

# Wolf Advisory Group

## Meeting Summary<sup>1</sup>, January 7-8, 2025

**WAG members present:** Amy Porter, Bill Kemp, Caitlin Scarano, Dan Paul, Lisa Stone, Lynn Okita, Marie Neumiller, Paula Swedeen, Rick Perleberg, Samee Charriere, Scott Nielson, Sierra Smith, Tyler Allen

**Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW, Department) staff members (participating):** Annemarie Prince, Ben Maletzke, Brock Hoenes, Candace Bennett, Donny Martorello (Day 1), Ellen Heilhecker, Juli Anderson, Kyla West, Trent Roussin, Staci Lehman, Subhadeep (Shubh) Bhattacharjee

Washington Fish & Wildlife Commission (speaker): Commissioner Lorna Smith

**Facilitation team:** Susan Hayman, Casey Hart

## Meeting Action Items

Who	Action Item	Target Date
WAG	Share any language flagged in the Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol for further clarification or discussion.	Feb 2025
Paula Swedeen (WAG)	Continue to work on the Compensation Pay-for-Presence Proposal and conduct follow-up as needed.	April 2025
WAG Producers	Check in with other producers (non-WAG) to get a sense of the level of support, lack of support, and producers who wouldn't use the program but support creating it for others.	April 2025
WDFW/WAG	Clarify the 4-in-10-month threshold: the rationale behind it, and how it is implemented, to enhance public understanding	April 2025
WDFW	Provide available information on previous lawsuits filed in response to lethal removal orders, especially where the 3/30-days and 4/10-months thresholds were at issue.	April 2025
WDFW	Compile data related to the number of incidences of lethal removal actions authorized outside of the 3-in-30 days window (i.e., 4-in-10 month window) to assess if there is any new pattern to how often these incidences occur and within what actual timeframe.	April 2025
Facilitation Team	Contact the Director to see if he is available to join the April WAG meeting for a "Director's Session."	April 2025

<sup>1</sup> This summary is a synthesis of the meeting discussion January 7-8, 2025. The meeting summary will be publicly available following finalization of the meeting documentation package.

Who	Action Item	Target Date
WDFW	Continue to work on the Compensation WAC proposal and share tracked-change version with the WAG when ready for review.	Feb 2025
WDFW	Consider whether to request extra proviso funding to cover program administration costs of continuing to work on the potential Compensation Pay-for-Presence Program.	April 2025
WDFW	Provide any updates to WAG at the April meeting concerning wolf co-management discussions with the Colville Tribe.	April 2025
Facilitation Team	Schedule a WAG/WDFW conversation to discuss potential approaches to address chronic depredations prior to the April to try to get options in place prior to the 2025 grazing season.	February 2025
Facilitation Team	Distribute a calendar hold for a 90-minute WAG Compensation call the last week of February/first week of March.	January 2025
Facilitation Team	Convene the Range-Riding Task Group to develop recommendations for range riding expectations and whether any changes to the Protocol are warranted (based on the January meeting discussion) and bring recommendations to the April WAG meeting.	February 2025
Facilitation Team	Work with the WAG to frame questions for WDFW to enable staff to gather data to inform a discussion of occurrences of legal action brought against WDFW related to wolves.	March 2025

## January 7, 2025 (Day 1)

### Opening

Susan Hayman, Ross Strategic facilitator, opened the Wolf Advisory Group (WAG) meeting at 10:00am by welcoming members, WDFW staff, and meeting observers, providing an overview of the meeting objectives and agenda, and reviewing the WAG Ground Rules. The purpose of the meeting was to:

1. Affirm issues and determine a path forward to address concerns raised during the November meeting discussion of the Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol.
2. Discuss updates on the progress of WAC Revision and Pay-for-Presence Compensation recommendations.
3. Provide opportunities for WAG members and WDFW staff to build collaborative capacity, promote conflict transformation, and strengthen their relationships with one another.

## *Introductions*

### ***WAG Member and WDFW Staff Introductions***

Hayman invited WAG members and WDFW staff in attendance to introduce themselves. WA Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Lorna Smith provided a brief hello to WAG members and expressed appreciation for their hard work.

