

**Wolf Advisory Group
January 27, 2021, Meeting Notes
Microsoft Teams Meeting**

WAG members: Samee Charriere, Tom Davis, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Todd Holmdahl, Jess Kayser, Jessica Kelley, Bill Kemp, Lynn Okita, Nick Martinez, Rick Perleberg, Lisa Stone, Caitlin Scarano, and Paula Swedeen

WDFW staff members: Candace Bennett, Dan Brinson, Ben Maletzke, Donny Martorello, Joe McCanna, Scott McCorquodale, Steve Pozzanghera, Grant Samsill, Julia Smith, Kevin Robinette, Trent Roussin, and Jeff Wade

FWC Commission: Lorna Smith

US Forest Service: Robert Garcia

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

Welcome and check-in

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

Meeting Purpose

Finish Special Focus Areas language and address the list of questions associated with the proposed language.

Comment

I want to see if we can focus on the language first and the questions second?

Objections?

No Objections

Comment

I spent quite a bit of time talking to livestock producers who have wolves in their areas. I didn't get very good answers on this thing. I think one of the problems we have right now is what the governor is doing, I feel like there's no reason for us to agree to anything. The Washington Cattleman's Association gave me a "no" vote on this Section 9. The leadership in the hunting community was upset about how watered down the predator-prey relationship has become in the last decade. They are opposed to the whole thing. I don't know where this puts me. I have gotten feedback to not even go with a Section 9 period. What we have today is not working. Promises haven't been kept and they're not willing to go forward. I am just going to declare all of this upfront.

Comment

After the last meeting, we worked later that evening and kicked out the draft to you. I wanted to touch on some items in there that you all should have received. I wanted to highlight that on page 2 of the document it's the first call out in the right-hand margin, we have grappled with that before. Right now, not all range riders have access to data. We have struggled with the definition before. In the last statement in the callout box, we put in there what we already now have in the protocol. The question of if we should just use this repeat language is there. The last bullet in pink on page 2 is highlighted as well, since the last meeting we weren't sure what the question was there. We also grabbed some information from the protocol to see what was meant by it.

Comment

I was just wondering what the implications were of what was reported before your comment. I appreciate the fact that he's representing people but I'm wondering if his position means we're not going to get to sufficient consensus. I think it might be good for us to have some type of indication of if there isn't going to be an agreement before we dig into this.

Comment

I think that makes sense. Let's pulse the group right now. How many people, even with additional work today, couldn't bring themselves to support this Section 9? I can go around the room.

Comment

I have a question, someone made a statement about the hunting community not supporting Section 9, I don't understand that, considering that this section is focused on livestock interaction.

Comment

The hunting community believes that one of the biggest causes of these areas is a lack of prey populations. The department has dodged the issue for over a decade. They feel that it needs to be done. We need to be working at understanding those relationships. The document has been watered down to the point that if we bring some other party in, they feel that the department has ducked this issue for a decade, and because of that, they cannot go along with this document. One of the real causes of these areas is a lack of predator-prey research management and implementation. We have a bigger predator problem than wolves. Wolves moved in and inherited these problems and it has been completely ignored by the department and is little mentioned in this solution document.

Comment

With respect to Section 9, you're saying that just because it doesn't address the predator-prey relationship, hunters cannot support that.

Comment

It's because when we look into these areas we need to look into the causes. I don't represent every hunter in the state. This document continues to ignore this issue.

Comment

I am going to go around the room and ask, would you be able to support the concepts in this language now. Yes or no and if it's no can you summarize the topics that are holding you back right now.

Comment

No, I can't support it right now. The specific reason is the language that now resides in the assessment paragraph that addresses the third-party review. We have not touched on the questions posed and I think there are some critical pieces there that are key there in this conversation and implementation of the section.

Comment

As it stands, I could sign it as is.

Comment

I want to say I think it's important to hear from WAG members and hear that feedback. There are some concerns in there, but I would rather defer to WAG members than state anything else. However, I did some reaching out internally and externally and I think there are some big misconceptions. For example, the third-party review and making things too restrictive so it becomes a failure. I do think we need to clean this up quite a bit so we can be successful. I wouldn't be comfortable supporting it as is. I think allowing SFA groups latitude to figure out what they need is going to be important.

