

Wolf Advisory Group

June 27, 2019

Meeting Notes

Red Lion Hotel and Conference Center
1700 South Canyon Road
Ellensburg, WA 98926

WAG members: Samee Charriere, Tim Coleman, Don Dashiell, Tom Davis, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Andy Hover, Jess Kayser, Molly Linville, Nick Martinez, Dan Paul, Lisa Stone

WDFW staff members: Donny Martorello, Dan Brinson, Steve Pozzanghera, Joey McCanna, Ben Maletzke, Stephanie Simek, Julia Smith, Matthew Trendera

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

Welcome and check in

Rob welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the agenda for the day. Rob talked about the main purpose of the meeting, which is to resolve differences with the proposed protocol changes. If that is accomplished this meeting, that means the group has succeeded. If time, the group could also continue with post-recovery planning.

Donny recognized that the group has been together for a long time, and that they all deal with difficult things outside the group. We've talked for a long time about going from a system of war to a system of peace. And that is really, really hard to do. Each member has a whole community under stress, and they're carrying that on their shoulders and doing their best to represent that. They're bringing those human needs on their shoulders, and that is a heavy burden. When we do that, it can be really hard to stay with the system of peace. It's much harder to stay on a peaceful path than go back to that system of war. Don't forget that we're in this for the long haul. We continue to build that foundation for a peaceful path five, ten, or even more years into the future. What really matters are the relationships we've built in the group. We've seen members go through highs and lows throughout this process. Here we are again, trying to blend all of those needs that everyone has, and that is really hard to do. It can seem so daunting, but when we're in that headspace, and all of us are here being good listeners, assuming the best in people, and creating a safe place for opinions, that's what allows creativity to come out. It takes a tremendous amount of social courage. It's so difficult to find that spot of cohesion with people who used to be your enemy. Every member of the group is a pioneer, and we should be ready to roll up our sleeves and get this done.

Review and discuss proposed Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol changes

WAG members and the public all submitted comments on the draft protocol. All of those comments were considered and combined into the draft being reviewed today.

Rob proposed the method to get through the proposed protocol changes. The main highlights were put on the wall listed on flipcharts. These will be available on the WAG webpage for public review. Rob went through each item to make sure everyone knew what topics were needing to be discussed. Rob also asked if any were missed.

Comment

What happened to the old number 10? (Section 10 in old protocol)

Comment

Based on all the comments we got back, we took it out and put it within other areas. It's still here.

Comment

Another item we need to add is data sharing. We're in a data sharing stakeholder process, but are we speaking to it enough here?

Comment

At some point I was wondering if we could do a little bit of thoughtful brainstorming around whether this protocol meets the needs of when wolves are getting close to an urban interface. I want to acknowledge if wolves are impacting small hobby farms. The protocol might address this already, but wanted to call it out because I don't want to come back again.

Comment

One other one would be looking at areas with known depredating wolves, there's lethal removal, and the department isn't successful, and then we go through a whole winter season. Does the next year have a clean slate?

Comment

That's captured in the comment on page 22 that this would be up for a further WAG discussion.

Comment

Okay, if that's up for discussion, I'm good with that.

Comment

I want to talk about page 5, line 142-143 as well.

Rob added that point to the list.

****WAG members flagged the items they wanted to highlight for this meeting****

Rob reminded the group that Dan is here only for today, and we want to take advantage of that time.

Comment

On page 21, section 6, talking about flexibility. What jumps out at me as an immediate concern is the issue of kill permits to ranchers. I think that's a very highly charged decision. That's different from a kill order from the Director to the state. A kill permit goes to the landowner, right?

Comment

This is part of HB 2097. In areas that are at or above the recovery objective, there is a little more flexibility in what the Director can do. That includes number of depredations, the time element, and the issuing of a kill permit. Whenever there is a decision to lethally remove a wolf, that's the Director's decision, and then the question is how to carry that out. There are different paths, including having the department do it or issuing a kill permit. None of these options is a "new norm." The Director looks at each situation and asks what is the most effective way to change wolf behavior. Other options might be deployment of nonlethal tools. We have to ask if things are effective or if we're just doing them because the protocol lists them.

Comment

When producers are issued the kill permits for a cougar, those permits are issued to a local trapper or local hound handler for that specific depredation. Are these wolf kill permits issued like that or are they issued solely to the landowner?

Comment

What is the department's goal in issuing a kill permit to an individual versus the department doing it themselves?

Comment

The plan talks about issuing a kill permit to a producer and family members. The plan identifies that as an option when department resources are limited. The plan also says that lethal removal would be done by the department or Wildlife Services. We've taken that as department staff, but that could also be an agent of the state. It could be a person on contract who is an agent of the state. That's equivalent to a department employee. What we've learned is that there's also that sense of local control. For example, if the department makes a decision for lethal removal, and the department is carrying that out, and the producer is helping with that, there is that sense of local control and local voice that has benefits on the social side.

Comment

As everyone knows, I believe very strongly in the sandbox of tools. I think whatever the authority of the Director is, we should spell it out so the public and everybody in WAG knows what is in that sandbox. I'm for full disclosure of what that authority is, and I think we should put it right in the protocol.

Comment

What's the difference between caught in the act and a kill permit?

Comment

Caught in the act is without a permit, the producer or family member can remove one wolf that is attacking. A kill permit is issued by the Director to remove wolves. The conditions of the permit would be outlined by the Director (inside a fenced pasture is different than outside the fence). The permit could also be wide open.

Comment

I have concerns about what happens to the producer's family if they're the ones who have the kill permit. Also, it feels like the department may be "passing the buck." Lethal removal should be the department's job.

Comment

In my recollection with the plan when talking about issuing kill permits, we're looking at moving away from the current listing of wolves and going to a downlisting. To me, a kill permit flies in the face of the current listing of wolves in Washington. I share the concern of what happens to that ranching family. Certainly other states have experienced that. I think it's the department's responsibility to ensure that wolf is humanely removed. I worry about getting away from a professional staff member.

Comment

If we look at this holistically, I get issued a depredation tag for deer. If we look at that across the board, that's kind of the same thing to do with wolves. Are you worried about the number of permits being issued? Or that somebody is not going to remove a wolf humanely?

Comment

Because of their recovery status, wolves are different from deer. So that's one concern. But then, yes, how it's spelled out was looking at the impacts of humane removal. All of this oversight should be done by the agency. If you don't have the certainty as a citizen from trained biologists, it can be an issue. It's a whole cascade of things, not just one in particular. I know my community is up in arms with the idea of issuing landowner kill permits.

Comment

The individual that gets that kill permit would also already have a data sharing agreement. That's a concern that is out there.

Comment

I want to go back to page 20, with the three bullets, where that's kind of the verbal version. It says we're more restrictive early in recovery and less restrictive in later recovery. It's a very high level statement. Right after that section, there is a table that outlines the kinds of things there to operate at certain listing status. For example, in the endangered column, it talks about issuing a permit only on private lands. In sensitive, it doesn't have that private land restriction. We're seeing that the eastern zone is clearly different from the western zone. How do we take that and apply it to today?

Comment

I'm not pushing for kill permits. If I was offered one, I probably wouldn't take it. I wouldn't want to put myself or my family through it. The discussion should be about what authority lies within the sandbox. Keep surprises out of this. It could happen. This year there was one kill permit issued. I think we struggled for years with this wolf plan, and we have this sandbox so we'll have a plan. We need to just come forward with the authority. Even if we don't like it, we need to explain what the sandbox means.

Comment

So that's the stuff at the top of page 20. That's some of language about authority.

Comment

I appreciate that, and this is a guidance document to the Director. He does have authority over this. Is issuing kill permits part of that authority?

Comment

Yes, and the Director does that for many species when there is good reason. Our Director is very thoughtful and very measured, and he wants to know the logic behind all of these areas so he can look at each case and decide the best way forward.

Comment

So if we took that out, we'd just be removing it as an example, but it'd still be there.

Comment

Correct

Comment

It's just the Director who can issue these permits, right?

Comment

It's just the Director who has the authority to issue a kill permit for wolves.

Comment

I would prefer if that language is cleared up in the protocol. It's not like a lot of those are going to be issued if it has to go through the Director.

Comment

Is there a compromise? First of all, we know the financial aspects are sometimes difficult for the department. We know the environmental community doesn't want removal that isn't humane. Is there a compromise that says the department can only issue these permits to experienced contractors? If this said that kill permits can only be issued to agents of the state?

Comment

I could agree to us interpreting what it said in here, but it doesn't change the authority. The authority still exists as it exists and is interpreted by the attorneys of the department. It's not going to change the law.

Comment

In response, nothing really we come up with here changes the authority of the Director. I still have issues with kill permits. There are many different examples of kill permits for various species, but how many are for an endangered species? I think it flies in the face of the state of wolves right now. I remember when we talked about caught in the act, and how folks were saying it wasn't going to happen, and it has happened. I think voicing it here is important so everyone understands the authority of the Director.

Comment

Are we setting this up so that no one is around when we have multiple operations going? How could the department afford to do it? It has to be sustainable money-wise and time-wise.

Comment

In the instance where this happened last year, we had multiple operations going on, and we were unsuccessful getting a color in the pack. One thing to change pack behavior is when those animals are in around the cattle. That producer is there all the time, and the department can't be there all the time. A removal to change pack behavior is most effective when the pack is among the livestock. Remember this is a last resort after nonlethal methods have been tried. None of these things are taken lightly. We're always thinking about what we can do to change the behavior of the pack. It's maybe not the perfect option, but it is another tool. I think that's important. I do echo the concern about data sharing. I would advocate not sharing data if the producer is carrying a kill permit. If you're trying to change behavior, you want it happen in that pasture.

Comment

I'm wondering if for number 6, it starts with the RCW authority, then goes into the part about with wolves, the Director authorizes lethal removal. We strike the examples and add a new sentence that says when considering removal, the Director will consider the humaneness of the removal and use of department resources prior to issuing kill permits. I wonder if we can adjust that language to find a common ground.

Comment

I was going to say that, but to me if we try to over-define every little nugget, it's going to be a wreck.

Comment

A kill permit has only been issued once. Was that at a point in Togo when it was essentially looking for full pack removal?

Comment

That was, at that point, to remove the entire pack.

Comment

So it wasn't a case where you really want to look at the wolves you're removing and avoiding some for the health of the pack.

Comment

There has been one issued before and that was Huckleberry.

Comment

Was there concern about the breeding male/female?

Comment

Not at the time, no.

Comment

Was either permit filled?

Comment

No, neither permit was issued. I think there was a timeline that included the grazing season.

Comment

Were there restrictions?

Comment

Togo was only if the wolf was scene in the pasture.

Comment

I think people have an image of what a pasture is, and it could be wrong. The pasture doesn't necessarily mean near the cattle.

Comment

So yes, there was some restriction, but it doesn't specify to avoid the breeding female or male.

Comment

You also have to take into account the recovery status in that region. It's not out the gate, here we go. A lot of that reasoning has already been done at this point.

