout period that producers can contact as well.

Comment

If we do share data during the blackout period, then what would that look like? That is one of many questions that we are trying to answer.

Comment

I think it is also important to remember that a den site is an activity center that doesn't change. As long as we communicate that location to the producers, then that is most important because that is the area where cattle will be most vulnerable during the grazing season. We are more concerned about the high activity centers being communicated.

Comment

I feel like we are talking past each other a little bit. I don't think we as producers will feel comfortable until the data is opened up sooner.

Comment

We are talking about various trust issues. There are some producers that can't do their jobs without the data and this will be a serious issue.

Comment

We are looking at the agreement between the WDFW and producers. We want to have that trust.

Break

Collaring wolves update

Comment

This winter we got up three different locations to try to collar. We had some terrible conditions to try to catch wolves. One in Loup Loup was a recollar. We got a collar in Smackout. We recaptured a wolf in Goodman Meadows. There are 14 collars that are being monitored. In 2019 we actually handled 19 wolves. We had a number of wolves dispersed and some wolves died. That number went down to about 11 wolves that we are currently monitoring.

Comment

For winter captures staff use helicopter. When they do this, they look for current collars and try to collar more wolves within that pack. There are some packs that we would really like to put a collar in, but it is like looking for a needle in a haystack. The annual report is not completed yet and it may not be included in the commission report due to the essential tasks being limited currently. It feels like we are pretty stingy with the information, but that is not the case. We like to keep the main message as one message that goes out in the annual report every year.

Comment

Our upcoming trapping season, we try to hit the ground running in late April-early May to try to collar uncollared packs. Any research packs as well as conflict packs are of highest priority. Right now, with the COVID-19 response, we are not able to be out in the field so we are looking to see what will happen in the next couple weeks.

Post-recovery planning update

Comment

The last big process was the public scoping comment period. We had about 7800 comments and the process of going through them is done. I had planned to present the findings in early March, but that meeting has been cancelled and postponed due to COVID-19. Those documents containing the analysis are ready to be presented. I wanted to start conversations with several groups to start talking about ideas for discussion.

Comment

We have the evolving processes that need to stay parallel. We've had a check in with the inter-agency wolf committee and it is past the scoping. Right now, we are thinking a lot about alternatives.

Comment

There is not a ton of meetings or working happening right now behind the scenes because those meetings are supposed to be in person and have been postponed or cancelled due to COVID-19. Depending how long the situation goes on, we may look at trying to accomplish the tasks of the in-person meeting on an online platform.

Question

I remember in a prior meeting you put out a timeline of events for this. Are you thinking about extending that timeline because of the COVID-19 situation? Also, I noticed that the commission meeting in March were set to talk about the sideboards of wolf committee task. Any updates on that?

Answer

I think the timeline will change because some meetings can't be done via online. Maybe not a whole lot delayed, but some. The sideboard discussion ended up being just about items they would like to see included in the wolf plan but did not take a deep dive.

Address a question given via email

Comment

What is the perspective if we don't have a revised protocol in time in relation to the Governor's request?

Comment

I would say that the WAG is an advisory board to the Director. When you folks reach that cohesion spot, it is a very powerful thing because of the diversity of your voice. The Department thinks that having the range rider coverage is key, the dialogue about what will be done different in chronic conflict zones is important. We have an existing protocol that we will operate under if there isn't a final protocol created before the grazing season. We will infuse that with the nuggets that you all are working on right now.

Comment

Thank you. It was a hard question to have to answer. I work in a political world and I am concerned that the Governor has politized this issue significantly. I am concerned that what we are doing here could be overshadowed by the pressure of the Governor. We need to walk in with our eyes wide open. As an advisory group we can offer lots of good information, but there are other forces out there such as the Governor that can push the Department in a different direction. Just want to make us all aware of that. Appreciate the conversation around this.

Comment

Thanks for that. We are communicating with the Governor's office frequently. It wasn't an absolute that no lethal is on the table, but it was an expectation that the nonlethals on the table are to be used as designed and implanted in full capacity. We are all in this together and want to create a revised protocol. We are in a current pandemic situation so we can only do what we can do at this point.

Comment

I talk quite a bit to the producers in the NE. This pandemic has kept the producers from talking to the Governor. I think they have some good solutions to be shared. Did I miss the status review? At one time we were going to have that done by the first of February.

Comment

On the periodic status review for a refresher, at one of the previous wolf committee meetings the director has given us some direction. We looked into a variety of places to contract the analysis. We contracted with WSU. They are about to begin that work. At the soonest it will be winter 2020 by the time we receive that information from WSU.

Comment

We have the final discussion for who we are going to select for the WSU candidate next week.

Comment

That person has free range of the latest and greatest science to look at wolf populations and it would be a totally different approach than previously.

Department update

Comment

Before we dive into the next agenda item. We've had a lot of talk about ungulates here at WAG and I asked the Wildlife Program Director to join to speak to that. As you have seen the agency make some changes with hunting and fishing, I wanted to give him a chance to speak here.

Update

I wanted to talk about the small item of changes to meetings. There has been a relaxation in relation to the open public meetings when they are online. Some things like the update on the wolf annual report may not fit under the open public meetings act under the current relaxations. There are new side boards that the commission has to operate under.

A very big topic, the proposed changes to the recreational cougar hunting seasons. The changes that were brought to the table are still on the table and being discussed. Recognizing that the department is aware that the changes in the recreational side of this conversation is just a little piece of this issue. There are also conversations going on around hound handlers, public safety, and damage. There will hopefully be a final commission decision in April on the recreational hunting.

Closure of hunt seasons: The decision to actually close hunt seasons has been the most difficult situation of my career. I feel the disappointment and I remember very well drawing my first turkey tag and being taken out on my first hunt with my dad and how that influenced me. This is not about the fact that hunting can be done very safely. I am confident that I can go out and hunt and meet the CDC guidelines. However, all of the prep that goes into the hunt is taken into consideration. We are very concerned about our infrastructure and hospitals and such. We are putting the community at risk if we keep these opportunities open. There are about 20,000 turkey hunters and, in those areas, where the hunting would take place, there are not a lot of gas stations etc. so the concern of

the spread is high that could impact the infrastructure nearby. The youth turkey season and some bear seasons have been closed. For the bear hunts, they take place in small communities and there would be several folks traveling from all over to these small communities. We plan to revisit the closure decisions on April 6th and if we can do anything different, it will take a day or so to finalize those changes. We are in a really tough spot right now and in this early window of complex decisions.

I understand that not everyone agrees with this decision. We feel this is inline with the Governor's request and we are doing our part. Please share your questions, comments, concern, etc., because we want to hear the feedback.

Predator-Prey research update

Update

I imagine that some of you are familiar with the project and some may not be. We are going to focus on the big picture in what we are trying to achieve. There is not a lot in here as far as actual results because we are currently in data collection mode.

Staff provided update and reviewed slides on a PowerPoint.

Question

Will we be able to understand from the project? If we aren't seeing impacts of predation on ungulates. Do you think we would be able to detect a population decline with the sample sizes that you have?

Answer

Yes. Specifically, with wolves, we have yet to detect a wolf predation. I want to highlight is that that also means at sites that we know predations occurred; we swab for the DNA. We have not received any wolf DNA from predations. There have not been any wolves that caused a death.

Question

First of all, thank you for the in-depth presentation. Can you guys talk a little more about how the project is incorporating the human influence?

Answer

On the carnivore side of things. There are objectives for each carnivore that address the relations of human impact as well as the relations between the carnivores. Human beings are the leading source of mortality for both cougars and wolves in this study. The question is how carnivores are affecting each other as well as how humans are affecting carnivores. People vs. competition.

On the ungulate side of things. One objective is land use and habitat analysis. We are collecting the mortality of ungulates. So, in addition to predation there are those lost by harvest, vehicle collision, etc.