Comment

I think that it reads fine. I don't see any major hang-ups on my end.

Comment

I think we're close. If we were required to vote, I would approve what we have. I want to work on the issues people have raised. I've also received comments from the conservation community as well that I'd like to share. I think that we're close and the document could benefit from more discussion.

Comment

I think we need continued dialogue. I would not be comfortable taking it as is. I believe there are areas where interpretations are being made regardless of the side and that's where the concern is. We need the benefit of those groups talking through these sections like the external review and plans specifically to understand what the intent is. If the group agrees about the intent, then the department could move forward. I don't think that's the case. The sides are interpreting words differently and that's where we could use more work.

Comment

I cannot support it as it stands. We need to have accountability in this document. Unless we see something about enforcement added, I can't sign off on it.

Comment

As it stands, I don't have as much of a problem with it. My concern is I thought that today's meeting would get us towards something more agreeable. From my perspective, representing hunters, I have heard many perspectives. I do agree that the predator-prey thing is a big thing for hunters but what worries me is that we can't get past this point. If we can't get agreement from everyone, the document will be nothing. I couldn't support it right now, but we need to tune it more.

Comment

Could I vote yes now? No, I couldn't. I think we're very close. A couple of the items I highlighted moments ago are important to address and we need to answer those questions. I don't want my "no" to feel like we're not close.

Comment

We're close, but that's the whole reason we're meeting this afternoon. I don't feel like we have a final product, but we could get there.

Comment

I too feel that we are close. My thought is still that we continue to work through the issues. I received feedback from folks as well.

Comment

I have issues with the collaring topic still. It's not a deal-breaker but I do find it troubling that there is a fundamental misunderstanding of collar data and its usefulness. I am just going to say this now, that requiring that we put more collars on wolves isn't going to fix anything to stop the conflict. The fact that that's so clearly in there means that there is a misunderstanding of the use of collars.

Comment

Like I said before, it's because of the times we're in, with the governor's demands that we change some policy, they don't know where this is going to end up. They don't know if whether they agree to something if it's a rule or not. The answer I got across the board is don't nod your head to anything.

Comment

It's an unfinished document so I couldn't sign off at this point, but the progress is good. We're on the right track.

Comment

I think I have similar comments, for it to be a yes for me, we need to discuss the questions at the bottom.

Comment

I could probably support it the way it is.

Comment

I can support this mostly. I am generally in favor of it. And the predator-prey relationship piece, it was in this document before but maybe it needs to be added back to that section.

Comment

I want to acknowledge that with missing members from the producer community we don't know what the true answer is to this question of consensus.

Comment

There is this question mark about what we're working on and spending time on in Section 9 and the rulemaking process. I don't know how the process will pan out, but this is a process that we didn't have a few years ago that really gives voice to stakeholders in this diverse group. Even with the commission process, you are helping inform that process. I was encouraged that most thought we were close. In these deep-rooted identity-based conundrums within this process and how we've gotten used to you having that voice, I want to encourage all of us that we are close. I think that the effort and time put into this is valuable.

Comment

The accountability element may push us further apart than we are now. Some producers feel like this is something that is being done to them, not for them. I think that creates a bigger challenge for us.

Comment

My proposal to the group is that most are feeling close but it's that accountability and enforcement issue that may challenge us more. Could I ask people who brought that up to share thoughts on what that might look like?

Comment

So what I think and the people I represent think, is that producers in an SFA will agree to and adhere to a mitigation plan and if they choose not to do that then lethal removal should not be implemented on their behalf. Any depredations that happen on their allotment should not affect the pack's total depredations. That's what we see as accountability and enforcement.

Comment

I think it might be helpful for when we talk about accountability, to hear about how all parties need to be held accountable. I agree with what you just said, but also like what's the other piece there.

Comment

I appreciate your comment. I think it's a good idea to have a global view of it. I received input from folks that were similar to what was previously shared. There is a desire that if there is an offer of resources and assistance to participants in one of these plans with the intent to reduce the chance of more depredations and someone chooses not to and it turned out to be another season that triggered the lethal threshold that lethal should not be an option.