Comment

Donny went over the proposed rewrite language of this section. This included:

- The Director has the authority under RCW 77.12.240 to lethally remove wolves that are destroying or injuring property, or when necessary for wildlife management and research.
- The Director authorizes all wolf removals.
- In regions at/above objective, the Director has more flexibility when considering lethal removal and deterrents, and may use any tools/approaches in plan

- When considering lethal removal, the Director will consider humaneness of approaches and use department resource before the issuance of a permit

Comment

Does this mean that every single time, the department will use resources before issuing a kill permit? I would maybe switch that to “may use” or “may consider.” We can move the humane aspect up to the third bullet.

Comment

That’s mixing two authorities.

Comment

It’s all still the Director.

****The group suggested and agreed to removing the fourth bullet above.****

Comment

Section 6 has a lot to do with Section 1, number 1 (widening the sideboards – asterisk with 6). This is a very important part of the discussion. Six is what we’re talking about rewording.

Comment

We removed the last sentence of Section 6 and added the language in the bullets above.

Comment

Let’s get rid of the second bullet, because already in the pamphlet it says, “The decision to implement or not implement lethal removal of wolves is made by the Director.” The second bullet isn’t needed.

Comment

I would say keep this one but remove the other one.

Comment

Some confusion may be coming from the fact that the RCW 77.12.240 is not specific to wolves. That’s the general authority to remove wildlife that is damaging property. That’s why we need a statement specific to wolf lethal removal in the next bullet.

Comment

Would it be helpful to also link the RCW that gives the Director the authority to remove endangered species?

Comment

RCW 77.12.240 is regardless of listing status.

Comment

In practice, what we’ve said is that only the Director can approve lethal removal for wolves for multiple reasons. That is under guidance of the plan.

Comment

Let’s add that to the second bullet. “Under the wolf plan, only the Director...”

Comment

Like in the past, we'll take this back and wordsmith it and send it out for review. Can we do a check in and see if this works for everyone?

Comment

I'm not comfortable. I thought that six basically said what HB 2097 said, with an example, and now we've added an authority that kind of confuses me to what we're referring to in Section 1. Even though what we say is correct, I think we've changed the meaning. HB 2097 could change the numbers of three in 30 days and four in 10 months.

Comment

Why don't we reference the bill in the plan? We can add under the second bullet, "Under the wolf plan and HB 2097, only the Director can authorize..."

Comment

I want to leave the exceptions in there.

Comment

It may help if we read the bill. Section 2 is where we want to focus. To mean that language is different than where we're landing here.

Comment

This authority is not specific to areas above recovery objective. Is the authority the first thing that should be said? That could be 1A. Then it goes down the list and we keep exceptions so readers know that in the eastern recovery area there is added flexibility. Then we have this bulleted language as number six. Then this last item is the new number seven, which is, "Under the wolf plan, only the Director..."

Comment

For those on the producer side, the flexibility is important. Having that example language in there is important. The bill does not define what conflict mitigation guidelines are. They are what we say they are. My preference would be to not remove the language regarding flexibility on the thresholds.

Comment

And that could go right in there and be included.

Comment

I'm reading that a little different. It doesn't say anything about flexibility in the bill at all. It has two different guidelines depending on listing status, and we've just added flexibility.

Comment

There was an implicit policy call here for areas at or above recovery objective, the conflict mitigation guidelines are those described in the plan. In that bullet, that's how we're implementing what 2097 says.

Comment

Pre-recovery is the standard, while post-recovery is where the flexibility comes in.

Comment

In the eastern recovery region, the Director's flexibility is that described in the plan.

Comment

So why is that considered flexibility if it's what the plan already says? Why are we even talking about that? Flexibility to me means something beyond what you've already said you're going to do. In regions below recovery status, what's the thought?

Comment

What's described in 1-5 is using a portion of the plan. There are other flexibilities in the plan. In those regions below, there are tighter restrictions in the plan. These numbers and this specificity are not in the plan. Per 2097, our interpretation of that, is that the Director can operate with any of the tools in the plan.

Comment

Why not just say that then? Why not just say, "Under 2097, the Director may use any tools or approaches identified in the plan."

Comment

You're getting on the point of the bill and what it says. The other factor is that the plan actually allows the Director to issue a permit. I'm kind of there too. Why aren't we just making this simple? There is that ability and it's clearly stated.

Comment

If number six were moved up to the top, that might be good. In 1-5, you're not fully utilizing all the tools in the toolbox of the wolf plan because the region is not at full recovery objective, correct?

Comment

1-5 are the added specificity that drills down a little lower than the wolf plan.

Comment

Okay, so we can say that in regions at or above recovery objectives, the Director can use any tools or approaches identified in the plan. Then you go into the other stuff after this.

Comment

We thought about that, but we also still think the items in 1-5 are important. Those are still high values for us. Then we call out that the Director can operate anywhere within the plan.

Comment

But whether or not we state that, it makes no difference.

Comment

In my opinion, the position on the paper makes zero difference.

Comment

Let's take a break and we'll put this all down to paper and come back and talk about it.

Break

New proposed language:

The Director has the authority under RCW 77.12.240 to lethally remove wildlife (including wolves) that are destroying or injuring property, or when necessary for wildlife management. The department may consider...

(1-5)

6. Under the wolf plan, and recognizing wolves are a state-listed species, only the Director authorizes wolf removals.

7. Except, in regions at/above objective the Director may use any tool/approach in the plan.

Comment

The first sentence will go at the top of page 21. The new number 8 will be, "WDFW will consider..."

Comment

Isn't the Director using the tools/approaches in the plan already?

Comment

The plan limits tools in areas not at recovery objectives.

Comment

When you speak of objective, what do you mean?

Comment

Regional recovery objective. Four breeding pairs for three years in each region.

Comment

It's 15 successful breeding pairs, with four in each region for three years, plus three anywhere in the state. That keeps the three year requirement.

Comment

Currently at number 2, it says proactive nonlethal deterrents are expected regardless of recovery or listing status. That's a little more loose than 2097.

Comment

Good point, and we'll look at that language and add in "must" like the bill says.

Comment

Let's add "regional recovery" in front of objective.

Comment

Make it "at or above the regional recovery objective as described in the wolf plan."

Rob went around the room to check in with everyone and see if they can live with the new language. Not everyone could agree yet and there was more discussion.

Comment

When we talk about regions at or above objective, are we talking about readjusting depredation numbers in those scenarios?

Comment

That ties back to number 1 on the list, as well as 7, and I'm comfortable with that.

Comment

The “except” language refers to the plan, but the question that was just posed refers to the Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol. Did we forget something there?

Comment

I’m with that comment. If our intent is to capture that the Director may do something different from what’s in the protocol, we need to say that. I fear that this brings more confusion. If the intent was to capture 2097 and give the Director the flexibility, then let’s just say that. If it needs to be stated.

Comment

It should say, “plan and/or protocol” rather than just plan.

Comment

Are we too restrictive by saying in the plan or protocol? Why not just say at the Director’s discretion?

Comment

I think it has to say plan. That’s just a hope line to the Director. The sandbox is the plan. But we can piece those together.

Comment

If there is an interest of the triggers for lethal action to be something other than 4 in 10, 3 in 30, would that language get you there? I don’t think it does. Maybe the group should discuss that.

Comment

The Director doesn’t need the protocol to authorize lethal removal. The protocol is guidance and that’s all. The plan and the EIS behind the plan are the sandbox. The Director can operate outside the plan, but that’s dangerous to do. We don’t want to abandon the plan. We want to acknowledge that the Director is not confined to the protocol, but can operate anywhere within the plan.

Comment

But if we’re honoring 2097, you have to acknowledge that nonlethal deterrents are required. It says, “must include proactive nonlethal deterrents.”

Comment

Yes, that’s in there.

Comment

What’s regional plan when referenced in the bill?

Comment

Whether that region has reached recovery objectives or not.

Comment

It’s not a different plan for each region, it’s whether or not they’ve hit that recovery objective.

Comment

We still have to follow state law. We still have to implement nonlethal deterrents regardless of listing status. We’re adding the word “must” to the protocol instead of “expected.”

Comment

So the language now says, "...the director is not confined by the protocol and may use any of the tools/approaches in the wolf plan."

Rob checked in with everyone once again. Everyone is good with this point.

Comment

I did want to add another item to discuss, separate from this. That would be compensation.

Comment

That's been added as number 24 and it has been circled.

The next item chosen was number 14, the time period for attempting active removal and what if it involves removing the pack?

Comment

This was an edit from the group. The example was with OPT, where we were at the last increment and attempting to remove the remaining two animals. The department tried and was unable to complete that. Then some time goes by, with the winter and spring, and the question becomes, how long does that effort go on? The protocol talks about two weeks or less on lethal removal operations, but does that last increment look different?

Comment

My thoughts are that we've done everything we could think of to address the problem and change pack behavior and it didn't work. I think those animals should be removed.

Comment

It's tough after 24 depredations to say that with a winter in between the animals would be any different. I think you have to complete the removal.

Comment

Livestock producers feel really strongly about this issue. We've gone to pack removal 3 times in this one area and haven't removed the pack. I think what is critical is that those two wolves have denned and now we're going to have a large pack again. And we've got a pair addicted to livestock. We went through all the pain and agony of pack removal, and we didn't remove them. Now we're going to have to remove more than two wolves again this year. I would hope that folks can agree with me that we'd have been better off to remove those two wolves if possible. Remember, the goal of the tools and approaches of the protocol is to change pack behavior while continuing to promote wolf recovery. Does it fit or not to go forward and take those two wolves? I feel strongly that it does if we're really trying to accomplish what we say we want to accomplish. We should try to hopefully not have more depredations as a result of removing those two wolves. The people I represent also feel strong about it.

Comment

I have a different opinion in my constituents, and that's where this chronic discussion came from in the first place. This is a place that is a hotspot for wolves because it's a hotspot for ungulates. It's a rich ecosystem and there's a lot of water. It's the perfect wolf habitat. I wonder what the producers think about the idea of resting that pasture for a season. If the wolves were addicted to livestock, they'd be following livestock away. But instead they switched back to ungulates. This is a real

quandary, and I want to be sympathetic to producer concerns, and that's why we're looking at maybe an alternate pasture for just one season. Maybe that will work really well.

Comment

When we go into a removal, particularly with a helicopter, even with a collar in the pack. You get a glimpse, but they learn quickly to spread out and avoid the helicopter. You're flying very close to the ground in steep terrain. It's very dangerous to do this repetitively. Sometimes it's long days. We make an attempt to do what we can and go in and be efficient. However, at some point, it's just not feasible. And we may not be able to get all of them. There are definitely logistics involved. It's a tall order sometimes, and we may not be able to do that anyway in some of this terrain.

Comment

I'm not condemning the department for not being able to remove the wolves. You can only do so much, and I know that. Maybe you could have put a trap down keyed in on those two wolves. We have to have a protocol that says we're doing everything we can to remove those wolves. I personally feel that maybe if we'd had that full pack removal earlier, we'd be in a lot better position this spring. We're just asking for problems. It's going to cost money, it'll be bad PR. There's no winning. Could we take them out? I don't know. But I feel we should try. This is only if we go to full pack removal. There were a lot of depredations. To say that this pair of wolves won't give us trouble this year is a dream. We're all faced with a lot of heartache, and we should find a way to finish that job. I'm not saying you should have put in more helicopter time. I know what that risk is.

