

**Wolf Advisory Group
November 19, 2020, Meeting Notes
Zoom Meeting (Day 1)**

WAG members: Samee Charriere, Tom Davis, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Jess Kayser, Jessica Kelley, Bill Kemp, Lynn Okita, Dan Paul, Lisa Stone, Caitlin Scarano, and Paula Swedeen

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

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

Welcome and check-in

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

Review the agenda and make any adjustments

Rob presents the agenda to the group.

Meeting Purpose

Provide department updates to WAG members, chronic conflict zone (enhanced resource areas) language for the protocol, and next steps for post-recovery planning.

Comment

Let's get into the conflict specialist and on the ground updates.

Comment

Yes, to WAG members, we got the feedback that you like updates. We reached out to folks before today to kind of go through the state start in the blue mountains, move to east with, and move down from there. Biologists, please provide any updates on your work. All conflict specialists and others feel free to jump in.

Comment

Overall, our grazing season compared to last year was quitter. We did have several depredation investigations, probable injury and another where we know wolves scavenged on a carcass. Most of the cattle came out from in the wolf areas to lower elevation for winter grazing and calving locks. We'll continue to work in areas with cattle and where wolves have used the areas in the past. We'll be working with those producers to implement whatever non-lethals we can for that area. That's the majority of what's going on now. We did get a new district ranger from the United States Forest

Service (USFS), so we're strengthening those relationships. That's a brief overview of what's happened so far.

Comment

We've talked a lot about what's happened this year. It started early in northeast Washington with depredations starting in Wedge in May and scattered throughout Togo, Wedge, and Leadpoint. Things started to quiet down a bit in September. Currently what we've been working on is prepping for winter. Getting deterrents back that don't need to be out. And checking in with the ones that still need to be out especially on private lands. We're switching from weekly calls to monthly. These calls include counties, USFS, range riders and many others. We will start the weekly calls back in May. With winter, we're hoping to make changes to range rider contracts, while working on coordination with groups to meet our goals. We've been doing end of season reviews. It's just starting, because it was a last resort for some producers on USFS allotments. This is our time of year where we can catch up.

Comment

Any questions?

Comment

I have a question. You mentioned your end of season review, is that something that is done all together?

Response

This year is different. In the past we've done it different ways. We usually sit down and touch bases with everyone. With Covid-19 this year most of this work has been done over the phone. I have met with a few people (with masks and social distance) but it depends on the producers. This year is quite different than what it's been. I would assume our connections with the season starting will look different. Ideally, we'd like to get people together to bounce ideas off. We've talked about formalizing a range riding training. That's best done in person, so might be something for next year.

Comment

Thank you

Question

Could the previous biologist go back? We had more grazing activity on allotments than in the past, I would like you to go back and talk more about the non-lethals deployed and that area were there was a search for a range rider. I'm currently in the process of doing our calves numbers and they seem low this year. Seems like you're playing it off that there wasn't much activity.

Response

So yes, we did do a search. Contracted range riders reached out to producers on who may be a good fit. Some indicated that they may be interested next year but had too much on their plate to do it this year. What I was referring to was actual wolf livestock depredations. We did get quite a few sightings of wolves. Some territories looked like they increased in areas. Like you said, producers are doing their counts and that will also help us. It has been kind of a strange year, but people have been a bit behind. You did also ask about non-lethals, we did increase FoxLights on the landscapes for producers that were willing. We also deployed some fladry early on, where it worked in a given situation. Producers have been great about increasing range riding due to last years issues. Those were the big ones. We'll keep working and making it happen.

Comment

I wanted to give another update for northeast Washington and the Walla Walla area. We worked with USFS last year, to create a sign with contact information for both the department and the forest service. We put about fifty signs out and we have already been receiving calls. We are also seeing signs vandalized and ripped off. We have more signs coming and hoping it will be a good thing. The initial intent was that if there were cattle up there reported that it would be a strike against them. That is not true. We are just trying to be proactive and do something to help those producers out. Our specialist has been working in Walla Walla and some wolves have been moving out of their traditional territories. On Tuesday, we received a call from a producer with a dead cow. We met up with the producer and investigated. The report from the rancher was that they were herding cattle with dogs off the range. They reported seeing six black wolves with the dogs. They did fire a shot to scare them off and it worked. We did a complete necropsy on the cow and there were signs on a wolf feeding off it. We have a person out there now, working on counts this morning.

Question

So, this is a sign you put up in the woods where if you see cattle call this number?

Comment

Yes, so if people can see brands or ear tag numbers, we ask them to report it. You provide a road number and mileage. If it comes to the department, we are contact the USFS and they are contacting the producer.

Comment

I hate the sign idea. If you're going to put up signs, put our numbers on it. You may not think it's a bad idea. It does have consequences for producers and really pisses them off.

Comment

Begs the question to why, I don't understand the affect.

Comment

I would like to touch on this a bit. I just did a media interview on it. I want to reiterate what was said, my understanding is that in this area they haven't reached their final off date. This is why on the list of creative ideas offing into last grazing season, its just trying to get the property to the owner. Just doing what we can. No strike against a producer or anything. We're trying to do a community approach; our staff are a part of these communities. And we're trying to help producers this time of year. The producers are wanting to get them off, and they're not in violation of their agreement. We'll also go through the winter here and visit with producers and USFS.

Comment

I'm observing this dynamic; I got a call from someone who was upset with the signs as well. I see the best of intent from department staff, but it wasn't received that way. This is just an example of one of those things. Everybody is assuming good intent is important but then learning when things aren't received the way they were supposed to. Before you guys decided to put these signs out did you run this idea by producers? How would the messaging look? Any unintended consequences? I'm not criticizing anything because I see what you were trying to do. Your good gesture was not received the way you wanted it. I think that's good thing to learn from.

Comment

I applaud what you said. I really like what the department is doing here. Trying a different approach to help producers. However, a good deed by the department may be offending producers. No slam against the department, let's just look at a way to meet the needs of everyone involved. I do appreciate the extra work by the department to help.

Comment

I want to make sure that the biologist that worked directly with these producers can speak.

Response

Before I go into the subject of the cattle observation signs, I did want to mention that I had unanimous support from the producers I talked to about these signs. Before we drafted the signs and made them, I reached out to the community. Many thought it was a great idea and provided suggestions on posting locations. Some of them thought it was something that should have happened a long time ago. I'm a wildlife conflict specialist, my assigned area is in Ferry and Stevens County. That covers several wolf pack territories. For a grazing season wrap-up, wolf livestock conflict has slowed considerably in the district the past few months. I really tried to encourage regular communication with producers, range riders as well as with our new Kapow coordinator and USFS. Looking back, I'm hearing from a lot of producers that they are reporting really good end of season counts. Some producers are at a hundred percent which is really encouraging. Lots of these producers are right in the middle of conflict territories. The reports are also showing healthy cow populations. In the western part of District 1,

we finished the season with one confirmed wolf depredation, and one injury to a calf. That is an improvement compared to years past. Our District 1 conflict team is fully staffed. We'll be wrapping up additional seasons shortly. Non-lethal deterrents utilized were FoxLights, most are being pulled out of the field now, to ensure their effectiveness. We deployed well over a mile of fladry. We're starting to plan about deploying fladry in calving areas. Range riders just finished up at the end of October. We've been working with the USFS to place the cattle observation signs.

Comment

We've gotten feedback that some like the signs and some don't. We'll see how that progresses.

Comment

So, we had one probable wolf loss. Since there hasn't been any additional reports. Once the injury occurred, we had at least two range riders out there every day. Both range riders had seen multiple tracks of wolves. The producers also started spending more time up there, filling water troughs and checking on the cattle. We also had a producer in the Beaver Creek pack that has wolves that pass through the calving areas in springtime. We give them fencing materials to enclose the area. In the Lookout pack, we had a report of a cow-calf pair missing towards the end of September. Most of October we had a range riders out there looking for missing cows. They could hear the cow and saw tracks but could not find them. Someone who lives in the area eventually found the pair. We still had four missing cows at the time. That producer put the signs up and thought they were a great idea for getting the cows back. The producer's phone number was on there and also USFS contact. We haven't been able to take additional signs down or put them up due to winter conditions.

Comment

Knowing we were going to be talking about this, the wolf section talked about how the season went to provide the update. So, this year we just wrapped up our activities for the 2020 season. We are starting out winter surveys that look like initial counts, and potential collaring. More recently, we have been following up on reports and so we hope we can get some new packs on the maps this winter. We will start telemetry surveys soon. Speaking of collars, the wolf section collared 12 wolves, 5 during winter and 7 during trapping efforts. In total, we monitored 24 collared wolves in 17 different packs. We are currently monitoring 13 wolves in 17 packs. Most of those packs have territories over state lines (Idaho and Oregon). We documented 8 mortalities, 3 agency removals, 2 natural deaths, 2 human caused (self-defense and one still being investigated) and 1 was a vehicle mortality. I'm happy to answer any questions.

Comment

I would like to give an update on headquarters operations and some history. Our conflict section has typically been staffed with three people (including myself) with a biologist and a project specialist. For the last three and half years we have run mostly under-staffed with just two people. We lost someone else and brought on someone temporarily. We took another look at our efficiency. We wanted to build our capacity, so we have. We brought in two management analysts. We now have the increased capacity to look at customer service, internally and externally. This will allow more timely processing and work we can do with conflict contracts, wildlife control operators, and others. We can now better serve our customers. I'm feeling very good about the future of our program.

Comment

Its nice to have a full team so that's good news. Anything else form the staff side?

Response

I think they covered it all. Good job folks.

Question

Thank you everyone for the updates. I wanted to ask about the compensation program, we had a discussion a couple of years ago where we wanted to revamp the program. I've been on the livestock review board looking at several compensation claims. We've only gotten five or six over the past few years. I remember when we started doing the review, we got feedback from some producers that there wasn't interest in the program due to the amount of paperwork. We were trying to think of ideas to make it simpler. I'm wondering if there's an intent to pick up those discussions again by the department.

Comment

I'll jump into the updates that I have, starting with your question. It has slowed down and with Covid-19 has become more challenging. One thing I will give an update on is the rule process directive from the governor. To review, a small group came together to try and think about changes that need to be made to the compensation program whether it's direct or indirect. They kind of set the direct aside but the indirect is not working as much. What are the kinds of impacts that producers have from indirect? We've been revamping and bringing that group back. An update on the governor's directive to the Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) on wolf management and livestock conflict, we've had several check-ins with entities that are going to help. We have learned that the process will have a couple of different components to it. The CR-101 has been filed. The draft rule making period will happen where we get some feedback from the FWC and work with staff and stakeholders to develop draft rules. Due to the potential impacts to livestock producers, it must go through the small business economic impact process. We are working with the governor's office on that. It is a nine-step process where you look at the impacts of the rule change on producers. It would look to mitigate impacts. We look at the elements of the rule and then do that analysis. Then we look at SEPA, we

have initiated those three processes. We'll start with the rulemaking one and then move forward with the other two. It will probably not be completed by the 2021 grazing season, although that was an item the governor expressed to us. We have visited with the FWC and they are considering short term goals before the 2021 grazing season that they can do, outside of rulemaking, as we work on the longer arch. Questions on compensation programs or rulemaking process?

Response

The compensation program is a cluster. From our end its an extremely tedious thing. We finally got our 2018 paperwork through. We're two years behind. Its not fair to producers and the program is faulty at that point. We can't get staff to come out and do the confirmation and it hurts. Just plain and simple, I am ten calves shorts, and normal death loss is less than a percent. That's just an example, I'm willing to share those numbers with the WAG so there's an understanding. The investigations are not thorough and that leaves us here sitting with nothing. The compensation program has to be revamped if you want producers to be happy.

Comment

The ten short is this grazing season?

Response

Yes, ten calves short and a cow. We are confident the cow is dead and that it was wolf.

Comment

In the compensation group, folks are describing that there are other indirect impacts and consequences. Another piece on the rulemaking, is that it includes reaching out to producers in the state to get their input on impacts to their operations so that should really invigorate those compensation processes. Virtual public meetings should be involved in that process. Also, the data sharing group continues to move forward. I wanted to share with the group that one of our members is moving on with the WAG. They said they were going to reach out to you all but doesn't seem like they may have had time to do that. We are starting our recruitment process again. One of the other things, was that you asked about hearing from the Director. I visited with the Director and he wasn't able to make this meeting, but he will be coming back to the group to share his perspectives of priorities for you to put on your agenda.

Comment

I think that completes our intended updates. Any other items?

No responses

Comment

Thank you staff for that update. I think things to think about for the future are the signage, some see good and others don't. Also, the compensation program needs help. We're moving now to look at chronic conflict zones and wording. Due to the topic change, lets take a break now.

Break

Comment

Quick recap, a subcommittee was created to start an official effort on the chronic conflict zone language that needs to go into the protocol. We're here to see what sticking points might still exist or what we need to do to add this language to the protocol or not. I wanted to give time for any of the subcommittee members to provide opening comments about what you heard in October or share any opening remarks.

Response

After the last call that we had, there were a coupled of things that I thought were important that weren't resolved. We did a bit of a name change as well, we wrestled with that and it was definitely something that needed to be brought to the full WAG.

Comment

We decided that we needed to re-introduce the world conflict to the section. We need this to describe what the issue is. Whether it needs to be in the title or text, we wanted to bring that to whole group and how we use the word in the new version. We talked about the issue of ungulate studies and whether or not it really belongs in there. In the notes there is a question of whether that's realistic to address. Hunter groups felt it was important and some language should remain. We're looking about recommendation moving forward.

Comment

You'll see with this document that there are several unresolved issues. The comments we heard from you at the last meeting, we did try to address. There is new proposed language and titles. Its all just proposed for discussion and I encourage you all to collaborate.

Comment

I want to thank the team that's been working on this and the team before then, this is tough stuff. We're trying to find solutions for one of the biggest challenges out there. Its really easy to critique so I just want to thank you all for all the work you've put into this. You've gotten us a long way here. I appreciate you all.