Comment

This is one where we had this conversation with the Director. What is the outcome if a producer chooses not to engage in the non-lethals as described in the plans? Where the Director was is that he wouldn't consider lethal at the thresholds and guidance in the protocol but may at a higher level of depredations. That's similar to how it reads now. It wouldn't be at the regular threshold, but he may consider it if it passes the threshold. In his mind, it's not an ultimatum with lethal removal it just changes the circumstances to when we would agree to that. Non-lethals are required, the Director wouldn't be able to authorize lethal removal without that by state law. Let's say a particular producer chose not to implement or create a plan in an SFA, but then depredations start to occur on an adjacent producer's allotment. That activity is extending, and the Director may consider lethal removal if the plan is being followed. Is there guidance that we would talk about how lethal removal would be implemented without those non-lethals in place but when might it? That's his thoughts in a nutshell.

Comment

I think the other part about the accountability piece, we did discuss with the Director about WDFW's accountability on providing actual timelines from the time that the last qualifying depredation happens, assuming that it meets other criteria to provide that timeline until the Director makes a decision.

Comment

So, just because a producer isn't signing something doesn't mean he's not doing the non-lethals. You are kind of getting penalized if you don't sign an SFA.

Comment

Any other reactions about how parties should sign off on a plan for an SFA and if they don't then we can't consider lethal or count those depredations against the wolf pack? We've had department staff say it's not so black and white. There may be additional needs and timelines being tracked. We heard from some producers that just because you don't sign a paper doesn't mean you're not doing non-lethals either. Any additional reactions or thoughts to that?

Comment

I wonder if the Department could give me an example of any agreements that don't require a signature?

Comment

We do have DPCLs and DPCAs, for producers it's less about the signature and more about what they said they would do. There's no signature for that. We keep track of those conversations but none of that is signed on a piece of paper. If we had everyone sign a document in an SFA you would have people less likely to participate in that. I don't know if you're going to get that this year. I think they would participate but most of what we do is not signed on a piece of paper.

Comment

What do you mean by a DPCL or DPCA?

Comment

Those are Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements and the "L" stands for livestock producers. There are things we do sign like range rider contracts and invoices.

Comment

I am shocked by your comment. The Department has used checklists in the past, but there has been a reluctance in the last decade to use that in the DPCLs. I am thankful to

hear that checklists are still an option. If there's a way to monitor or track what people are doing, it's good to have that documentation.

Comment

My question would be, how is the Director's position different than what it's been in the past with chronic conflict areas and the producers who do not implement non-lethals? When have we been bound in a sandbox like this? We don't have the authority or green light to provide additional advisement to him beyond what he is willing to consider?

Comment

I'll take a stab at answering your question, he does consider the guidance on every account. Every situation is unique. The Director considers patterns, trends, and communications with the Governor's office, so I do think he's in a spot where he has elevated awareness in these areas with repeated depredations and repeated use of lethal removal year after year. There are still some large question marks about non-lethals. The Director knows that any future items that come forward will have those unique circumstances as well. He doesn't want a box to take away flexibility. I do know for certain that the Director is aware and thinking about the unique challenges in these SFAs and we need to address that.

Comment

I think the idea is that there's a process in place where analysis is done with the intent to help the producer, not lose livestock the next year or minimize that loss that all people need to be in the room and do problem-solving. That involves ideas and things at the end in which the state is actually paying for and providing more tools. I think that's the intention and spirit of this section. Going over to the other side of the concern, given all the difficult and situational stress of lethal removal and if a producer chooses not to participate but there's an independent evaluation where the producer stepped up to the plate anyway and did a bunch of non-lethals. I would think there should be some flexibility to consider that. If someone is unwilling to participate in this process or resources that would try to end the cycle and they just say, "wolves need to be killed", that's the situation that we might want accountability for. I and the people I represent don't like public resources being used to kill wildlife.

Comment

We should try to cover as many things as we can, knowing that we won't cover everything, and someone is going to have to be the decision-maker eventually. I think your statement is a good thing. I do think at some point if the depredations continue, the idea of a graduated level is appropriate, it's just going to spread, and at some point, I think the cycle needs to be broken.