## *WDFW Updates*

### ***Wolf Team Updates***

Shubh Bhattacharjee and Ben Maletzke (WDFW) provided WDFW updates and clarifications on recent poaching, depredations, and wolf counts:

- On December 17<sup>th</sup>, WDFW handed evidence to US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) law enforcement regarding a third poaching incident in Klickitat County (See press release [here](#)). WDFW believes all three incidents are under active investigation, which typically takes up to three months, but can be delayed due to limited staffing and resources. USFWS leads the investigation due to federal jurisdiction. WAG members asked WDFW staff to encourage the Director to reach out to USFWS again.
- Maletzke shared a documentary video link on a community perspective of the return of wolves, following WAG discussion regarding perceptions of current community sentiments regarding wolves.
- WDFW shared high-level information regarding depredations on the Colombia Pack Further details are available in a WDFW press release.
- WDFW emphasized that they focus on pattern of depredations, not the size of depredated livestock in lethal action considerations.
- WDFW staff will be focusing on wolf counts from January to March. Winter is when wolf pups are beginning to learn to hunt and the pack is most cohesive, traveling together. Aircraft help with pack counts and determining wolves without collars. WDFW will then begin to trap wolves and put collars on in May. The Annual Wolf Report will be released in April and an update will be provided to the Fish and Wildlife Commission.
- WDFW is conducting a follow-up investigation on a wolf mortality in the Couse Pack and can share more details after they have an official mortality determination.
- WDFW has reached out to the Colville Tribe and hopes to touch base in the next few weeks regarding addressing House Bill 2424 regarding wolf co-management.

### ***Ungulate Updates***

Annemarie Prince (WDFW) reported multiple instances of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) detections in white-tailed deer, including in in Game Management Unit (GMU) 124, and recently in GMU 117. WDFW is collecting and analyzing samples. There are no follow up studies but game management units in District 2 mandated hunted and salvaged carcass sample submissions and Region 1 mandated that no harvested ungulates could leave the region unless deboned and cleaned. WDFW aims to make this a permanent practice and expand submission requirements region wide. Restrictions will grow as CWD spreads. Proper disposal methods and landfills can be found on the WDFW website.

Separately, WDFW plans a second round of moose captures in Northeast WA Districts 1 and 2 to collar moose, allowing them to look at cow survival and recruitment, and improve survey methods.

## *Compensation Program Recommendation Updates*

### ***Compensation WAC Update***

At the end of the November 2024 WAG meeting, the WAG agreed to move Washington Advisory Code (WAC) revisions to WDFW to create a tracked changes document of integrations into the WACs and Revised Codes of Washington (RCWs). This document will then be subject to review before the WAG determines whether there is consensus for making recommendations to WDFW Director Susewind to move forward with these changes. Bhattacharjee updated that that WDFW staff separated proposal language into WACs and RCWs and will have an internal meeting this month to discuss the proposal changes.

Next Steps: Once WDFW arranges the proposed changes within the WACs and RCWs, WDFW staff will communicate and send updates to the WAG for review and comment. The WDFW Commissioner will have to initiate rulemaking for any proposed RCW changes.

### ***Compensation Pay-for-Presence (P4P) Update***

At end of the November 2024 WAG meeting, WAG reached sufficient consensus to begin initiating discussions with the WA Department of Agriculture (WSDA) regarding their interest in administering a P4P program, and to begin discussions with interested legislators regarding a potential budget proviso to continue developing the proposed Pay-for-Presence program and to explore appropriate potential administering agencies. Paula Swedeen (WAG) provided an update that the proviso is the next step to give WDFW and WAG more time to develop proposal concepts before potentially submitting a budget request to a pilot program in the 2026 legislative session.

#### Next Steps:

Paula Swedeen (WAG) will be in touch with the Facilitation Team and WAG members on next steps before any further actions by WAG and WDFW are taken, so that everyone is coordinated with correct information. Next steps will include:

- Swedeen will have a next-steps conversation with Laura Butler at WSDA. Butler administers the WA range riding grant program.
- After determining WSDA's potential interest in administering the program, Swedeen will begin outreach to potentially interested legislators from the affected NE/SE WA regions, including Senator Shelly Short. She encouraged WDFW to stay in close contact with Senator Short as well. She also encouraged WAG members to help identify potential legislators of interest in the NE/SE regions.
- Swedeen asked WAG producers to help determine the level of interest in program participation in the NE/SE regions. This is important to determine the pilot area.
- Swedeen noted that the proviso might not cost much, and WDFW should determine if they want extra proviso funding to cover program administration costs.