Comment

Let me take you through this. The first issue we came across was the name, we had chronic conflict zones (CCZ) and enhanced resource areas (ERA). I'll point out the issues. Chronic conflict zones places a negative spotlight on this. That's one way to view but I think that these places are not the normal. They are rare situations. They are important to deal with and talk about. Putting them into this negative spotlight makes it sounds like it's something that can't be fixed. We came up with ERA and it was pointed out to us that it comes off like a wildlife preserve. A lot of the time wildlife professionals refer to them as resources. We talk about a natural resource area or wildlife preserve. That name was not hitting the mark. We wrote some special language that eluded to special focus area for conflict mitigation. There were also conversations about adding the word chronic back in.

The first other big edit was the issue of what is the shared goal. We were having difficulty with folks interpreting things a different way. Such as turning away lethal as a tool, what we are really trying to capture here is that its not that we're taking tools off the table but that we want to minimize the loss of livestock which in turn reduces loss of wolves. We proposed some new language there. The next change had to do with a lot of comments about the meetings that happen. Are all the players at the table? The next issue is looking at the evaluation of local predator and prey abundance. We heard feedback that this is not a simple request. This request may not even be feasible on that landscape. And so, we don't want something in the protocol that doesn't mean anything. Its there to address concerns from WAG and members of public but it's something we don't know if we're able to address as biologists and wildlife managers.

The next one was enhanced non-lethal deterrents. We talked about our list of creative solutions, but should this be part of that document? Its more of a concrete answer. This answer could also include funding. The lethal removal phrase at the end of the document was also mentioned. What does it look like if we don't have accountability or everyone isn't on board? So, what happens if these things don't occur. Those are the major issues we want to dive into.

Comment

I just wanted to say that I have taken a note, that someone mentioned at the last meeting that, these are areas where we should focus our resources. Being able to identify these areas is to be helpful. That's the only reason we would want to identify these specific areas. Not be punitive or call anyone out but to focus funds and supplies there.

Comment

Now, I'd like to open it up to the group for feedback about what you see in this new addition?

Response

First, thank you much to the subcommittee. I'm pleased with the changes I'm seeing here. One thing I'd like to hear from the department as I hear enhanced resources going on here, how do we do this in a way that doesn't set up false expectations? How do we really ensure that additional resources go to this area when they are limited?

Comment

I think I understand your question but I'm going to turn to our conflict folks. There may be situations where in this all hands-on deck, approach and thinking about the next grazing seasons, where there might be strategies that they could be put in place that would require more resources but there are things they can actually point to. There may be some areas where we have everything, we can think of in play there. I don't want to set a false expectation that there will always be a strategy that we can turn to. I think there's an assumption that that's what these folks do. They may come back and say, yes, we can increase range rider effectiveness or whatever, but they may come back and also say that they think we have everything in play here. I want to hear from our boots on the ground.

Comment

I think that's where the resource discussion came from. Resources particularly, what I'm thinking is that when we have these years with repeated depredations that when funding becomes tight, we're using that funding to direct if there are things we haven't tried. For example, I know staff are working on a group with some potential upgrades to rag boxes. Maybe we would try those out in these areas. I did make a list in 2018 on creative solutions and it has been growing. Those may be the things where we haven't tried it, but we do here. I think all of these things revolve around the financial portion and what does that look like.

Comment

A couple of meetings ago, staff shared the creative solutions list and many of those things have been implemented or tried. One thing I want to touch on is funding. Funding is limited. These areas are a super high priority. I would have a voice of optimism to make sure we have funding in these enhanced resource areas. These areas would be at the top of the list.

Comment

Another thing I would like to point out, so wolf biologists and conflict specialists, understand that conflict can't always be predicted. I don't know if folks would have predicted that Leadpoint was a big conflict area this year. There is a bit of triage that happens where you just go where the fires are and put them out. In a CCZ or special focus area, whatever you want to call it, if you have those implementation plans, that include everybody (producers and operations) to talk about the date range riders are deployed and calves are going out, amongst other things. I don't know if these meetings are happening, I think that is a simple no-cost solution.

If you could do more participation where these areas are then you could come at it stronger. Everyone could come together and discuss what we've tried. That's where we could say what we think would work or wouldn't work. We would all be coming from the same place which is stopping depredations before they start.

Comment

I'm thinking about the efficient use of resources and I also think that's there's one relatively straightforward thing that can be done. Public money funds contracted range riders and the agricultural grant program and this year there was a special grant. There was a lot of public money that went to range riding efforts. There are areas I'm aware of where there was a duplication of effort. It wasn't in coordination. There wasn't a sense of central mandate or direction to say if someone had a certain area covered, someone else is not needed there. These were situations where they were not asked for. That kind of thing is a waste of public resources. I would hope that there would be a voluntary sense of coordination and getting together. It's not necessarily fair to put this on the department but it is the coordinating hub. I would like to see some method put in place to avoid the overlap of range riding so that the ones that are available can go to uncovered places. They need to be there in a more concentrated and focused way. We're going into the resource constraint part and like I said I would hope all the entities that have range riders would communicate but if its not quite cohesive that something happens to put that in place.

Comment

On the language, any comments before I start calling on people? One of the previous things I think I heard was, is this language removing lethal as a tool? And when you as representatives of the producer community read this proposed language does that still concern you? Id like to hear if it's still a concern.

Response

The department should accept their responsibility at the first stge. They should manage the state's wolves instead of hiding behind producers. Livestock producers need more relief, that's not what this document says. I like what was said previously, but this document as written the livestock industry and hunting community cannot buy in on it period. I would like to see us not even do this. It's the departments responsibility to manage wolves. I'm opposed to the document as written; I'm not going to suggest on how to rewrite.

Comment

So, I'm looking at the last paragraph of the document. I want to call out that we already do the things in this document. It just makes it more explicit and formal and says this is an area where there is conflict. The tools we have used are not getting us where we want to be. This document provides more process. This is consistent with the protocol we've created already. I hear what concerns are coming from with producers, I want to say that we're not hiding behind producers at all. This is not a document saying lethal

removal is not considered but we are being explicit about this step. The repeated loss of cows every year for a series of years those producers involved in CCZ are equally as frustrated as anyone else. I'm in a different spot, respectfully. I think this document is a value added. I'm completely open to changing the perception. If this feels from a producer perspective that it falls on them, then let's change it. We want to reduce the loss of all critters.

Comment

Just to talk about what you're saying. I'm not entirely opposed to the document, but I do like the change of the wording. In these areas its like we're adding another step. During that process, it feels like it just takes longer to get relief for the producer. I like the name ERA rather than CCZ.

Comment

Thank you, I think I said this last time, this is likely going to be one of the more challenging conversations for our group. From the producer perspective, we feel like this section is being done to us and not with us. That is clearly how many of us feel. We are the ones that are impacted by this, far more than anyone on this call. Its been a chronic condition for us for a decade now. When we see language at the end for example, that limits the use of lethal, you could understand the emotional impact that it has on producers. Let me share with you another thought, we know that when it comes down to a point where the department has to consider going lethal or not that it is challenging decision to make. In that process, it may take many many days where you have many days that have passed and the decision to go lethal. That minimizes greatly, the impact of lethal since so much time goes by. Let's hold back and make the producers wait even longer now, and the decision-making process by the department is not addressed in here. One of the important issues is not being considered. One of the emotional triggers for me, is that we have to do something about the number of days it takes to make the decision. I have to say I like special focus areas (SFA) best, as we do consider this language but is there a way with the last paragraph, to step away from any restrictions on its use? The mere mentioning of that is a slam door to accept this section. We're all for looking for new ideas and approaches to save wolves and livestock.

Comment

So, I agree with what you said. I think having an outside set of eyes report back, they also read this as taking lethal off the table. I think we're trying to get to the fact that we need to do the non-lethals as soon as the season starts or where there are habitual wolf depredations. We need to start them then rather than waiting for problems to start. I think we still need to address that the language of taking lethal off the table is there. When it does come to the need for lethal removal, the department has to be faster. It can't be a week plus from the time the decision is made. I think that will be better for all communities involved if the process can be faster. I know there's growing pains and paperwork involved with lethal. The department has done enough lethal removal to

make it a smoother process for all involved. I think if we can do that then we could get the offenders and stop the depredations. The words still say we're taking lethal off the table.

Comment

I think we're getting at where the refinements need to be. This is not an assessment between the third or fourth depredation, but this document is something that happens before the cows go out. This is something that is done well before, if at that point if we've used all of the non-lethal tools and we still see an escalation then yes, lethal is something the agency would consider. A little bit on the lethal part, yes, I think if the agency is in a spot where we've done everything we can do and really put the proactive plan together, if we see conflict still emerge then yes, lethal is something the Director would consider. I want share with you that internally we have the same concern. The days between acknowledging the pattern and seeing the guidance on when we consider lethal the more time that goes on is bad for everybody. We recognize that and we are looking to address that in a real way before this grazing season.

Comment

I want to say its really hard to get intention across. Just what was previously said is the intention, this document is the first step, not a step down the line. The first step would be to prevent cattle or livestock from dying in the first place. I know the last paragraph needs to be addressed but let's start with the shared goal. Our group discussions with the subcommittee looked at ways to word this to show the true intent. The shared goal is to reduce the lethal removal of wolves by reducing depredations of livestock.

Comment

I want to agree. I like the special focus area name better as well. I also want to agree that this document's intentions are not supposed to be an after the fact process. This is a proactive statement about coordination that would happen prior in an area of known conflict. This is a known area of conflict that we're trying to be proactive.

Comment

I wanted to say a few things. One being, seems like there is a need from the producers for relief that is quick. There is a desire from other stakeholders to have lethal removals as a last resort. I feel like there's an overlap between those two things. What sort of things can be in this statement that get a quick relief and understanding and also treats lethal as a last resort? I would refer to the producers with where the overlap may be. This section seems like its preventing livestock deaths, it feels like a bit of a non-starter to be openly opposed to the document. If someone feels that way, what can you share about the document that would give it purpose that you agree with?

Comment

I think there's a piece that needs to be discussed about putting these large groups together. I can tell you with Covid-19 that it might not happen next year. What happens when this doesn't work for producers? I know with USFS we have these meetings one on one but thinking about this year, these areas are growing which could equate with hundreds of producers that we need to meet with. The logistics of this could get out of control. I think we need feedback on what the vision of these areas are. If I have to have one hundred of these meetings, then I need to start now. I'm curious on feedback and the visions of these.

Comment

I appreciate your comments about the logistics and reality of how this would be implemented. As I was re-reading it again, if this truly is an implementation plan then the paragraph after the five bullet points should be moved up. I think making it clear at the beginning that it is an implementation plan before the thing is done would help. It still doesn't address our concerns with the use of lethal, so the concern remains there. We still need to wrap our heads around the intention of the language and the concerns of producers. I think intent helps, the language in the last paragraph is problematic but I think the intent isn't.

Comment

This has been a difficult exercise for us. What's missing in this document is explicitly the time frame we're talking about. This kicks in before the season starts. I think it needs to be clear at the top there. We need to get enhanced non-lethals in place before the season starts. It would be very few places where we would need to apply. Everyone should be willing to do non-lethals before lethal is considered. I think if we can get a timeframe at the start that would help.

Comment

Those were great comments. I appreciate hearing from the producers about what gets them stuck about this. It feels like we're moving towards trying to address those things. The thought I had is just clarifying the language regarding the timing of this. It would also clarify the timing of people coming together. I know that conflict specialists do a lot of work meeting with people. They are to hook producers up with resources and do depredation investigations. I want to acknowledge that the suggested language in here about this meeting, where everyone comes with the intent to analyze and problem solve. Its acknowledging that there is some intent in those that does not happen now. And the other thing is that the language sounds like producers are hung up on, that makes lethal off the table, there's a conundrum that we face about accountability. The genesis of this discussion was where there was an area with a lack of cooperation with a particular producer but there's a need to solve the problem, that's the stuff that we hear about. We hear about anger with public resources being spent to remove wolves. We're trying to figure out some way that whenever these areas emerge that the producers would want to cooperate in one of these implementation plans but I know that there is a great desire

to see some language on what happens if a producer is not willing to come to the table and do this problem solving. This is about trying to come with more ideas and resources to help the producer, but if the producer is not going to do anything then that it's something that is not okay for a portion of the public. Our community wants to make sure there's acceptance of additional resources to fill the gaps. My question back to producers, is how do you suggest we deal with that? In the instance when someone is unwilling to participate how do we deal with that? I totally hear what producers are saying about the time gap, and I agree that once those conditions are met it does serve everyone best to do it as quickly and humanely as possible.

Comment

Just to respond, I guess the first thing would be to figure out why? Why is there that unwillingness? If you can identify that problem, maybe it can be fixed. I think most producers are going to be willing to help. There's also the idea of the compensation for their extra efforts. Is the compensation that more livestock don't die? That's not enough. Is it worth a person's time to fill out the paperwork? There are some key things there that deter producers. Other comments I have heard is that the department just comes out and sets stuff up and leaves. I heard others that are concerned about meetings or concern with getting non-lethals on the ground. I think it's part of a conflict specialists' job to do that work. I liked the comment about the time frame, and it sounds like it's a big thing to get put in here.

Comment

I do like the name, special focus area. Enhanced implies that we're not doing something already. I want to compliment the game department; they did a great job this past season with deterrents. We talked about the need for priority funding, it needs to be in here. It could give the department some extra direction regarding these areas. The non-lethals need to be started long before the depredations which also needs to be in here. Several people have mentioned the timing, I think there should be something in here that says they need to be removed within ten days or something. I like the shared goal as written, with minimizing instead of reducing, I think that says the goal is to get it to zero. I think minimizing the conflict is better. I think we're on the right track.

Comment

As someone who has boots on the ground, I think a lot about how we are going to do these things. When I first saw this document, I didn't see a ton in here that is radically different than what we're doing in the northeast part of the state. I'm surprised with the pushback. I think I now understand more of it and it is warranted. I think adding wording about timing is critical. I think this document would clarify that this is something we recognize before the season starts. I like the discussion around that. I just want to highlight, that none of the packs or areas in the state right now would actually meet this threshold as defined currently. I wanted to gauge people's temperature on the definition and if it captures what these areas mean. I think in the group there might be different opinions as meeting the threshold in one of these areas.