Comment

I was wondering if it might help for the accountability concerns, if producers weren't cooperating to what was outlined, to just say that this could impact the decision to implement to either use lethal removal. If it isn't being followed then we should outline the consequences of that, but if no one is signing the SFA plan and failure to cooperate could impact the decision to implement lethal who or what is determining what cooperation looks like?

Comment

I don't think we were thinking these would be signed documents, but more of the plan that the local groups create together, and when they are all satisfied with it then it is their proactive plan but not a contractual thing. I think there is not receptivity for that, and the Department is not prepared for that. Nearly every time I have spoken with the Director, he has said he could change his mind on things. I know he would share that with you. If we have a cohesion spot that might be out of that sandbox of his thoughts, the power of consensus is very strong. I don't want what we heard from the Director to be a negative impact on our WAG process.

Comment

Nobody is saying there has to be a signature. There can be some type of spoken agreement to work on the issue together. And the reality is that this section isn't applying to 98% of the producers in Washington. This is where we have had the repeated cycle of lethal removal. Section 9 is the way to stop the cycle of repeated lethal removal.

Break

Comment

Members from the producer perspective, what are the reactions from our conversation this far?

Comment

Whatever we do, the number one thing has to be trust-building between the Department and people in the field. We trusted the Department and we were trying to have wolves on the landscape, and we've lost it all. We talk about contracts or however, you want to do this, the only thing that will let us be successful is to try and build trust back between the Department and people in the field like livestock producers.

Comment

First, I want to call out something that was said, regarding the failure to cooperate definition. To me that's what this comes down to, there is a boogeyman in the northeast part of the state and there's always a conversation about cooperation and with any complicated story there are many details, and the more you drill down the more complicated it gets. How would anyone have any real idea what a producer is doing on their private property? It may be an opinion someone has but not the truth. We know how hard producers are working and any losses are bad but if you are in an area that is in an SFA you might be under more pressure and experience more loss. I would caution if we're going to be successful as a group reaching an agreement on some language. If we're going to put more requirements, we are dooming ourselves today.

Comment

This whole deal feels like the bar is being moved, we're not looking at wolf populations. When we first did lethal removals, they said it will be a few years before we need to do anything, now we're coming back in two years having issues. Is this a wolf-livestock issue or a wolf population problem?

Comment

I wanted to make sure there aren't any other producers who want to respond before I ask some questions. A couple of things I have to say, the comment just made, about maybe it's a population problem, I want to reiterate that there's been good research done on a long-term dataset in Montana that showed that managing at the population level doesn't affect wolf-livestock conflict. For some WAG members that were around in 2015, and we had someone from Montana share their experiences during one of our meetings, they talked about how they thought they had all the tools from a lethal perspective, however, ranchers still weren't satisfied with that. They were still losing cattle even though they could kill wolves whenever they wanted to. They tried to prevent the depredations in the first place, and when they did it and decided to do something different, they reduced their wolf depredations to next to nothing. It's one of the driving concerns for me in this discussion, ranchers think that in this discussion that we're asking them to do more but the intent in this discussion is to bring a better analytical process and to have a conversation to avoid the depredations. There's still likely to be situations where you're going to have more depredations than you want. This is me just trying to reiterate why I have a desire for this section. The question I want to propose to you is that you are aware of what your conservation colleagues have to face with repeated lethal removal, if you were in our shoes then what's your advice to us? What's your suggestion about addressing concerns the public has about wolf lethal removal? How else do we do this other than what we've been talking about here?

Comment

Wolves are highly adaptable as far as habitat is concerned. I would think that the first thing you would explore is the prey base issue.

Comment

We are trying to carve out new ground here and tackle the hardest conundrum with wolves in the west. When we were talking internally, we've thought about our tools as being creative and outside the box. In Section 9, we all shared some concerns we have. Does it help us to think that this is something where we recognize we are taking a big bite of the apple and is this our pilot approach for the grazing season? Is it helpful for us to get this one done and say we're going to give this a try for the 2021 season and come back and see what worked or didn't work? I do think that the topic of the trust element is bigger than just the wolf piece of the pie. This might not be the place to solve all that. I have heard from folks in the producer community that producers want to know what's expected in black and white and deal with that. They don't want the goal post changing though. I think there is value in proactive plans and knowing what it is and that it's not changing.