Question

How are you addressing the recollaring of cougars that the battery life does not last the 5 years of this study? How does this affect the study? And how do you communicate the collared cats that are in the high population areas to enforcement?

Answer

There are two battery types. The first lasts 3 years and the second lasts 4 years. In any cougar project that I am part of, you rarely have individuals that are sampled for more than two years. If a

cat has a battery that malfunctions, we attempt to recollar the individuals if possible. In terms of affecting the validity of the project, it depends on how early they go. If you get at least 6 months of data from an individual, then you have a good amount of to do analysis. Also, if you have a large sample size, then that can make up for the lost data. In this case, we have a good sample size. Ideally you get at least a years' worth of data from each individual. You want to get a represented sample of data for the population as a whole instead of data for each individual. Finally, we don't have a policy where we notify enforcement if a cougar goes near a house. If there is a safety concern, then we will notify enforcement. In those cases, some animals may be euthanized, and they do not get any special treatment because they are collared. We want to simulate the natural environment as much as possible. The problem conflict cougars are the leading cause of death so far.

Question

Ungulates: Why didn't we touch on the moose section? Can you provide an update?

Answer

There was a project wrapping up as we started this project that looked at moose population in NE Washington. Because that project was going on with limited resources, we thought that we should focus on other ungulates.

Answer

We have a ton of useful data from the moose project in NE that can be used here. The project was in GMU 117 as well as in Mount Spokane. Mainly looking at moose densities. The PhD student is not quite finished with the dissertation.

Question

Are you going to be showing the data on why the collars wouldn't be replaced and how much data you received from that collar?

Answer

On the cougar side of things, that information is summarized on my PR (Pittman-Robertson) reports. In any research project, you will always suspect to lose a certain number of individuals due to malfunction of tools. I don't suspect the current loss of data will impact the study in this case. All of the collars that are deployed, have collars that will deteriorate over time so that the collar will not remain on the animal. It is harder on the animal to be captured, than it is to leave them with a collar on until it rots off.

On the ungulate side of things. It's the same thing. This is not unique to this study. You will always suspect some sort of loss of data because of malfunction of collars. Currently, we still have the sample sizes that we need for this project. Trying to recapture those individuals that have collars malfunctioning is extremely difficult.

Question

Are you looking at continuing to capture animals to keep that sample size good? Or no?

Answer

On the cougar side of things. No, we have the sample sizes we need so we don't have additional capture efforts planned.

For wolves, we do have wolf captures planned in accordance with the Game Division captures.

On the ungulate side of things. No, the same as cougars. No further plans for more animals to be captured.

Question

How many of the deer and elk collared were in areas of known wolf packs?

Answer

I don't have numbers for you. We are capturing individuals throughout the research areas so spatially we have really good distribution.

Question

I live in Winthrop and have a lot of collared deer and cougar on our place. In the Okanogan study area, how many deer have been killed by wolves?

Answer

Of the collared individuals, none. There are a portion of the mortalities that we were unable to determine cause of death, but we do a DNA swab to see what types of animals are causing deaths. Of those swabs, we have not had any wolf DNA be detected. That doesn't mean that wolves don't kill deer, however.

Comment

When you talk with folks in the hunting community, there is always talk about wolves depleting the deer population. Then you have a study come out that wolves are not killing the deer. I am having a hard time with this. It brings in a question of the validity of the statistics.

Comment

We are studying this from the perspective of the entire population, not an individual. Our sample size is adequate for the study and have targeting those in the Methow Valley to account for this. We do have staff going to prey sites and looking at the composition of the prey from wolves.

Comment

Wolves are eating deer and it represents the bulk of their diet. The disconnect is that we are collaring a portion of the population, not the entire population. The question that if this sample size is represented of the entire population. I think yes. Some of this could be a reflection of the size of the population of deer based on how many collared animals you see versus what the main diet is of the wolves. You may have more deer than expected.

Question

Are you cross referencing that if you find a wolf kill of an ungulate, then are you cross-referencing that with the collared deer at that time?

Answer

Yes. There is still a ton of work that needs to be done. There are those sorts of spatial references that we can look at. We are going to try to do as much analysis as we can, but there is still so much work to be done. Results can change over time as more data comes in, so trying to discuss the results right now is difficult.

Question

Are data being collected from kills sites of collared wolves and cougars regarding prey composition or is the prey inference just from marked ungulate deaths?

Answer

Already answered above.

Comment

Hearing the dialogue, we have a real opportunity here to connect this research project in another way to all of your communities. You all are an outreach component to this project.

Thinking about the big picture. We have heard questions from WAG members on how the ungulate piece fits into the picture, how cougars fit in, etc. My immediate reaction is how complex this whole thing is. My question is, is there a different way that we can discuss about the ungulate situation than we have been in the past?

Comment

I do want to say that there is a nexus in the department itself and the people in the communities that are carrying out the policies. For example, cougars in our area are not a problem and our enforcement folks are great. So, I think that you guys (the Department) have to look at policy and guidance in different areas of the state.

Question

The agenda had a segment that we were going to look at the overarching goal of the protocol. Are we going to continue with that?

Answer

Yes, I will bring up that question to the group after lunch.

Lunch

Discussed the agenda and determined what to do this afternoon.

Comment

Our work is used to bolster the decision of the Director. So, if the Director decides not to follow it then I don't agree with that. There is nothing in the protocol that states that the Director can choose to not follow what the WAG has put forward.

Comment

I would like to hold this conversation until tomorrow if we can.

Agreed that the previously stated comment will have a discussion tomorrow and we will continue into the range riding discussion.

Revise the definition of range riding

Two versions of the range riding documents are posted (version A and B).

Comment

We worked a lot on version A, and I feel that that is something that the livestock producers could live with. We did not finish the focused monitoring definition on A, but there is a good definition on B. We have done a lot of research into this. I think we need to be careful when we incorporate the "must haves" and "will dos" in the documents.

Comment

I agree with above. There was quite a bit of effort that went into it and we all took a shot at this. There are still some areas that have some disagreement, but I think it is good. I might be comfortable with this, but I don't think everyone will be comfortable with it.

Comment

Just wanted to comment on the whole process. I think it has been a good process with the subcommittee. I appreciate the work that has been put forth. From my perspective, version A has a few more points than version B that I like. There might be some comparisons and wordsmithing between the two, but I am pleased with how it has come out. I don't think version A needs many changes.

Comment

I tried to merge several different versions and that is how version B came to be.

Comment

We were looking at version A and B to determine if we can combine both A and B. I think they read the same to me, but how do we collapse those into one document? Great work from everyone on these.

Comment

My biggest concern with both of them is that the managing of the livestock is the producer's job, not WDFW. WDFW needs to be worried about the wolves, not cattle. The producer's staff is in charge of livestock.

Comment

For the human focused definition, there was a desire to have a distinction between human presence and range riding. I recall the term human presence being confusing, so there was an attempt to change that. We wanted to pull out the parts that are not range riding and put them under this new category.

Comment

One of the big common things among the producers is that they want to be in control of their livestock and ranching operation.

Comment

Can we look at what we missed between these two instead of comparing the two?

Comment

It would be really helpful if we didn't get into the wordsmithing, but for the subcommittee to jump in on any conversations that they may have had.

Question: Is there anything in these that needs to be there, but isn't?

Comment

On version A, add the wolf sites.

Comment

One thing missing in the focused human presence. I think the WDFW needs to inform the producers when there are wolves in the area. I think that is their job, especially during a blackout period of the data.

Comment

I really like both versions. I particularly like the detail in version B, especially the first paragraph.

Comment

I appreciate the detail in both of them. Version B has the statement to the effect of, in order for range riding to be consistent with the protocol these things have to happen. It was stated that we should not have that and take away the "must be" type of things. One of the reasons I put that requirement sense of things is the conundrum of the conflict folks and WDFW staff have to monitor and check that the nonlethal have been accurately implemented. I would like to talk about these needs and how they can be implemented. Just wanted to flag the issue.