Comment

This is not going to sound like I want it to sound, and I'm sorry for that. I can't imagine what it was like for producers to lose that many animals. Two additional wolves joining the pair doesn't necessarily mean a recipe for further depredation. The dynamic might change. We don't know. If you're suggesting that the department should go kill those wolves without an issue, I can't agree. There would be an outcry. I think that would be tough for me to support. So much can happen over a winter with the dynamics of a wolf pack. I know this seems like I'm asking a producer to just wait until more livestock is lost, and that doesn't feel good either.

Comment

That's one thing with protocols is that we have our 10-month window. We had those discussions this winter, but we were in a pause and we talked about that. They weren't down in lower elevations. They were up in the woods where they'd been all summer. Hopefully having range riders in the right spots will help keep space between those cattle. We want to give it a shot and try to avoid conflict.

Comment

I just think it's a numbers problem. If 22 doesn't tell us something, how is the environmental community ever going to come to a number that is enough? From a producer perspective, the give is the nonlethal deterrents and falling back on the protocol to back us up. You're losing that trust. It erodes trust in the department because it feels like we're not using the protocol. It feels slippery. With such a high number. If it were 5-6 depredations, it would feel different.

Comment

Good points, and I hear you loud and clear. I think the challenge to our community is that we know these wolves presumably had to survive the winter. They're hunting for themselves, and they're hunting. That's sort of the nature of this 10-month window as well. You're optimistic that a reset

can happen in the winter time. The alternative is proactive removals in the spring. There's pain on either side. The perception is that we're then putting the "easy" food back in front of the wolves.

Comment

This is the spot we don't want to be in, right? Prolonged loss of wolves and livestock. There's not a worse feeling for us when we have a sense that it's going to start again. Not all are like that, but this one has that feel. I ask those who are more familiar with wolf behavior, and they think this is going to continue. None of us want to kill wolves just to kill wolves. But when you have this scenario, I'd rather deal with just those two now rather than others later. Does our previous conversation give us that flexibility? If it's in the best interest of wolves and livestock and people to end it quickly, does that get us there? We want to end it so that the future doesn't have more pain for all involved.

Comment

Is there anywhere in the plan that says once you go to pack removal, you stop? Because if not, I'd say we haven't done the job yet. In my opinion, the Director made this decision, and I think it needs to be honored. This is the third pack in this area. The biologists are saying it will likely continue.

Comment

This isn't the first time, but the past is the past. What are we going to do this time? What's our program if we get pack removal authorized? It's easy looking back, but the bigger question is what happens this fall and this winter.

Comment

I wanted to address the statement that said if 22 isn't enough, what is enough. I haven't heard that in my community. My understanding is this was a one-off. I would hope that doesn't happen again because that's not a recipe for success in the future. That was a really different situation, and there was a pause by the department because there was concern about the information on the ground. When we do need lethals, we want them done quickly and efficiently.

Comment

We thought we had 3 adults and 2 pups in that pack. I suspected there were two left all fall. It caught me off-guard when we had four. That's when we can be most accurate, in the winter counts. So trying to make sure we've got all of them is tough. We do the best we can. In the summertime, we don't know if some have dispersed or left or whatever. Even in our best estimate, we'd still be off by one or two. It's not always exact. The other thing is that last winter, we talked about doing removal, but that also tied into heavy snowfall in that country. There are a lot of other things to think about, including staff safety.

Comment

Yeah, no one wolf is worth any of that in regard to safety.

Comment

We did have the opportunity to remove the collared animal. We didn't because we recognized the value of having that collar in the pack. Then conditions got worse. Since that point, we've learned there are additional members of the pack. At this point, we haven't seen anything to indicate they are on a trajectory for depredation. But if that happens, we're there. We're ready. I just wanted to remind you all that your protocol is working in this case. We've got those opportunities in front of us.

Comment

So it's possible that they have pups, and the public outrage for removing a pack like that just isn't worth it. You know you've got a high risk situation. Are we going to change our behavior to avoid that risk? What is the producer doing different this year because of that high risk situation? Doing the same thing and expecting different results isn't the way to go. We have these couple areas that are high risk, and how do we effectively attack that? Here we are in a situation where there's no win. You're talking about some serious pain if we're removing a pack with pups. We really empathize with producers on this, and what we're pushing for is defensible pastures. Perhaps we solve this problem or we create new locations that aren't that high risk.

Comment

I think we're getting out of our lane if we're suggesting changes to producers and the U.S. Forest Service. I think we can say if there is a depredation, we go to incremental. That's the protocol, and I think that's more effective than a forest revision plan. I'm willing to put up with the anguish of removing pups if that's the final outcome. I think if we went to immediate incremental of selected individuals, we could save the pups. By the time you have 22 depredations, we're really to pack removal. I don't think you have to fly to get that done. The Director already has that authority, and I like the idea of having the Director do some more creative things to help. The Director can start thinking about what really might work.

Comment

I want to clarify what the question is for this point.

Comment

For most situations, the period of active removal is two weeks or less. That creates a situation where, in that final increment, this protocol doesn't articulate continuing that effort. So, new language would be something like, "In most situations, a period of attempted incremental removal will be two weeks or less except in a final pack removal."

Comment

I'm wondering if the previous discussion covers this.

Comment

I want to be careful about making the Director do everything though.

Comment

Where does the OPT fit into the threshold right now? They already hit the threshold, does it start over? They should still be in lethal removal if we're following the protocol, right?

Comment

So if there is another wolf depredation in OPT, the Director is considering lethal removal.

Comment

Why does there have to be another one since we're still in the 10-month window?

Comment

That's this discussion point. Usually we do incremental, then evaluate. In this case

Comment

Producers are expected to do all these nonlethal efforts. We've done lots of different things. The proactive thing the department can do right now is address the issue before it starts. It feels like it's all being put on the producers. It's easier to tell us to spend our money than to take action.

Comment

In addition to the threats and personal safety, we're also noting a change in behavior of that pack. They started moving out of the area, then they were doing something different. That combination paired with them becoming weary of the helicopter indicated a change. We decided at that point that our safety is important, cows are coming off the landscape, etc. All of these things combined to cease the operation during that point. During this lull period, we haven't seen anything to indicate they are going to depredate. If that changes, we have an opportunity to go in and lethally remove those wolves. I'm not asking producers to shoulder the burden, but our objective is to change pack behavior. If our efforts didn't do that, we'll know and we'll be back to what we were doing.

Comment

These are just the approaches and things we can do, and we know there are other things. We are not going to be able to write something that covers everything. To use OPT as an example, perhaps to have a little flexibility would be helpful. If we really think depredations are going to continue, in that case-specific situation, you go to the field staff and see what they think. If we still think depredations are likely to continue because conditions have changed, we provide that space where the field experts can share with us.

Comment

When it goes to lethal, is there only one lethal method?

Comment

There are multiples. The protocol calls it out. Typically it's a helicopter, but we want to get away from that. That's been the most effective. Trapping is on the list, and you can call and shoot from the ground, but that's really low.

Comment

As a former wildlife biologist, I want to acknowledge safety first and foremost. Getting to the point about asking field staff, if I'm a wolf biologist, asking a wolf biologist to kill wolves seems unfair to me. They've just spent a hell of a lot of time getting to know these individuals. It seems unfair to ask them that question. It seems like a tough position to put them in.

Comment

I appreciate that comment, and when we go to our district team, it's everyone. It's conflict specialists, it's district biologists, it's others. We look at everything as a whole. That whole district team puts that recommendation forward. It's not just me. It's everyone. We have very lengthy discussions about each of these facets. You're right, it's not why I got into this position. But that is part of wolf management, and that's just one of the things. All this weighs heavily on all of us, but you try to approach this as objectively as possible.

Comment

I don't think we're going to get consensus in this group on this topic. I would propose we take that qualifier out and leave it up to the Director in those cases.

Comment

Hearing that, and thank you. So you're saying remove the earmark, but the understanding that if that last increment is longer than two weeks, your community can understand that.

Comment

Yeah, it says in most situations. It doesn't say two weeks every time.

Comment

Incremental is in the plan as up to and including pack removal.

Comment

It doesn't specify anything. It just says incrementally. It has no timeframes or anything. We've already addressed that in the eastern area, the Director can use any tools in the toolbox as outlined in the plan. It doesn't say he has to go to pack removal. Has the department said two weeks in the hard and fast rule?

Comment

A typical trap line is out for two weeks, then we enter a waiting period. You give it that opportunity in the evaluation period to see if what we did worked.

Comment

So there is nothing in the plan that outlines time or anything else. But in the protocol, when it calls out for pack removal, then does that mean no matter what?

Comment

No.

Comment

That's just the final increment of the removal.

Comment

We had described in this process this structure of doing removal, evaluate, and if further depredations do removal. I think it would have surprised folks to go to removal after a three week break in OPT last year.

Comment

Why even call it pack removal then?

Comment

We don't.

Comment

If you say we're going to remove four wolves, and you can't do it, then that's it. You can't do it. Then, later, do you even want to go back in? That's what we're wrestling with.

Comment

The history of this is that we get a first depredation in July or August, we go through this process, and every time we get to pack removal, the cattle come off the landscape. So it never happens. It kind of becomes a timing thing. We're doing this to change pack behavior. Every time we've gone to pack removal, the cattle have left. We've done it three times. The cattle left, there's no more problem, so the wolves are there all winter. In those three areas, we've had repetition.

Comment

If you go to pack removal, you're analysis has already been done. In the first increment, you evaluate, and that didn't work. When you get to the last set, and it's still happening, that's your evaluation period. There's no more evaluation after not removing wolves.

Comment

But we've never gone to a full pack removal. We've never removed a full pack.

Comment

Wedge

Comment

This has been a great discussion. It seems to me that our protocol ought to be brought in line with the actions of the department. It seems packs get a reset every year. We need to reach consensus on what we do in this situation, or we need to just agree that we give the wolves the winter. Just to be fair to the public reading this so they can know how the department is dealing with these situations. It appears this OPT area is a chronic area. Are more wolves having to be removed because of the approach we're using? We keep having to remove wolves. Would fewer wolves be removed if we went in and removed the wolves right away? Social tolerance from the livestock community is diminishing because of the actions in the northeast. Successful recovery has to have that piece that producers can look at these situations and know that it's been resolved and that when wolves come to their areas they'll get that assistance.

Comment

Where are we going this fall? Are we taking off the two-week exemption and just keeping going?

Comment

From WDFW's perspective, I think this conversation has helped. When I read the previous item we discussed about Director authority, and I listen to the conversation, I think I would say that if we have a situation like last year, we'd pull together the wolf team and have that discussion. We'd let the specifics of the case outline our direction.

Comment

I'd love to hear from producers about the compensation program. OPT is this hotspot, but one of the reasons it's become this is because we had a new Director who had concerns about the information he was getting. So what are we doing to avoid that situation again. That amount of depredation is not good. We need oversight. I would be strongly opposed to the department going in and starting lethal removal without evidence of depredation or anything like that. We all have our own public, and I don't think the general public would understand that at all.

Comment

Yes, that ship sailed.

Comment

Are we going to do this effort to achieve the goal, or does this feel like retribution? We're going to have to tease this out.