## *Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol (Protocol) Current Implementation*

Hayman identified the purpose of the Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol (Protocol) discussion as a continuation from the discussion initiated at the November WAG meeting. This discussion was an opportunity to take steps in addressing challenges experienced by both producers and WDFW in

implementing the wolf-livestock interaction protocol. It aims to confirm perspectives heard in November, identify root problems, and causes for those problems, and identify solutions. It was also an opportunity for WAG to identify how they view range riding as a non-lethal practice.

### ***Legacy Member Perspectives***

Hayman invited legacy WAG members and WDFW staff (those involved in WAG discussions when the Protocol was created), to share their perspectives of previous WAG discussions and clarify if the Protocol is being implemented as intended. Legacy WAG members include Paula Swedeen, Dan Paul, Lisa Stone, and Nick Martinez (not present). Legacy WDFW staff include Trent Roussin, Ellen Heilhecker, Candace Bennett, and Donny Martorello. Legacy members shared experiences, challenges, and key WAG moments:

- Protocol Development and Changes
  - The Protocol, developed in multiple iterations starting in 2016, initially called for any two proactive non-lethal measures. The 2016 grazing season tested the draft Protocol, revealing weaknesses and prompting revisions. Discussions led to enforcing two non-lethal practices chosen collaboratively by producers and conflict specialists, based on a deterrence measure checklist to mitigate wolf-livestock interaction.
  - In 2017, the draft Protocol was refined and adopted through sufficient consensus. Conversations clarified probable versus confirmed depredation and emphasized lethal control as a last resort and only one tool of many options to change pack behavior. This helped create stakeholder buy-in. Significant discussions addressed the three depredations in 30 days (3/30 days rule) or four depredations in 10 months (4/10 months) rule.
  - In 2020, WAG further defined range riding expectations, specifying its use as an important non-lethal deterrent, especially in large pastures (e.g., National Forest grazing allotments).
- Overcoming external pressure and internal conflict throughout the process: The WAG faced high external pressure, negativity, and public doubt about reaching consensus within a reasonable timeframe. WAG made significant progress, reaching sufficient consensus on the Protocol in 2017. Developing the Protocol laid the foundation for finding methods to minimize the need for lethal control. Before the WAG was able to work on the substance of the Protocol, members first focused on building trust and respect and on understanding each other and overall issues. Conservation Conflict Training (CCT) was valuable, and the WAG learned to work as a team to meet everyone's needs. When discouraged, the WAG considered numerous tools to problem solve. Legacy members reflected that this has been challenging and rewarding work, and it is important to keep in mind examples of success through difficulties, and that Protocols take time to develop and maintain.
- WDFW's Role and Decisions: WDFW's role is to determine whether they can support and implement potential decisions to include in the Protocol. WDFW was an integral part of Protocol discussions. Staff helped determine if WDFW could feasibly implement protocol ideas, determine how decisions could affect WDFW resources, ensure solutions could work for everyone, and identify any concerns. The ability for WDFW to step out of the room during meetings or call the Director to discuss WAG questions and provide immediate answers at WAG meetings facilitated progress.

WAG members responded to legacy member perspectives, raising considerations for discussion on protocol intent and implementation:

- Assessing Livestock Injuries: Some WAG members expressed that the Protocol should include additional guidance to address processes of depredation determinations for injured (rather than killed) livestock. Legacy WAG members recalled that while injuries are accounted for, and there was extensive discussion on how to account for injuries, there is currently only a high level of detail on this in the Protocol. WDFW noted that at the time the Protocol was written, WA was the only state considering injuries in lethal removal decisions.
- Range Riding Requirements: Some WAG members are concerned that WDFW is considering range riding a requirement for lethal action, especially since range riding is not fully funded/fully available in all areas where wolf depredations are occurring (i.e., not always a viable option).
- Understanding the three depredations in 30 days (3/30-days) and four depredations in 10-months (4/10-months) threshold: More background on why the 3/30 days and 4/10-month depredation threshold for lethal removal were determined would be welcomed by WAG members not involved in WAG at the time the Protocol was developed, along with any data leading to landing on those specific numbers. Some feel the 4/10-month guidance is too significant of a time gap after the depredation before lethal removal, causing lethal removal to not serve its purpose of changing pack behavior. Producers have felt that the 4/10-month threshold's purpose is not achieved as lethal removal action is sometimes not taken until well after thresholds are reached, leading to more unnecessary livestock depredations. WDFW clarified that data came from consideration of all wolf depredation reports and WDFW and WAG members had multiple iterations of dialogue at the time the Protocol was developed to come to consensus of what thresholds felt most appropriate. Legacy members observed that the 4/10-months threshold aims to capture instances depredations occurred at the end of the previous and beginning of the next grazing season. WDFW clarified that neither the 3/30 or 4/10 trigger lethal removal but rather initiate a district recommendation process that moves to the WDFW Director. Also, other factors are included in determining lethal removal.
- Public Perception and Transparency: Some public viewers may have perceived a lack of transparency with the WAG when WDFW staff left the room, or when WAG broke into small groups during Protocol development. It is important to ensure the intent of actions are clear to the public.