Comment

I feel like we are getting caught up in version B as range riders are required to manage livestock and that is the producer's job. I think we need to have the fish and wildlife folks focus on the wolves.

Comment

Same as above. I understand that there was a bad egg for a range rider. This is the definition of what range riding is. The requirements for each range rider, WDFW, and the producer should be within the contracts. This is defining range riding. I think we are scared of lawsuits and we need to not focus on that as well as not focus on putting language in there that will cause lawsuits.

Comment

I think of range riders as not following wolves, but they are an extension of producers monitoring livestock. I think I understand that the livestock are the producer's control. If there was an extension of more fleet of range riders, then the producer has to approve what each range rider does.

Comment

I think this is getting way to big of a deal. This is just the definition. I am not against this, but I am in charge of my livestock and I need to take responsibility, and I don't want to put that on anyone else.

Comment

There are major differences in item two of each version. I've been in livestock for over 30 years. Herding is not part of the permits or contracts. I object to that statement there.

Comment

Does that feel better if it is more stated that "at the approval of the producer"?

Comment

I was just wondering if there could be some language on collecting strays and such or even come up with a specific term.

Comment

What you are talking about is just good husbandry practices. If cattle get off of your allotment, then it is your job to herd it back on. I don't think we can put it all in here, but we need to just follow good animal husbandry.

Comment

Hearing the feedback. When I read number two on both versions, I feel like they are both getting to the same point. The safeguard of having approval from the producer is in both versions.

Comment

I just wanted to talk about number four, it says real-time collar data. We never have real-time collar data depending on the fixed schedule of the collar.

Comment

The difference in version A is that the grazing permits with the forest service requires to do and not to do certain things, so we wanted to call that out here in number four.

Comment

Back to three, they are both very similar between the versions. Monitoring would be near daily in chronic areas.

Comment

When I was working on version B, I have a tendency to be short and sweet. I tried to condense the communication points into one point rather than state it several times, so that is why it looks a little different.

Comment

I would add to four looking at version B, "utilizing wolf collar data when available."

Comment

I have quite a bit of pushback on number 5. I think this goes beyond what producers should be doing. When we have a problem with wolves and livestock, I think it is up to the WDFW because they are in control of the wildlife. Maybe we have two kinds of range riders out there: the producers that look for the problems and manage without, then once there are depredations or problems, we can include WDFW.

Comment

When things escalate to the point of routine mixing of wolves and livestock, at some point WDFW becomes engaged in that. Before it gets to that, I see that we all have a part whether it is the Department or producer or range riders. If you have the opportunity to scare a wolf off, then by gosh do it. Use what you have. By trying to change behavior immediately, we can save wolves and livestock.

Comment

I think I am the one that put that in there the first time. With the amount of range riders scaring off wolves, I feel like that works. There were some instances where range riders have scared off wolves repeatedly to the point where it was successful in changing behavior. When there is an opportunity to run the wolf off or use a scare device, it seems like a pretty essential function of range riders. I feel like this is protecting the cows as well as the wolves.

Comment

I just want to thank the committee for all the hard work. One thing that is missing is that there's no mention of keeping cattle away from den and rendezvous sites. I think it is an important ingredient.

Comment

I wasn't meaning to say that the range rider couldn't do something to chase wolves off. I just feel that in order to have success, when situations escalate, we need to be able to bring in the professionals. I don't think the producers want to manage the wildlife because that is WDFW's job. I think there are two different range riders.

Comment

Talking about the hazing, there will be instances when you can do as much as you want to move the wolves, but they won't because they may have pups that aren't old enough to move. Moving cattle away from the wolves may be a better tactic.

Comment

On the den sites comment, producers don't know where the den sites are, so it is really hard to avoid those sites unless the department tells us where they are. GPS devices cannot be required for all range riders. Only for the WDFW hired range riders. Range riders are to be a barrier between livestock and wolves, not on one side or the other. I will not require my hired range riders to report their GPS coordinates.

Comment

Trying to understand. What is the reasoning why you don't want to use the GPS monitoring from your range riders?

Comment

The range rider that I hire for 365 days a year, I am not going to make him do a GPS monitoring device. That is showing a lack of trust between me and my range rider. If you don't trust your range rider, then don't hire him. I think it is too much to require. Trying to log on the paper logs for the reports is enough.

Comment

The language in B is saying that contracted range riders are to be required to use GPS track logs. It is a current requirement and I don't think what we are talking about is a producer hired range rider. The GPS monitoring is very useful for the contractors that we hire, and we would like to use the range riding track logs to take a look at how the movement of range riders across the landscape can impact the movement of wolves.

Question

In A, number nine. I am curious where that came from and what that would be used for?

Answer

I think the idea is to use people on the ground to have an idea of what we are seeing out there. Personally, I report notes to the forest service to report the wildlife that we see. There are range riders out there everyday and this could be used.

Comment

This may be a need in different areas depending on what they want to capture for their data fields. Just kind of an understanding that based on the conversations between the producer and conflict specialist, maybe they can add different data fields.

Comment

I like that addition in version A number nine. In the spirit of trust issues between ranchers and the department, this kind of information sharing may be able to help add to the general body of

information for what is out there. We have heard that we are not doing enough to address ungulate issues and I see this as a nice additional to connect the different worlds. It would be systematic or a research project, but it will become useful.

Comment

I wanted to go back to number 8 on version A. Clarification on why this would need to be in there.

Comment

The idea that if there is an incremental removal going on, then removing every dead animal may not be the case because it can be used to help removal wolves.

Comment

That is why I put, "if feasible" in version B to address that.

Comment

Concerns about number nine. I could see in certain circumstances where we may be interested in bighorn sheep or other ungulates, I don't want several folks to be coming to me to ask what I am doing with this additional information. I don't want the extra work of noting every white tail deer spotted to interfere with the critical work that they are already doing because the need for the data isn't there.

Comment

Going back to version B number six. At this point in range riding, I have a real problem. I think that when range riders are out there over their head, we need to bring in the WDFW range riders.

Public Comment

Comment

I do want to comment on the GPS. I heard it said that only when funds are used that the GPS is required. Lethal removal requires WDFW funds and so anytime range riding occurs, there needs to be the GPS requirement because it is a component that goes into the lethal removal action.

Comment

I wanted to comment on the GPS piece to. The GPS logs are piece to help the WDFW determine if the nonlethal were accurately implemented. If there are no GPS logs to go off of, then I don't think that range riding should be considered when determining lethal removal.

Comment

I am not a public lands grazer, but I am a rancher in Clark and Klickitat. When I put my livestock out to graze, I employ Herders. Emphasizing the term "herders". You have way too many pieces thrown into this section on range riders. Absolutely opposed to creating a whole new job for this. My concern is that it would be impossible to supervise any action against a range rider if this is a job description, policy, political obligations, etc. Give everybody a break. If you want to be subsidizing a producer's grazing activities, then okay. I agree with the producers that I don't want any range rider moving my livestock. If I hire a herder, then I will tell them where I want my livestock, how long they should be there, etc. This is all complicated. I think you need to de complicate this whole thing. Decide if this is a job description and have some official person write up an official description. IF you pay the producer for this job, then let them write up the job description.

Picking up where we left off before public comment

Comment

Number eleven on version A. With lessons learned. If something isn't working in an area, then we need to come up with something different to use.

Comment

I think I was just venting on that item. We have been doing this range riding for what, eight years now and we don't have any lessons learned. I think it is a big concern across our community. We continually talk about changing wolf pack behavior, and I don't think it is on the payroll of a producer hired range rider to take that on.

Comment

I think it is a well-expressed vent. I think we should be taking advantage of all the learning that the range riders on the ground have. This will help all of us understand why things work and why they don't work. I support your point. It combines duties of range riders and conflict specialists. Maybe we should have a section on how to compile these lessons learned as well as share them back. We have talked previously about having a meeting where the range riders share what they have learned. There are cases where range riding just doesn't work. It may be that it didn't work because of the terrain or because there aren't enough resources. I think we need to find how range riding is applied to answer the why question, not just what did and didn't work.

