

WAG Public comment notes: (Jan 6, 2021)

Wayne

- He is very upset that neither the Director nor the Dept. staff are responding to his questions.
- He's disappointed that wolves aren't protected as well as they should be.
- He says there is not enough protection for wolves.

David

- Would have been helpful to post used-documents online before the meeting. That would give members of the public a chance to give better input.
- Goal of sect. 9 is to prevent the killing of wolves.
- There's no talk about implementing more non-lethal deterrents.
- The Special Focus Definition is absurd. For example, the Leadpoint pack wouldn't meet the definition.
- We need more, not less non-lethal deterrents.
- Disheartened with this group.
- Public comments made at one meeting were never addressed at the following WAG meeting.

Amaroq

- Regarding outside experts, she is aware of 3 experts offering help to the Dept. and the Dept. hasn't acted on those offers. She hopes the proposal of using 3rd party experts is an indication of a helpful cultural shift in the Dept.
- Regarding a statement about WAG "having the Dept.'s back", the Dept.'s handbook doesn't state this as a purpose of the advisory group.
- It would be inappropriate of the WAG to "have the Dept.'s back".
- Regarding grace and flexibility, taxpayer dollars are being spent to help private businesses.
- Regarding onboarding, she recommends the Dept. does a better job of onboarding before new members attend their first meeting.
- The above notes about Wayne's statement are inaccurate. They don't capture how upset he is that neither the Director nor Dept. staff are responding to his questions. (Note added above.)

Zoe

- Regarding the use of outside wolf experts to review Special Focus Area plans, she endorses it. It's an opportunity for mutual learning and consideration of creative solutions. Instead of using the word "experts", it may be better to phrase it as getting help from individuals with wolf-livestock conflict experience.
- She's part of a community based organization helping producers/communities to live in coexistence with wolves. She asks the Dept. to consider using that organization as an outside expert.
- Regarding wolf pack collaring, wolf packs are not cohesive in the summer, and at that time, wolf data doesn't necessarily reflect a pack location. Collar data helps us understand den site locations, rendezvous locations, and pack movements, and that information, in combination with non-lethal deterrents, best protects wolves. One potential value of livestock ear-tag data is that such data may be available on a phone in the field, which is another tool that can help.

Jeff

- Regarding collars, as a producer that's done this, he's willing to share pluses and minuses of using them.
- He has some concerns, and we all don't want to repeat the same conflicts year after year.

Ashley

- You can't manage what you can't measure, and collar data is helpful despite the difficulties of collecting that data.
- She supports the third party review of a Special Focus Area plan. It's an avenue that demonstrates transparency.

Jocelyn

- Regarding grace and flexibility, there has been grace with the producers' use of non-lethals, while still resulting in lethal removals. It's public funds that are being used for these lethal removal wolves.
- She's excited about the use of 3rd-party experts, and it's important to discuss how they'd be identified. Be careful using other western state experts because they focus more on wolf-management than wolf protection.

Jesse

- She agrees that shifting the burden of collars to producers rather than the Dept. is unacceptable.
- What metrics would WDFW be looking for, regarding cattle activity?
- She questioned whether the Dept. follows through saliva testing for depredated cattle?
- Regarding collars, there are plenty of examples of other organizations that do set and reach quotas, why can't the Dept.
- She encourages better collection of adequate data.
- Barring useful data, lethal removal is the only way to better manage wolves.

Faye

- Regarding the WAG's talk (over the past few meetings) about the responsibility of the Dept. to collar the wolves and know where the wolves are, if the Dept. should be responsible for collaring and tracking wolves, producers should be responsible for collaring and tracking their animals.

WAG Public comment notes: (Jan 7, 2021)

Sarah

- She's a former executive for the Washington Cattlemen's Assoc.
- In Washington and Oregon, it seems both their Depts. of Fish and Wildlife are only interested in single species management.
- In Idaho, they approach it differently. The non-lethal tools work in Idaho but don't work here. Take a look at Idaho, Montana, Wyoming plans. They're looking at the whole ecosystem.
- She encourages the use of a 3rd party review.
- Without the correct use of lethal control, non-lethal methods won't work.
- We should manage the whole ecosystem, including consideration of ungulate populations, instead of single species.