Comment

Unfortunately I won't be here tomorrow, but wanted to say that this really feels like a chronic depredation zone discussion. I just hope these aren't throw away statements. I hope there really will be efforts made. This is the big challenge. These chronic depredation zones. It's easy to put on paper but hard to deal with in real life. It's our biggest challenge.

Comment

I wanted to reiterate that when we had Profanity, we removed a significant number in that pack. That female dispersed and another pack moved in and depredated. And now we have OPT. We can remove a whole pack, but it's only a matter of days before another pack moves in. It's really a matter of focusing on changing the behavior of the animals who are already there. Killing those wolves just means we'll have wolves back there again. It might be removal for an answer, but it doesn't have to be. If we have other solutions, we want to give them a go as well. We try to make the most objective decision whatever that is, and I'm sure we'll talk about that this fall. It's not always straight-laced like that. This is an area that's good landscape for wolves. We'll need to find a balance and make sure those wolves aren't depredating.

Comment

We're so keyed into the northeast, but I don't ever want to forget that wolves will be in other parts of the state, and there will be situations where this occurs on private ground. I want to make sure we don't forget about that.

Comment

Part of this issue of retribution. Donny and others have heard a strong reaction from me on that word. I hate that word. Retribution implies willful maliciousness. It's an awful word. The length of time creates a scenario where when we ask staff about the goal of changing pack behavior, we don't know if pack behavior has changed. The more time passes after a depredation event (winter, circumstances, whatever), it's more and more difficult to know if we've changed pack behavior or not. To me it's always coming back to do we believe pack behavior has changed or do we believe depredations will continue.

Comment

But if you're down to the last two animals, you know pack behavior hasn't changed. They did something to get to that point. If they're the last two and they don't do anything, nothing happens to them. But, if they depredated, that behavior hasn't changed. So have you altered their behavior by doing nothing? Or are you just thinking that due to the timeframe, their behavior has changed?

Comment

There's never been a scenario where there has been an attempt for an additional incremental removal where we've done nothing.

Comment

I'm sorry, I didn't mean that. I mean when an animal is not removed.

Comment

Yes, but those things we did do may not have resulted in the death of an animal, but they may have changed pack behavior. So did our helicopter attempts change anything? The length of time? The fact that two additional wolves joined the pack? We don't know.

Comment

You may have a depredation situation where nonlethal deterrents weren't there, but then at the start of the next cycle, you're using proactive deterrents. That could change behavior as well.

Comment

In the protocol, the department has flexibility around what the increment is. I think we should do a check in on this point.

Comment

So the question we're asking is that the protocol outlines an interval (two weeks or less in most situations). Should the last interval be different? Should there be an interval listed? Are we okay with this or are there needed edits?

Rob went around the room and checked in with everyone on that question specifically.

Comment

I think this is a good place where we can trust the department's decision-making.

Comment

I can't say yes or no.

Comment

So working with the team and receiving the team recommendation, then having to craft my own to submit to the Director, the more areas of the protocol where you have to pull language from different points, the harder it is. This to me feels like we're adding another point where it's a little ambiguous unless you know the proper trail to follow. I thought adding language that said, "except for the last increment" or "for example, the last increment may be longer" helps with that.

Comment

What do you mean by trail? It says two weeks. So the only time you go down by the trail is the last increment, right?

Comment

Would you ever go longer on incremental removal before the last increment?

Comment

I also think it needs to be edited.

Comment

Just for the record, I like it as written.

Public comment

Comment #1

I think I have more questions than comments. I haven't been to a WAG meeting for a long time, so apologies for that. One of the things I've heard a lot of discussion about is regional recovery objectives. For me, the recovery objectives are always tied to statewide distribution. My main question is about the protocol. The protocol is guidance to the department on conflicts when they occur. What I think I heard was that the protocol doesn't apply to eastern Washington. Is that what just took place? If it is, that means it's basically, "Director, it's up to you." It sounds like eastern Washington doesn't need the protocol, which is what I've heard. If that's the case, why do we need a protocol at all? What good is it if we're deferring to the Director's discretion? It seems like there's

no point to the protocol. What do you do with it if it's not really relevant anymore? Then the department doesn't need the advice. If we do have a protocol, I think I agree with the issue on compensation. That is a very important part of reducing conflicts, and livestock operators shouldn't have to absorb the costs. It should be swift and it should be immediate as soon as that call is made that it's confirmed or probable. No excuses for delays. It's a very important part of recovery, and it should be a very effective and efficient program. I think that's something the WAG is in good position to address to ensure it happens. It's vital to the recovery program. In regard to chronic depredation, those wolves are always going to be there. Wolves are always going to come in. It seems like another good place for the WAG to address creative solutions. You can't keep doing the same thing over and over. It's not going to change. Those territories are large and cover a big area, and if conflicts exist they will likely continue. WAG has the ability to bring solutions to the table. It's an important place for WAG to be advising the department. Otherwise it's just a no-go zone for wolves. We'll need to come up with something more creative to keep livestock safe. I think you do need to be talking to everyone involved at that point, including land managers. Also, as a side note, I didn't know people didn't say pack removal. If we do it, we need to own it. It's not the desirable place to be, but we have done it.

Comment #2

I have a lot more questions than answers. I see as an outsider that you all have come so far from the earlier WAG meetings. It's a real tribute to the livestock producers and WDFW in particular. Then there are people like me who enjoy nature and love wolves. One thing that came to mind, is there a way that we can move cattle to other areas? Or is that area such an enriched place for cattle that it would be impossible? It seems to me that we need to think outside the box. I just assumed that ranchers were getting compensated. That's another question we can address in the future. The check should be written as soon as it's confirmed. How can they continue on if they're not compensated? On the other hand, there are a couple human things that can cause wolves to be killed. 1200 livestock were stolen in a 3-year period in Oregon by human beings? Do we have a plan for that? That's huge and something to think about. In Oregon, in 2010, 55,000 livestock died from weather, disease, and other causes. The wolf depredation was less than 1 percent. 95 sheep died last week from eating poisoned grass in Idaho. It seems to me there are a lot of flawed humans. The wolf seems to bear the brunt, but what about all these other things? How do people deal with people stealing their livestock? I've got some free time and I'm happy to look into that. It seems to me that livestock is lost in many ways and wolves always take the brunt.

Comment #3

This sounds like a very positive group. I keep hearing about depredation and compensation. I want some people to know that it's not just the loss of an animal. In our industry, we do a lot to reduce stress in the animals. We want to get a good product to market. The economic losses are more than just a dead animal. The folks impacted in different parts of the state are feeling it. It can be stressful without unforeseen things happening. If you do want to increase movement of cattle, open up more public land.

Comment #4

I have attended the Oregon WAG meeting, and I have to say you all communicate really good. Ideally the WAG would be no compensations and the wolves doing fine and all is great. That's the goal. In regard to stress on animals, we know that cows get stressed when wolves are around. A lot of people don't understand that, but if you've been in the mountains you've seen it. You are all doing a good job, and you communicate really well.

Public comment from morning listening session

A member of the public wanted WAG to discuss the definition of self-defense and what constitutes self-defense.

Check out

Everyone checked out around the room.

Meeting adjourned for the day

Wolf Advisory Group

June 28, 2019

Meeting Notes

Red Lion Hotel and Conference Center
1700 South Canyon Road
Ellensburg, WA 98926

WAG members: Samee Charriere, Tim Coleman, Don Dashiell, Tom Davis, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Andy Hover, Jess Kayser, Molly Linville, Nick Martinez, Lisa Stone

WDFW staff members: Donny Martorello, Dan Brinson, Steve Pozzanghera, Joey McCanna, Ben Maletzke, Stephanie Simek, Julia Smith, Matthew Trendera

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

Welcome and check in

Rob welcomed everyone to the second day of the meeting and everyone checked in.

Review and discuss proposed Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol changes

WAG members continued the discussion from yesterday on the proposed Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol changes.

Donny acknowledged a great discussion yesterday on some heavy topics. After thinking about it last night, it can look a little different the next day. One thing I want to bring up is the idea that the protocol may not even matter. I had a conversation I had with the Director. Yes, the protocol matters. It has a lot of good things in it. We recognize that we can't have an item in the protocol for every scenario. So we realized that we can start with what's in the protocol, but that flexibility would be there for those situations we can't capture. We're trying to say that those lines outlined in the protocol are not limiting. Let's put a little bit of space around that and go back to the context that we've all talked about. The Director didn't want to get hung up on any one number. He wanted some space around those so he could really look at each case specifically. The other thought I had is that there are things we may have skipped over yesterday. For example, the part where it says "above objective" and we said add regional recovery objective. You can't find in the plan where it says anything about a regional recovery objective. So we're going to take that nugget back and get the language right. We're going to see what the legislature meant by that. We're going to scrub those words and make sure we all match together with what we're doing.

Comment

I just wanted to read the new section to RCW 77.12.240. It says, "The department shall implement conflict mitigation guidelines that distinguish between wolf recovery regions identified in the 2011 Wolf Conservation and Management Plan..." Isn't that kind of what we're doing with the protocol? Establishing guidelines between the different regions? Isn't that where we're trying to go?

Comment

Yes, we're trying to say that in the eastern region, where the population is more robust, it's a little different for us than the other regions. The part I was trying to emphasize is the recovery objective part. There is no regional recovery objective. There is a statewide recovery objective. So we're going to go back and talk to the AG office and the Legislature and make sure our language is correct and clear and matches the law.

Comment

One thing I'd like you to think about is that I think the conversation is different if you only had 15 packs in the state. Right now we're at 27 packs.

Comment

It's successful breeding pairs.

Comment

So we've got 15 successful breeding pairs. So we're already at that level where we could be in that 3-year window if they were spread throughout the state.

Comment

The plan says 4 successful breeding pairs in each regional recovery area, plus 3 anywhere in the state for 3 consecutive years. Or, you could have 4 successful breeding pairs in each regional recovery area, plus 6 anywhere in the state for 1 year. Now here we are referencing a regional recovery objective when that isn't referenced at all in the plan. So we need to work on that word choice.

Comment

I have a quick question. In my mind the group wasn't saying that we don't want the Director to use the current protocol just because the population is robust in the northeast. We acknowledged that the department may go outside that in special circumstances as long as it stayed within the sandbox of the plan. My expectation is still that we as a group are providing guidance based on the 3 in 30 or 4 in 10. But then we understand that those numbers may not be the best numbers in every circumstance. But those are still the norm. If they aren't the norm, we have the wrong protocol.

Comment

The values of the protocol are still there. We're looking at acute patterns of depredations. We still have the expectations of nonlethal deterrents on the ground. At least two that make sense for your operation. Producers and conflict specialists are still communicating. We're still making sure lethal removal won't affect recovery. It's just giving the Director some space in that eastern region. So if we have a case where there's 4 depredations in 11 months, maybe that still qualifies depending on the situation. It's a recognition that the Director has some flexibility.

Comment

But the eastern region is the only place where we're using the lethal parts of the protocol. So we have to go with what's current now. So I'm hearing that the Director would be looking at the protocol, but it might be 11 months instead of 10. But we all agreed to 10, so if it's outside that, it's not the norm. So I would hope we have a good explanation from the department if that happens.

Comment

Yes, and this is not a case where every situation would be special.

Comment

I would hope not, because if so we have the wrong protocol.