Comment

I like the concept also. We do this in our communities where we do a pause and then lessons learned. The last sentence of version A number 11. I cringe a little bit when I hear something isn't working no matter what tool in the toolbox is being used. It doesn't mean that they aren't working. If there is conflict, then we should come back together to evaluate which tools are doing the best job.

Comment

I agree in this first sentence that we've got to learn some lessons here. The fact that we are not communicating on this level enough builds distrust. I think we are putting too much on the local range rider to think that they can change wolf pack behavior. The department needs to step up to help that local range rider when things escalate.

Comment

I was trying to figure if we could add or subtract things from our conversations, but the question still remains: What did we miss?

Comment

I just want to say that you have all come a long way as a group on this.

Review tasks from the day and consider day two agenda adjustments

Comment

I feel that the entire WAG group needs to be a part of these documents at this point. I want everyone to have a voice in this.

Comment

I was wondering with the remaining time that we have, can we create a clear path forward to start tomorrow. It would be really nice for the group to say, "the base document is this, and then add these things from one to the other." I would like some certainty on how we are going to get this done.

Comment

I understand the importance of this. There are things going on in the world right now that make it difficult for me to devote my efforts here.

Comment

I think we should go through A and use it as our skeleton because it seemed like several folks agreed to that version.

Comment

I don't mind the idea of picking a base document as long as we can pull from the other. I am comfortable using A as long as we can pull from B.

Comment

I am comfortable combining the documents. The documents in A and B are very similar. There are only certain paragraphs that we need to work on, so we can focus there. It seems like we just went through it, so I don't see why we should go through it again.

Comment

I like the idea of using version A as the base, while being prepared to move items over from version B.

Comment

If we start with A, we need to understand that we have to really hear from folks. It is up to all of us to make sure we pull all the items from one to the other, so please speak up. If we go with A, let's just tack down the concepts and come back at this with the wordsmithing afterwards. Get the concepts down and then go to the grammar.

Comment

I think a lot of department staff are thinking we should go with version B and pull in version A.

Comment

I agree that we should start with version B. It seems like version A has a lot of good points, but some may not need to be addressed in this section. Version B is more specific and paired down to the duties of a range rider.

Comment

I'm not vetted to which version to start with. It is hard to go back and forth with each version. I think we need to combine them into one.

Comment

There're the WAG members and then there is the WIG members that provide technical expertise. This will be a WAG decision that informs our recommendation to the director. To me, version B is a checklist, so it makes sense for staff to like this one for a field usability. Version A is more of a policy

document that will help guide everything. I think the question is are we wanting a field checklist or a policy type document.

Comment

I created an edited version with the comments that we discussed today. I am happy to send it to several folks as a base document to start with.

Comment

I think document A is the one to start with tomorrow.

Comment

I think there are some confusion with version B being the departments opinion. Version A is only from the livestock community and version B has input from several different members on WAG. I think version B is just a paired down version of A.

Comment

This is the struggle when you have two versions. There is a tendency to compete. We all went through a long process and we need to remember that they are very similar. I don't want us to compete to decide which version to use. Is there a way that we can get past this question of which version to start with? We can get this across the finish.

Comment

I appreciate that. There are some real challenges trying to create a third version from the first two versions. Responding to the purpose of this document: this is a critical piece of the livestock interaction protocol. This whole concept of needing a definition of range riding is because of the use of range riding in the protocol. The group said that if we are going to utilize range riding in the protocol, then we need to come from a common understanding of what it is. This is so we can move forward with the term. This wasn't meant to be a checklist in relation to a contract or DPCA-L, this was supposed to be coming to a common ground.

Comment

I saw some stuff in version A and B that I provided. We shouldn't look at these two versions as competing. I think we should start with A as a base. Some of the things are phrased in a way that makes the livestock community is more comfortable. That doesn't mean that we can't change things or add things into it. I think there is something to be said about the producers taking this on and providing something that is comfortable with them and I want to honor that. I don't see them as competing. I want to come to a common spot.

Comment

I shared these documents with my constituents, and they all liked version B. They felt like it was a good representation of what a good range rider should be. We are trying to use the lessons learned on range riders in this. This is a way to try to create a uniform strategy that can be applied fairly across the board. I would like to honor the individual effort of those that take the responsibility. You can't have two competing versions.

Comment

I appreciate what was said. Some of the things that are in version A were copy pasted from the original. I took offense when it was said that I didn't include all points of view. IF the producers solely did this version, then it would just say, "keep the wolves away from cattle." Period. End of

story. So, I thought I did a good job of including several other points of view. IF you put must haves or must dos, then this will fail. You can't have that here.

Comment

Addressing this point of litigation. We are only advising, and we are not writing rules.

Comment

We started the meeting with our fruit and flower ranks because there are no ranks. This is about an egalitarian approach. WDFW is not the WAG. WAG is the guidance to the director. The reason why so many WDFW staff are here is not only because to provide technical assistance, but also because we have needs. We absolutely have to think about the litigation, and we have to think about state auditing because it is an agency need. We try to communicate to everyone so they can understand. I think WDFW staff are just trying to express the needs of the agency while trying to not take away the role of WAG which is guiding the agency.

Comment

We do this every day folk. We take several documents and put them into one. ON the version thing, it is going to be very hard. There is going to be folks that feel they don't have a voice. A silly idea let's put both documents into one and just start wilding away the pieces that are repetitive. Even if it is crafting something on the fly during the meeting tomorrow.

Comment

I am wondering if we could have both versions together in one. I think it would be easier to follow.

Comment

I see tomorrows task a little different. Today we discussed each item, but tomorrow we will actually be editing the document. It is a little clunky, but it might be worth doing if it means we can get past this. One WAG member has the work done already in editing version A, so we could use that. Or if Maci would like to send the notes around, then that could be helpful as well.

Comment

I agree. I endorse using the WAG members version that has already been worked on. Maybe we could use that one as a template for tomorrow.

Comment

If we can get that version tonight and look at the two that it came from, then that will work. I would just like one template to work off of.

Comment

I'm struggling here. It makes folks feel like their version wasn't used when we pick a version. I want to try to overcome that to make sure that all of our voices are heard.

Comment

I'm a little amazed that this is what we are getting stuck on. My proposal is that we should just do the combined version of both of them and have Rob combine them.

Comment

I am good with that, but I would still like to see the WAG members version just for perspective. I think we should go around the group to call to see where everyone is at.

Comment

This frustrates me terribly. We could have done this in the time that we talked about how we are going to do it. We just tried to get something on the table. Let's wind this up and get on down the road.

Group did a round robin to determine how tomorrow will be implemented.

Check out

Everyone checked out around the room.

Meeting adjourned for the day

Wolf Advisory Group

April 1, 2020

Meeting Notes

Online Meeting

WAG members: Diane Gallegos, Dave Duncan, Lisa Stone, Paula Swedeen, Samee Charriere, Tim Coleman, Tom Davis, Bill Kemp, Jess Kayser Dan Paul, Jessica Kelley, Lynn Okita, Don Dashielle

WDFW staff members: Donny Martorello, Julia Smith, Dan Brinson, Trent Roussin, Annemarie Prince, Joey McCanna, Ben Maletzke, Ellen Heilhecker, Jeff Wade, Steve Pozzanghera, Staci Lehman, Scott McCorquodale, Grant Samsill, Maci Yungdahl

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

US Forest Service: Robert Garcia

Welcome and check in

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

Review agenda and make any adjustments

No adjustments.