***WDFW Discussion on Implementation of Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol: Review of an excerpt of slides presented to the WDFW Commission***

Bhattacharjee presented on WDFW's Protocol implementation, including a flowchart ([Appendix B](#)) of the lethal removal decision process and public outreach. WDFW aims for wolf recovery and influencing pack behavior. Over time, WDFW has focused on improving transparency, documentation, and public outreach. Decision-making is non-linear and is influenced by many factors, including non-lethal methods being implemented by producers. WDFW wildlife conflict specialists and producers determine non-lethal deterrents and next steps during preseason meetings, sometimes in daily communication.

The Appendix B flowchart process is initiated when 1-2 confirmed livestock depredations by wolves have occurred, and WDFW is initiating discussions in anticipation of the potential need for action. WDFW conducts district wolf team meetings once a threshold in the Protocol has been reached to align the WDFW team with facts for decision-making regarding lethal control. Wildlife conflict specialists inform

producers of these discussions and invite any additional information that may have a bearing on the Director's decision (producers are often reluctant to provide additional information due to the potential for public disclosure). Fish and Wildlife Commission members are also briefed on recommendations prior to the Director's decision. While decisions are open to discussion with producers, the WDFW Director makes the final decision on whether to authorize lethal removal.

In response, the WAG and WDFW staff discussed:

- Flowchart Accuracy and Transparency: Some WAG members noted that while the flowchart looks accurate, it does not show how producers are engaged. Producers might not have known the steps and consequences when they agreed to the Protocol, and some feel they are following two separate set of requirements. Other WAG members feel the flowchart is logical as WDFW has a lot to process with numerous levels of decision making, which this flowchart clarifies. WAG members feel it would have been useful to have had an opportunity to comment on the flowchart process.
  - *Action*: WAG members agree that there may be an opportunity to display better transparency of the decision-making process. WDFW staff said the producer communication steps could be added to the flowchart.
- Producer Perspectives and Input: WAG members emphasized the importance of the wildlife conflict specialist-producer relationship, and said it would be helpful to identify ways that producers can see how WDFW is using their input.
- Non-lethal deterrents and proactive problem solving: WAG members and WDFW staff agreed that discussions with producers regarding non-lethal deterrents should begin well before the 3/30 days or 4/10 months depredation thresholds are reached to avoid having to restart the process. "If/then" scenarios could be developed with producers and WDFW ahead of the grazing season to help address challenges more proactively and more quickly. The Protocol should clearly distinguish proactive from reactive deterrents. Proactive measures are preferred as reactive ones often fail and take extra time, according to producers in these situations. WDFW and producers should brainstorm ways to be more responsive based on available resources, balancing both proactive and reactive measures.
- Consistency and timelines for lethal removals: WDFW aims to improve consistency across WA state and noted there are opportunities for improvement. Preparation of background information ahead of time helps speed up the process. WAG members noted impacts to producers when the timeframe for lethal removal is extended, or removal does not begin right after the Director's decision.
- Privacy and safety concerns: WDFW reminded WAG members that they are unable to talk specifically about actively occurring lethal removal actions due to producer privacy and safety concerns for both producer and WDFW staff.

### ***Identification of Overarching Issues/Challenges and Root Causes with Protocol Implementation***

Hayman reviewed issues, challenges, and root causes with Protocol implementation identified from the November WAG meeting, referencing the online white board and spreadsheet generated from the November meeting. WAG members provided additions and feedback:

- Some feel there are differences between the Legacy member perspectives of the Protocol intent versus implementation, such as the requirement of range riding, or the definition of hemorrhaging. Others feel range riding is implemented consistent with the Protocol's scope.