Comment

I look at Section 9, as the protocol failed so what do we need to do to fix the protocol? I look at this as just adding this to the problem.

Comment

I'm thinking of the recommendations about having the perspective to put something like a pilot if that's helpful to people. It's obvious that for quite a few of our members the description of consequences and not cooperating is important.

Comment

I think hearing the last comments about people's general feeling of Section 9 would be useful to hear from the WAG members who joined us later on.

Comment

I can't support it now. We're trying to solve a problem that the protocol failed and created. If this is a reoccurring issue, then we need to solve that. This is just a way to penalize the producer, there may be circumstances outside of one's control or they may question the good faith effort of the Department.

Comment

Maybe it is time to take a few of the key areas and detail what the issues are. We should start looking at the language that addresses these concerns.

Comment

Any objection for us to dive into accountability and what might work there? What might help is viewing the language and seeing what's on the paper?

Comment

I think we're more at a stage where we can wordsmith but I'm wondering if we could all share what the nugget is, we would like to see in the accountability section.

Comment

One of the things I heard about accountability was considering the consequences of uncooperating producers. Potential answers are specific, but others are more flexible.

Comment

From a consequence standpoint, if they chose not to implement the plan or didn't have one, the Director would not consider lethal removal at the guidance of the protocol but may at some higher level of interactions or if the depredations start impacting a producer that is or does implement the non-lethals as the plan describes.

Comment

I want to incorporate something that addresses the non-cooperation piece and why that's happening. If someone is in an SFA and there's an attempt to contact ranchers in that area to participate in an analytical or problem-solving exercise, instead of just assuming they're unwilling to participate, there would be an attempt made by the Department to sit down with the producer and talk through their reasons for not participating.

Comment

Livestock producers as a whole believe that is the duty of the WDFW to manage wolves, not theirs. Producers are out there to manage their cattle. The other land management agencies believe the same thing. They don't believe it is their duty to manage wildlife, it's the state's. We're always trying to place more duty and cost on livestock producers and also try to involve other management agencies in managing wildlife.

Comment

So we're talking about this section and what's going to be different in special focus areas, it sounds like, really where you think the question should be addressed is what would the Department do differently because it's the producer's responsibility to focus on their cattle. Is that what you're saying?

Comment

Yes.

Comment

What's the risk or benefit of not counting depredations towards a pack's total?

Comment

I want to respond to what was said. I feel like previous statements, like "it's the Department's job to manage wolves and the producers to manage cattle", I find that frustrating because it's a dead-end statement. It's not only the Department's job to manage wildlife. All of these issues are connected. It shouldn't just fall on the Department and I want us to think about generalizing statements like that about producers and the Department and consider that there is nuance in these situations. We need to come up with solutions that don't solely benefit one group.

Comment

My question again, is what's the risk or benefit of not counting depredations towards a pack's total?

Comment

The benefit would be that we don't move towards lethal removal if there isn't participation from a particular producer.

Comment

What would be a disadvantage to that with producers in these areas?

Comment

One of the things we're forgetting now, the depredations on cattle is a learned behavior and if we're having a problem and letting the numbers go higher, we are propagating a wolf pack and we're creating a bigger problem. Depredations are a learned behavior and we don't want it to go on.

Comment

Is there a way to create some peer pressure for ranchers that are cooperating to help their community members come to the table? In the ranchers we work with, there can be a sense of resentment going the other way. There could be a disincentive in participating on the flip side if it ended up delaying lethal, but I think the idea here is positive peer pressure.

Comment

This is a response to what was previously said, there's a thought the depredations are learned behavior, with SFAs there's also a thought that we can create behavior change in wolves generationally. In an SFA there should adequate non-lethals in place teaching that wolf pack even though lethal removal is happening. There are a lot of constituents I represent out there who do not want the wolves to be bearing the brunt of it.

Comment

I wanted to switch gears a bit, I am looking at the list of accountability bullets here. Is there any receptivity to the idea of lethal removal not being considered without reaching the threshold of the protocol? Even if a new set of depredations continue after the non-lethal tools were implemented. IM wondering if there is any way to not say a generic statement but add some specificity to it.