Revise definition of range riding

Comment

My big picture perspective is this. I wasn't involved in drafting the two versions we looked at yesterday. One of the things we were struggling with is that we are trying to come up with a tool that covers all things range riding that will solve specific problems we have encountered. We are trying to come up with a perfect tool to cover everything, and I think we are stuck there. I think we should try to keep in mind what we are trying to do here and some of the things we are trying to put in here should really live somewhere else. Try not to make this the tool that does everything you think of.

Comment

I agree. As we are working through the guts of the versions, we need to figure out what we are trying to accomplish here. What is it that we need as we move forward? We need something that is legally defensible, something that builds trust, and helps to build relationships. Having flexibility within the document is important, and to include accountability.

Comment

Along those very same lines, I was wondering if it is time to revisit what the purpose of writing this description was. We need to make sure that what we are trying to come up with is what we as the WAG had determined what is necessary.

Comment

I think I recall one of the big drivers of this definition of range riding is the recent scenarios that has led to losses of wolf packs. I think we are trying to move toward a standardized way of range riding.

Yes, there will always be some variation between each landscape, but we need to define human presence and range riding. We keep asking the “why” question when packs are removed. The driver is what kind of a system, program, or standardization of what this means. WAG is here to say this is what we think are some of the key issues and then work from there.

Comment

I think the other thing we don't want to forget is that we learned from the Department that they were unaware of the caliber of range riding that was happening on the landscape. As mentioned, building community trust by having an agreed upon document to use.

Facilitator shares document to review (combination of both A & B).

Comment

I am wondering what folks think about when I read the first sentences of both, maybe pulling those out to combine them and have a purpose statement.

Comment

I like that idea. One thing that hit me was that it included some flexibility as well as accountability in it. I think we could change the language a bit though. Using the word “must” won't really be inspiring for those who are producers or range riders, so maybe change that wording. Or if we need to use that word, then let's make sure that those duties truly are must haves or must dos.

Comment

I agree with that. There are some areas where there is a “must”. But there are some areas that may not be a must because those are just additions. Just be mindful of what our goal here is and what is going to be the most helpful with this.

Comment

One of the things is that I don't think we should try to define both chronic conflict zones (CCZ) and range riding in the same sentence. We need to make sure we are clear.

Comment

Good point. You have duties that are a must and then you have accountability that is a must and then you have skills and abilities that are needed to do the duties. Maybe divide duties and how those duties are carried out.

Comment

I agree that we can take care of the CCZ in this first section, but I think we need to make sure it is separated from range riding while pointing out the connection between them. We need to keep in mind where this piece fits in with the entire protocol as a whole. As mentioned yesterday with den sites being in here, it may not be a range riders' duty. We need to remind how certain topics are addressed in the protocol, and not try to address them here.

Comment

I wonder how were capturing these points being brought up. Yesterday we felt like we lost some of those points, so I am wondering how they are being captured today. It seems like there are some key phrases that could be added to the first paragraph from version B. I feel like the CCZ should be a part of this range riding description. Just because it is elsewhere in the document, it doesn't say how it is associated with range rider duties.

Comment

It seems like there is this perception that range riders should be doing something different than what a producer does. If the producer is doing all the things that fall under range riding definition, then they don't need a range rider. I think by focusing on differentiating the two may cause some conflict. I think we should look at all the activities as a whole regardless of who is doing those activities/duties.

Comment

I agree with that. Most of the situations out there with livestock, we don't need a range rider because it hasn't gotten to that point yet. The first sentence of A and B is that range rider may be producers that take on those duties. I am curious if you feel that this captures that or if you think it needs work.

Comment

I don't think we need wordsmithing. What is important to me is that the things are getting done. Just specifically who is doing them.

Comment

A concern that I have. Is there a way of having those general duties, but the department being able to accurately say, "yes, range riding happened?"

Comment

As long as we can agree on what duties need to happen, then I think we can talk about how we can monitor that those duties are actually getting done.

Comment

I think this goes back to the comment of the right tool. Right now, this tool is trying to be everything. I think that if we focus a majority of this section on the range riding activity and not range riders, then there will be less conflict. The emphasis is on the activity of what range riding is, not the individuals that are involved in that activity. I like the idea of having the first sentence being the most critical. It should be short and sweet and roll off our tongues so anyone can repeat it verbatim.

Comment

I am agreeing with what is being said here to delineate the activity verse the participants. Going through most of version A, it actually describes the activities.

Comment

We talked with several producers to produce version A. I think maybe we have two types of range riders here. The producer type that does some activities, and then once we have an issue arise then we call in the WDFW range rider that would be considered more professional. I was having a hard time coming up with one definition to fit all.

Comment

That's an interesting notion. Just want to throw this out there. One of the things I heard is that some of the producers don't have time to do these activities or don't have the resources to hire them. The person you are talking about would do kind of both. If the WDFW range riders are the only ones out there on the landscape, then it would be difficult to try to divide the two. I am thinking about retaining the sensitivity that some producers may not want some range riders doing certain activities. Some producers want to control some of the activities that are out there.

Comment

I am just trying to find solutions. One thing that the producer has to do is livestock management and movement. If they are not doing that, then the whole thing doesn't work. If some folks want to put a WDFW range rider out there right off the bat, then at some point they need to allow them to move their livestock.

Comment

That's a good point to have a more standardize range rider to provide assistance when issues arise. I think what we are trying to do is craft the perfect introduction and then a set of duties/suggestions on how best to do that. I think we should focus on this paragraph. Maybe we could even turn to the experts to help provide the key components of range riding to add that in. It is sort of like the professionals are helping to craft this document. It might delay it a bit, but at least we could get the paragraph done.

Comment

Often times when we are talking about range riding, it may be the producer or one of its employees that is doing the duties.

Comment

I agree. That's why I really wanted to hear the group in the NE when they were to talk to the Governor. I think we should talk to the experts in the environments that we are in to get their expertise. Experts will have a lot to say about how we can or can't do this successfully.

Comment

I just kind of like to step back a minute and think about the point that maybe this doesn't need to be the perfect little paragraph. I think maybe we can keep this simple and keep some of the duties within the contracts.

Comment

The last few folks were talking about moving cattle. Some range riding activities may be involved in moving cattle. If there is a range rider that contacts the producer to move the cattle, but the producer doesn't want to move the cattle, then we need to look at this question: Is moving the cattle one of the things that shall be done to be considered effective range riding?

Break

Comment

My question is, what would cause the range rider to suggest that the cows need to be moved right away?

Comment

I could try to address that. I think the biggest situation is if a new den site or rendezvous site is discovered along the way and to determine if moving

Comment

We don't know where den sites or rendezvous are on the ground.

Comment

If you don't want the cows to go in the den site area, then we need to know where they are.

Comment

I think you should know where the den sites are. Maybe if the range rider discovers the den site themselves and maybe that is when the range rider contacts the producer to maybe move the cattle.

Comment

Those are just good animal husbandry practices that we already do.

Comment

I didn't mean to get us into the weeds about specific duties.

Comment

People knowing about the den site or rendezvous site. The conflict specialists are notifying the producer that will be affected. So not every producer is affected.

Comment

The question was when we would ever have to move cattle. I don't think we are talking about moving the entire herd. I think it could be as simple as pairing cows and calves back together or bunch them back up before dark, so they are more defensible. I hope that the conversation would move away from thinking about moving cattle on a large scale.

Comment

Let's start with the first sentence. I think it wraps it up nicely. Can we accept that first sentence and move on?

Comment

Yes, I can accept it as part of the whole. But not the whole.

Comment

I suggest putting deter in that first sentence. It's to reduce and deter. If you see a wolf by your cows, you want to scare it off. So, I think the word deter needs to be there.

Comment

If the word conflict is the right word. We know that we have wolves and livestock that interact regularly, so maybe its when there is conflict. Not all interactions result in conflict.

Comment

That one sentence does the definition right there. The rest of it doesn't need to be there because it is in the protocol.