Comment

I have a suggestion. Let's strike number 7 and add some language for a more generalized statement. It recognizes we have a regional recovery component. It recognizes this is not the norm. And there is some variation.

Comment

I get to see all of your input, and some of that input is that on page 21, where does 2097 show up? If that's all the same, and there's nothing in there that describes that, folks may feel like, "what changed?"

Comment

What changed, and it's a matter of how we word it, is that in the beginning we're stating the recovery component. If we say that up front, I think we do address the 2097 component. If not, I'd like to hear from WAG on how best to do that.

Comment

Yesterday I asked for 6 to be moved to the beginning. The Legislature says you shall implement differences. But your burying this under what you'd do in a region that isn't at full recovery. Why not up front say in regions where we've hit the recovery component, this is what we'll do, then go into the norm for those other regions. To me burying it down below doesn't explicitly spell it out.

Comment

I feel like actions speak louder than words. This is directing the department, and producers will see through the department's actions that something has changed. What's important is what happens on the ground. This allows the department to respond, and it's the response that's important for trust and comfort to those folks.

Comment

As I think about it, I think it could work in a lot of ways. Putting it above could work. We want to be aware that those items on page 21 are the path. As long as we communicate that this doesn't dismiss that logic.

Comment

There could be a win-win here if we took that general language and added a reference to the RCW within it. Then it's in there.

Comment

I agree with that and I think it should satisfy everyone.

Comment

I like the general language, and I definitely agree that in the end it's the action taken. But there is a lot of stress in our community, and we've got to have something that we can point to. We've got to be able to market that tomorrow is going to be better than today. The patience is gone. We've got to come away with some answers on wolf management.

Comment

Remember that when we started the protocol, it felt like it always was getting stretched out. Now we have enough wolves, you should be able to have the option to go quicker if it's justified. It's kind of the flip side of what we did at the beginning.

Comment

If you can't do it now, you're never going to do it in the post-delisting plan.

Comment

The one thing I was looking at is the language of lethal removal, where it says use will be more conservative in areas that haven't hit recovery objectives. You've already said you're doing case-by-case on that.

Comment

I do not appreciate this general language. Perhaps I'm misunderstanding, but nothing in this protocol matters then. We've got chronic issues we've identified and suddenly that doesn't matter? I think what we're saying is that all our work doesn't really count. The other part is that we hear a lot about the concerns of the producers, and I appreciate that. The people I represent care about the ecology of it all. Wolves do a lot for riparian areas. Wolves are an important mesopredator, and we're trying to balance the needs of an economic system, especially on public lands, and that's really where the rub is. I get that pressure being put on producers, but there is a flipside to this. Let's create defensible grazing pastures. There's no movement towards that. That's a part of this that I hope folks here understand. We're looking for answers that would help. It's a combination of using the tools in the toolbox and also adding to that. I know we can't tell other agencies what to do, but we can try to lead them in that direction. That's all part of this mix.

Comment

So words are important, and right now we've just heard them verbalized. Let's take some time to write those words we're proposing. In the meantime, we can address another topic and then come back to it.

Comment

Just to respond to the previous comment, I think this is a great body to talk about great solutions down the line. Things like creating pastures is a decade or two down the line. The protocol is the now. I would love to have that language written out to review, and I like the idea of having that go at the front. In my mind that's significant for producers. We know there are places where the department will have to use judgement.

Comment

There's no one solution to anything. Fencing pastures isn't a solution. I have a gold-standard producer today who is in really bad crisis and it's in a fenced pasture. That's not the total answer to this thing. None of us have a solution that helps that producer today. We're all very concerned about the outcome right before us right today, and it's in a pasture that you've described as the answer.

Comment

Smackout meadow is a defensible pasture, and it has some of the worst interaction with wolves in the state. You can't read anything in this that makes it better. That's the more real thing up there. We have nonlethal deterrents, but some are programmed to shut off when it gets dark. The rendezvous site is a ways away, but they just bring the pups.

Comment

And caught in the act could have been done, but that's not a good answer.

Comment

One thing I want to say is that we can't wordsmith that today. So can we continue to work through other items and then you all will get this as a draft for a final review.

Comment

I heard two things. Add the general language to the beginning of the section and add the general language to the front of the document. Which is correct?

Comment

Beginning of the document.

Comment

So the proposal to the group right now is for the department to go back and write this out, then send out the draft later on.

Comment

Then we need a timeline for that and for comments.

Comment

I'll need to check with the team. We don't know if this is our only nugget or if we're going to have 12 more nuggets, right? So at the break, I'll check with the team.

Comment

But by the end of the day we'll have that timeline.

The group went back to the discussion from yesterday on page 22. This was the item about the last increment of lethal removal. On one hand, the language says "most of the time" right now. But I've heard also that if it's down to that last increment, then there shouldn't be a two week window. Did I miss anything from that?

Comment

We talked a bit about how that sets the department up for failure to expect full pack removal.

Comment

I've lived this several times. The reason we decided on incremental removal is that full pack removal sets us up for failure. So that was where all that came from.

Comment

So how does that tie with the two week window? So you're saying that the action still spans over a two week period unless it's the last increment?

Comment

So that last increment could be longer, yes. There are a lot of different variables, such as weather, time, etc.

Comment

How long would you expect that last increment to go? Because that could go on forever.

Comment

That's one of the reasons we went to two weeks. Staff was out there for months. So I don't have an answer for that. It depends on when the job is done.

Comment

So this is a tough one, and we've grappled with it before. I know in Oregon they have a 45-day window once the Director approves lethal removal. If there's a window, it's not that we'll drag it out for that whole window. We want to be swift. The stress in the system is the highest. We want to hopefully change wolf behavior with that. But there may be cases where the effort may be longer.

Comment

I'm curious how that ties together with the 14-day window talked about yesterday.

Comment

I think when we get to that point, it becomes difficult logistically just to pull it off. It's that chronic thing. We try to be efficient. It's very heightened. We have to be vigilant about the whole operation, and sensitive to others. Dragging it out longer is harder on everyone. It may or may not be feasible to remove all of those animals. If it's the first operation, you want to be quick after that depredation so there's learning that goes on. Any lethal removal is probably going to disrupt that pack in some way. Just making the effort could disrupt that pack. But by the time we get to the last increment, we could try for 45 days and be unsuccessful. The wolves get so in tune with the lethal efforts that they know how to avoid them. There's a limit to what we can do sometimes. Logistically sometimes it's just not feasible.

Comment

If we are agreeing to that general language, doesn't that deal with all these things? Doesn't that provide the flexibility?

Comment

So when you're writing the justification, can you go to that general language at the front of the document?

Comment

Yes, we can.

Comment

So we don't really need to change anything here.

Comment

Yeah, I like bringing that language up front. I think that is very helpful. I think the language combined with the upfront statement can work.

Comment

Same for the district team. We'll have anywhere from 8-15 attachments in that recommendation. If we have that at the beginning, that helps us too.

Comment

I always have concerns that we're keeping this robust and not tailored to the northeast. When we start talking about regions that makes me concerned.

Comment

So the proposal I'm hearing now is that front section is important to address all of these things. Then in addition we add referencing to the final increment to the language on page 22.

Comment

I really feel comfortable that as a group, if we saw the exception becoming the rule, we'd speak up about it.

Comment

I'm the one who pushed this forward. I'm not criticizing WDFW staff for not being able to remove these wolves. I want them to have more flexibility over a longer period of time. I don't want to tie them down in a timeframe. I think by putting this up front, we accomplish what I wanted to accomplish. Right now I'm still skeptical and looking at a big lose-lose.

Comment

Would it be too pointed to call out the final incremental removal? So, it would say, "in most cases, excluding the final increment..." This is in addition to that verbiage up front.

Comment

I think we should give them all the flexibility to get the job done. That's all I want to see.

Comment

I think that's helpful because it describes to the public that generally we want to be swift. But at the point of the final increment, it's a really challenging time, and it could take longer. I think it helps with the expectations.

Comment

It puts sideboards on it.

Comment

This is something that really caught us last year with OPT. Logistically it was not feasible to do it in the fall. So we had discussions about what to do in the winter time. The winter was an opportunity, and we talked about removing those animals or putting more collars out or what we do in those situations. There are no cows out there at that time. The 10-month window was a nice option because it lets us act right away the following year. It's one of those things where you want to protect the cows, but you also want to do all you can to protect those wolves. That conversation goes all the way to the Director too. The ultimate decision was to add a second collar to the pack. But that's the thing: is that the right decision? Should we have been more stringent during the winter? That was something we struggled with as a team. Like what was said, as we get further out, they're back to natural prey through the winter. So in the spring, can we change the behavior? You give them that chance. That's not to say we can't respond quickly if needed, but we're doing okay so far this year. So it's a really tough thing. It becomes less palatable as time goes on. It's not an easy yes or no. I wish it was, but it isn't.

Comment

Another thing we discussed is that there's a possibility you're killing fewer wolves in the long run. If we get in that situation this summer, more wolves may be euthanized than would have otherwise. More cows too.

Comment

I think it's an interesting experiment to see if behavior can change. Maybe you end up with a pack that doesn't deplete anymore. Given the geography of that area, you're just not getting stable packs in there. In a way, I'm glad the operation was unsuccessful. I hope it shows that by taking

risks sometimes, there are benefits. If that doesn't happen, I'll suffer even more for it. So I'm hopeful the pack behavior changed.

Comment

I think adding the final increment to that sentence changes that sentence. I wonder if we can make that a separate sentence instead. By saying excluding, you make the assumption that the final incremental is always excluded. What if there's some circumstance where that's not the case?

Comment

This is what the language at the front is about, right? Am I missing something there?

Comment

I'm trusting the staff to highlight what we've talked about here, because until I've seen that general language, it's hard to know.

Comment

This is a document the department wants to follow. Putting that final piece in there about the final increment, the department's already made that decision, so there's no more evaluation period. They've committed the action to warrant the final order. What I'm trying to do is say that normally the two-week time period applies, but the final increment is different. It may take longer than two weeks.

Comment

Why not just that? Add a different sentence: "The final increment may take longer than two weeks."

Comment

Agree with that.

Comment

I think it's important to be there in the language for transparency.

Comment

I like this language, but I have to say that I would not support a lethal removal of the final two wolves after something 8 months. I would feel comfortable if something starts up again. But if it was a situation where you give the order in September, there's no problem for six months, and then you remove a wolf in April, that's not something I can be comfortable with.

Comment

The department wouldn't be comfortable with that either. Time itself can change things, and there are far more unknowns. We use all of your guidance throughout the process. We're saying yes it may be longer than two weeks, we still think this pattern will continue, etc. If we think enough time has passed, or something else happens, we take all of that into consideration. It comes back to achieving the goal of changing wolf behavior.

Comment

We don't spend hours talking about this, we spend days. It seems like it's always at the end of the season, and then hunting season starts as well. So there are higher safety issues in the field. So we're working around all these other factors.

The group agreed that any item not circled on the flip charts would be okay for now. They then did a group vote on which items to focus on for the remainder of the day.

Break

Comment

Moving forward after that exercise, it seems data sharing and collaring a collar-less pack after the first depredation.

