

**WILDLIFE REHABILITATION ADVISORY PANEL
MEETING MINUTES – April 10, 2021
Teams Virtual Meeting**

WDFW Staff Present:

Patricia Thompson – WRAP Contact
Hannah Anderson
Michael Atamian
Capt. Jennifer Maurstad

WRAP members Present:

Jennifer Teitzel, Chairperson
Alicia Bye, Vice Chairperson
Jenny Schlieps
Alysha Evans
Irene Holmes

Suzanne West
Lynn Tompkins
Craig Moran
Emily Meredith
Cindy Daily

Not Present:

Amy Hanson
Jasmine Fletcher-Glaze
Nicky Finch

Chair Jennifer Teitzel called the meeting to order 9:02 am

Check-in

PAWS is open but not taking eastern gray squirrels or cottontails this year as in last year. Taking opossums. They are on the fence about deer, may take five or six. Very few volunteers and interns. SARS – PAWS is coordinating with Sarvey and Whatcom Humane dividing up high-risk species. PAWS takes bobcats.

WSWS - limited intake of EGS and raccoons but are accepting eastern cottontails. Not taking House Sparrows, European Starlings or Norway rats. WSWS is sending COVID high-risk species to PAWS, Sarvey, and Whatcom. Limited volunteers and interns.

Whatcom Humane Society is starting their interns. They are accepting all their normal species but have higher weight requirements for admissions. Not accepting House Sparrow or European Starling babies. Moving ahead with deer but may be limiting raccoons to only Whatcom County. Presented update on their new facility and they are planning on going forward with the move. SARS – Whatcom is taking the river otters and transferring cats.

Craig is spending time off because of the tragic death of his younger brother from COVID for which we all expressed sorrow. He expects schools to be starting up shortly and may be going back to work after a year off.

Discovery Bay is still taking most of the birds in their area. They have their core volunteers this year. Cindy announced they are repurposing their barn now that they are without horses and adding a surgery suite and visiting veterinarian. Room for rehabilitation is greatly expanded.

Irene announced that Footprints in Carnation built some new enclosures. One big one is close to maximum with EGS. They also have eastern cottontails and coordinating with Mary Cunningham who reduced the number of small mammals she takes in. Footprints has two volunteers.

Focus Wildlife was on a spill in B.C. where there are lots of seabirds, sea otters, coastal wolves, and pinnipeds that were in danger of being affected. There were two to three thousand birds per day and the oiled birds attract predators.

Sarvey is not accepting European Starlings and most mice and rats. SARS focus is on weasels; transfer other high-risk species. Fewer raccoons at present so they prepared a raccoon cage for isolating weasels. A former intern from Vermont is back as a seasonal staff member and will have 10-12 interns this summer. What to do with small mammal calls?

Footprints Irene said if it's around Buckley call Mary, other locations call Footprints.

Mike Atamian WDFW District Biologist - "What are Region 1's biggest wildlife rehabilitation needs?"

Wildlife rehabilitation and wildlife/public interaction response in Region 1 has been a group effort this year with a lot of participation from other District Bios and Wildlife Officers.

Many calls are about raptors, EGS, and fawn kidnappings about which much education is provided.

Occasionally get bear cub calls which is a heavy lift because they need to be transported long distances.

Non-native species. Several comments come from staff about non-natives – “should we be rehabilitating non-native species” because they compete with natives, and often cause conflict issues with the public that WDFW must manage. Conflict issues depend on what species the calls are about, much of time destruction of property or “danger” such as aggressive raccoons.

Issues and hurdles – Oregon tightened its laws regarding non-native rehabilitation, and transfer of Washington birds for rehabilitation. There are counties in Reg. 1 that cannot send raptors to Blue Mountain Wildlife.

Significant time and funding is spent on responding to public reports of orphaned and injured wildlife and we do not have any space to place this wildlife while trying to find a rehabilitator.

We do have a couple of people interested in the wildlife rehabilitation permit but the hurdle of 1000 hours of training and even the exam causes them to give up. We hear lots of big dreams, but they can't pull it off and get discouraged. We are very concerned that current rehabilitators will age out and retire – Dr. Ponti.