- WDFW questioned how to make decisions in the spirit of the Protocol when producers decline provided resources, such as range riding. Should WDFW go to lethal control more quickly? Are there better ways to apply resources?
- The Protocol allows autonomy (e.g., to choose a range rider or decide on a particular non-lethal) while expecting collaboration between producers and WDFW on non-lethal deterrents.
- Extensive effort was spent on range riding consideration development and some view range riding as the most appropriate tool on large pastures for tracking cattle and wolves and preventing depredations. Legacy WAG members did not see range riding as the ultimate solution when developing the Protocol, though it strongly emphasized. There is a recognized need for other cost-effective solutions to support agricultural communities and their economies. WAG members expressed an interest to understand where a line is drawn on how decisions for lethal removal are made with consideration to the amount of range riding needed compared to available resources and other non-lethal actions employed.
- Regarding available resources for non-lethal deterrents, the Governor's budget faces a shortfall and agencies expect cuts. Budget decisions are not final until April. A WAG member encouraged others to reach out to their elected officials to encourage support for increased funding for non-lethal deterrents.
- Both WAG and WDFW highlighted the importance of honesty and opportunities for communication improvements. WDFW announced it will share depredation reports with affected producers starting next grazing season.

### ***Next Steps:***

Hayman asked WAG members to prepare for the following day by reviewing the Protocol, finding areas of confusion or concern, and thinking about opportunities to make improvements and find solutions.

### ***Public Comment***

Six persons provided public comment on Day 1, as documented in [Appendix A](#).

### ***Closing***

Hayman reviewed the meeting's action items and invited WAG members and WDFW staff to provide final reflections on something WAG members valued from the day's conversation.



## January 8, 2025 (Day 2)

### *Opening*

Susan Hayman, Ross Strategic facilitator, opened the Wolf Advisory Group (WAG) meeting at 9:30am by welcoming members, WDFW staff, and meeting observers, and providing a meeting agenda overview.

### *Introductions*

#### **WAG Member and WDFW Staff Introductions**

Hayman invited WAG members and WDFW staff in attendance to introduce themselves.

### *Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol Current Implementation*

Hayman recapped the January 7<sup>th</sup> discussion on the Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol, which focused on challenges and root causes of issues. The purpose of continuing the conversation was to dive deeper into key topics and brainstorm solutions for improving the Protocol or its' implementation. The WAG focused on range riding, 3/30-day and 4/10-month criteria, and chronic depredations. They raised timelines for district recommendations and criteria for determining injury by wolves as other key topics for later conversation. The WAG worked towards identifying Protocol and implementation solutions for these issues. The WAG discussed the following topics:

#### **Range Riding**

Based on the January 7<sup>th</sup> conversation, Hayman posed the question: "Under what conditions is range riding essential and most effective?" The WAG discussed:

#### Range Riding Effectiveness and Use of Other Tactics

- WAG members expressed mixed views whether range riding is the most effective non-deterrent tool. Range riding success depends on patterns, timing, and deployment, and combination with other tools. Wolves may become used to human presence over time, reducing its effectiveness.
- Range riding should be one of multiple tools and not relied on when resources are limited, or other tools are more effective.
- Legacy WAG members intended range riding to be adaptable based on needs and resources.
- Range riding helps producers understand pasture conditions and gather critical information.
- Effective non-lethal alternatives include carcass sanitation and delaying calves from entering fields until they are several hundred pounds to prevent targetability.
- Non-injurious harassment (such as "spank-and-release") could enhance range riding if range riders can intensify their presence. WDFW noted range riding is most effective if wolves are encountered with livestock, but it is unclear how often this happens.
- Training cattle to better protect themselves is a theory, but producers must be willing, and aggressive cattle can be dangerous.

### Realistic Expectations for Producers

- Producers and WDFW have conflicting views on requirements for range riding frequency and extent to count as an effective non-lethal tool. Expectations need clarification, should be realistic, and should allow for a combination of tactics.
- It may be infeasible for producers to range ride daily/near-daily across all allotments with limited time and resources. Some must protect cattle from multiple wolf packs. Some WAG producers expressed that they often feel the need to be in more than one place at a time.
- Drone cameras could augment range riding to better understand pasture conditions.