Comment

Let's start with the collars (page 11, line 388)

Comment

The reason I'm interested in that is because we have two regions that haven't met that statewide recovery component. Instead of saying, "WDFW may attempt to deploy a collar..." I want it to say, "WDFW *shall* attempt..."

Comment

That's generally what we do anyway, but I agree the wording can be adjusted.

Comment

So if added something referencing the two regions, and add "shall" that would work for me.

Comment

No matter what area it is, on the first depredation, it would tend to discourage wolves to add a collar because there would be trapping involved. This originated with the department in lessons learned. So I agree.

Comment

I think changing the word "may" to "shall" without doing anything with "when feasible" doesn't change anything.

Comment

I'm not talking about changing that bullet. I'm talking about adding a bullet that says, "In areas below the regional component of statewide recovery objectives, the department shall attempt to deploy a collar following the first depredation."

Comment

And that's already a priority too. We don't have to say prioritize.

Comment

I agree with this. However, I have concerns about putting "shall" in a protocol that would need to have funding. If that money's not sitting there, then they're breaking the shall.

Comment

We are trying to recover wolves. This is part of that piece. So if they're saying there isn't enough money to collar in areas where we don't know they exist, I have a hard time with that. We need to emphasis on finding animals. That's important.

Comment

Are we adding this to the item or is this becoming the whole statement?

Comment

Adding a new bullet

Comment

So it still applies to the eastern recovery region.

Comment

To give a little insight into wordsmithing, and why shall wasn't used originally, there's no shall when wolf trapping. You can try your best, but it may not happen. The shall really ties your hands quite a bit.

Comment

But it's "shall attempt" not "shall collar."

Comment

This is a key part of the job. When we read the "shall," there are so many other things involved. Is there an opportunity to trap? We can waste a whole lot of time when we know we're not going to catch anything. As to funding, if we fund one thing, that means the funding leaves another area. So the shall has different meetings. I like the intent of having this on the priority list, and in fact it already is.

Comment

The other factor is there may be occasions when we're in a different situation. The federal side might tell us we can't collar. Translocation may be a thing. There is value in trying to capture and collar these animals.

Comment

It seems to me that statement as it is right now encapsulates all of this anyway. I'm sure the department's priority is to have collars on predating wolves. Maybe use prioritize instead of shall? It's still subject to resources available. Is the department supposed to pull staff away from something else if something is happening? Prioritize may be a better word than shall.

Comment

Wouldn't we want to collar before a depredation?

Comment

That's the goal, definitely.

Comment

I too wonder if we could just state that deploying a collar after a depredation will be a high priority. It still acknowledges that fact.

Comment

The objective is to get to recovery. If you get to recovery, you're not having to do a lot of the mitigation efforts in the northeast. Prioritizing recovery is important. If everyone feels like the words are okay, I'll back off on this.

Comment

I just want to acknowledge that I too feel it. How do we write in accountability? It's frustrating sometimes, and I feel that frustration. It's hard.

Comment

We're sensitive to this one because we have a crew that works so hard all year long to collar wolves, and it's never enough. We can't add more time to the year. We're a little sensitive because we can never do a good enough job right now no matter the effort. We have monitoring activities statewide right now.

Comment

How many depredations last year in those regions? How many did you collar?

Comment

We had 4 or 5 last year, and we collared the Teanaway and Skagit packs.

Comment

In some cases, you might get lucky, but if it's a traveling wolf, there's probably no point. The other thing I'll say is that we're always looking for new packs. When we find them, they go on the list to get a collar out there.

Comment

We've got cameras all over in these areas and other monitoring tools. So we're actively trying to find animals, but they have to be there if we're going to be successful. In the last two months, the wolf team has collared 11 wolves in a bunch of different packs.

Comment

Thank you for that work.

Comment

So what I'm hearing is we have to be careful with the word "shall." There was a suggestion for the word "priority" instead. I don't know where we've landed though.

Comment

Yes, the language would be, "The department would make deploying a collar following the first depredation a priority." This is in addition to the language on page 11.

Comment

We may not need both statements. They say kind of the same thing.

Comment

I would add something about prioritizing areas that have not reached recovery goals.

Comment

When there's conflict and there's no collar, that's a priority. But to be so explicit about it takes that flexibility away from the wolf team. Where can they be successful? How hot is it there right now? How much have we trapped in there before? Those are all factors.

Comment

Any objections to keeping the wording how it is?

****There were no objections****

Wording will be kept.

The next item discussed was data sharing.

Comment

Several months ago, the Director put a team together for data sharing. We had one conference call and two in-person meetings. Our next meeting is July 10 in Spokane. From the second meeting, we came up with 5 different options to take back. I am doing intakes next week and will set the July 10 meeting agenda. We'll go through all those options and the data sharing agreement, and hopefully have a rough draft to have folks review. After that, our recommendation would go out for a final review, then go the Director as a final recommendation. The blackout period is through July 15. Folks are going to see the same data as before on July 16, and maybe even a little more data. It is point data, kernel data, and section data. No change from last year's layers.

Comment

As a member of the group, our to-do list was to take those 5 options and visit with the commission and all of you and our internal team. We've done that. We've added a couple more options that we're taking back to the group. A couple more things are happening in the group as well. One of the items is of the layers there, how can improve those? Some of the members brought feedback that said the blue layer covers the map and it doesn't work. Things like that are being worked on so the settings are more user-friendly. All of these creative ideas are going on right now.

Comment

So it'd be easy to look at right when you login. But you can also go through and make adjustments on your own.

Comment

One thing is that it's not mobile friendly. Has that changed? It has to be mobile friendly.

Comment

I brought that up, and our GIS team is working on that.

Comment

I'm on the committee and I went to the meeting in Spokane and it went well. We talked about the blackout date. So what do we do with packs that have a collar but show no sign of denning. I think we talked about June 1 for that date. Another thing we talked about was if there's a depredation, the data sharing comes on for those producers affected. All of those things were positive concepts for producers.

Comment

We are working on a couple of different formats. In addition to that, there will be an instructional sheet provided to help people out. So we're addressing that issue.

Comment

Question on that. Is there a way to prioritize it yourself?

Comment

Yes, absolutely. It's a bit more user-friendly now too.

Comment

We want to emphasize that this process and product is emphasizing quality over timeline. Here we are approaching July, and we have a program that's been in place. My timeline includes all of those steps talked about before, and then the Director has to take that final recommendation to the commission. I don't expect there's a completed program with changes for the 2019 grazing period. With where we are, I just don't see it.

Comment

A friendly amendment is that we wouldn't roll out more restrictive changes. We don't want to do that mid grazing season. At the same time, that doesn't mean we're slowing down. We're moving, but we don't want to put something on producers that they weren't prepared for.

Comment

One of the things we talked about was improved communication with producers in pack areas. Is that happening, are there challenges?

Comment

Yes, that is getting out. More communication is there, especially for den sites, rendezvous sites, and if there's any clustering. Additional nonlethal deterrents are then deployed, etc.

Comment

One thing we talked about on the county level for information gathering is to be able to share contact information. So we can provide that information layer. Plus, it'll identify brands and the different allotments, as well as who is the permittee. I think we had a little conversation about highlighting allotments with den sites. Just another concept for information.

Comment

On communicating with landowners, I did a reach out to our conflict specialists to check in. They're doing phone calls. We got some feedback from commissioners as well. In some areas, we haven't had depredations, but we know conflict is brewing. So what does that mean? We're working with the producer so they're not out there blind. So we don't want to blow up the process. We want to do a quality job in the process.

Comment

That idea of the layers and brands and contact came from that county meeting, and we're bringing that to the meeting July 10.

Comment

It sounds like we're captured that people are good with the process going on right now.

Comment

Want to make sure we follow up on the question of the mobile app.

Comment

One of the concerns I've heard from producers is those of us having to deal with them all year shouldn't have to go through the blackout period. Some producers are amongst wolves 365 days a year.

Comment

The blackout period is really only the spring time. Is that what they're asking for?

Comment
Yes.

Comment
Okay. We have that as one of the options for discussion for the next meeting.

Comment
From the committee, there was some discussion about the new information that came to the table in regard to the Colville Tribe having the hunting season.

Comment
I think we have a follow up to this as making sure the data sharing working group has a good connection with this working group. Maybe we add it as an agenda item. Does the committee provide an update to WAG? What form does that take?

Comment
That could be a topic for the July 10 meeting.

Comment
I kind of feel like the department is kicking the can down the road. There are people out there saying a whole year's gone by and we haven't done anything. We need to figure out how to keep communication open. I think there's some communication there that isn't working. I hear people complaining that the whole system is broken.

Comment
We need to explain that better as far as what we're doing.

Comment
How does WAG want to be engaged?

Comment
Could we get a draft of those five options?

Comment
We have that in a public update.

Comment
Can we share meeting notes from the next meeting? Is that enough?

Comment
The proposal is to share the July 10 notes by email for discussion at the next WAG meeting.

The next item to be discussed was defining chronic depredation zones (page 23 of protocol)

Comment
The two or more consecutive language. The example I'm thinking of is when you have a third year with another predation. The word consecutive doesn't capture the chronic issue. You've got 250

days between a full pack removal and another group of wolves. You could go through two seasons, and you wouldn't meet consecutive. That's two different groups of wolves. Is it 2 in 3 years? 3 in 5?

Comment

That's assuming pack removal, and we just talked about how unrealistic that is. How do you cover that?

Comment

Change pack behavior, right. There's something in the mix there.

Comment

But if the next year we're doing it again, we didn't change pack behavior.

Comment

But then what if it takes a year for the pack to coalesce?

Comment

I'd just as soon cross out the whole thing. If it's a depredating pack that reaches the threshold, they do it in the normal routine of the plan rather than creating a special consideration zone. That just creates more work for the department. We're getting into someone else's lane there a bit. The land managers have a job too. Everyone is seeking creative alternatives all the time anyway.

Comment

We're always looking for creative approaches. My sense is that we recognize consecutive is bad for everyone, but I'm not sure what this section adds for us.

Comment

I agree. It's always felt like a slippery slope to me. I'm concerned about the "just one more thing" language. Adding exceptions to a robust protocol seems like a bad idea to me.

Comment

What we're talking about is trying to do more in areas that are chronic. So that first argument of narrowing sideboards doesn't work for me. We should broaden it out. Trying to define numbers here seems pointless. We should move quicker in those areas where we have problems. Tightening that up doesn't make sense to me. We should do that period. Chronic areas should have a broader definition.

Comment

So the department is already doing this? If there is a lot of depredation, you're already looking at new ways, so we don't even need this section, right?

Comment

I don't want to write it off, but yeah we are always looking for new ideas. We're looking everywhere. It's always an ongoing evolution and discussion and learning. This kind of makes it sound like we're not doing this in other places, and we are. Maybe this is just a statement that says the department and communities will always look for new solutions everywhere, especially in these chronic areas.

Comment

I think the second paragraph is informative but not really necessary. And I agree that I'm not sure we need any of the language. What I do like is the language that calls out the other management plans and looking at them all as a whole. I know the department is doing that, but I think it's helpful to have that illuminated in here. I think it would be helpful to capture that somewhere in the protocol.

Comment

I think we do have it on page 6. It's line 164. Some of the same language that says let's make sure we're communicating between plans.

Comment

Maybe we could amend that a little bit.