Chris

- Earlier this morning, the Dept. held a wildlife management meeting, and throughout the meeting there was no discussion about the impact of predators.
- Regarding the maintenance of robust ungulate populations, a lack of consideration for predator impacts is alarming.

David

- He supports Chris's summation of the wildlife management meeting.
- He supports the break-out room meetings before the full Wolf Advisory Group meeting, and he encourages the Dept. to continue them.
- He's not yet sure about the usefulness of public comment at the beginning (rather than the end) of our meeting.
- He's fearful that the Special Focus Area framework is too complicated. A simpler approach using a higher level of non-lethal deterrents could better achieve desired outcomes.
- A complex framework might bog down conflict mitigations plans and may lead to more bickering/finger-pointing.
- He recommends that we don't refer to Protocol Section 6 at the end of Section 9 (Special Focus Areas).
- He's heard statements that killing wolves changes wolf behavior, and he thinks that's not necessarily true. It may increase conflict rather than decrease conflict.

Tim

- White tail deer in his area are not in decline.
- He's seen (white tail deer) behavioral changes, driven by logging practices that have been significantly upscaled.
- Significant wind storms have also affected their behavior.
- He's seeing more mule deer, and he sees a lot more bucks.
- Regarding yesterday's discussions, it's a myth that without public grazing lands, private producers will have to sell their land.
- Regarding ranchers saying that the public can't expect them to change their actions, it should be on their (producer) shoulders to come up with better ways of range management.
- He likes the idea about livestock ear tags, and they use them in other countries like Australia.

Rachel

- Echos concerns about the high expense of collaring wolves and ranchers wanting the Dept. to spend more money on them.
- Ranchers don't seem to track their livestock, and the ear tag solution seems reasonable.
- Wolves were here before us, and disappeared for a time due to us. It's a good thing that they're back.
- Cows are non-native species. Imbalance in nature occurs when we try to manipulate nature.

- She recommends against looking at Idaho's and Montana's wolf management plans because they include hunting wolves.
- She supports Chris' comments.

Ilene

- She's a rancher.
- Please keep the rancher and farmer at the top of the responsibility pyramid.
- The wolf and any other carnivore is at the bottom of the pyramid and don't have any control over human actions.
- The successful rancher/farmer makes their sole income from their operation, and they have to give their full attention to that operation. They have to assess their land needs, and they can't identify public grazing lands as part of their personal grazing lands.
- It must not be the tax payers responsibility to subsidize the rancher/farmer or a new state employee classification to help protect producer operations.
- She supports the right of a rancher/farmer to legally protect his/her livestock from any and all carnivores within their land and outbuildings.

Mike

- We can't have a hands off approach in (wildlife) management, and we can't go back to the way things were.
- The state agency has to be manage wildlife.
- When an area's species have reached their capacity, you have to manage that species.
- Regarding statewide wolf recovery, in SW Washington they have problems with elk hoof rot. If we bring another predator in the area, it will exacerbate the problem with elk populations.
- People that hunt and fish are the ones that help fund the Dept.

Lane

- From a previous meeting at Moses Lake, a rancher asked to get up and talk about wolves.
- The rancher lost about 20 animals to wolves, and he could tell you about the wolves' process, before they ever decided to kill prey.
- Someone asked the rancher why he didn't alleviate the problem himself. He said others that have shot wolves, were receiving death threats or threats against their homes.
- Lane thinks the ranchers need to tell their stories and others need to listen.

Cody

- He's a sheep and cattle producer.
- The landscape of how we raise and produce livestock have changed, and so the way we graze/move cattle has to change. Using methods of the past doesn't work so well.
- He agree's with Sarah's comment to work with people who are successfully coexisting with wolves.
- Stop looking at just 2 different viewpoints.
- There are too many antiquated ideas.