Comment

I think that was a good transition, some of the concerns I have is what are the scopes of these plans? What happens when we are coordinating with NGOs, USFS, potentially a lot of producers and a little more clarity around the definition but then also the expectations. If this becomes a big thing where it could equate to a lot of meetings, we need to know now. The season started in the northeast on May 11. I think a lot of the questions are how you define this area and what does it look like moving forward. Doing it last minute will not help. The concern is what is the scope and where is the receptivity on these plans?

Comment

We're going to shift gears due to time constraints; the department would like to share a video with you regarding counting wolves.

Comment

I wanted to share that this goes back to about a year ago, we wanted to get a message out about how we count critters and all that stuff. Some of our biologists took it from there and created something. This is a video that we all have this sense of they're out there counting wolves, but we really don't see what it entails or quite frankly how dangerous it is. I've lost a close agency friend in a helicopter wreck, and watching this video just shows this amazing work. At the same time, they're all family and they're putting themselves at risk for this information.

Comment

I appreciate the lead-in on this, for a couple of years now, I've given the presentation to the FWC about the number of wolves. Trying to explain the effort and work that goes into it doesn't necessarily show how much it takes. We wanted to make this video to explain what we're doing.

Plays WDFW's "How to Count a Wolf" a video

Lunch

Comment

To start off, I want to review key points from this morning. This was my attempt to capture the notes. First, it feels like on the producer side it's something being done to them not with them. I think that we had one of members point out that the last paragraph leads them to those worries. We had one-member question if the language was necessary. Someone else asked if part of this language's intent is to protect livestock is there wording to make this language more useful? The subcommittee says the intent of the language is to say, "Hey let's use non-lethals in the beginning before depredations". We've heard staff concerns with the language about getting the expectations clear, how many people, and how many meetings? We need to pay attention to that. We had a number of specific language recommendations.

Lots of folks have said they like the special focus title. There was also a need to describe the timeframe of this document. A couple of ideas for us to consider are would it be useful to identify these particular areas for funding priority. We also had a question thrown out to the group regarding lethal removal for more than two consecutive years, is that the right definition? We had a member request, to address if a producer is not willing to support or receive additional help. Did I miss key points? I'm thinking what's the best use of our time. I'm assuming we're going to ask the subcommittee to take another shot at this.

Comment

The subcommittee has tackled this many times, I'm kind of wondering if we're in the stage or process where we could do the wordsmithing on this right now. If I'm wrong on that please push back, we've got a lot of good suggestions and some consensus around ideas.

Comment

I'm wondering if it's a lot of people to wordsmith but if we could put a little more substance to those items, whether it's the subcommittee or other folks. I'm cautious about wordsmithing, but I would like more direction on those items. Some of those were just comments or two but let's see if there's cohesion in those items

Comment

I could just go down those items and check-in with members about those items? Let's take the first one. The title, being special focus areas, also known as an SFA. Any concerns with that as a title?

Comment

I like special focus areas, but I understand the importance of chronic being there. I would suggest highlighting the special focus areas as being the front face but having it formally be special focus area for chronic conflict mitigation. I think overall that this is happening for multiple years and its conflict mitigation adding that it would be helpful.

Comment

Yeah, when we renamed the title again, we took out chronic. That's what the subcommittee came up with. We were trying to change it to something that had the same meaning but softer sounding since producers didn't like chronic or conflict.

Comment

Producer's thoughts?

Comment

I agree, it shouldn't have chronic in there.

Comment

I was going to suggest using the word recurrent instead of chronic. Is that word acceptable?

Comment

I think somehow, we need to describe what we're actually focusing. We have to come up with a word of some type that explains that this is not your run-of-the-mill conflict. These areas where there are chronic issues with conflict, and we've taken full packs out multiple times. So, what is the term that describes that?

Comment

Let me throw out the next recommendation for consideration. Talking about the paragraph after the numbered list. So, the suggestion was to take that paragraph and move it before the numbered list. Let's give members a chance to read that and see how it sounds to them.

Comment

So, I think the language is good but I'm wondering if we should add something. Say something about "the intent is to develop this plan and have it ready for implementation at the beginning of the time in which an area becomes a special focus area".

Comment

That was my recommendation as well. You could even put it at the start of the second paragraph and that would be another option.

Comment

It seems to me as though we don't have the definition the way I envisioned it, I guess. We talk about repeated depredations that have occurred, but these areas are having repeated removal of entire packs. I don't know a good way to describe that and maybe no one else agrees with this.

Comment

It's a good point, the thing I'm struggling with and I think this could apply as well with how ranchers feel about the number of livestock depredated on, is that there's a lot of social upset when there's lethal removal at all. Say you had one year, and you had a full pack removal and that got a lot of angst and then you have another year a new pack moved in but still depredations and you had to remove another one or two wolves. I think that will be as upsetting or problematic as if you remove an entire pack two years in a row. I think if we put the threshold too high, we wouldn't be able to mobilize what this language talks about. Lots of livestock were killed in the Wedge and a pack was removed and that was one year but in order to look at that through the lens of producers, should we have an aspect of defining a threshold on the total number of losses? I didn't bring us to any resolution but throwing it out there for considerations.

Comment

Someone else brought this up before lunch but I wanted to highlight that as these areas are currently defined none of these areas would meet the threshold because we haven't had two consecutive years of depredations. Maybe the level of depredation is too high and maybe producers want this to kick in. What is it based on? Also keep in mind about what is realistic for what could be done. That's where the agency needs your help on what feels right.

Comment

I've thought about this quite a bit. The way its worded right now being lethal removal after two or more consecutive years of depredations, but if we have a spot where we're removing wolves two years in a row, I think if an area has issues with chronic wolf conflict then it should be three years. There's a little more wiggle room there so there's not as much lethal removal.

Comment

I would, I think this is a good start. I think its easy to overthink it. I remember in the early years; we went down so many rabbit holes. This basic level kind of covers it. And if over a couple consecutive years, they don't get us where they want to be then we act differently. My sense right now is that its really the content below that we should focus on. What are we going to do in these areas?

Comment

I agree, there does need to be focus in these areas. I disagree with the first part of what you said, I think getting the definition right is important. The on-the ground field staff need to understand what's expected of them to do.

Comment

Someone on the producer side please offer your thoughts on the definition.

Comment

I think the definition is just fine. If you dissect it to closely then it has no chance. These depredations we're talking about is the bare minimum, there's depredations out there that are never found.

Comment

Id like to ask staff, is that clear enough for you or are there questions?

Comment

As I sort of turn this over in my head, I think about one of our triggers, for the agency is having the lethal order issued period. Sometimes we are not able to even carry out these orders. If a lethal removal order has been issued that means depredations have gotten to the point, we don't want them to.

Comment

I'm still uncomfortable with it the way it is. As I said earlier, none of the packs meet this threshold as it stands today. Are there WAG members that know of areas that meet this? If there are, we can work back from there. We saw it with the signs today, the agency tries to do something with good intentions and then we get slammed. I'm not comfortable with it the way it is. I would hope some WAG members would speak up if they're reading it differently than I am.

Comment

With the current definition we don't have any areas for next year. Are there areas you think should be special focus areas?

Comment

I guess to speak to that, I am feeling a bit of discomfort looking at it. If you have an area where your repeatedly having issues and not two years in a row, maybe that's too general and doesn't give the staff a concrete definition. Some of it we won't be able to tie down so you can have flexibility. How can we describe these areas with the direction you need?

Comment

It's a good point, lets look at Profanity, Kettles, OPT, all that had removals four years in a row. It doesn't necessarily mean there won't be removals the following years. The question would be to consider the central Kettles area to be a place that's deserving of extra attention or does a year of no conflict take the area of table? If there were two years in a row, then the third year you start kicking this in. You can have a place that hasn't had conflict before, and everyone does everything they can to make it better next year. In retrospect you realize that doing something the second year, didn't work, then you're in a third year. Its going to cause this social tension that we need to deal with. The point is that you might have a couple years of bad conflict and then a year of no conflict and then a year of bad again. There are all these factors in the Kettles area where it is easy for conflict to emerge. Should those be areas of focus to see if you can get improvements or successes? To the point where everyone has done everything possible, it's something we can't solve then. I really do think you could put boundaries on it and identify areas that have more conflict than not.

Comment

That resonates with me. I think that if you look in the Kettles area where we've had three or four different packs, there's not a thing where a year it doesn't meet the definition then it off the list. In those areas we want to look at what's unique to the landscape and how it meets the level of detail. I'm wanting us to define the definition and find clarity here. I think we should also acknowledge that it's not going to be perfect. Every case is different, and we need to have maneuverability to say, this one is one of our special areas. We know from experience that in these areas where we see repeated issues, they are all a bit different

Comment

Its confusing for me too here. We're not waiting for two years of consecutive stuff. We're not going to just sit back and think nothing is going to happen this year. Lots of planning will go into this area regardless. We're not waiting for two consecutive years for something to happen

Comment

What happens in areas that have had full pack removal, two years in a row and then there are no wolves on the landscape so there's no conflict? There are proven areas of conflict so how do we reconcile that? When we have conflict areas where packs have been removed?

Comment

I think I echo some of the things about the need for a definition. Being that this is a living document, the more we learn and implement things, the more we can come back and look at it and see if it hits the mark. Each year we sit down and try to think about potential areas with issues and we look at history and pack composition and lots of the time we throw that out the window. Areas we suspect being a problem don't end up rising to the level where we need to make management decisions. If we're putting all of our eggs in that basket and finding them will be a problem. We're doing pre-season stuff, and focusing time and effort into one area so how do you compensate for areas that pop up? I think we need to share that and need guidelines and recommendations. It doesn't mean it has to be that way forever. We do need guidance here.

Comment

I wanted to respond to a previous point. I don't think we've said this before, it's a common misconception, I think everyone should be aware, when we remove packs they recolonize almost instantly. A couple weeks after removing the Wedge pack this year, the territory was reoccupied with wolves within a month. That's what we expect, is for these areas to fill in quickly.

Comment

We're trying to identify the criteria that would define something as a special focus area. I guess a question is do we need to? Or is it a periodic assessment where people say this is what we think, and these should be SFAs. I'm asking you if we have to nail it down here or could it be something in the process?

Comment

I think without concrete examples or setting up a way of what we mean that it might be hard for people to wrap their heads around what this is about. I want to emphasize that if there is a lethal removal there will be a lot of planning to prevent that from happening the next year. In 2016, it was an incredibly difficult year with non-lethals, and range riding being implemented. It was seen as progress. It turned out after that there were depredations from different wolves that had moved up. There were some depredations

that happened which caused lethal to happen in the same place. There's no way that one range rider could have covered that area based on pattern of wolf use. There is an intent to always do the very best the next year after a situation arises. People did the planning. You look back though and there aren't enough range riders to cover it. In a third year, what you would hear from our community is that well based on what's happened those two years and that third year, you should do X, the example is you should have had constant rotation of range riders or more concentrated focus areas. When we analyze what happened in 2018, there were still gaps. If people would have known in advance that would happen what could have gotten done or done differently? I think it's a tricky thing to wrap our heads around, but we could all find a situation where lethal occurred where there was a mismatch of time of range riders out there or the non-lethals didn't work. This is really about harvesting as much information as available as people try what they can, and you find out it doesn't work. I'm not intending any blame there. The whole point of this, whether its two or three consecutive years, or whatever, it's trying to continue to learn from the things that didn't happen.

In some situations, you need more resources, or you need to change the pattern in which you deploy those resources. I remember talking to a range rider in those situations, and they said if they had the capacity or permission to camp out, they thought we would have been able to take care of this. It's the idea of when you get everyone's heads together that participated in the situation, that's the reason and way to analyze those patterns. We thought this thing would work but now that we see this, maybe its just changing how you deploy them. This exercise will not always create more work but allow us to address these issues in a different way next time. The whole point is to take advantage of the information you can. Legislators don't like their phones ringing off the hook, so they've been willing to help us. I think we can all find examples of when something happened, and you thought to try it a different way next time.

Comment

I'm wondering if on the definition side, if there's a step we do in the revision process where a team of us starts at looking at the perspective of areas in which should be considered special focus areas? It would also give us some clarity about what we think.

Comment

I think we've gone way off track. I think there's a lot of words and it's hard to read. What I do know is that the first paragraph makes sense. It says something about a plan but what plan? We're not making a plan. This is section 9. I understand the department's needs for this to be cut and dry, but I think this is a really hard thing to do. You're working with livestock, humans and wolves and they're all living animals. If we want Section 9 to be in the protocol, we should try to get through it. How do we change the words on the paper to make it make sense?

Comment

What's the right balance of wordsmithing? I didn't see us as off track, but I saw with the previously asked question that it's obvious we're not all comfortable with the right answer. Someone offered a suggestion about using real life example and then work backwards from it. We're spending a lot of time with this because it's not right with everyone yet.

Comment

I totally agree. It feels like to me we're working backwards. What do the biologists think if there are any zones that fit this description?

Comment

We could add language that says the department has flexibility to create SFAs.

Comment

Rather than defining the area with years, the department should at the end of each grazing season figure out special focus areas for the next season.

Comment

Is this still the best use of our time? Are we at a point where a small group takes input and goes to the next version?

Comment

This is a really good discussion. Its not perfect as written and we want to play with this more. I like the idea of an assignment for the subcommittee. The dialogue we just had is something a group can create and build something that captures the perspectives we just shared.

Comment

I don't think it should go to another subcommittee. It's a real conundrum. We will lose momentum and find new rabbit holes to go down. Any forward thrusts we had this time are lost again. It doesn't interest me to punt it further down. I think we're as close as we're going to be.

Comment

I was thinking that giving it to a smaller group to work on it would be nice.

Comment

I think the same lines are drawn when it gets brought back to the group and then we just get caught in the loop.

Comment

This many people editing a document is ludacris. Especially if the smaller group had representatives from all groups.

Comment

I've had another person in our group share that, the amnesia part of seeing those documents is real. If we take this energy and check-in with everybody it might help with the amnesia.