Comment

I don't think we can strike this. It's been stated that some in the environmental world can't survive another year where we remove wolves in the same area over and over again. This is coordinating and collaborating with other agencies and other entities. I think we take this as an opportunity to move forward, and it may be case by case. But we have to keep something in this protocol that recognizes that concern and that issue.

Comment

To add to that, the protocol says best-suited practices. That lends itself to this chronic issue. If you have a chronic issue, we're going to continue to have wolves there. It's going to continue. This ties nicely into not only coordinating with land managers, but also this reserve allotments idea. To create new pasturing systems, particularly in those areas. Rugged landscape with bizarre rock formations that create these canyons. Places where cows get stuck. That's why they're out there in the winter time. Maybe the way we can do it is a combination of creating better pastures and using the reserve system. When you have a problem, you can move the cows and still provide for them. So I would agree that the second paragraph could be taken out, but I would like to add reserve allotment strategies would be considered. Also, I think the rolling window would be extended or modified, as well as the incremental thresholds, to take into account the situation on the ground in chronic zones.

Comment

Can you expand on that? How would those change?

Comment

Yeah, so, how would we adjust thresholds in those areas? You've already conditioned the wolves to be weary of lethal methods. So is there a way to not hold to the 3 in 30 or 4 in 10 window. Is there more flexibility for the department? It's a rare situation, but it's there.

Comment

I would like to see a statement about innovation stay here. I wish that there was a meeting we could have as a group focused on innovative ideas, at a time when it's not as stressful. Then the ideas wouldn't be assumed as "add-ons." It would just be coming up with ideas. Not that it would be viewed as something more difficult for producers. The end goal would be making it better. Then you can deal with the individual situation.

Comment

I agree with that. I think these chronic depredation zones are key. We're going to have more chronic depredation zones in completely different areas for completely different reasons. So we need to go in and decide what to do. I think we need to stay within the sandbox for those discussions. We've really got to look at this wildlife thing. We have to have a robust prey base. That's the number one thing. We're not even looking at that in our one zone. We've finally got it in the protocol a little bit this time. We have fractured habitats, and that's where the wildlife is being pushed. It's going to be a problem in the future. I think the language needs to be in here.

Comment

I like the idea of thinking about pastures. I think it's worth looking at. I'd like to push back a bit on the idea of not being able to take one more season of wolves being killed. It's the same for us. We can't take one more season of cows being killed. The feelings around that are the same. It's too many dying.

Comment

I would like to see what "can't take anymore" looks like for the environmental side. What it looks like on the producer side is people run away from those areas. The U.S. Forest Service already has their plans. I think we're getting out of our lane if we go there with other agencies.

Comment

I do like the idea of taking some time to focus on innovative solutions. We have to remember that producers are tied by allotments in particular. That means we have to bring those other agencies to the table. If we're going to look at it, we need to look at it for the whole state rather than piecemeal. Situations are always going to be different, but you can plan some solutions.

Comment

This conversation has really helped me. From my perspective, we can live with this. Does it have to be there? It's okay to be there. We're demonstrating that in areas with repeated depredations, we're trying to be visionary and find solutions. For the second paragraph, it tries to capture that hardship for producers as well. It's trying to pull us all together and say that's hard on all of us. I'm thinking we leave this, take the reserve pasture concept and tuck it into here, and then the reserve pasture concept is recognized as a discussion. We'll need to bring other players into this group for that. How do folks feel about that?

Comment

On the surface this isn't a problem, but I'm concerned about putting more on the backs of producers. That's my only concern.

Comment

I look at this as, if we get to here the protocol failed. Why don't we just say we're trying something else?

Comment

This should be about cause and effect. You have the effect of chronic zones, what is causing it? More than how we solve it, what is causing it?

Comment

This would be a good place to collaborate.

Comment

I like the idea of moving the reserve pasture language to this point.

Comment

I agree with all of that. I know that the folks who wrote this put a lot of value in what producers are doing. I hope we all know that isn't minimized.

Comment

The frustration is also on the part of the wolf advocates that we want to see things happen faster on the ground. We get frustrated too. We want to create those defensible spaces so producers can put their animals back there again. I think we're looking for that innovation as well. Once we understand what the problem is, maybe we can't fix it at that site. So we find a way to make that work on the landscape. A long time ago my group proposed a meadow structure in areas. Fires were allowed to do their thing. We've proposed ideas to fix these things and offer new opportunities for a variety of interest groups, and a lot of times we run into a wall. I believe we can find balances out there.

Comment

The whole concept of a reserve grazing area is troublesome to us. In some ways it feels like a fictional notion. Ag lands are tough to come by. So producers don't hold that as a viable option. If the department believes that's a viable option, I think the onus is on you to put numbers to the availability of those lands. If there are other lands, it would be helpful to list that. Let's see some proof. If it's not there, then we're sending the wrong message out to the public as well.

Comment

If you have a chronic zone, and you have problems there you don't know how to resolve, you have to find the cause. I can't solve anything without first starting with a problem statement. I struggle with saying there's an easy solution. We're faced with a real critical problem, but it's in an area with a fenced pasture. So we're applying that to chronic areas? I struggle with that. The cause could be something we haven't thought about today. That's where we're going to learn the most about wolf management.

Comment

Following on that, I like looking hard at the cause and recognizing that it's not something obvious. But I think adaptive management goes along with it. We have to be nimble and do both. On the reserve part, we're nervous about the interpretation of that. When it comes from government, it sounds like we're making a sweeping movement and that's it. But that's not it at all. It's a conversation with us and others. It's the idea that when the opportunity comes where we have something for reserve, we hold it and we have it. Then we can offer that option. The point is it's mutually beneficial. No one goes into it begrudgingly. So how do we start that conversation with other land managers without forcing anything?

Comment

I agree with that, but I disagree with saying here's a landscape and we're going to change it and that will solve our problem. We come up with different places and offer that option, yes. But I think they're two separate subjects. We have to assume we're wrong when coming up with concepts.

Comment

We've asked for these reserves forever in regard to wildfires. There's always something else involved. Show us some of them and we can go. The regulations aren't getting changed.

Comment

Yes, I can only imagine that there's a lot of red tape. We've called this out now, and I think we have a way to help even this year already. So that's where we want to go. This vision of starting a dialogue and having a workshop session, getting feedback is going to help us.

Comment

Thinking of the state as a whole, there are quite a few ranchers with ground coming out of CRP that are aging out. If you could offer grazing ground, that's a possibility. I know many older farmers and ranchers whose kids aren't coming back, who would be pretty glad to have dollars for grazing districts.

Comment

In 1998, when the fish was listed, our allotment came under real scrutiny. We were one of three producers, and they chose to move us to an allotment that had not been used. In that, we took cows to an unknown, unfenced area. The cows did very poorly. It was a real struggle. It was a one year trial, and it was difficult. That was tried back then. I'm sure if you asked to do that today it wouldn't work. It wasn't an easy situation. It creates bigger problems. The department has added money with land purchases, and sometimes the source of money isn't open to grazing lands.

Comment

NEPA and SEPA cost the department a lot of money. As an option, reserves can help, but it's not a fix. What happens when you run out of land? There's less of it every year.

Comment

That's where the message has to be crafted carefully. Having some emergency areas set aside, and having it be the producer's choice, hopefully makes that better. We'd at least have that in our back pocket. But we don't want it to be the new norm.

Comment

I agree. In their eyes, this whole wolf thing is a way to get them off the landscape. Not that this isn't a good option temporarily, but yeah.

Comment

Would the group be okay with WDFW taking these ideas and putting them into the protocol? No guarantees we could work them in like all of you want, but we go through and then you have a chance to edit it.

Comment

I like that, but I wonder if the group can take a quick run through the items. Identify the ones to work on and the ones that went away.

The group went through the PC17 (see flipchart) list and identified what to keep. The keeps include:

- Amend reference and considering multiple plans
- Amend second paragraph
- Add consideration for reserves as a temporary option
- Effort to take a look at the cause of these zones
 - Wildlife aspect wording left in
- Department availability of other lands, including private

Parking lot items:

- Having an innovation meeting
 - Providing options, not requirements
- Department availability of other lands, including private

Comment

I wanted to note the concern of having a perception of putting more work on the back of producers. It's about coming up with solutions that people want. Producers should be a part of this. It's all about the intent.

Comment

The department will take these suggestions, put them into text, and get that out for review.

The group was able to check off number 6 on the list (potential changes flipcharts).

Comment

We'll want that to note that the reserves are not limited to federal.

The group then moved the discussion to number 11 on the list. This is the nonlethal deterrents expected regardless of recovery/listing status.

Comment

Does that include when wolves become completely delisted?

Comment

There was a part in 2097 that talked about periodic status review and all of that. There was an edit that said that nonlethal deterrent measures must be used regardless of listing status. That includes delisting. I think there's an edit on page 21 that strikes "expected" and changes to "must." From department standpoint, we're expecting at least two no matter what.

Comment

I find this strange, I have to admit. What if time goes along and we all learn together. What pops in my head is someone deploying a measure who doesn't have a concern. That seems strange to me.

Comment

The way I interpret that is in regard to lethal removal of wolves. So the department is saying that there needs to be something there before lethal removal goes forward.

Comment

Yes. It says you must use nonlethal tools.

Comment

That makes sense. How I interpreted it didn't. Maybe that means it should be reworded.

Comment

When you get to delisting, the department is not going to do lethal removal. It's like coyotes. Is this section only for prior to post-delisting?

Comment

This protocol is implementing our current plan. This provides guidance within the plan. This doesn't implement the next plan.

Comment

So why is this even in here?

Comment

Because it's state law.

Comment

If that's the answer, then that's the answer.

Comment

So when status changes and funding goes away, how's that addressed?

Comment

Yes, the resource availability will look different, but I wouldn't assume that effort just ends. We hope these methods carry on well beyond state delisting. Exactly how they're put out there might change, but I think the concept is to have these in place well into the future. The post-delisting plan will have these conflict mitigation guidelines. The law still says producers will use these nonlethal tools. It has to be ones that are suitable and make sense.

Comment

What to do with producers right now who have cougar issues? When we get to state delisting, we're going to have just another predator out there. But you already have animals producers are worried about. What's the difference between wolves and cougars there?

Comment

I think the post-delisting plan will deal with that more. But it is in the current plan a little bit. We continue to evolve and be less restrictive. The tools will change and the approach will change. But HB2097 doesn't just stop at saying nonlethal tools must occur. It also gives money to do that. It tries to set up a situation where we are proactive and have the resources to be proactive.

Comment

The strategy with conflict management is you're always trying to prevent it. Our officers don't go to someone's house with their garbage spread everywhere and not do anything. The officers keep going back there until something is done about that attractant. The goal will always be to minimize conflict. Having tools in the protocol ought to be kind of a fallback. The cougar item depends on the situation too. Officers will say they really need the landowner to do something different there.

Comment

On page 7, line 215, it say secure and provide resources to jumpstart efforts. That term jumpstart implies a financial burden for the producer.

Comment

I wish we had the resources together for it not to be a jumpstart. We have to realize it's a limited pot of money.

Comment

We feel like we're helping have the animals on the landscape and general citizenship should pay for that maintenance. Just the word jumpstart didn't sit too well with me.