Comment

I am not sure why, but for some reason it gives me a gut feel that they need to be driving wolves out of an area where livestock may be to avoid all interaction. I think that if wolves are in there and not causing a problem, then we don't need to remove them. So maybe focus on conflict.

Comment

I understand. I was trying to avoid the conflict term because it creates issues. To me the interaction word is more encompassing than the conflict term.

Comment

From my perspective, I believe the goal is to reduce the negative interactions. Not to reduce all interactions because I don't think that is possible. There is something to the overall interaction, but we have heard that cows can learn to defend themselves. Personally, I would feel more comfortable if we put the word "negative" in front of the word interactions to avoid the term conflict.

Comment

I am following that line. We will never know if an interaction is negative or not until it becomes negative. Right now, I think we are trying to get the concept on the paper. Maybe at the start of the sentence we can add the "activity" of range riding.

Comment

I like the use of activity. When I read this, when it says reduce it isn't trying to eliminate everything. Overall, there is not a lot of positivity of having wolves and livestock interact, but I think we should use a tool to do our best to keep them separated. I think the idea is to reduce interactions overall, so not just negative interactions.

Comment

I just want to remind everyone that we have a lot of wolf packs that currently overlap with livestock areas. There is currently a lot of interaction that is going on throughout WA and it hasn't been negative.

Comment

It just seems like the tool is to help reduce predation and livestock stress. So maybe we should spell that out here.

Comment

How about this... add "and deter depredations" at the end to encompass that?

Comment

I find this interesting that we use to have the word depredation in there and we changed that to conflict. Now we are looking at putting depredation back in there. Maybe we should think about why we took it out.

Comment

I have no problem with the word conflict.

Comment

As I am looking at version B, when it talks about monitor livestock, I think it talks about how range riding is different from all the other tools. However, I think we need to describe why it is different from all the other non lethals.

Comment

On the first sentence, I think we are close. I agree with describing why range riding is different from the others. I think this is getting at "what is the duty". We will describe the duties below but is there a specific sentence that we could add that briefly encompasses a range riders' duty.

Comment

It seems like we are going down a rabbit hole. Their focus should be on monitoring livestock. There are other carnivores on the landscape, so it isn't just about wolves and livestock. It is about monitoring the livestock.

Comment

Maybe we can use monitoring livestock in the first sentence. I think that it is a good descriptor of what is yet to come below.

Comment

This is a job description. I think we have already defined range riding and we should try to keep it open on both ends to be creative depending on the situation. The department can decide what the responsibilities are for their range riders and I can decide what the responsibilities are for my hired range riders.

Comment

Maybe we should look at what he is saying. We need to find that consistent core of what needs to be contained in what range riding is. Then we should be able to know what a range rider is doing in general.

Comment

Looking at both versions, they say the same thing. Just pick one and go with it.

Comment

I agree that they are very similar. Are we saying that that kind of communication is core to what being a range rider is? If so, that that is a core element.

Comment

Grammar and writing are not my specialty. Adding the term of "communication is KEY" would really highlight this section.

Comment

So, do we need the last part of the last sentence? Does item one changes the other items? To avoid this looking like a checklist, maybe we can change that somehow.

Comment

I don't think communication should be in item one. I think this should be in the first paragraph because it flows into all other items.

Comment

Maybe to get this in the go-fast mode. maybe we could do like ten minutes on each section?

Comment

I support that if we are going to get done.

Comment

I support it!

Comment

I like version B for item two. I think it describes the flexibility. I think it could be tightened up a little bit because some of the things could be moved to the contract rather than in here.

Comment

I concur. I like the start of version B to. The second sentence of version B could mean a whole lot more than what is stated here. Maybe we should rework the moving and grouping so it says what we mean.

Comment

We need to keep the grazing plan in this section because the forest service requires some things. Is the department willing to pay a range rider whenever a producer asks the range rider to that their cows need to be moved?

Comment

We did hear from Daniel Curry, that when asked by producers to move cows, he is doing it. The context in which he is moving cows under producers ask is to adapt to the season and honor the grazing plans.

Comment

Thinking about the moving and grouping and the proposed question. Yes, I think that we would pay our department range riders to sort and pair livestock if that is to help reduce the interactions.

Comment

I'm not disagreeing with what is said. There is one common theme, we are assuming that there are a lot of folks out there thinking that range riders can manage livestock. But that is the producer's responsibility and most producers will not give a range rider permission to move cattle.

Comment

I think we are getting in the weeds. I think the second sentence is trying to explain the specific duties, but the first sentence sums up the assistance part.

Comment

Hearing what is said. We are not talking about livestock movement on a large scale that will affect grazing plans. I used to herd calves back with their moms when I was a wolf biologist and then contact the producer. I think that kind of small scale is what we are talking about here.

Comment

It seems like it isn't so much hazing, but it is bunching livestock when approved by the producer. I think that is an important tactic for range riding.

Comment

Herding cattle. We talk about it when it works in Montana, there are plenty of areas where it wont work. Herding cattle is an art form. I disagree in that this is not about herding cattle.

Comment

I'm just wondering if moving is a better word to use rather than herding. I am looking for the words that say, "we just discovered a den site and what do you call when you move the cows away from that danger zone".

Comment

It feels like we are going down the wrong path. I do know cows and the terrain that we have here. You have to know the cows before you start moving them or you may accidently leave some cows behind. This may lead to noncompliance of plans.

Comment

We are beating a dead horse. Herding is a term that cannot be used. It does not belong in here anywhere. We have talked about what the movement could be when it is moving cows away from den site.

Comment

I guess my concern. How do we define the livestock management activity duties in relation to range rider vs producers?

Comment

I think there is a perception among some range riders that they don't feel like they can bring a calf back to the herd, so I think it is important to write that down.

Lunch

Comment

I am wondering if we should use the term of expectations instead of duties. I don't think we need to spell out each specific duty during this.

Comment

I think there is a breakdown in trust if the range riders feel as though they can't move the producer's cattle.

Comment

I wanted to say that I think, considering the problem areas that have occurred. it's got to be more specific (range riding). In order for range riding to be considered adequate, it has to have these certain duties. It keeps coming back to the problem areas are created because the range riding has not been adequate or happening at all. It is too variable at this point. The public needs that sort of certainty in what range riding is. Just the opening statements are not specific enough.

Comment

I like the second number three because it really sums it up.

Comment

Regarding collar data in item four, there is no real-time collar data so I think that should be changed. Real time data does not exist.

Comment

Yes, I think the real time statement should be taken out.

Comment

I wonder how folks would feel about accepting the second number four because the communication piece in the first number four has already been addressed above.

Comment

We should incorporate the term using in front of the collar data piece.

Comment

Yes, I was going to say utilize, but using works good to. Is this the appropriate place to talk about keeping cattle bunched up as well as sick and injured animals in this item?

Comment

Those are good things to consider. We could create a new section to incorporate that as well.

Comment

I believe that is part of the herding and bunching and has no place here.

Comment

I wanted to note that there is an item below that discusses the carcass removal.

Comment

This bunching thing is no different than the herding thing. They want the cattle scattered over a large landscape when it comes to the grazing plan, so sometimes you can't bunch cattle. I think we need to keep bunching out of this.

Comment

Good point. Are there ever scenarios where having calves stray away, and that is never a good thing. Maybe we should include strays at that point.

Comment

I can't answer that. Very seldom is the calf separated from the cow. There usually is something that caused the separation.

Comment

Maybe we have the terminology about returning stray calves rather than bunching?

Comment

I think you could probably put it in there. I really feel that if you have a bunch of stray calves, your dealing with a symptom with a cause.

Comment

I could be driving down a forest road and have a couple calves take off running and they won't get out of the way. You could get a calf separated from it's mother by about a mile or so. I think separation could and does happen, and it may not be from a carnivore out there.

Comment

We are just recognizing that there are some terms that provoke certain feelings from the livestock community. I'm trying not to go to far down in the weeds. But maybe the language is to pair and sort cattle based on the producer's instruction in regard to the grazing permit. There are several different unique cases that could cause separation of cows and calves.