Comment

From a commonsense point of view, it concerns me that people out there think that if we had the cooperation from one more livestock producer it would solve the situation. I do understand the comparison between Montana, but we have to understand we have these very limited and small habitats in Washington. That defies common sense to me.

Comment

How can we blend what we have here to meet all of our needs?

Comment

I'm not trying to put anyone on the spot, but I might ask people from the producer community because it feels like they're the ones that are impacted the most and have the most issue with this, what do you think about the proposal that was made? If you think this is a way forward or if we are missing the point, I might ask those folks to provide us with their thoughts.

Comment

I'm thinking about how grazing season will be upon us before we know it and trying to put myself in the conflict specialist or biologists' positions. Department staff are going to need to do something and we need something from this group. We can't seem to come to some sort of answer for the document that we're working on today. There is a sense of urgency. We need to help these field staff out and I wanted to state that.

Comment

I think I definitely appreciate listening to all of the thoughts and things bounced around. I think as a field staff person are there things in this document that we can find common ground on? Having direction or thought on where the values are from this section would be helpful to address misconceptions like the third-party review piece. We're already pushing off some of these conversations with producers moving forward and we need to find some values or direction which would be helpful.

Comment

I would add that the Department is faced with needing to respond this coming summer in these SFA areas, but I want to make sure folks understand that the status quo is not an option for WDFW. We know that the status quo for WDFW's response in these areas won't work.

Comment

The Department will have to make these decisions and having this backdrop to make these decisions will help. Otherwise, we won't have your voices or opinions involved in the decision. I can't emphasize enough how much we want and need to have guidance from you. We don't want to guess what you think the path should be that's why it's valuable to us.

Comment

Please, fellow WAG members, correct me if I'm wrong, all of us have agreed that bringing the players together including land managers and the Department and producers in the spirit of innovation and problem-solving in an SFA is something we agree to. I've heard us say that getting some outside eyes on it may also spark further conversations and innovations. It's not meant at all as an insult to Department staff. I think all of us agreed to that maybe not the specifics. I would hope that the Department is already beginning to put together some of those meetings. I think the major concepts in Section 9 are things we agreed to.

Comment

The sense of urgency you hear from us is that we all have to be in. If we can reach a point of cohesion and then we all go back to our communities, I don't know how far we're going to get if we don't have that. We're going to do what we can.

Comment

I just wanted to remark that in my listening to the conversation, I think that there are different assumptions about why these problems emerge. I think that those different assumptions or perspectives get in the way of how to address them. My point is that if we all assume that our own sets of confirmation bias or desired hypothesis are the only one that's true, that I think that makes it difficult for us to agree. I would love for us to figure out a way to further explore the assumptions that are operating and driving these problems. We won't be able to do it for this version.

Comment

I think that the two pages we have now, minus the questions, I think there's a pretty good consensus on what we've been working on. I think at this stage this is as far as we are going to get for this grazing season. We're going to learn a lot more and come back to this and redo it. Let's think about approving these pages so that the Department has some type of guideline for this season.

Comment

Your comment made me change my mind a bit about what I was going to say. I am curious as to what part of the document, is going to change anything about what the Department is currently doing now. I don't see any big changes that we've asked for in there, so what in there is going to be different? You said the status quo isn't going to work but I don't think there's anything in this document that changes anything. I guess I would pose that question. I do agree that we have spent a lot of time on this and we haven't gotten anywhere. I'm just not sure where we've even gotten with all of our time on this document.

Comment

So, your comment also generated a reaction for me, going back, we cannot support this document as it currently exists regarding the assessment piece. You're asking the producers to do a lot here; you're asking them to accept the depredations that are occurring until we put together this plan without putting any other accountability on department staff. If you're not willing to review your work, producers aren't willing to do all of these items.

Comment

I have a clarifying question for you, when you say that this section is asking the producers to take a pause, I want to make a statement about how I perceive this and have you answer back. My understanding, is that these plans are to be made pre-grazing season and they're going to happen after a lethal situation has been resolved in some manner if its pre-season and the prior season was enough to be lethal so either lethal happened and the depredations stopped or lethal was attempted and wolves

weren't killed but the depredations stopped which happened in Leadpoint and Togo this year. I am not seeing this as it being in the middle of a depredation event cycle that something would stop so one of these plans could be put together. To me, none of this is pausing anything. It's trying to prevent there to be a need to go to lethal in the future. Does that make sense to you? Is what I explained different than what you thought?