Comment

If it was changed to "bolster" would that help? Bolster says consistent with financial resources as available.

Comment

Yes, that is much better.

Comment

Maybe reference the RCW directly for the nonlethal tools item? That's why it's in there, right? Because of state law? So we add the reference.

Comment

I'm still stuck on this in regard to listing status. You can get compensated for cougars, right? Why is that compensation different for wolves?

Comment

It's because of the law in place. To be honest, it should be there for cougars and bears as well. The intent is to encourage good husbandry practices.

Comment

Thank you, that helps.

Comment

This is in the weeds, but 2097 won't be in statute until July 28 (or later). Depending on that, we may just have to use the bill number. We don't know the subsection of the RCW yet.

Comment

So the latest proposal on number 11 here is to add a reference to the RCW.

Comment

I want to add the language that specifies "for the implementation of these conflict mitigation guidelines."

Lunch break

The group returned to talk more about the protocol.

The department proposed some language to go at the beginning of the protocol document. This proposed language is:

"The Director has the authority to vary from the protocol while remaining within the guidelines of the wolf plan. For example, in areas where the local wolf population is below the regional component of the statewide wolf recovery objective, the Director may be more conservative. In areas where the regional component of the statewide wolf recovery objective are at or above, the Director may be less restrictive (RCW 77.12)."

Comment

I would say that's getting very close.

Comment

Instead of saying less restrictive, could you say something like the Director will follow the wolf plan? The only concern is, in the portion that says less restrictive, it doesn't make a lot of sense to me. You're saying more conservative, which is fine, but at the bottom it doesn't have an equivalent.

Comment

May use more discretion?

Comment

I hesitate because the first sentence already says the Director is remaining within the guidelines of the wolf plan. So, with that established, it's then saying less restrictive.

Comment

Doesn't the plan talk about what less restrictive means? I think that's the language used in the plan.

Comment

The for example is the critical part. There may be something else there. There may be some knowledge that something has changed. So the Director may do something different, but there's a reason and it makes sense.

Comment

So it sounds like this is a good initial offering for this process. We just maybe need to think about that last piece.

Comment

And if that's consistent with the language in the plan, I would stick with it. Then you can reference the plan for any questions. My concern there is no longer there.

Comment

We'll review that to make sure, but I think that is the language in the plan.

The plan was checked and "less restrictive" is used in the text. The group moved to the next item, number 19 on the potential changes flipchart.

Comment

As long as the other species plans, when reopened, consider the impact that wolves specifically have on the ungulate populations. In other words, we're not just going status quo.

Comment

I don't know if we have to be specific to wolves. I don't want wolves to take the rap for other predators too.

Comment

I would agree with that. It seems like it's maybe not appropriate to be in the wolf protocol.

Comment

It's very appropriate because it follows the wolf plan, which is the sandbox.

Comment

It's in the plan, yes, but how does it fit in the protocol?

Comment

If you're going to have good wolf habitat, you have to have a robust ungulate population. It has to be there. And they adapt to lots of different types of habitats too.

Comment

I think there are two different things being said. Talking about managing ungulate populations doesn't have a place in the protocol is one thing. What part of the protocol is going to tell you how to manage ungulates?

Comment

This is under the role for WDFW.

Comment

I don't know that it fits under expectations for deterrence measures. If we're going to include ungulates, we'd have to include a lot more.

Comment

What I think I heard was, this is a wolf-livestock interaction protocol, why is the wolf ecology stuff in there?

Comment

Yeah, that's what I meant.

Comment

I do like that we have expectations for WDFW.

Comment

Is having a healthy ungulate population a deterrence measure?

Comment

It can be, yes.

Comment

Then I think it should stay in there. If the department keeps managing for sustainable ungulate populations, then we could have less conflict with producers.

Comment

Then why isn't grazing in there? We could add a whole lot more.

Comment

When I read it with the "WDFW's role is to" language, I'm comfortable with it.

Comment

I think with managing ungulates, that's something WDFW can do, while on the allotments, they don't have that authority.

Comment

Wolves don't just eat ungulates. So if you're concerned about this particular prey base, that's one thing. But if it's prey base in general, we want to reword to ungulates and other prey.

Comment

Part of my role is to represent hunters. The ungulate population is the primary prey for hunters in Washington. If they feel like the wolves are impacting that, they're going to have questions. That's why I'm trying to make sure that everyone's thoughts are articulated here. I understand it's not an ungulate management plan here, but it is referencing those ungulate management plan. Ungulates are the primary prey base.

Comment

But these are the deterrents. It says deterrents.

Comment

Maybe it's in the wrong section then.

Comment

An adequate prey base can also be considered a deterrent.

Comment

The other factor is the location of that prey base. If that's where cattle are grazing, just know that wolves will be in that area. Ungulates can serve as an attractant in some cases. I want to make sure we're capturing what all of you want.

Comment

Many of the folks I represent are also hunters. As you know, there has been a reaction to the either perceived or real impacts to ungulates in the northeast. So part of our story is that concern. So having that in here is important to us.

Comment

If you took that sentence out, it doesn't change anything for WDFW. We're going to manage for those objectives as much as we can. There are other factors, like winter severity, that go into play. I'm not arguing one way or another, but it doesn't change anything for us.

Comment

I think we should also keep that cause and effect in mind. I don't want this to be a presumed cause yet. I'm not disagreeing with having it, but wanted to address the perception that wolves are the cause of ungulate depletion. For one, we don't know if there are fewer ungulates. For two, if we do have fewer ungulates, we don't know if that is because of wolves.

Comment

We're not opposed to the language, and it doesn't change management. This is beyond just wolves. It's cougars and bears and other factors as well. We just want to make sure we're capturing what you're wanting.

Comment

Can you change the language to say, "The department will continue to manage..." Does that work for everyone?

Comment

It's not so much what this bullet point says. It's where it's located. Could we put it in the third paragraph on the first page? I think it fits there better. It seems more appropriate there. I think it's out of place in deterrents. That would include it with the goals of the plan.

Comment

Why not include it in both places?

Comment

Wanted to also say that we don't know that ungulates are not an attractant to wolves. So I'd hesitate to say it's exclusively a deterrent. The other piece is about suitable habitat. Suitable habitat for wolves is everywhere. In other states wolves live on beavers and berries. They are not tied to areas with ungulates.

Comment

One challenge too is in terms of predictability. It's asymmetric. It's logical that when the prey base is reduced, you'll have more conflicts. But in other cases, where the prey base is healthy, that doesn't necessarily give you the same predictable models.

Comment

The wolf plan says maintaining robust prey population will benefit wolf populations in Washington. Right there, that says exactly what I want that bullet item to reference. That's page 116, the very first paragraph of the plan.

Comment

That brings me back to my first point that wolves eat more things than ungulates. So it's the whole slew of species. I wanted to state that to make sure we're capturing what you want.

Comment

I think if we moved that paragraph to the protocol, it would be a good thing. Honestly, that's kind of back and forth since the protocol is an addendum to the plan, but I think it helps with understanding.

Comment

We've got some valid proposals. I'm thinking we hit pause on this one. We use the remainder of the time to reflect on all the things we and the department have to do.

Comment

Does the department feel like they have enough from us?

Comment

I don't think there's any disagreement around the room here. No one's disputing the importance of a robust prey base. The only disagreement seems to be on where to put this bullet.

Comment

So the decision is to have it on the first page, under section 3, or in both places.

Comment

I like the idea of copying the language from the plan.

Comment

There's a whole bunch of other stuff from the plan that we reference but haven't pulled over. This would be the only thing. That's fine, but wanted to point that out.

Comment

With the protocol, it gives some sideboards around that plan. So if you have this piece, we need to reference it in the protocol. People seem to use the protocol more often. We could even just reference the plan.

Comment

Could you be okay with just referencing the pages in the wolf plan?

Comment

Yeah, that'd be fine.

Comment

Let's ask the department to take this guidance and craft something to give back to WAG for review?

The group agreed that was a good idea.

Rob summarized what came out of the meeting to make sure expectations were met.

Public comment

Comment #1

Wanted to thank all of you, especially for the conversation about clarifying the OPT situation. I learned a lot during it. I still think that language is a little wishy-washy, but I'll be interested to see the new draft protocol. I hope to have the opportunity to comment on that. I also want to tell all of you that I'm really interested in having the department record the meetings. It shouldn't be up to a nonprofit organization to do that. These discussions are things the public are really interested in, and oftentimes it's tough for people to make it to these meetings. I think it's important so we can reach as many as people as possible.

Comment #2

I want to thank you all, and I appreciate getting the feedback from yesterday. I appreciate everyone's time being devoted to this. I know what it takes to put this stuff together. Usually it comes out with something worthwhile. I really appreciate hearing from more staff. I think it was great to hear staff speak up. It's important to incorporate that into this. I appreciate Rob keeping all the cats herded. It was a good effort on everyone's part.

Additional discussion

Can you spell out that it's only department range riders who will be tracked with GPS?

Comment

Yes, we will make note of that.

Comment

So what we've spelled out here is the basis for the protocol. So can we go around and do our check in for sufficient consensus?

Comment

We did not get through all the circles. Ones without a checkmark we didn't get through.

Comment

And that's okay because there are others we did get to. Are you at a point where you believe the department can go back and put on paper what is articulated on the wall? That's the sufficient consensus vote. The other path is that we're not there yet and there's more to be done.

Comment

My understanding is that WAG is comfortable with the department taking that back and making those edits.

Comment

So the check in would be, "Can you live with the discussions we had during this meeting?" Then after that, we work with WAG on the final word choices.

Comment

Do we have enough of the group here to have sufficient consensus? I'd be concerned about that.

Comment

I think we can still be supportive of the department taking this back.

Comment

So the vote is, "Can you live with these components in the protocol?" This is the sufficient consensus check in on the elements of the protocol. You'll still have a chance to do tweaks and stuff.

Comment

What do you mean by tweaks? If the draft comes out and the tweak isn't livable, do I have the ability to make objection?

Comment

If that's the case, you bring that forward.

Comment

My understanding is, "Does the department have mandated permission to go back and add this stuff in a good faith effort to capture what was intended?"

Rob went around the room and checked in with everyone. Everyone agreed that was okay.

Comment

Also I wanted to highlight to WAG that public meetings are going forward for the post-recovery plan and translocation will be involved with that. The schedule isn't finalized yet, but it will be out soon.

Future meeting dates

Rob would like to attempt to get some predictability for the group. Rob proposed January, May, August, and November as set meeting months for WAG. It would be the second Wednesday of each of those months. As we get closer to those dates, Rob will check in to see how folks are feeling.

Comment

That pretty much works for me.

Comment

Do we want to start this for this August? That's six weeks from now.

Comment

It would be a great time to engage before the public scoping meetings.

Comment

So right now, let's plan that second Wednesday/Thursday in August. That would be Aug. 14/15 in Spokane.

Comment

I'm wondering if we can Doodle poll this one, and then start on the second Wednesday starting in November.

Comment

That sounds good to me. Then we'll send out the dates for the annual meeting cycle.

Date for protocol draft

I assume it's before August. I will check with the team to get a date for that. It's a couple weeks at the most.

Check out

Everyone checked out around the room.

Meeting adjourned