

DRAFT – April 20, 2021

Section 9. Special focus areas (SFAs) for recurrent conflict mitigation

Definition

A Special Focus Area (SFA) is a geographic area (e.g., all or a portion of a pack territory) where livestock depredations occurred and incremental **lethal removal of wolves was authorized in two of the last three years.**¹

1. **Definition – lethal removal authorized in 2 of the last 3 years**

Goal

The shared goal within a Special Focus Area (SFA) is to **minimize livestock depredations to reduce the need for lethal removal of wolves.**

The Department's decision to establish a SFA is a recognition that repeated livestock loss and wolf removals are likely to cause significant hardship for producers and their animals, as well as their communities, wolf packs, the wolf advocate community, and WDFW staff.

2. **Goal – minimize depredations, reduce the need for lethal removal of wolves**

Designation of an SFA

The Director may designate a SFA when the definition is met.

Assessment

Once a SFA is designated, Department staff will coordinate a group to assess the situation and develop a formal plan. Department staff will facilitate the first discussion.

- a. The group will include **affected livestock producers, associated landowners, range riders, county sheriff representative (if applicable), land management agencies, and Department staff.**
- b. The assessment will include an evaluation of the strengths, weaknesses, effectiveness, and timeliness of the mitigation efforts staff and other involved parties have taken within the SFA for the past three years.
- c. The assessment document will form the basis for Special Focus Area conflict mitigation plan.
- d. The group will select a **mutually agreed upon, independent, third party reviewer.**

¹ In areas not designated as SFAs but where wolf-livestock conflict has resulted in lethal removal authorization for one year, it is standard practice for WDFW staff to emphasize these areas in planning for the upcoming grazing season.

- i. The reviewer should have experience with reducing wolf-livestock conflict and improving human-carnivore coexistence.
 - ii. Comments from the reviewer will be included in the assessment document.
3. Staff coordinate (facilitating that 1st discussion, not picking the 3rd party) “the group” to assess the situation and develop a formal plan w/ a 3rd party review
 - a. Group: affected producers, associated landowners, range riders, county sheriff representative (if applicable), land management agencies, and Dept. staff
 - b. Ask the group to describe what’s known about the prey base. If there’s an issue, notify applicable Dept. staff.
 - c. An independent person does the 3rd party review
 - d. The group would select the 3rd party

SFA Conflict Mitigation Plan

Based on the assessment (see above), the group will develop a SFA conflict mitigation plan focused on adaptive alternatives that seek to reduce or eliminate additional loss of livestock and attempt to break the need for repeated lethal removal of wolves in these areas. In developing the plan, the group will focus on non-lethal wolf deterrence methods and techniques designed to reduce wolf-livestock depredations.

The group must complete the conflict mitigation plan, working with affected livestock producers, prior to beginning of the next grazing season. Changes can be made to the plan, including requiring additional types of non-lethal deterrents, during the grazing season only with the agreement of the affected producers and the Department.

The conflict mitigation plan may include the use of:

- Methods that are currently known to have the highest potential for being effective and can be adapted through the grazing season.
- Additional non-lethal deterrents and the underlying reasoning for why this new approach will provide additional benefit.
- Enhanced proactive non-lethal deterrents, if they are available, what those deterrents are, how they will be used and the underlying reason for why this new approach will provide additional benefit.
- The best available knowledge of the prey base as it relates to the wolf-livestock conflict in the area. Information will be passed on to the appropriate Department staff.

The Department will:

- Attempt to deploy two collars in packs with five or more wolves observed during the annual survey.
- Work with the local group decide what types of collars are best for conflict mitigation (VHF, long-term monitoring, or four fixes/day) based on their assessment. In some cases, this could include utilizing a modified trapping schedule in an attempt to change wolf behavior.

- Make GPS collar information available to users with data sharing agreements to inform producers of potential problem areas and depredation sites. The Department will set GPS conflict collar parameters consistent with the group's decision (see [limitations of data sharing system and GPS collars](#)).

4. In this guidance: attempt 2 collars, and let the local group decide what types (VHF, long-term monitoring, or 4-fixes/day) of collars are best, based on their analysis for packs with 5 or more wolves observed during our annual survey

Lethal Removal Decisions in a SFA

If implementation of SFA conflict mitigation plans fail to prevent depredations that reach thresholds established in Section 6, lethal removal may be authorized as described in sections 6 and 7 of the protocol, with the following provisions:

- a. All parties will make a good faith effort to follow the guidance within the SFA conflict mitigation plan and are expected to proactively implement non-lethal mitigation tools.
 - b. WDFW and cooperating entities will allocate resources to parties participating in a SFA plan.
 - c. The Director will retain flexibility regarding lethal removal of wolves based on the unique circumstances of each SFA.
5.
 - a. Start with a general statement that all parties will make a good faith effort.
 - b. If participating in a proactive plan, then get them added resources.
 - c. It's an expectation that non-lethal methods are used proactively.
 - d. The Director will retain flexibility regarding the unique circumstances