Comment

I don't know how we're ever going to finish this thing. I don't even think the small groups are fully on board.

Comment

So, I think getting this right is better than being fast. Given that this impacts, the people I represent and some of the other folks, I prefer to have it right and think kicking I back to the small group, maybe we shift the small group members but I think having some of the field staff and biologists that would actually be implementing what we're working out here. I heard from staff that they have concerns with this definition. I would love for some of them or all of them to be a part of improving the language.

Comment

I really do agree with the other staff who have said definition is important. I don't know how we carry out anything without it. The issue with the subgroup is that we're trying to do simple language changes but only the entire group can help us define these things. Is there anything wrong with the proposed definition, of the department designating zones annually based on prior season? It has flexibility in it. Can I propose that we move towards one or other for definitions?

Comment

I wanted to quickly respond to the previous comment. Its been over a year since we started this section. My interest is not to rush it through but not continue to lose traction.

Comment

I guess I have a different view of the world. I know in the spring and summer we worked on different sections of the protocol. My group did not focus on this section at all. The livestock producer side of the table has not been as involved. We're certainly not ready at this point to say thumbs up.

Comment

When I look at the definition including department flexibility, I thought that could work. I want to bring that back to the table and ask the question on what would work for all of us?

Comment

When you get to the topic of a definition, we really need the larger group's input. I think we should run with that right now. We don't want to lose momentum and how much time we spend wordsmithing. There are a couple of proposed definition adjustments, what are peoples' thoughts on that?

Comment

I'm not comfortable with the department designating these zones after the grazing season. There still has to be some type of definition or guidelines for them to do that. I'm not comfortable with the department having the power or ability to make the okay that "this pack fits that definitions". There still has to be the definition on how they fit. I don't like that part of the language at all.

Comment

I think we're beating a dead horse. I think we need to get on with the issues that are in those document further down before we can decide how much authority to give the department or what the department should be. That second sentence about the intent we need to get rid of this plan. It could be this plan or that plan. We need to go down the line and address the issues that are important. We're hung up on one spot and we need to go line item by item.

Comment

I want to hear other responses from the previous question.

Comment

I agree that there should be a definition. I think it puts a really big burden on the department staff and someone will always be mad at them for not doing it the right way. There should be a subjective way to define it. I think we should try to keep it as straight forward as possible. I think we should just start with the definition given and if we find that it's not right then we can go back and adjust. It also doesn't mean the department is going to stop doing hard work planning for grazing seasons and addressing situations that come up within a given grazing season. All hands-on deck thing. My suggestion is to just go with the two out of three consecutive years and change it when necessary. If it helps producers to remove lethal control from this section, and it clearly shows that the intent was not to put a burden on the producer. The entire intent of this document is to reduce losses on both sides so let's focus on that.

Comment

Let's go back to the first recommendation you had about the definition. What do we think about the two out of three consecutive years as a starting point? I'd like to hear from on the ground staff especially.

Comment

I think that having clarity on what people expect is helpful, I just want to make sure we all have clear expectations. The earlier we can start identifying these areas the more likely we will be to have success. We need to identify packs before calving season. That's why I've been pushing for us to figure out these special focus areas so that we can work as soon as possible.

Comment

I think we can try that as a working definition right now. Why don't we look at the last paragraph, and get group input?

Comment

My suggestion is to remove the last paragraph. One reason is that there is already authority to not go to lethal yet. I would already read this section as there is an intent to do a plan for these areas. I think the Director already has the authority on what to do in situations where producers or other parties don't cooperate. I hear from the producers that they don't want more hurdles and that they can't agree to something that outlines what might make their lives harder, which again is not the intent. We're trying to stop this from happening every year because its hard for producers, conservationists, staff members and others. I heard the producers say that they couldn't agree based on this. I see a wat forward by us having this paragraph in here.

Comment

I understand the rationale. I have a concern that it removes the tiny amount of accountability in this section. I think it is in another part of the protocol, but it doesn't hurt to have it here. We need to address the fact that there are producers that don't cooperate, and we need to address that.

Comment

Any other thoughts?

Comment

We don't need to have it in there twice. It doesn't make it stronger.

Comment

I want to emphasis that this is not only stated in another part of the protocol but throughout the beginning of conflict to when the director makes an approval, there isn't a word of that protocol that we're not thinking about the entire time. It is stated and it is something incredibly relevant. It doesn't hurt to restate it, but I don't think its needed.

Comment

If you want any language that moves forward, it lives and dies with this language. That's why I've been saying that this for producers is one of the harder conversations to have. Lethal control and problem areas are a significant issue.

Break

Comment

What we're still wrestling with right now is the accountability portion. I think there are concerns from certain groups that this was an issue.

Comment

The sentence above the deleted paragraph concerned me. I've been on GMAC for over a decade and involved in wildlife management. I've looked at graphs and charts that have been used statewide to set seasons and the state is telling me they don't know anything, that insults my intelligence. I'm really upset with that. As far as I'm concerned, that sentence needs to stay in.

Comment

I think the change we're on right now is the last paragraph. Is anyone concerned with dropping it?

Comment

I have concerns, I can't seem to find it in the protocol where its stated. If we're going to drop this then I'd like to know how we're going to have accountability in this section specifically for producers who do no cooperate or come to the table with non-lethals or a plan.

Comment

I looked at the protocol and the 2017 version (on our website) on page 14 where it talks about lethal removal criteria, there's bullet that directly addresses your concern.

Comment

I thought this section was something in addition to a focus area where the department would recommend the use of non-lethals. If there isn't cooperation with that and we get another cycle of wolf removal, what are we doing differently to prevent the cycle of repeated depredations and lethal removal?

Comment

Some thoughts are that we have what's in the protocol already that says that if they choose not to cooperate then we consider lethal removal when those two items are met at a higher level or at what point they decide to do them. I think we saw something like this in Wedge area this season. I think that's part of the context. The non-lethals by state law, you got to do them. We're not in a position to do level removal if they're not using those tools.

Comment

I hear what is being said. There is a distinction between having non-lethals that the conflict specialist thinks are suited versus this higher level of planning. They're distinct situations. I stand by my point, that what is in the protocol should be there but it's not clear. I think we need to make that part of the protocol, that's not in this section should be clearer. What would happen if non-lethals were not considered then what would the department do? Make the linkage explicit. Earlier in the meeting I asked about the conundrum about how we handle the accountability issue. The attempt with cooperation is to help the producer as much as anyone else but if there's someone not willing to do that then what do we do. I think there is value in trying to understand the situation but what if it is tried and it doesn't change. I heard other people saying that we don't want this language to illustrate that lethal is off the table, however, given the involvement of public resources there does need to be accountability here. Is there something that would be acceptable from the producers that this applies to Section 9?

Comment

I'm just going to the language previously read. The reason for this in the first place. If a producer is doing delayed turn out and cleaning up carcasses, that satisfies what was just said. Nothing is explaining what exactly they need to do and they're just hitting the minimum mark? What is the section even asking for then? Mandatory cooperation for range riding and other things that are adequate is fine but without that then are we just going to say we're powerless and are going to kill wolves?

Comment

Thanks for bringing that up. I'm trying to communicate that what this paragraph says the way we look at the protocol, what we get from this paragraph we have in the protocol. I think it could be described more strongly in the protocol. We have the protocol that says if you're not participating in the non-lethals that we'd like to see that happen, then we will only consider lethal removal at higher levels and until you implement those tools. Our field staff will make recommendations to the producer and work through each situation. I do think what could be strengthened is that some of this gets packaged together in the protocol on page 14 and earlier in the protocol where it talks about conflict specialists and producers. For what we have right now, with that paragraph, we already have in the protocol.

Comment

If I'm understanding clearly your thought is that in the protocol, there is already direction for non-lethal deterrent use and staff would be communicating with the producers about changes?

Comment

Yes, its not just that they're doing two things but its proactive communication like, "here are the non-lethals tools we think are best suited for this operation", then that language for accountability is in there. If I were to pick a spot somewhere in the protocol to tie that together, I would pick page 14.

Comment

And so, you're working with a rancher, there are some creative ideas of things that could be tried that have not been tried before in the CCZ, and at that time there would be conversations about ERAs to implement something new different?

Comment

Yes, those conversations take place this time of year, anything new to try. Whatever it may be, we work on that during the winter months to get them out to producers.

Comment

I think like I said earlier, in 2018 after the rough year we had, we spent a lot of time internally about pilot project ideas that fit into the category of trying something new. I think the plan this year, we did purchase some of those things on the list but it's too late in the year to know if they were effective. Right now, we're still putting together what we want to try in those areas. We usually reexamine those things in the winter. If we're funneling it into these focus areas that normally happens in winter.

Comment

I think for this conversation; an example would be helpful. As we had depredations occurring this year, WAG as a body wasn't finished with the recommendation on range riding but we had already known that it was something more than just clarity or level of expectation to the point of X number of riders per week. So, we communicated that as an expectation to producer and range riders as they were staffing up. I think that's an example of how it works. It's going to be different things for certain pack areas and producers. I think it's good to be clear about our expectations moving forward. That's the model we're working towards. I wouldn't tag that into Section 9, I would put that for everywhere. I think there would be an improvement in the protocol to pull all of this together in one spot.

Comment

So, I agree with you, relative to where the protocol provides the umbrella language and relative to the use of non-lethals and specifically talking about best suited tools. That's really the strength of the non-lethal component. I go back to the pervious suggestion, I think if we merge both ideas, that you can strengthen the ideas on page 14 and at that location you point specifically to the term special focus areas. I think if you did that, you'd got it. Seems like you got a couple of good ideas and we're close to making it work.

Comment

I think that's a good suggestion before you said that I was going to try and refocus the question. What happens when the producer doesn't want to participate? If its acceptable to everyone else on the WAG I think we should make the connection between the ability of the department to go to a higher number versus the producer not cooperating. I think that provides a level of accountability. I would be interested to hear how others feel.

Comment

Someone talked about putting them together, a link to the language would allow work. I do believe the language needs to be strengthened. Id have to see what that looks like.

Comment.

I don't think you can make producers do things on their own private lands. Public lands are different but on their own private lands you can't force people to do something. Its your land. As long as there's no abuse, you have no right. Wolves are attacking private property; you better follow the protocol as its written and take care of it. The best you can do is offer the resources, even when you offer them you don't always have them. I requested a range rider this year and didn't get one. Just because we have these tools doesn't mean there's the ability to implement them. The last paragraph being out of there makes it a lot easier to swallow.

Comment

As far as the accountability topic we're wrestling with does the proposal sound good to you.

Comment

I don't feel like this paragraph needs to be in there. I don't think there's a need to do that.

Comment

The pointing to isn't the last paragraph but to the development and implementation of the plan in these areas. The whole idea is that if a producer decides to use non-lethals, the department can decide to go to a higher number. If a producer doesn't want to participate then the department has the same decision-making authority.

Comment

There are a couple of other sections we're wrestling with. Id like to get feedback on those areas as well. One suggestion was taking the paragraph underlined and the numbered list and moving it above, which was done. Another thing was that it was important that we identified the time frame actions should be done. We've also had comment on the intent and the word "plan" triggered some folks, so that's where I think this topic has went. I want to focus on this section and get more guidance.

Comment

I appreciate the move of that language for clarity. Its an implementation plan but we need to tell people clearly what this is. The clarity in the narrative would be helpful.

Comment

I was going to say something about the sentence, I think it should say the intent is to develop these plans or plan and have them ready for implementation.

Comment

I would ask if you would provide more clarity regarding focus area and conflict mitigation plans and then it starts to tie together the whole conversation area. The first paragraph you talk about the desire to work collaboratively and I would just refer to the plan as those conflict mitigation plans.

Comment

The sentence at the bottom about ungulates, someone has said its important to keep it in there rather than take out?

Comment

We do have population abundance estimates. For example, the Yakima elk herd runs through these focus areas and are in pack territories which are in the populations we're counting. Typically, the most detailed information we get is from game management units (GMUs) and harvest reports. We do have abundance estimates. No one has figured out how to accurately count animals amongst trees yet.

Comment

Lots of good input on this. Good ideas and adjustments. In the past the department would ask "Hey do we have permission to mandate and go back and change what you said?". That's one potential process where we could do that, or we could say no we want more time picking away at this. We could use time on Friday afternoon to do that.

Comment

I propose that I could clean up the document so its readable and implement the changes that we agreed upon and revisit tomorrow.

Comment

This section is a place where we could either link to the creative solutions document or we could put this directly into the document and place some ideas.

Comment

I feel that the subcommittee can wordsmith and implement changes, but we can't make big context changes without the big group. I think we could also talk about those other potential ideas.

Comment

It would be nice for readability to look at the document cleaned up a bit while its still fresh. I would be game to at least do that tomorrow.

Comment

I agree. I would like a chance to see a cleaned-up version and get this over the lines.

Comment

I think we should spend time tomorrow looking at a revised document. I don't want to, but I will.

Comment

I concur. I'd like to see if we at least can't get further along.

Comment

We have blocked time from 12pm to 4pm tomorrow, so we can start with it then.

Comment

Now we are switching topics to post recovery. I think staff are going to reorient our minds to post recovery.

Comment

Most of you should recognize the displayed document. This is the velcro thing we built in Ellensburg. I wanted to start with this because we should go back to this and see if we're on track. I'm going to bounce around a little bit. Knowing that each of these is a timeline and there isn't a start date or end date. I'll start on the green timeline that goes over the WDFW led and SEPA items. We're in a middle place where scoping is closed and we're working on a draft. On the department line, the outreach really started with the scoping and pre-scoping. The ungulate monitoring, we're well into our predator-prey project. Wolf ecology specifically we have not addressed as much. We've done a public comment on the topic and we have initiated dialogue between other committees. The one above, the blue line, is really the WAG and what your process was. I think we had some grand ideas, Covid-19 has obviously put a big wrench into that. It's incredibly important that we're reaching tens of thousands of people. I don't know if WAG got to the point of goals with the wolf plan. Some of the big over arching things, the commission needs to hear about WAG to understand how to work together. We know have regular attendance by a commissioner or more. How are they communicating? We have seen the eagerness of the wolf committee to be a part of this. We've made progress there. I wanted to come back with a report card if you will. Now is a good time to have the conversation about goals and timelines.