### Collaboration: Producers, Range Riders, and WDFW

- The protocol calls for WDFW and producers to collaboratively determine the best tools based on circumstances.
- WDFW and producers have the opportunity to improve communication, including more constant communication for where wolves are and where range riding needs to occur.
- Producers are the most effective range riders (but time limited) and find it is important to have good relationships with assisting range riders.
- Producers and WDFW may have differing opinions about what documentation is needed versus what are reasonable expectations. WDFW noted that providing special/other circumstances and verification of non-lethals in writing is important for producers to do because it is important for records in case WDFW's decisions are challenged.

### Clear range riding expectations is critical: Is range riding a requirement?

- Current range riding requirement expectations need clarification.
- Some WAG members agree with range riding requirements, highlighting that range riding is the most appropriate tool in some areas and therefore is expected. This expectation developed over years of work and expectations to keep livestock safe. Past situations led to range riding becoming the used tool because it was working. Given its history, benefits, and intent, some WAG members do not want to relax on range riding. A focus could be to create a system of access to range riding rather than reducing range riding emphasis.
- Other WAG members do not support mandatory range riding requirements. Producers feel that they should be working collaboratively with WDFW to determine the most appropriate non-lethal tools, but they don't feel this collaboration currently occurs appropriately and with enough resources to be able to require range riding.
- A sentence could be added to the Protocol that range riding should not be required if tools and resources are not available. WAG members posed the idea to change "required" to "recommended," emphasizing that they don't want to penalize producers for lacking range riding resources. Daily or near-daily requirements should be dynamic based on resources.
- Range riding documentation allows WDFW to provide resources to producers and determine when is appropriate to pursue lethal removal. Producers (vs. range riders) have many tasks and may feel they do not have the same obligation to turn in range riding activity logs and only some are willing to turn in data. Documentation requirements make more sense for hired range riders as part of their job. WAG members suggested finding acceptable ways to gather information and ways to streamline documentation, especially for producers.

- WDFW highlighted that if some areas do not have the same range riding requirements, WAG should consider disparities in range riding presence and resources affecting decision-making and potentially leading to quicker lethal removal in resource-limited areas.
- WDFW may need to reassess the weight of range riding as a non-lethal tool, considering protocol changes or implementation methods. WAG needs further conversation on this, determining reasonable documentation requirements, and how decisions should be verified. WAG producers expressed that range riding has been a good tactic in the past in reducing the chance of losing livestock, and there have been previous efforts to obtain funding for more external staff to reduce producer burden.
- Some believe that the Protocol doesn't need to be changed, but it is not being implemented as intended.

Hayman summarized potential concepts for range riding focused on implementation considerations rather than Protocol changes, based on points raised during the conversation. The group discussed a potential approach to submit a letter to WDFW, rather than recommendations to change the protocol. WAG members and WDFW staff expressed that there is more to discuss and address to determine whether the Protocol is implemented as intended and whether changes to the Protocol or its implementation should be made. Producers need to be able to accept and use what is created out of this discussion. An option could be to insert an additional narrative in the Protocol, which could be more helpful and inclusive of information and would keep information in one place.

**Next Steps:** The range riding task group will convene for further conversation to bring recommendations back to the WAG in April. WDFW asked the WAG to ensure any new language is consistent with Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for Livestock (DPCAL) requirements.

### **3/30-day and 4/10-month thresholds**

WAG members generally agreed that the 3/30-days threshold continues to make sense due to frequent depredations in short periods. They sought clarification on the 4/10-month guidance, concerned about punishing wolves for incidents potentially ten-months after-the-fact, which may not impact the offender wolves, could create room for situations to change, and would not be an immediate response to change pack behavior. They question the threshold's effectiveness and feel available information is lacking.

WDFW explained that the 3/30-days marks the start of a depredation pattern unlikely to change. The 4/10-month guidance captures patterns over two grazing seasons, recognizing that depredation patterns could restart after cattle are released back onto land. WDFW considers other factors such as location and wolves involved and does not always make recommendations for lethal action once thresholds are met.