Questions for Mike – “How can we encourage people to get a permit?” That's something we can help work on. “What is WDFW stance on rehabilitation when CWD arrives in WA?” Stop rehabilitating fawns. Some states do not allow cervid rehabilitation at all.

Suzanne – In addition to needing more rehabilitators, need to recruit Principal Veterinarians and need a way for veterinarians to gain wildlife experience. Dr. Jess Adams in Chewelah is willing to help with that.

Mount Spokane is willing to work with rehabilitators and WDFW.

Region 2 is the most problematic. It seems like veterinarians have a difficult time transferring after they stabilized an animal

Craig – Why are so many doing it under the table and not getting a permit?

It is hard for the veterinarians to find space, and for them to afford the care if they “make it big.” Donations are hard to get esp. in Region 2 because of sparse population. Craig wondered if there were fewer now.

Jenny – How do we mitigate needing wildlife rehabilitation in the first place, such as not destroying habitat like cutting down trees.

That's a huge question and one of the department's missions is to preserve habitat against development.

Transportation of wildlife has been a roadblock to getting Region 1 and 2 wildlife to rehab. We would like to build a network of transporters. It would be very helpful to have a system already in place to call on, and have help to establish a good transport system. Typically, transport goes north to south.

Alysha – Does Region 1 reach out for transporting animals? We can help with that. West side rehabilitators such as Whatcom Humane would be willing to run over and pick up. We can give Mike a call list for transport of wildlife.

ACTION ITEM

Alysha? Create a transportation list of those rehabilitators willing to be called for pick up from the eastside.

Mike – we need to make sure everyone knows they are available for transport assistance. Rich Beausoleil will help with transport.

ACTION ITEM

Tricia Get transportation list and add to the Referral Guide spreadsheet when finalized. Contact Rich about wildlife transportation. Just large carnivores? Get Region 2 input.

Alicia – Thank you for trying to think out of the box. Mike tries to encourage people to volunteer with rehabilitators. We have a lack of rehabilitators where they can volunteer. How do those people get to the rehabilitators and meet all the requirements? Education and experience are very necessary. Are we or WDW able to ship people from eastside to westside for training? Can we do **remote mentoring**? Could the trainee be consulted with every day?

Mike – This sounds good for some technical parts but how much could replace the actual hours? Perhaps spend a week at a facility then go back for remote mentoring and debriefing?

Tricia – It might be good to revisit the **Novice Permit** and use remote mentoring.

Jenny – Remote monitoring (not mentoring or training) – WWRA set up a fund for paid internships, then remote interning in rounds.

Capt. Jennifer Maurstad – guest Enforcement Program speaker

Both rehabilitation and possession of wildlife are criminal violations in nature, so, an investigation must be done. We cannot just write a ticket because it is not just an infraction, such as a traffic ticket would be.

We feel education with a warning is the best way to get the animal out of the house and into rehabilitation for best care.

Can you do a written warning? We can do a written warning with criminal activity, but it is not an infraction citation.

We must have very good information to be able to apply for a search warrant and it is not easy to get one. We cannot just go do a search. Capt. Maurstad has never been able to get a search warrant for a wildlife violating with the required 51% certainty of the crime. In fact, the judge usually wants 90% certainty.

Even if we see wildlife in the house, we cannot go in. We must give them their Ferrier warnings which is basically asking permission to enter, and they can say no.

Emily – It seems like you have to go through so much to be able to charge someone with a crime. Can you go to infraction?

Mike – should we pursue a WAC (RCW?) change to make them infractions and not criminal misdemeanors which means a higher bar for charging?

Capt. Maurstad – It's true that it might be better and easier to cite, such as a \$250.00 infraction.

Would there be the ability to elevate to criminal?

Capt. Maurstad doesn't think they would lose anything by that action, and it could probably go to criminal.