Comment

I wanted to go back to this timeline because I want to honor the work that WAG did to come up with this. I don't want to throw this in the bin yet, but we have sort of had to move forward on steps of it. I do want to put a spotlight on the WAG line that addressed goals of the wolf plan. I have your draft vision of that. Of course, we want WAG to be involved with this. I have moved forward on the SEPA steps. We are ready for WAG to give into this plan. I know WAG's time has been dedicated to revisions but work on the plan has been moving forward. Since its been awhile since we talked about post recovery planning, I want to do a quick refresher. A post recovery plan is an updated plan for when wolves have recovered in Washington State. They still have a state listed status. This plan is not a unique thing for the state to do, Minnesota is doing it now. Lots of states do this when they have conservation plans written for a species and its been a decade or so. Washington is reaching a point where we meet our recovery goals. We want to have a new plan in place for wolf management in Washington. Why are we doing it early? Because it takes a long time to develop these plans. You should fully expect that for the species and topics that are as controversial as wolves that it will take time. We need to make sure our public involvement is good, EIS (environmental impact statement) and other things need to be ahead of the game. A quick review of scoping, scoping is what kicked off the state's SEPA process which looks at the environmental impact. We're doing things that fall in this plan, and others that are not. Scoping is a part of the formal process. It kicks off the proposal to start this new plan; we had a formal public comment period for 107 days. If you look at comments per capita, based on the population of each county, highest were Stevens, Garfield, Pend Oreille, Ferry and Jefferson counties. About 50% of the comments came from folks who are directly affected by this. Thirteen percent of the comments from within Washington came from areas where wolves were known to occur. I encourage you to look at the comments.

I want to talk about things that are part of a normal SEPA process. Our work on drafting and brainstorming ideas has been done internally. We have included folks starting with our cross-sections and Wolf Internal Group (WIG) and WDFW senior staff and Executive Management team. We've worked internally to get collective ideas on paper. A lot of our foundations are on paper, so we have a place to start from. Again, we had gathered ideas for discussions. The WIG refined that document, then went to senior staff, then went to the Executive Management team and right now we're at the current stage of communicating and coordinating with tribal governments. We are doing information sharing with Tribes on these ideas. After this step we are going to move onto steps that are concurrent or close to concurrent, which is a wolf workshop. We can't do anything without our colleagues and partners. Everything we do is on land that is managed by other agencies so its important everyone is at table for that. Id love to present these draft ideas and have WAG jump into this stuff. I'm wondering if we'd be able to do that at our next meeting in January, and other advisory committees like GMAC, DAC and others. Those advisory groups are made of constituents and taking those ideas to them gives them larger consideration.

We also want to bring these ideas to the FWC Wolf Committee. Those meetings are open to the public. The public can be engaged and become involved in the discussion early. All of this will happen while we form an EIS. All we have is brainstorm ideas so far, just ideas for discussion. We need to continue to review refine and finalize alternatives, then develop draft EIS, internal review of draft EIS and issue a DEIS, which is an external public review. There are lots of places where we can have stakeholder meetings and you can communicate with WAG or department staff. We can get the public's ideas and inputs, its not part of the formal process but we want to provide that. We still want to continue to have meetings and conversations. WAG and the Wolf Committee meetings are always open to the public. Those meetings you can hear and understands what's going on. How does WAG dive into this? I think it would be great for WAG to start diving into social topics, but some ideas are wolf translocation, compensation for livestock loss, land management, wolf hunting, any of those topics are more social in nature. That's where we need WAG to dive in. Anyone have questions?

Comment

Is there value in starting a subcommittee here to give WAG a good starting point?

Comment

I want to make sure we're following the government steps and make sure we're doing everything publicly. We could provide some draft language prior to the January meeting so you have it.

Comment

I wanted to emphasize one thing, what we've done at this stage, is just kind of internally, what does WDFW think. That's really what we've done, we've started our internal dialogue, as you would expect us to so that when we have a conversation, we're not coming to you cold. We purposefully stopped there because the development of alternative that are really going to be in print, we want those heavily informed by WAG, DAC and GMAC, amongst other advisory groups. We want to make sure your voice is a part of developing these alternatives. When you see us come to you next with this, here's my begging and pleading, please find time for us. We need WAG's input or perspectives. Please find time to dive into this one. We're going to have to do this virtually, but you will see things written in pen on the screen.

Comment

I appreciate the updates. I am eager to be engaged sooner than later.

Comment

I'm getting kind of burnt out, I'd like to hit the ground running for the future.

Comment

Just to mention, I know that WAG has probably seen links to other webinars in states working on similar stuff. Those states have had hundreds if not thousands of wolves for many years. I am keeping my ear to the ground for their public engagement process. I will keep sending links to those and it's a great opportunity to hear what others are doing. A great mutual learning opportunity by learning how other groups have worked on this.

Comment

Thank you to the public for joining in. One of the things that we've been grappling with is that going into this virtual world, there's just no way to replace that condition we had before with our WAG meetings. The process is not just about WAG member but incorporating as much voice as possible. We're looking for ways to replicate that the best way we can, struggling a bit internally with if Zoom will be our platform or not. One of the things that we're going to be working on is to put at least an hour in front of the WAG meetings where we could do breakout remembers. I just wanted to pass that along to all the public. We're trying to find a way to incorporate your voices more into this.

Public Comment @ 4:30

Meeting adjourned

**Wolf Advisory Group
November 20, 2020, Meeting Notes
Zoom Meeting (Day 2)**

WAG members: Samee Charriere, Tom Davis, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Jess Kayser, Jessica Kelley, Bill Kemp, Lynn Okita, Dan Paul, Lisa Stone, Caitlin Scarano, and Paula Swedeen

WDFW staff members: Candace Bennett, Dan Brinson, Ben Maletzke, Donny Martorello, Joe McCanna, Steve Pozzanghera, Annemarie Prince, Kevin Robinette, Trent Roussin, and Julia Smith

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

Welcome and check-in

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

Review the agenda and make any adjustments

Rob presents the agenda to the group.

Meeting Purpose

Continue discussion on special focus areas.

Comment

What I recall from yesterday, were three main topics. One had to do with the title, and do we use the word chronic? The second thing was trying to find the right place to capture timeframe. Finally, we were wondering if we should keep the last paragraph or not? That's my recollection, please correct me if I missed something.

Comment

It might be helpful for you guys to know where we're coming from. I'm going to say that out of all my time on WAG I'm not sure I came away from a conversation like the one we had yesterday so frustrated. I think its important that you know our position, so I'll walk you through what our concerns are over Section 9. This language assumes that the problem rests solely on producers and nowhere else. The department shares some blame or equal blame. I touched on this a bit yesterday and felt blown off. In talking with producers, it's been confirmed to me that there is a huge gap in communication. Some of these complaints are about the length of time to go lethal. There were also complaints about department funded range riding. Data sharing continues to be a huge issue, as a 48-hour delay does nothing and doesn't help to build trust. Our feeling is that Section 9 places the full focus of actions or inactions of producers, which is only part of the problem in our opinion. To continue down this path with this language to me is

inaccurate and unkind and uncivil to livestock producers. For that reason, I can't support what is before us today. I think that's important for you to continue the discussion.

Comment

Any responses to what was said?

Comment

Thanks for sharing that with us. I guess my question to you is, do you have recommendations on how we can incorporate those concerns in this document?

Comment

One comment I forget to mention was that I appreciate the recommendation to remove the last paragraph. I'm not trying to throw grenades at anyone here. It's a complex issue and they are doing the best they can with the resources they have. But we could all do our jobs better and we are only looking at the subset of an issue in a chronic area. I think if we could broaden the scope it would help lessen frustration for myself and people I represent.

Comment

I guess hearing your description is not how I looked at that section. I thought everyone was coming together and what we could do there.

Comment

The acknowledgement that when an area becomes chronic, brings up the question of what caused that to happen? It could just be the behavior of a pack or what the producer did or not do. But could it also be due to the delay of going to lethal or the lack of using data more effectively. As I read this, this is putting producers on trial for what they do or didn't do. I'm just looking for some fairness and more comprehensive review.

Comment

A lot of producers watched this yesterday and there was a lot of pushback. I'm supporting what was previously said without having to review it.

Comment

Would it be helpful at this point to throw up the language?

Comment

Thank you for sharing your thoughts. So, I do think we mentioned this yesterday, you know that the time the Director makes a decision to the time of attempting to carryout that decision. We are also frustrated and want that to be as swift as possible. That's one of the tools we use. We're not wanting more depredations to continue to reinforce that behavior. From what you were sharing, we have that in common. We're looking at this winter as a way to go back and review our process for decision making from the Director to implementation. We've acknowledged that's something we need to

accomplish before the 2021 season. I think that's reasonable to acknowledge, whether in Section 9 or somewhere else. We need to look at the timeliness of tools. When you were describing it, you were sharing what you heard from producers, just a reminder that where we left yesterday that this is not an assessment after four depredations, this is an all hands on deck plan before cows are turned out into the spring. Its pre-emptive. Its not slowing anything down if established.

Comment

Would it be helpful at this point to throw up the language for everyone to view and go over specific language recommendations or even identifying the words here that give you the impression that you described. Would this be a good idea or helpful?

Comment

I don't have any language recommendations at this point. I think it needs to be re-worked, as far as the group can go with addressing concerns.

Comment

If there is specific language or triggers the response you have it would be helpful for us to know.

Comment

I was thinking what's at the core of these special focus areas, because they're distinct but what makes them special focus areas? Are there specific steps that are already taken in the protocol that relate to this? How do we make these things tangible and preemptive? I was also wondering if they are special focus areas, how can we shift the conversation to be less on lethal removals to more non-lethals on private property? Has that come up or it is explicit?

Comment

I've been looking at the document and as we look at it, I'm thinking about what has been shared from producers. So, lets put that feeling on for a moment, where in this does that feeling come from? What does this direct? The only thing that really jumps out to me here is the first sentence of the second paragraph. And so, part of that feels off to me, it says "the department will do this", not producers. Would it feel better if it were more communal? Somehow saying that all those involved in this will work together. Later, in the bullet list, there could be at the beginning an acknowledgement that says at this step, this is not a blame thing on producer or department or tool or anything like that. Its "Hey what we've been using in the toolbox is not having the desired effect, so let's figure this out". If there's a way to acknowledge that in Section 9, this is just a recognition of the scenario we're in.

Comment

I work in a political world. I can't help but see things through that lens. So, there are two things in response to your comments, maybe this isn't the right place to be honest. We see this just out the gate as being politically driven, given that these depredation areas have been a part of court cases to the Governor's office. That makes us nervous. Know that that's part of the lens we see things. So just having this discussion in the protocol based on what's happened causes us concern. Secondly, having language in the last paragraph of the section as possibly limiting lethal as a tool, makes us nervous as well. That's part of why we're considered and hesitant about this language.

Comment

Thanks for sharing that. This is that mode where we quickly move into problem solving mode. You shared something that you're hearing and feeling but I would offer that all of us reach down deep there to get into problem solving mode.

Comment

I'd like to clarify, first, from the perspective of the producers that even having this discussion or creating special focus areas has the negative connotation you described. The second issue was the last paragraph and how it implies further restrictions on the use of lethal.

Comment

Thoughts or reactions?

Comment

I'm going over my notes, and we did have some action items we talked about. There are a few things I wrote down yesterday. One was that we need priority funding for these areas. The other one I heard was to start non-lethals before depredations and the other big one we talked about was we need to in these areas start lethal immediately after a depredation happens. Shorten the timeline and if there's a wolf doing this remove them, so we don't end up with a whole pack with learned behavior to be corrected.

Comment

Maybe it's a question for producers, and if they believe that they have clarified this then I apologize, are producers able to engage in a specific section that includes the concept of a focus area where there has been attempted and or lethal removal in two of the previous three consecutive years with the idea that we preemptively want to go into those areas and look for additional opportunities? Is there a willingness to work on a specific section focused on special focus areas or are you looking to see elements incorporated into the protocol?

Comment

It's a good question and the answer is yes. Clearly the ongoing constant review of what's working and not is needed. I am certainly willing to problem solve but are we doing the most effective way of lethal in Washington? We ought to review that, but I think its needs to be in this conversation. I know that there is natural divide between some us on this WAG as far as it comes to using lethal. We've already heard voices that less lethal is better and we could never agree to that. We're trying to help our producers survive. This topic brings these issues front and center.

Comment

I feel like this section should be something that producers welcome as far as additional assistance to protect their cattle if they're having an issue with repeated depredations. This is us looking at more ways to provide funding and additional non-lethals to prevent lethal action. For those of us focused on wolf recovery, we want to see that everything is being done possible with the assistance of the department prior to moving forward with lethal. That is the main concern. The fact that lethal is repeatedly used in certain area, it doesn't appear that everything is being done. If we could feel like producers have done everything they can and there's nowhere else to go that's one thing but when we feel like everything isn't being done because there isn't full cooperation, its not okay with my community to go out and kill wolves. I hear you but I want you to hear us. I think we can come to some kind of understanding with this section because its meant to prevent the death of cattle and wolves in the long run.

Comment

Thank you for that. You helped formulate my comment here. You have statements in print from the governor and there's the process we're going through with rulemaking. All that context is the backdrop to this. I think if there is a way to very carefully state things so that we're capturing that context that we think is the right way forward. The part about less reliance on lethals and less depredations, let's just play with that. When we describe that in more words, we're saying that we wouldn't need to use lethal because there would be less depredations on livestock. We need to perfect the outcome or why this is important to us. We're looking to do this proactively, prior to grazing season planning process with all those involved so that we don't see a pattern of wolf depredations on livestock which means we won't need to turn to the lethal tool. Is there a way we can put that all together in a way where it resonates with folks? What I'm hearing is that there is an interpretation out there that says don't use lethal but there isn't as much of a need for that tool because not as many cows are dying.

Comment

Is that the right characterizing of the goal from the group perspective?