Comment

That's helpful. Honestly, it's more of a gut reaction and then you just got intellectual and smart. I agree with how you laid it out, was it Leadpoint where we had the early depredations on private land? I couldn't remember.

Comment

It was Wedge.

Comment

It's situations like that where I wonder if we are on pause when that's going on? That's what I was thinking of. What are the new things that are being required, how long do they have to play out before a lethal decision? Anything that looks like a pause to a producer, we already feel we are waiting long enough for the department to do something, but anything that resembles or looks like it could pause the decision of the department that they might have taken sooner outside of an SFA, hopefully, you understand why that gives us concern.

Comment

I want to prompt people to think next steps from this meeting. Our next regularly scheduled meeting is in April. We don't have much time left today.

Comment

As was previously described, there wouldn't be depredations in-between space to stop and make a proactive plan. The plans should be completed before turning out onto public lands. It's usually before the depredations in those environments. To a point earlier, if that's a thing that has the producer community worried then we need to work on that. The team has not met yet before the cows are turned out, on federal land, it's not a penalty right. I think we need to address that more.

Comment

Are we willing to add a third-party assessment as being required? I don't think we've addressed that point.

Comment

We went back in good faith and tried to send this version out with the conversations from the last meeting. We're open to more dialogue there.

Comment

I'm thinking about the previous question, I'm sitting here thinking that I can't say no to that question. I sit on the outside of the circle, from the US Forest Service perspective, that's more of a question of our land officers. I represent the regional forester in Portland, I'm thinking about the sections in this document, a lot of this is occurring on public land. I hope this doesn't come across as me not wanting to cooperate, but that language in Section 9, sounds to me like something that would need to be captured in an MOU or agreement that is supported by those land managers.

Comment

In the last seven minutes we have, we have heard staff say your guidance helps, other members, have chimed in with consensus items within the group. I'm sharing what I'm thinking because I'm wondering what would be helpful to give the Department from this meeting. If I put myself in the Department's shoes, I have to do my best from the conversations we have had and reflect that on the ground. We have put the Department in the spot to interpret that for themselves. Any thoughts or guidance on that?

Comment

Can we agree to create a basic mitigation plan in an SFA and in April work on some of the finer points that we need to prior to the start of a grazing season? That's my suggestion right now.

Comment

My thought is to make sure we understand the statement between what the Department would normally do versus what would happen in these SFAs.

Comment

Right now, we're in the phase of everything is soft until you do a roll call and decide what your advice is. Some of these things we have already started but until there is group cohesion and consensus it is all soft. I think the Department needs to check-in with staff and map out what the elements are and what the cutoff date is for completing Section 9. If we were meeting in person we would have already caucused, and we need to come back to you after this meeting with a cutoff date for this.

Comment

I do have to say that checking back in but just to give you guys a perspective, something to consider though so I think having a multi-stakeholder group at the table for these discussions is going to be a heavy lift. From the beginning, hearing from you guys and others that participation is important. Field staff have already been talking and attempting to reach out to producers on this type of thing. Cattle are potentially going out before mid-April. Even if by chance we can get something solid, it's late now. Field staff are reaching out to try and honor what you guys are working on. I think it's important that you see those timelines. If we add layers, it just adds more time to the process. Great discussion today.

Comment

I find it hard to believe that some cattle go out around mid-April. Saying that they go out at that time in the low country sure, but the high country probably not. That's a fact point that may be broad swept. Is there a chance that we can meet before next time to have a conversation about this section?

Comment

In both Togo and Kettle, cattle are on adjacent allotments, it could be on other public lands or their homeplace. Sorry if I wasn't clear on that.

Comment

Guidance from this group to the Department has to do with an SFA plan and focus on the differences between the status quo and what we do with this document. April is our next meeting, but we have a request to meet sometime earlier to continue progress on this section. Any objections?

No Objections

Public Comment & Meeting Adjourned