WAG members commented:

- Clarifying the 4/10-month threshold in writing would help the public understand reasoning behind these numbers and how they will be followed. Analyzing past 4/10-month cases could help explain guidelines to the public and adjust as needed.
- To meet the goal of changing pack behavior, offending wolves should be removed quickly for best success. Chronic depredations occur after waiting too long for action. It is challenging to properly do this as WDFW doesn't always know the specific offending wolf, only the pack. Lethal

removal is an imperfect but disruptive tool to change wolf pack behavior. There is skepticism among a number of people in the group that lethal removal is demonstratively effective.

- WDFW continuously analyzes lethal removal situations so it would be beneficial to hear about these analyses. The spank-and-release non-injurious harassment method could help directly target offending wolves.
- There are remaining questions regarding procedures being followed by WDFW that may not be documented on the flowchart. It would be good to ensure the process is transparent in a safe way. The current protocol was created with the desire for flexibility. A future conversation is needed on how flexibility is viewed and interpreted in the protocol.

### ***Next Steps***

- WDFW will see if it can provide clarification of the 4/10-month threshold.
- WDFW will see if it can gather information for the April WAG meeting on previous lawsuits to demonstrate the topics of legal challenges.
- WDFW will gather literature/examples to the WAG for how lethal removal has influenced pack behavior in Washington. Some WAG members offered to do a literature search on this topic, too.

### **Chronic Depredation**

Chronic conflict zones arise when wolf packs are involved in numerous depredations over time and deterrence methods, including lethal removal, are not effective. The WAG spent over a year discussing these zones but could not reach consensus to add a section into the Protocol. They aimed to designate an area for intensive analysis to understand and prevent chronic conflicts, a different approach from stopping a single pack from starting a depredation pattern. The topic was tabled. There were perceptual and trust issues WAG members couldn't move past, including that it would cause more burden on producers. The conversation also previously had poor timing, overlapping with potential Wolf Livestock Interaction Protocol rulemaking. A pilot was attempted, but was unsuccessful. The WAG previously intended to have an intensive analytical frame for why the chronic situation developed and secure funding for tools like increased range riding presence. WAG could revisit this topic, but WAG members want to avoid repeating conversations that led to dead ends.

***Next Steps:*** The WAG will have intermediate conversations to continue the chronic depredation discussion before the April WAG meeting.

### ***Public Comment***

Two people provided public comment on Day 2, as documented in [Appendix A](#).

### ***Next Steps and Closing***

Hayman reviewed the meeting's action items and potential April meeting topics including: a session with the Director, range riding recommendations (re: protocol and implementation), other protocol recommendations, a data discussion on 4/10-months related incidents, and compensation draft recommendation updates. The April WAG meeting will be held in Olympia WA.

The Facilitation Team will share the Excel spreadsheet documenting issues, root causes, and potential solutions with WAG on the work from this meeting, and invite WAG to continue to add to this

spreadsheet. The Facilitation team will also schedule a tentative 90-minute call on Compensation in March to assess progress, as well as schedule a range riding task group meeting. WAG members are encouraged to flag any language in the Protocol for further clarification.

Hayman invited WAG members and WDFW staff to provide final reflections. The meeting adjourned at 3:30pm.

## Appendix A: Public Comment

Public comment received at the end of each meeting day is paraphrased below:

### January 7<sup>th</sup>

- **Dave Hedrick (Ferry County)** – I recommend where funding goes for the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) range rider program. The next biennium's budget recommendation got cut dramatically. WSDA has a base budget of \$912 thousand per biennium base funding that they don't have to ask for. This was reduced by \$661 thousand, leaving \$251 thousand for the whole biennium. This is an 80% reduction in funding compared to the Governor's \$1.6 million budget for the biennium we are currently in. Funding for the Sheriff's Department Conflict Officer Jeff Flood as well as two range riding NGO's comes out of this pot. There will be enough funding for NGO's to fund 1 rancher per year. I sent a spreadsheet to the Facilitation Team with definitions. Last time we had a \$268 thousand proviso from the Legislature. Provisos hard to get in down budgets and are not dependable. I talked with Laura Butler from WSDA and she said the compensation conversations are a mystery to her. She said they've had no input or heads up from WDFW and think it is odd. Without considering available funding, the compensation protocol is irresponsible. [note: following Dave's comment, Susan Hayman shared that Paula Swedeen reported she and Laura Butler are now coordinating on this topic].
- **Wayne Johnson** – The Colombia pack is targeted, and those wolves want to live enough as much as us. Someone on WAG should speak up for no more murder of wolves in WA state.
- **Sheilah Delphel (Okanagan Farm Bureau President)** – On behalf of Farm Bureau board members, I respectfully request WAG to review pages 59-60 of the Wolf Management Plan, which conflict with page 64. Page 59-60 states wolves don't need to be distributed throughout the SW Cascade or NW Coast recovery region to achieve recovery objectives. If they occur in the Olympic Peninsula or SW WA, they will count as they do not need to be there to delist. Although wolves historically were throughout WA, there is considerable quality habitat and wolves do not need to reoccupy all of their former range to meet objectives, if they are present in both halves of the Cascades. The Northern and Southern Cascade mountains have a historic range portion that would ensure the long-term survival of the population. In particular, the Southern area includes abundant prey for wolves, public and private land, and a low level livestock conflict is expected. Page 64 of recovery objectives in the last sentence under items 1-3 and under area 4 must be removed, as it states a requirement of successful breeding pairs distributed in SW Cascades and NW Coast. I ask WAG to review these pages and, if in agreement with the contradiction, WDFW should move towards down or delisting in accordance with and outlined in Wolf Recovery Plan. In 2023 there was a reporting of 260 wolves, not including 36 mortalities. With 42 packs and 25 breeding pairs, the Wolf Recovery Plan is successful, and focus should be on moving towards post-wolf recovery planning, which started in 2019-2021.
- **Marty Hall (Colombia County Commissioner and cattleman)** – I appreciate the work of the WAG. We are experiencing severe losses from the Columbia pack. There are other packs without as much record of conflict. There have been lethal removal permits issued for two wolves. I hope this can be executed and am frustrated removal is not starting immediately. The depredation occurred in town. I had my daughter take pictures and wolves were back in the middle of the day. Wolves are emboldened. I don't want to belittle the problems of friends on public land, but

Columbia Pack depredations are on private land, where people sacrifice to pay for and make living off of their land. It is frustrating when arising issues make situations more difficult. I recognize we need to learn to live with wolves, but they also need to learn to live with us. Removals have to be executed in a timely fashion to modify pack behavior of pack.

- **Derek Marin (Natural Resource Conservation Service [NRCS])** -I worked for the Colville National Forest Service as a supervisory range specialist and am now a district conservationist for the NRCS in Northeast WA. I have a public announcement that WA state NRCS was recently authorized to fund range riding efforts. We haven't released funding yet and are still collaborating with local conservation districts to see how to best utilize funding. We are looking at targeted efforts and are collaborating with others.
- **Larry Ledgerwood (Garfield County Commissioner)** – I have family involved with wolf interactions in neighboring counties. So far Garfield County has avoided wolf interactions. On January 1<sup>st</sup>, there were wolf tracks to the north of Pomeroy. Wolf issues are moving towards us. We are trying to be prepared and learn from Asotin and Columbia county. This is putting a strain on producers trying to make living. I hope lethal takes will change pack behavior. This lethal process should be expedited and I am concerned that lethal removal is not happening faster. I expressed to legislators that WDFW needs to get more collars to confirm or deny things in the future. It is important to really listen to producers.

#### January 8<sup>th</sup>

- **Dave Hedrick (Ferry County)** - I sent a description to the facilitation team regarding range riding funding and compensation to distribute to WAG. What happened with the range riding program budget was not typical. The only program Department of Agriculture had cut out of all programs was range riding. It was cut from \$912 thousand to \$251 thousand by the government. This sends a message that this is political rather than being about the budget. Ranchers need a Protocol that has funding. Range riders have to be able to understand if they have a job going forward and ranchers have to understand if they will have range riders. The Governor can veto a budget proviso. It does not work to get programs going and then cut them. Policy needs to match rancher funding support.
- **Rachel B** - I am the public that cares about the wild land. It is frustrating to listening to these meetings with the same arguments recurring. We won't reach a resolution when producers don't want to share information. Producers want to conduct business as they always have. We must adjust for a path forward. Wolves are vital to the ecosystem while cattle are not native. It is amazing wolves don't attack cattle more often. Taxpayers don't want to subsidize producers to this level. I don't have any solutions but appreciate the opportunity to listen.

Appendix B: WDFW Flowchart on the Process for Determining Lethal Removal