Comment

I appreciate that suggestion. I share the same view as the previous speaker. I never looked at this document as being a hand slap to producers. It was all of us coming

together and saying what could be proactively done to provide support. A hand slap was never my intent.

Comment

You stated that well. I have a couple of points I want to get across. I think this is a good place start. But I hear both things from producers and as the discussion has been going on for a while, conservationists have had this intent that was just stated. As we work through this document, we keep hearing back from the ranching community that that's not how they feel. Sometimes I feel like the things conservationists are trying to do or express get lost in a large sense of frustration with the department. I really heard this in a 2019 meeting, when staff talked about living in that community because they get beat up all the time. Their efforts were not appreciated even though they are busting their ass helping producers. It was hard to be a WDFW member in that community. It isn't department staff not performing up to producers' standards, but staff also feel like the work is not fully appreciated. Part of me feels that core thing needs to be addressed. If we can't get to the point, then it is going to be a blow to those of us who are conservationists if we can't arrive at some sort of language agreement here. This seems like a really core thing.

Comment

I understand what was said, and when I talk to folks nobody's beating on the department. No one feels like they're not doing enough just that what they're doing doesn't work. We kind of knew this was going to happen.

Comment

You described that it's not working like we thought, and that's the point of this discussion and Section 9.

Comment

I want to explain my idea a bit. Trying to take some of what I've heard people say and try to put it into words, by adding to bullet one "the shared goal is to minimize the lethal removal of wolves by minimizing depredations of livestock". One of the things I've heard is that there is a need for the department to be very involved. I also tried to change the way the language read regarding the way lethal would be carried out. It's just a thought I'm throwing out there.

Comment

Thank you for your suggestions. It's something for us to noodle on. I'm wondering if other WAG members have thoughts about the second sentence at the end where it says, "implemented by WDFW prior to livestock turnout..." is there a way to add range riders and other entities that assist?

Comment

In response to that, those are people that mostly work for you, so you bring them in if that has to happen. I think we get too hung up in making sure everyone gets included. This is about the department and livestock producers. My intention with this edit was to replace the last paragraph

Comment

Reactions?

Comment

At the end when we talk about swifter actions is that intended to be part of that section?

Comment

So, my swifter action add-in was in my original thought process because the swifter action is taking out during the ten-day period and I think we need to shorten that down to eight hours. We are recognizing that we need to be ready and that's my thought process.

Comment

Thanks for clarifying.

Comment

I was looking at that as well. There are times where we can move quick if we're going to be trapping but I also caution folks on that. I'll use Togo as an example. We had a number of depredations last summer that led to us lethal action. We didn't have a collar in the pack, and we tried trapping and were unsuccessful. We know we had a wolf in that pack and the dynamic changed in the winter. We started out with an injury this summer and had us consider going lethal. It does take some time to get through the legal process and paperwork. In dense timber it is really difficult to do anything, and we didn't have any other depredations in that area after the rest of the summer. That pack wasn't depredating chronically and if we had moved quickly, we would have killed wolves in that pack without needing to. I know in some instances we do have depredations happening quickly and right next to each other and those situations may need to be quicker but going into a summer and having an injury, it can move us into that. Using the protocol with those guidelines, but not just sitting at a helicopter and waiting it does take time. Logistically, we need to look at the situation carefully to protect livestock and wolves. I want people to think about that before we get into any more language. We want to move when we need to, but we also need to weigh-in on each of those things.

Comment

You just made my blood boil. To be honest, all I heard was excuses. You just gave me a bunch of excuses that you can't be ready to do the job that needs to be done. The protocol clearly states the amount of days and you could be more prepared for these

areas. These areas need special attention, if we get away with non-lethal deterrents then great but when it comes time and the deterrents fail, the job is then to go lethal and it needs to be done with swifter action. When we're saying lethal is where we need to go, eight hours should be enough time to get it done. I'm tired of excuses as to why we can't do the job.

Comment

I want to note that that seems like an example of intent being led different ways and it causes the reaction that we just got. I can imagine that there may be other feelings. That's the kind of thing we need to figure out how to work through. I appreciate the fact that we were involved in making sure there was really a range riding presence in Togo and that resulted in less depredations in the season. That presence came from learning about things in years prior. I appreciate that lethal didn't happen too quickly. To the other point though, maybe we should look at the criteria. It's going to be confusing and hard for the department to communicate to ranchers why a lethal order was issued. I think this is just a set up for pissing people off and being impossible to communicate over the gap. If there is a situation where staff don't feel like it's the right thing then don't issue the lethal order. And be damn sure that when one is issued that that is going to happen. Don't issue an order and then sit on it because you'll never get over that cultural divide. Its this kind of stuff we need to work on or we're just going to keep going in circles. People are outraged about the use of public resources to kill wolves on public land. That's how the vast majority of people that contact us they feel. If we can't find common ground because we're talking past each other, we're not going to end up with agreement.

Comment

I want to acknowledge what has been said. I want to add more context, in that period between the Director making a decision and being able to carry out an action there is no "sitting on it" for us. We have a job to do and we go do it. We are being honest here, there's no ill intent, but we do make sure that we are prepped and ready to go if there is a decision. We do check-ins and make sure availability is done in pre-planning like any agency would. It's a very dynamic situation, it's not static and every situation is unique. Is there a collar? Can you use a helicopter? Do you have a carcass to trap over? The legal process does add time to it. That's concerning to us, we don't want something that takes a day to take ten. Sometimes it's a different situation, we sometimes don't have anything to work with and we don't want to set the expectation up. Let's say that in these cases it can be swift, two days later we removed a wolf and other cases we can try and not carry that out but attempted and that's the Togo example. The other tools continue to work and help and its just a recognition that its dynamic. There is that thing that we are so sound bite that we say, "we're going to be swift" and sure as shit the next situation we won't have the ability and suddenly it is turned against us.

Comment

The definition was once the lethal removal decision was made then to act on that decision as soon as possible. Staff and producers have been discussing what does “as soon as possible” mean. The intent is to do it as swiftly as possible but sometimes is not an option. Are there words that members can offer that capture that? The intent to be quick but also flexible or understanding each situation is different.

Comment

How about we use “implement the lethal order as expeditiously as possibly given available resources”?

Comment

Anyone have concerns with that?

Comment

Why is this here as opposed to what we do with the regular protocol? Can someone fill me on this that?

Comment

From the producer community, there are concerns of this section being discussed for a few reasons, it gave them the feeling that the efforts go on the backs of producers, doesn't clarify the department's share in this regarding decision time and how long it takes to complete them, and I think the point was this section almost feels like another barrier as opposed to a help. After we shared group reactions, a producer had offered some proposed language as a replacement for the last paragraph. We're trying to look for a compromise that looks at these areas on the ground where tools are not working. I think we all agree we want to do better with that.

Comment

I'll just add that I think we were thinking more about the substance and intent here in terms of what the language says. We haven't had a deep conversation about this piece. My main comment was on the last sentence, that was proposed, which I like, I want to add that is part of when you think about the timespan of lethal removal and actually doing it if there's another component there. It's the time where the last depredation queues up review by the team and the consideration by the Director. That can take quite a bit of time, and that can take a lot of information gathering and we're preparing to go to court. Like I shared a moment ago that we're looking to do that in a timelier way. I'm including that part as well, so we've met the guidance of the protocol and its time for the Director to consider, we're shortening that time as well.

Comment

I appreciate the recap. What strikes me is that aren't these areas where the state has had lethal removals and they aren't working? So now were going to go faster? It gets away from the shared goal.

Comment

I think that there is an acknowledgement of non-lethal part. We can look at the top part of the paragraph and we can see sentences that discuss the tools being implemented. To me, that's a really nice concise capturing of what our community has wanted. I haven't said this yet, but I appreciate that language. You missed where there were expressions about some big frustrations and a continued sense that the whole section is about putting the burden on them and we're trying to work through that. An important piece of that for them, is that when the lethal decision is made after you've made a plan, it's been implemented and hasn't worked and the decision to lethal is made then at that point making sure there's not a delay. This isn't about changing the thresholds or anything. I hope that helps explain.

Comment

So, a question to the department, do you delay before going lethal?

Comment

We don't delay, like what was mentioned before we have a lot of things we have to do. However, we're looking at our means by looking at personnel or helicopter access. We aren't delaying anything once we have the okay to go. The process is moving, and we're getting things in place and started without delay.

Comment

How would this language change your actions?

Comment

Other than streamlining the paperwork process, I don't know if we could speed up the field side anymore. As we come up with the team recommendation, we're trying to look at timeframes and get stuff in place. I'm not sure how others might have better ideas.

Comment

Maybe it would be helpful, and again, I want to specifically state that there is not any type of purposeful delay by the department when a lethal removal order is in place. That's not at all the case. I think one of things that's been missed outside of the logistics of an operation is the recommendation process and the information that goes into supporting a decision or recommendation to the Director for lethal removal. So, it's actually a two-step process, the district team is putting together all the information we know about the pack, non-lethals deployed, depredation activity, working with the producers and range riding efforts and all that information is being kept as current as possible throughout the course of the season. You're putting all the final pieces of that together, then the team packages that up and then the recommendation comes from the team and goes to the director. I in turn review that information. There may be information that may not be included, I may go back and work with the district team to get it included. We may be working with the range riding community on getting information and the status of the efforts.

I take the teams information and then I provide a recommendation to the Director. It's that process and we're looking at that timeline. The recommendation process itself, we're working with the Attorneys General Office and are providing a template of the information that needs to be included to make sure our decision and recommendation process is as transparent as possible but at the same time realizing that something that can take three to five days, generally that written process alone is a three to five day effort that's because we are documenting each and every step. That's where we're really looking at to improve upon that timeline. I know for some of you, you've basically heard "blah blah bureaucracy", but if you had appreciation for the amount of work that goes into making those recommendations as defensible as possible, hopefully I've given you a sense of the work it takes to move to the very serious decision to go lethal.

Comment

That's informative to me. Personally, I would not want to see any bypassing of that process with this section. Walking us through that was helpful.

Comment

Not trying to push us too hard here but I was wanting to know if it would be useful to ask folks what they're thinking about this paragraph?

Comment

No, I wouldn't add anything else to this section, I want to emphasis the first sentences in there get at what we wanted. I think its hard for people listening to this so that's now solidly in there if we accept this paragraph. From my perspective, lethal needs to be sorted out for everyone. The first sentence just acknowledges the need.

Comment

I like it, hopefully it gets to the concerns from everybody. My only sticking point is that we have this place here where it says, "the plans will be implemented by WDFW" and there was a question to make it more inclusive and the response was that its your people. In northeast Washington, it's not WDFW staff. Over there, its CaPow and other riders. Those are situations where hopefully we can be team, but we can't direct those range riders directly. It really does take cooperation that is all hands-on deck, but I think it misses a couple of groups.

Comment

I guess we can live with it somewhat. I feel I know the frustration that producers feel, that's kind of what the big rub is for everybody. We don't want any cows or wolves to be killed, unfortunately it takes too long to get to that point.

Comment

I think that the realization that we're not the only players implementing that stuff, and the fact that some people don't want us to the main entity for that. I don't want to close that door; I think there are other people are involved.

Comment

I'm frustrated with this process right now. I feel like this whole process of Section 9, every time we talk about something a new bomb is thrown in and we can't even discuss it. I feel like if everybody doesn't agree on this then there's going to be another bomb thrown in twenty minutes.

Comment

I don't have anything to add really. I think its as good as it gets.

Comment

I'm okay with it.

Comment

I think it can work. I agree with the change about putting more words about the groups involved in implementing the plan not just WDFW.

Comment

So, clarification question, does anyone know if the range riders get paid before the turnout?

Comment

The payment process is not through WDFW, it's through the Department of Agriculture. They could have range riders out earlier and paid earlier.

Comment

Theoretically that is true, but WDFW is not the only agency that has had folks frustrated with the amount of time it takes to get reimbursed. There's not advanced payment. They've had to get loans to pay people, and that's hard.

Comment

Would the range rider be able to send people to help? There's no point in putting that in there if they can't help.

Comment

They're willing to but we're still trying to figure out how the state can issue a grant so work can be charged against it. So far, we've been able to plug that gap by getting the cash from somewhere else. If we have money available, then we can do that.

Comment

Is the department willing to pay range riders to do non-lethals prior to grazing turnout?

Comment

Yes, we do currently have range riding that occurs before turnout, it's a pretty common practice.

Comment

Okay, then I'm fine with changing the wording. I just wanted it to be clear that it's the department's responsibility to do these things before turnout.

Comment

I'm okay with the language.

Comment

I echo earlier comments.

Comment

Yes, I like it and thanks for what you just did there with others. I appreciate that problem solving. The start of the last sentence is not something to dive into now. I like the intent, I think we need to work out if the deterrents do not work, then we need to put more context to that.

Comment

So, speaking just to the last paragraph, I think that's an improvement. It clearly, addresses the concerns I had expressed before. I'm about to send some language and suggested edits to above paragraphs for consideration as well.

Comment

I have been appreciating the conversation, I'm glad we're circling around something. There are occasions where we're working with a variety of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) so I appreciate the addition of that. I do like the paragraph better.

Comment

I think it looks good, I would suggest that we add some details about how long the additional or enhanced deterrents need to be in place prior to authorizing lethal. Is that going to be the same as Section 7? Also, that somewhere we spell out what the enhanced non-lethals are, whether it is attaching a list or whatever just so people have an idea of what the possibilities are.

Comment

I think we've made a lot of progress. Looking at the first sentence in the third paragraph, producers feel that the department in some cases and some employees when it came to timely action, like completing phone calls and data sharing and the coordination of that, they wanted some focus on holding the department's feet to the fire to do what they're supposed to do.

Comment

I appreciate how the last paragraph has come together. This seemed pretty patient, and everybody that was speaking was working towards this language. I think if we could put the same amount of time into the non-lethal deterrents it would be worth our time.

Comment

I can certainly live with where we've landed on this.

Comment

From what I have gleaned since I've been here, I'm a still little bit not right with the last sentence in the paragraph. If that's worked on, I'm good.

Comment

I don't know if I have anything else to offer. I'm good where we are.