Comment

We know that stray calves alone are a recipe for not a good situation. Having an explicit direction for the range rider to return calves to the herd would be good here. I don't think there is any grazing plan that would go against that. This is regardless of what caused the separation.

Comment

I have mixed emotions because this comes under normal animal husbandry. If you have a WDFW range rider out there where a producer doesn't want him moving his cows back across the fence is

an issue of trust. That is the issue here. It is kind of hard to separate cows and calves for a long time. Motherhood is motherhood and calves want to nurse.

Comment

What does that mean for language? Does this mean that this language is okay, or it needs to be taken out?

Comment

I think the less you put in this document the better. In the end we will have to look at what the document says and think from there.

Comment

It doesn't matter who brings the calf back. I think the purpose of this document is to identify what the activities are that have to happen, then figure out who is doing the activity.

Comment

I agree. I was under the impression that we are talking about range riding activity regardless of who is do the range riding.

Comment

This idea of should we specifically call out the return of a stray calf should live in item two because the livestock management could include that. Also, in number 5 the language is incorporated in one of the versions in item two. This is duplicative.

Comment

I think item 5 is already in number 2. I think we should include the "activity of range riding" instead of "manner of which range riding is implemented".

Comment

I would prefer the version A. I like the why statement at the end of that one.

Comment

I agree with that.

Comment

I think that the habituation issue shouldn't leave this document. It is the why.

Comment

I see the why statement. Is habituation the right term? Is it to prevent or influence something?

Comment

Habituation is a well-defined behavioral shift. We should make room for anyone to chase off a wolf if it is a threat to livestock. One person chasing a wolf off one time will not change that wolf's behavior. If it's around cows a majority of the time and only one time it has a negative interaction by being chased off, then that wolf will forget about it immediately. There is a lot of literature out there that clearly defines habituation.

Comment

Habituation is not the right word to use here. It's problematic to use this for carnivore behavior. As indicated, habituation is very well defined in the literature. Livestock habituation is not unusual, but carnivore habituation is unusual.

Comment

Can we come up with a phrase here then? Let's put something in here so that we all know what we are talking about.

Comment

Just a thought. Maybe we don't need the second part of it because this will be a part of each contract. If we see a wolf, we will honestly try to shoot it if it is within the cows.

Comment

Something to think about. There are places in the state where you can't do this now because they are a federally listed species.

Comment

The beginning of the protocol does speak to that a bit.

Comment

I appreciate the honesty. I think its good for the purpose of this discussion to be careful of using the definition of caught in the act. If a wolf is in the act of attacking, then it can be shot. But just want to point out that a wolf being in the presence of cattle may not constitute for a caught in the act.

Comment

Just want to point out the same thing with the definition of a caught in the act. The wolf may be just dispersing through the area and not constitute a caught in the act.

Comment

I have strong feelings about the requirement of having folks stay out overnight. It is already dangerous enough being out there during the day. I think it is a huge liability for the health and risk of the person doing the activity. I don't think the department should require this.

Comment

I have a lot of concerns here. I just can't begin to see some range riders to camp out in the range overnight. If we are that far along that we think we need that requirement, then I feel that we need the WDFW range rider to come out and do that. Which brings me back to two types of range riders.

Comment

I agree. This to me goes back to the job description of the states range rider. I think that is their decision.

Comment

I hear loud and clear with the issue of staying overnight. In some situations, it is necessary. For the point of state contracted range riders, staying overnight is something we can't ask them to do. (offered language for draft) How do we not go through the same situation as in the Kettles? How do we have better coverage is the concept I think we are working towards.

Comment

I agree. Maybe we are thinking about looking more at a strategy when it is needed in a CCZ. Maybe it shouldn't be in this section as standard for range rider duties. This would be contingent on the resources available.

Comment

When I read this, it seems that if the range rider notices there is a situation arising, then we need to build up the efforts. The range rider will do what the contract says, so I think we are getting to specific here.

Comment

We still need some balance of specificity so that when the department says, range riding occurred, we know what is going on. We need to think about how far a range rider needs to travel to be out there and when the high points of interaction occur.

Comment

Once we have depredations or are close to it, we have to have another plan and I don't think this should be part of the range rider duties.

Comment

When everyone is monitoring the situation and everything is ramping up, it seems like that is when the planning needs to happen to do shifts. We don't want to put individual range riders working several extended hours because that is not good. (offered a language suggestion) Something to convey that we shouldn't put all of this on one range riders' shoulders. There may be times when you notice increased testing out there and some increased presence may be used to solve that.

Comment

The public and all of us have expectations of what range riding means. We shouldn't have to go down a checklist because it should be understood already by everyone. On the point of when there is an issue, WDFW needs to come in and help. In chronic situations, it may require additional measures. A majority of cases, we don't have to do additional measures. Overall, this will work better for everyone to the extent that every job has a certain set of expectations to do.

Comment

The logistics of how to get the job done should be elsewhere.

Comment

For me, it is really just having the resources to be able to provide the shifts. Human safety is important. It doesn't have to exclusively be CCZ to have the additional resources. Just as long as we have the resources.

WAG member provided language to use for item seven and other members provided some rewording. (documented in the main draft)

Comment

The protocol is guidelines for us. There would have to be a real reason for us to leave the carcass in the field.

Comment

I understand why this carcass sentence is included. There needs to be a recognition of why carcass removal needs to be there or doesn't need to happen. I think the version B is good if we add some different wording.

Comment

This is a function. Because other parts of the protocol specify removing carcasses. If a carcass is found, then the function should be to inform the needed folks in order to handle the situation. Folks don't really go looking for carcasses.

Comment

The first sentence of version A gets at the communication piece to inform certain folks when a carcass is found. I remember that there was a change in that leaving some carcasses on the landscape may be a recommendation for some cases. It should be addressed as to when carcass removal is needed or not.

Comment

A lot of what range riders do is looking for problems whether they are alive or dead, so looking for carcasses is what range riders do. Maybe it should be somewhere else in the protocol for when carcass is used for incremental.

Comment

I like that this should go somewhere else. I don't want this to become the expectation because sometimes it wouldn't work if we are in a removal situation.

Comment

Yes, there is a place in the current protocol for the carcass to be used. If livestock are not in the area, then there may not be a necessity for the carcass to be removed.

Public Comment

Comment

I've been learning for the last couple days. First of all, it seems like there is a mix of duties and procedures. The activities seem to be varied and random. It occurred to me that maybe it should be to define the responsibilities of the department and define the responsibilities of the rancher and then bring it together. Maybe looking at it that way to differ the responsibilities of each group.

Comment

I appreciate everyone for being willing to make this WAG meeting happen. I appreciate all of the discussion you have been having. I think it is weird that we are writing a job description for a job that none of you have expertise in and have not done before. I think it would be incredibly beneficial to have experts (names a few) that do the job currently to help try to define what you are discussing. Those folks are not part of the conversation and it is a bummer. I have seen or heard that there has been a lot of focus on the producers on what they do or won't do. I think we should look at what the department has control over and what it doesn't have control. They have the control of choosing when to kill the animals. The requirements are there so that if the range rider doesn't do the requirements, then they shouldn't use that as a factor to kill wolves. The department is using taxpayer dollars and wolves are part of the trust. I appreciate your time.

Comment

I support what I just heard. Individuals with expertise should be brought into this conversation. I feel that this document should be a job description for it to be considered as a nonlethal. The departmental range rider that comes in shouldn't be doing anything different than the producers range rider. There should be a standard set of range riding job duties to hold that requirement regardless of who is doing the activity. IF you are going to kill wolves, there needs to be accountability which is where the GPS unit comes into play to provide that accountability piece.

Continued...

Comment

I think it is worth to stay on to finish the document so we can get something done.