Comment

I want to ask the groups permission to delete the one repeated paragraph above so that we can be using the same language. Does anybody have any concern or objection?

No objections

Break

Comment

It might be good to hear some recommendations that have been shared within the working groups.

Comment

I wanted to say same thing that if there are other WAG members that have comments can we get those verbally to Julia?

Comment

What we'll do is go to the last paragraph and see if we can complete that. I heard a couple of things, from going around. One happened to do with expanding the wording in the second line to include other organizations discussed. I also heard that there's still a question about the last sentence regarding lethal removal. I think those were the main things, does anyone have adjustments to help us get this section done?

Comment

I think that I remember on that lethal one that someone had a comment on there, its less of a language thing but more of a process piece. WDFW won't be cutting the process or transparency in anyway. How can we get the resources to producers in a quicker amount of time?

Comment

To that point, the last sentence does say “as efficient as possible given the resources”, does that then supersede the other internal policies? Is there anyway we can capture what has been said about the process and the resources?

Comment

I’m wondering if “given available resources while still maintaining agency transparency” would be better? It’s something that lets the public know what’s going on and digest some stuff.

Comment

The phrase “special focus area designation”, confuses me a bit. Could you clarify the intent there?

Comment

I just thought that we’re working on this section and that it could give more power to the special focus area designation.

Comment

Its kind of a point of emphasis then? This is a special area. Does it from your perspective need to be there or do you have any ideas?

Comment

I think it could go either way.

Comment

Any concern regarding the last sentence?

No objections

Comment

Let’s move to the wording in the second line. Any proposals on words to help with this part?

Comment

I think we were talking about the pre-season range riding stuff and I’m wondering if it should be “implemented by WDFW and other entities that deploy non-lethals”?

Comment

Any reactions to that change?

No objections

Comment

Another point that was offered was about listing non-lethals, was that the intent of the asterix? Or we could have it somewhere at the end or listed.

Comment

I'm not sure if its more helpful to just have it in the protocol or if you just refer to a couple of ideas.

Comment

Seems like you could give a few examples but seems like the main idea is that new ideas would be coming up. Give a few examples but know it's a list that's ever changing.

Comment

We can pull from or point to the process, remember the creative ideas and solutions we shared awhile back? Maybe that's a way to acknowledge those non-lethals and we could point to that document. We could provide the URL.

Comment

Any concern with that approach?

Comment

I am remembering a comment about some ideas not being wild. Some might just be range riding at dawn and dusk and making sure they are deployed when wolves are most active. That's not a radical idea and the other things are not radical ideas, but they may not have been tried in a given area before. I like the idea of linking it, but it doesn't have to be a some outside of the box method.

Comment

I think you were endorsing the recommendation to just point to that document but you're also emphasizing that its not just those specific things. Did we adequately address the concerns with this paragraph?

Comment

I think we need to address how long the enhanced deterrents need to be in place, and that kind of speaks to the "do not work" words. If these deterrents have not been effective in a certain period of time, provide a timeframe that should be followed.

Comment

I'm struggling with the last sentence and how it got changed. It turned the intent completely around. The intent was to make sure the priority is to get the paperwork done and make the order happen as quickly as possible. If there are two depredations, then get the paperwork done. You can be prepared and that will take about half of the time if the prep is done before its needed. If there continues to be a problem be prepared. I think we totally lost the intent of my proposed language.

Comment

I think the intent was you'd like to see the department implement it quicker. When I listen to the department staff there is a whole process to that, but I think your guidance is how to shorten it.

Comment

If you can do the first two thirds of the process before it needs to be done, then its quicker.

Comment

So, reading it through that lens, I don't see how it conflicts.

Comment

I think we have a shared goal here; we want to carry out a lethal order as expeditiously as possible too. We've done as much paperwork and other pieces as we can but when our biologists contact our pilot who isn't available until two weeks out, that's kind of like the sticking point. There's a lot of ducks that need to be in a row. I know how it sounds, but if there are only two pilots capable of flying these missions and then sometimes it's out of our control. The sentence should capture your intent and how could we do that? Maybe if we change it back to the original wording would that help? I want to capture our shared goal.

Comment

I'm fully aware that there are only two helicopters but there are other ways, like the trapping process. You can start that, or there have been different times where actually hunting them as happened. There are other ways to start the process. I understand that's the most efficient but its also the most expensive. I think there are other ways to start the process. I don't want people to think I'm pushing for this but let's get it done right. Yeah there's been times where the two weeks allow the cycle to break but does it really help? We're in the same boat every year. There can't be the lag time. I understand that you changed the sentence and it probably still says what it says.

Comment

A couple of things, I think there are things that we can do in these specific areas that maybe it's on the paperwork side so that that's not a hang up. There are things dependent on other people but there are paperwork things that in these areas, we could do. I think it is getting lost a little bit that there are some things we can do but be aware that if the helicopter is the best use then we want to make sure that's right. There are paperwork things we can do to speed it up.

Comment

I don't see how this really fits into this section. The department should be able to get documents in place and maybe we're just confusing this section by tying these areas to expedited lethal. My proposal would be to strip this entire sentence and just refer to Section 7 for lethal guidance.

Comment

From the department's perspective, it does mean something here, in the last few years we have had non-lethal tools in place and lethal removal in these areas. We have had big periods of time between the Director making a decision and being able to get the helicopter vendor contracted. Considering too, the time it takes the recommendation from the district team to carry out an action pending the Director's decision. Because that's happened in these special areas, I could see how from the producer's perspective a part of the dialogue. I want folks to hear from the agency that we want this to be more efficient. Its not the getting the helicopter vendor or traps ready, it is on the pooling together mountains of information into a format where we get it in front of the Director and be more efficient in doing that to the Director and the public. We don't want to cut on quality but be more efficient.

Comment

That last sentence should be in Section 7 but I'm not sure what I'm asking of the department is fair anyways. I don't know if its fair to ask them to be prepared with all depredations but in these areas where the chronic depredations are, there is a need and ability to be prepared.

Comment

I'm looking for consistency across the board, does this sentence change what you guys do? It's an aspirational goal to be more efficient but does this sentence change things for other depredations or not?

Comment

As much as I want to just work on Section 9, I do agree with both comments and say this from the field, we want to be as efficient as possible. Science says the faster you move the more likely you'll be to stop depredations. It has been excoriatingly painful to be bogged down in bureaucracy and paperwork knowing your window is closing. We as an agency need to realize how we can be more efficient in the process and take steps to look at that across the board. I don't see it as being as critical in here otherwise. We need to be more efficient and getting the stuff done so we have the greatest effect. The goal is stop wolf and livestock depredations.

Comment

I agree with the comments earlier too about it going into Section 7. I do agree that this is a scenario where it is important. It has been painful to go through the long process. Hopefully, with your input on this, we can move into that direction. Its been difficult with the recommendation process taking so long. I think we should move that piece into Section 7.

Comment

I also feel like we're talking a deeper dive into this sentence that the context we're talking about is the use of non-lethal tools and creative solutions and pulling the people together where those things happened and before there's the decision for lethal we're going to be doing everything that was described.

Comment

I'm struggling with these discussions that seem like internal policy decisions. These are ways in which WDFW can tighten up their own ship. You can't go faster from what the resources allow and still provide public transparency. These don't need to be in these documents, but you need to do better for the state. Is this really in the protocol?

Comment

I couldn't agree with you more. I think the reason we're talking about it is because it goes to the beginning of the conversation and obviously, we need to be pushed on it as an agency. If its in this document that's where it is. But yeah in a perfect world if the agency could streamline its efficiency, it would be better. I think we're talking about it now because of a lack of trust honestly.

Comment

Is this the right place for this sentence? Is this the right time for that issue? We've heard the frustration with the speed of lethal removal but is that a different discussion?

Comment

I think adding to what was said, there are several other items like this in the protocol that are there because it's a perspective that one of us brought up and needed to have. Someone needed to have something there to emphasis that. An example is that the protocol talks about us doing lethal removal humanely. We would never do anything other than that but it's in there because we want to communicate that to the public. That's what I would offer here. We are collectively recognizing the needs that we think need to be there. If we hear our members in WAG say, "this is really important to me" and to think about can I live with this? Maybe its not important to another person in the same way but can you live with it?

Comment

How about we address a question at the top of the paragraph, can we identify time periods of how long it should be before we consider the non-lethals as not working? Can you do that? Do you? Does it depend on the deterrent?

Comment

I hear where you're coming from and understand. I just don't know if its possible and it does vary by deterrent. You can't put fladry out before a conflict and have the effects you're looking for. We need to strategic in the deployment in whatever method we use. Sometimes that means not using it until you need it. Then it would have the strongest affect. Because the world of options is so broad, putting specific dates seems problematic.

Comment

This is another item that is already addressed elsewhere in the protocol on page 17, part two of the criteria of lethal removal. All that is stated is that "there is a sufficient amount of time prior". There are some where you would want them in place well in advance and others you wouldn't. Fladry and rag boxes you deploy as needed.

Comment

I appreciate where everyone is coming from this. For me, having it implemented before the season starts is the critical time frame. I don't know how we would quantify a time frame but ensuring for these special focus areas that we need to have the plans in place before cows go on the landscape.

Comment

I think that should we put that statement in there about how long it needs to be in place. At least have something in there or just leave it out? Its just repeating what's in the other section of the protocol. I was thinking more of how long are you going to try to do these other things before you move to lethal? I wasn't talking about ahead of time.

Comment

In the protocol it says a "sufficient amount of time for them to effective". We essentially asked WAG members and said its quite variable but can you give a conflict specialist that trust? Its different for fladry versus a range rider and its hard to capture in something like this.

Comment

Any more reaction to that? I think to continue our break from the last sentence of this paragraph, I'd like to propose that we go back to the top and review other recommendations we have.

Comment

I highlighted the suggested changes in the document for everyone to review. You can see the changes in yellow.

Comment

I did this quickly before our break, but it was just to try and help jumpstart a conversation around the thoughts I shared. The first sentence there, was addressing the concept of the approach the department has taken and to do a review of those. I am assuming that is already going on daily, monthly as well but I think it would be helpful to have that daylighted to the rest of us. And then, that process along with then looking at what producers are doing and creating these new implementation plans while also trying to clarify the intent of when the plans will be created. You need to have the plans ready before the next grazing season.

Comment

I think the only thing that immediately after the grazing season piece is that part of the decision that we do internally to see which areas could potentially be these SFAs because we'd like to incorporate the winter counts for months. That may change what the dynamics on the ground look like. I'd be interested in other thoughts?

Comment

I would be fine with pulling "immediately" out of that sentence.

Comment

At first look here, I don't feel a strong reaction to any of those. Maybe some tweaks here and there. I'm wondering if there are other folks that have nuggets for this paragraph that we could think about

Comment

I don't know if it's a nugget or not, more of an ask, as proposed, I know you've retained the "working with affected producers" in the first sentence but then after that it seems it is more WDFW unilateral if you will. We know we will not be successful in just WDFW developing something. I think we could add something to acknowledge that yes WDFW will develop it, but it has to be in coordination with the producer. I'd ask that same thing to be looked at the last sentence. The yearly initiations of these plans have to be in coordination or support with producers.

Comment

I'm okay with that.

Comment

SFAs are for areas with repeated conflict, and we've been talking about what happens if the producer doesn't want to cooperate. I think this really overlooks that critical element to us.

Comment

What I heard was, right now this paragraph doesn't address that scenario where you have an uncooperative producer. I think the most recent change is what takes away the safeguards from non-cooperative producers.

Comment

I think back to previous comments; they are reflection of the fact that we know these things will only be successful with some buy-in from the producers. We know internally that everyone must be working together. The collaboration piece is not meant to be a stick to force someone to do something but it's a team effort here. Not just us who are responsible.

Comment

I agree with you both. I feel like what are or how are we addressing a producer that won't collaborate in the plan?

Comment

That really is the crux here. I'm glad we're talking about. That's the importance of being collaborative, so if there's a disconnect then that person will know the outcome of that. It's a much better place to work collaboratively and communicate early on. The department must own something there where we're clear about expectations and outcomes. I'm saying it from a communication standpoint. We all should understand where we're headed.

Comment

I appreciate that, I'm trying to figure what happens if the producer doesn't cooperate. Walk me through that scenario. What is the end of the day how do we avoid that call?

Comment

I think its just straightforward. In this allotment setting, we think that range riding ought to be in place at this level this many days a week and if it's something different or lower than that we wouldn't be able to consider lethal removal at that stage. We've gone through that and folks know what the expectations are.

Comment

It's a trust issue.

Comment

That's why it was important that I understood the scope of what this looks like. We have areas where there are four producers or forty producers. I guess we need that understanding that it may be a handful of people or a lot of people to work through the process. That's why the area of what these FSAs are covering is important for cooperation.

Comment

Using the previous scenario thinking of this section of wording, let's say we have an uncooperative producer. Non-lethals haven't been used and so if that condition is not met is that the point where it figures into the decision to go lethal?

Comment

Hearing the scenario and reading the scenario it does seem that's the case, so, I feel good.

Comment

I keep hearing the term "uncooperative producers". I don't really know what is meant by that. It could be someone who has said outright that they won't work with the department ever. It could be someone who has worked with the department in the past but has trust issues with them. The term is a bit like fingernails on chalkboard. It seems accusatory. I don't know what is meant when we're using that.

Comment

Thanks for that. There could be a different interpretation of what that means. I think in this case what that means is there are sometimes we come across situations where we say, "Hey can we get this carcass pit here now?" but staff must get a front loader out there. There are challenges out there and we have to problem solve on the hill at the time. If a producer won't let us allow range riding around the livestock and that's the best option for the operation and they won't entertain the idea, that is what we're talking about.

Comment

It is was brought to my attention, when talking about uncooperative producers that lethal will be delayed or gone. Is it somewhere else in the protocol that says if the wolf pack is affecting more than one producer, is there still going to be action taken on the pack? That language was in this part and I took it out.

Comment

It is in the protocol, but I believe that sentence was copy pasted from the protocol. I have no problem with it being listed again if it is important someone.

Comment

With the edits is there still concern with this as is?

No objections

Comment

I am no longer convinced that the sentence is in the protocol. I thought it was but I can't find it so I will just put it back in there.

Comment

I remember that too. Maybe we can put an asterix next to it.

Comment

We still need to resolve the last paragraph and the title?

Comment

So, I think the closest thing to that sentence in the protocol is on page 17 Section 2, it talks about the proactive deterrents.

Comment

We need to look at the last two sentences in the last paragraph. That's where we've been stuck. Any suggestions on resolving that?

Comment

I'm going to make two comments. One edit would be to say, "implement the lethal order as expeditiously as possible in terms of preparation and agency transparency", so incorporate the word of preparation into that sentence to address both preparation and what was described earlier about thoroughness and completion. If there's a way to say in that sentence "as expeditiously as possible both in terms of preparation of documents and agency transparency" it would be a way to get rid of the question mark. I wanted to go back to one of the comments I made about the example of range riding as well, we have had cases where range riding wasn't meeting our expectations and we've had to communicate that to producers.

Comment

I guess what I understood was that this piece needs to move to Section 7. So just move that last sentence to Section 7 where it fits appropriately.

Comment

I think that's where we would be as an agency. That's our desire everywhere so I agree it needs to be moved.

Comment

I'm wondering if knowing that this is important, we're perfectly happy to have it only reside in one section, I'm wondering if there are WAG interests that because we're talking about SFAs whether there's an interest in having it appear in simply both places? The department could go either way.

Comment

What does this practically do to the wolf plan? We still have processes in place for the department to consider and all sorts of those things, is that basically cutting that out now?

Comment

Thanks for bringing that up. Anybody if you're seeing something here that is inconsistent with the plan point to it. What I'm seeing is guidance on these special areas, and this paragraph provides guidance on non-lethals which is the nexus of the plan, guidance on the timely use of lethal. I'm not seeing anything that is divergent from the plan but if you feel that way, please let us know.

Comment

I just want to say that when we say, "these deterrents do not work", that's not typically how we refer to deterrents, "if these deterrents are not adequate" or something like that would be better.

Comment

I think that we should keep an eye on time if there are other areas and if we could get feedback there it would be important.

Comment

I also just want to make sure that everyone listening is aware that we changed the definition that we decided on yesterday. Yesterday it said two consecutive years and now it says two out of three consecutive years.

Comment

I like using the word recurrent better than chronic. With the areas you were just talking about, with the definition being two of the prior three consecutive years, I'm little uncomfortable with saying two of the three. I think about the intense conflict we've had in some areas where sometimes its an entire pack removed because of the high level of depredations. I'm wondering if we need that time frame. It could be two out of the four years. I'm interested in hearing from department staff regarding that concern.

Comment

Maybe the title if it is more clinical, something along the lines of “conflict mitigation in areas with conflict for the past two years”, that’s a way to make the title clinical. To the other point, I think that was something I was driving towards yesterday. This ebb and flow of conflict is dynamic and there’s so many variables, a definition is great but then we don’t want it to be a box. We want some space here in describing the intent so a very stringent definition may not be the best thing.

Comment

The ultimate goal of having the definition is giving the department a way to identify these areas. I think if WAG members just named the packs that met this definition, we could work backwards and figure out why. If we can list out that criteria at least we as the department know. I think working backwards might help us here.

Comment

I was even thinking about removing that altogether.

Comment

This is kind of the part of this that I love. We have grown this connection to the WAG process, flashback eight years ago, people were saying “we trust you; you tell us where those areas are”, but now we’re cautious, now we won’t just throw ones out there. Are we at the stage on this issue where WAG can dig into this? That’s where we want to head towards. If we have a good understanding of trust, are we at that stage?

Comment

That’s getting to what my comment was. The need for some discretion for on the ground staff. I do trust you.

Comment

So, that’s a pointed question. I don’t know if it’s a trust issue as much the approach. As this language is implemented, to me I trust the department staff to do that and maybe the implementation piece is the problem. Are the tools providing the results and outcomes that we can all support? That’s what I’m more interested in, is this going to work?

Comment

I like that idea, lets work backwards and figure it out what it is. If we’re going to ask for special resources and money and what not to be thrown at these areas, we need to know what they are. I think if you leave it to the department, are they going to just pick the five they wanted that year? I think it should be defined just so there’s expectation.

Comment

What has not been discussed at the definition level is how long are the FSAs or do they last multiple seasons? Not to establish it but get on the other end of it. I think it also needs to be defined for the public's understanding.

Comment

If they meet the criteria for five years in a row, then they do. If it's one year where they meet the criteria, then it's just one.

Comment

Maybe we can explicit about that.

Comment

We made a lot of progress and improved quite a bit. What's going through my head is, we just had a good suggestion to work backwards to better define an SFA. Okay, that's going to take time. I also know we put pressure on ourselves to make big changes before the next grazing season. How much time do we want to spend on this section?

Comment

Are we going to leave the third paragraph in the document? Lacking a robust prey population is the number one cause of wolf livestock conflict. It must be part of this.

Comment

We could use our January meeting to round out that discussion. That also pushes us out to that meeting. I wanted to throw that out as an idea.

Comment

Can we take fifteen minutes and run through the packs and see if they qualify? How much time do we need to take on this topic?

Comment

I think something faster than going through every pack in the state is to just go around a check in with people who think there are packs that meet the SFA.

People are in agreeance to continue working until 5:00 pm and provide time for public comment

Comment

The proposal we left with before we did public comment was to get a sense of a particular pack or area in which it might qualify as an SFA? Just to start.

Comment

I think given the time we have left; I would rather hear from the experts on the ground on how this would affect their work. Can department staff run through?

Comment

I understand a lot of folks might not be comfortable. I think in my mind; this entire section revolves around the idea that there are certain areas with chronic or repeated concerns. The obvious ones are not the ones that people don't know the names of. My perspective is that we kind of go through this every year anyways, not really in a formal manner, but there's not documents saying this pack will be an issue. The packs that I have on my radar, or areas are, in order of concern, Kettle pack territory, Togo given the history, followed by Leadpoint as a concern. That pack is large and finally the Wedge pack. Those are the ones I can think of right now.

Comment

I would agree. I think that list in the same order seems accurate. Smackout is one that kind of meets that general chronic area criteria, I would think about that one as well. We talk about this earlier in the season each year. I think that's why this is so important. There are potentially other packs like grouse flats that may hit that threshold. I think a portion of this also comes from a push within communities saying these areas need special attention.

Comment

From what I'm hearing, the Grouse Flats sounds like a big one. I'm not familiar with the northeast but I appreciate what the staff has done and keep up the good work.

Comment

Since I live in the northeast, I concur with what previous staff said. Those are all potentials, even the Kettles as being a big one.

Comment

I defer to the professionals, but I agree with what was previously said.

Comment

I think we should dive into these packs and list out a couple of things that make them a concern. If we could go through two or three, we could sort our definition out from there.

Comment

I was going to add, I'm wondering as we move through this discussion as another layer in Section 9, and with the list provided, how many of those packs could meet Section 9 criteria? How many could staff handle at any one time?

Comment

Let's pick a couple of packs and see what those highlights might be for a definition?

Comment

I was going to say I like that idea, but kind of looking at this list to get a range of ideas may be weighing too much, maybe weighing Wedge and Togo, so maybe picking two from that list we could do some comparing and contrasting.

Comment

Let's talk Wedge, can someone provide main concerns with that pack?

Comment

I think one of the reasons that Togo is on our radar and has been is because of their depredation history. I think it was 2018 when we authorized lethal removal and one was removed that year and I think another wolf was shot that year. There was a wolf shot last year while depredating a calf. And then they did injure a calf this year and due to their history of chronic depredating in the previous years, they met the threshold for lethal removal. We didn't end up removing any animals due to terrain considerations. No animals were removed and there were no further depredations following that one. It's a funky deal, part of us looks at it and thinks maybe something changed but there's always fear that something didn't change. I'd be curious to hear from other folks.

Comment

How many wolves are understood to be in the pack?

Comment

We only do our official counts once a year because they fluctuate throughout the year. When we started this summer, we thought there were four adults. Once we started monitoring them more intensively, we found there were pups. There are three or four adults in there and whatever pups survived. In theory that pack could be up to seven or eight this spring if the pups survived.

Comment

In 2019 how many depredations? Was it enough to meet the threshold? On public and private lands?

Comment

It was quite a few and when we had that injury, they met the threshold. The depredations have been a mix of occurring on public and private grounds. The grazing season is longer than just the USFS grazing season by a couple of months on either end.

Comment

How many producers are affected by this pack?

Comment

Roughly four in the core area.

Comment

How many range riders are typically deployed?

Comment

I think we had twelve this year. They rotated in and out.

Comment

So, the Wedge pack, the first location where we did lethal removals was in 2012. It was quiet until last year where we had one confirmed depredation and there were other injuries and mortalities that were unknown. Based on the age of injury we weren't able to pin those down. Depredations started in the beginning of the year and led to the whole pack removal. More wolves filled right back in in the same location. The complexities there were the sheer number of producers on public and private lands. There are five allotments in that area in addition to USFS allotments and private industrial forest grazing. There's actually quite a bit of producers in that area. If we did an FSA here it would take a lot of time. It was the first series of depts we have that affected three producers.

Comment

You said about fifteen depredations this year, how many for 2019?

Comment

One confirmed and four others weren't for sure. And zero in 2018.

Comment

So, in 2020, was the first time for removal of the full pack. How full is the pack now?

Comment

Approximately three wolves, the area filled quickly, within a month of removal.

Comment

How many range riders?

Comment

Across the whole Wedge area approximately five but a lot of them are private small acreages so there was human presence there not specific to range riding.

Comment

We're wrestling with how an area gets defined as special.

Comment

So, thank you to our staff for that. Its been an already very useful process, it's kind of two years of escalation of conflict and the decision for lethal removal feels like one of the variables we're thinking about. It's also this thinking about the uniqueness of an area and the challenges. There is a sense here that this is a tough landscape. I was in a similar place thinking about this and it helps me understand it's probably not something we can define with a single variable. There are different things in play in different pack areas.

Comment

I think also, when we go through this internally, we're thinking about Smackout and Kettles because they have a long history of removals and we're also looking at pack size. Scientifically, that's another area where you weigh that in as well.

Comment

Whats next? We've looked at these two. Do we want to wrestle with the definition now or not? Did we accomplish enough for today? Reactions?

Comment

I guess in looking at these two examples, do they fit the current definition we have and if not why?

Comment

Those two examples do not meet the criteria.

Comment

I think you're right; I have kind of been jotting down notes and thinking about it. I think if full pack removal occurred the prior year, they should be in an FSA if they did recolonize. If they didn't then they should be considered a foreign FSA depending on what it looks like. An area that receives full pack removal should have special consideration for the criteria. If it's an FSA designated for 2020 it needs to be evaluated in 2021 for risk. If the packs of six or more adults, there should be a risk evaluation. Of two of the last three years if there was lethal removal. Those are some of the criteria I thought of.

Comment

Thank you. I've been kicking around the full pack removal becoming a trigger for FSA but even that one, there's a difference to me if it's a full pack removal that was in the process of three different depredations that eventually for go to full pack removal. It's a long pattern with removals and evaluation periods. That's sometimes different than a pack or two and it didn't have that same long history to it. I'm kind of torn on that. The other thing we could do, is what if we as WAG and the department create a list at the end of every grazing season. We know the variables we want to talk about, but we actually say these are the packs for the 2021 grazing season and revisit in 2021 and restate what the packs are for the next year.

Comment

Question, the history of lethal removals versus the language that we talked about and kicked around the concept where there was lethal authorization that had been granted but removal did not occur. I'm wonder if it's worth mentioning removals should trigger a lethal authorization or if there as one in place and the removal did not occur for a variety of reasons?

Comment

I'm thinking about the list presented which is strong, potentially something like full pack removal in multiple increments could sort of get around that drawn out. The other thing, packs haven't had any lethal authorized in the past three years or efforts. If there were lethal removal orders that could also trigger as well. I think we need to have a firmer rule.

Comment

I like the idea of the WAG being a part of the conversation at the end of the grazing. To have that summary discussion would be helpful.

Comment

Do we want to get more specific with the definition?

Comment

I have to honor all of your time and I think we wind down at this point. We try to hold to that family time as much as possible.

Comment

That would be good. Maybe if staff could try to get something on paper and try to capture this better for those who weren't here.

Comment

Id like to stop with a plan. Can we not wait till January to figure this out?

Comment

I will send what I typed and changed and share with members. I think I captured the thoughts thrown out there. Not the changes we're talking about, but earlier today, I can send you all a cleaner version of that with the changes we talked about.

Comment

So, we have three tasks. One being, the proposed language for FSA. Secondly, how do we define a special focus area? The third task falls on me, trying to schedule our next meeting before January.

Comment

I appreciate the input from everybody. I think we need to remember what the public comments were today and the next meeting we need to read those comments and see how we could adjust anything in the section so that we're hearing what they're saying and showing them that.

Comment

To add, and you all try to grab onto those and own them. I just wanted to say again, that I'm amazed by you guys. Turn on the news and see how divided the country is and here you all are on a thorny issue and you're all working through it. Thank you all so much.

Comment

What's the plan going forward?

Comment

The way department staff collaborate on a document is we'll use a google doc, so everyone's edits are viewed together. Is there any interest in WAG doing that? There is a google doc where everyone could see comments and work from same thing.

Comment

I think one thing that hurts is that every word is important to somebody and its easy to take something out of context without conversation. I would say look at this and take your notes and if its something you want to kick or run by someone call up a WAG member and see what they think. My little worry inside is that we could have some changes and kick it out because it doesn't have the conversation to go with it.

Comment

I just wanted to make sure we had something we all agree upon.

Comment

You're encouraged to work on your notes and share perspectives. I am thinking the next meeting will be at least a couple of weeks out. Bring your ideas to those meetings and we'll share.

Comment

Can we maybe say less than a couple of weeks, maybe right after Thanksgiving? I want to make sure we're doing the work that's needed.

Meeting adjourned