Comment

I know there were other important things to get to in the agenda. Maybe we could look at picking up another call since we are all stuck at home.

Comment

I agree.

Comment

Ditto.

Break

Comment

I like the version B of item 10. I think it captures what WDFW needs for current contracted range riders as well as how they want them handled. The other version includes geo-referenced photo, but it would have to be standardized as far as where and how often. There are some benefits to both, but I like version B as it is the departments standard first.

Comment

Trying to differentiate between the activity and the range rider. I think this is focused on the range rider. For the activity, we need clear documentation to show that this activity is happening. I think they are all good ways. Let's go back to the value of ten which is that range riding should be documented to confirm that it is being conducted.

Comment

I agree. The details that are laid out in both versions should be in the contract. Right now, the GPS is the method of choice, but ten years from now that may change. Instead of discussing the method type, we need to identify the need for some sort of documentation.

Comment

This is going to be seen as a trust issue with the producers.

Comment

I like the version B of item 10. I think that it's an important tool to observe and look at where you've been to understand what you're trying to do. It helps to map out what you've been doing. If you are having problems, it can help you cross check yourself. Also, there is a lot of accountability in the GPS tool. I see it as an efficiency issue and accountability issue. There is also a certain amount of

responsibility here. Sometimes you just need those extra tools to help even with the trust issue. The activities of bunching livestock don't mean you're moving the whole herd. I think the Forest Service is very willing to work with the producer to reduce conflicts.

Comment

We have come a long way at this. One way to get folks to not comply is to require them to do something. We need to share with folks the rationale or need for the GPS unit to help drive that point. It would rub some folks the wrong way to force it upon non WDFW range riders. Documenting the activity of range riders will help provide accountability. Maybe making it a requirement for department staff but encouraging other folks to do it to as well as provide the why.

Comment

I think that is helpful. My assumption in Version B number 10 is that the GPS unit would only apply to WDFW funded range riders and not apply to the producer hired range riders. This state is spending money anyway if they have to go to lethal control. I don't think we should step away from the accountability piece. Daily logs are still required and completed. It isn't as fail safe, but it is hard to fake stuff. There is a way to look for the mistakes. I would rather have something that requires some sort of documentation without requiring something that feels like surveillance.

Comment

I am just as frustrated. We have spent six days on the definition of range riding. Whenever we put something in a document like this that requires the producers to do something, I don't agree with it. I don't think it is anyone's business where I am traveling on my range. I think it is time for the department to have requirements.

Comment

I agree. I think it is time to put some requirements on the departments. On the logging of the range riders, I think that needs to be put in the contract. IF you are going to have this requirement on range riders, then I think the department staff should have the requirement as well. This is super frustrating.

Comment

I just wonder if it would help you out by having the GPS unit to help to not have to write down the locations.

Comment

All that does is show lack of trust.

Comment

I am trying to understand. Are you both opposed to having any sort of documentation in there? We don't have to specify what kind of documentation.

Comment

Absolutely not. I think there should be some sort of paper trail. When you tell someone that it is another requirement, I have a hard time with that.

Comment

Not opposed to having some sort of log. There needs to be a standardization to the log that is put in place for the DPCA-L contract. I think this document should just have that there needs to be some sort of documentation but shouldn't spell out the specifics of what that documentation is.

Comment

In the world that we live in in the state, when conflict occurs and it gets to the point of lethal removal, we need to have a certain level of documentation to move forward. We have had audit findings and have a criminal investigation going on currently. It has put us in a situation where we have to have that kind of documentation. We should be very specific for what WDFW range riders are doing/should do, but not to require others to do if they do not want to. Even taking pictures to have the geo referenced material would work to help us make the decisions that we have to make.

Comment

I agree. I think we are looking at the cost-share range riders here which is state money and we can't ignore that fact.

Comment

I agree. I am not trying to hide anything. When you say state dollars, it is taxpayers' dollars. I am concerned for the safety of my family and employees out on the range with a GPS unit.

Comment

What is done with that information that is collected and how is it secured? It isn't just the producer community that have issues with GPS, there has also been some concern by the environmental community.

Comment

As far as what is required for a log should be in the contract. Maybe we can go to the color of money to determine which type of method used. If its WDFW, then it is GPS. If it is cost share, then it is the activity logs.

Comment

I think parts of number eleven could be incorporated in number 10. The concept of doing lessons learned is really important, but I think we should put that language in a different part of the protocol. Because we've put so much stock in the activity of range riding, it really does make sense to put something in the protocol for everyone to glean lessons learned from conducting the activity to ensure the effectiveness of the tool.

Comment

I think this could be put in the different part of the protocol. The last part of eleven raises some concerns with the conflict specialists because sometimes there can't be a resolution no matter how much effort is done.

Comment

I will not take on a public grazing lease. I would rather help the department to identify any issues on the range. When wolves did affect the cattle, then I would want to call on the department to come fix the issue because then it wouldn't be on me. I feel like it is always seen as the producer's fault and I am sick of that. We have great responsibility as producers, and I feel that managing wildlife should be on the department so when it goes wrong, it is on them.

Comment

I agree. As producers or hunters, the responsibility of managing the wildlife is on the department. It is not the producer's responsibility to manage the wildlife.

Comment

I think there could be a lot of things learned from wolf scat when on the range. I think we are missing an opportunity here.

Comment

I feel like a bit of a sigh that we got through this. Do we want to kind of stop here for the day and chart out the next steps? I want to end on a good note, and I feel good with what we accomplished.

Comment

In the past we have let the department write up what we have discussed. Maybe it would be good to have someone put this all together in some sort of document to be reviewed.

Comment

I agree with both. I don't believe a lot of producers would agree with this document, but I would like to see it tweaked and reviewed again.

Comment

I like the proposal from the two folks. One more proposal, with the public stating that range riders are not included in the conversation, I wanted to put out there that it may not be true. However, I am wondering as part of the review in the next phase, maybe we could circulate this to them to see if there is anything that we missed and give us some feedback.

Comment

I am wondering if we go that route it could become an endless circle. I would ask. maybe reach out to those folks in your community that includes the range riders and you be the funnel for that.

Comment

We can do that, but you guys also have range riders in your employ and maybe you guys should include that as well. Since there is going to be review, I just wanted to include this as a layer. I want to make sure that everyone feels comfortable with the decision.

Comment

I agree. The best way is to reach out to our own communities which includes those who don't have range riding or even wolves in their area. I think we need to have a powerful and good document to hold up here and I don't think time is of the essence.

Comment

I agree. We do have range riders on this WAG because we do this everyday and it is our life. I am not opposed to what is being said, but I just want to say that we don't need to have an outside entity come in for this.

Comment

I appreciate all the hard work and I agree. It is time to look at what we have done. I think we should reach out to others for advice for sure. Perhaps a misunderstanding about GPS data. It's not like a range rider would be like a collared wolf. It would be more of a private thing.

Comment

I am sure that the GPS unit information is under the FOIA and will be released. When do contracted range riders start working because this document may be under the time of essence piece?

Comment

First contracted range rider goes out in two weeks, pending the COVID-19 decisions.

Comment

I like the idea of the department being asked to take what we have done today and put something forward. I think the second half of number eleven should still be discussed because I am not sure where we landed there, and I would struggle on bringing something to the table.

Comment

I agree with more discussion of number eleven. I wanted to put out there a clarification on the public disclosure act changes regarding those under contract with WDFW. GPS locations of range riders exempt???

Comment

My question is about the range rider not going out because of COVID-19. Are you going to tell the wolves to not bother the livestock?

Comment

It is our understanding that they will go out. We are confirming that it will indeed fall under the agriculture section.

Review tasks from this meeting

Decided that the department will take the notes and come up with a final document to share.

Idea of a field trip to a producer's area was put on the table and well-liked by the group.

Idea of having another meeting to finalize more things before the grazing season. Well-liked by the group.

Check out

Everyone checked out around the room.

Meeting adjourned