Alysha – People are still posting illegal rehab. We are wondering why that is still happening and how can we help get those animals? It's getting chronic and there are no consequences for these people, so they keep doing it.

Capt. Maurstad – While it looks like we are doing nothing we are doing behind-the-scenes stuff that we cannot necessarily talk about. Plus, it can sometimes take months to be able to even enter someone's home to investigate. That being said, sometimes things slip through the cracks. If you feel you would like some answers on what is being done, please feel free to contact the Regional Captain (Capt. Maurstad is Region 4).

Jenny – our main concern is what happens to the animal. There is a degree of animal abuse in these situations. Is there a way to do preventative work like on Next Door or Facebook? Are there other ways besides infractions and crimes? We just want them to stop.

Tricia – That would be the Wildlife Programs responsibility. Our Public Information officers put out quite a bit of material on wildlife rehabilitation on our Facebook/Blog/Instagram/Twitter that includes illegal rehab and possession, baby animals, etc. We have so much public input to respond to and wildlife information to post that things get pushed down the page. Although a great idea, I'm not sure if WDFW personnel can post on individual Next Door-like sites and we couldn't keep up with them all. I have a couple of people monitoring Next Doors and one of them is one with Isis Caney. There have been posts on her Next Door saying that she does not have a permit and is not a wildlife rehabilitator.

Capt. Maurstad – We cannot force anyone to post on their Next Door or Facebook pages. A judge would have to make that decision. We cannot require community service. We would all like to do a better job of education but need the time and resources.

Mike – We are all making strides in education.

Jenny – You can go through the rehabilitators to reach the community. They can assist with distribution.

Irene – Helped write the protection laws in CA. They wrote in a tiered system and you can get really stuck in that.

Hannah – We have a huge public outreach effort on killer whales. How do we keep up – repost, retweet, etc. It uses up a lot of resources to buy adds and videos. We are starting to create great videos posted on You Tube.

Alicia – Proactively monitor Facebook and Next Door. WSWS responds to these posts. Rehabilitators can monitor local sites and respond.

Suzanne – Thanks for the Isis information. Lots of times we don't get that understanding that something is being done and the closure that is needed. We would like to get the local news involved. Rehabilitators can partner for news stories. Can we call the Captain and do a TV news spot about the incident? We also want to get the message out that rehabilitators are still open and taking wildlife!

Jennifer (Capt. Maurstad?) would love to work with Suzanne on a TV program. Okay to call her and start setting something up.

Alicia and Alysha both have contacts with KING 5 to ask them to come to the shelters.

Cindy – start referencing Personalized License Plates and funding for wildlife rehabilitation in all stories and posts.

WRAP – reach out to networks – each facility to tap a network and get a schedule together and create template of what we want to discuss. Capt. Maurstad can contact Becky Bennett, Enforcement Program Community Outreach/WILDCOMM.

ACTION ITEM

WRAP Start action on above? Contact Capt. Maurstad for help with outreach on Enforcement side?

WRAP Recruitment

Cindy suggested that virtual meetings be continued for better recruitment of east side members.

Demonstrated knowledge of wildlife preferable. Recruit veterinarians from the public; private practice veterinarians. Mt. Spokane veterinarian is already a wildlife rehabilitator. Ocean Beach veterinarian studied wildlife (Dr. Miller?).

Lynn agrees that making meetings more accessible to eastside using Teams is best. Suggested Dr. Susan Fazzari of Walla Walla (Animal Clinic East) for nomination

Tricia – Dr. Mary Thomas in Prosser was a permitted wildlife rehabilitator pre-2006 new permitting.

Motion to send Suzanne’s nomination; motion seconded. Send out nomination letter

Tricia asked that nominations be sent to her. Nomination process was described.

Alicia suggested falconer representation; Jenny said falconers can vary in their attitudes towards wildlife rehabilitation and techniques.

Craig Hinman and Ed Deal were suggested

Irene will send public nominees.

Jenny asked for clarification on “public.” Craig and Ed Deal are considered members of the public rather than wildlife rehabilitation representative. Are there ways to dismiss members?

Yes, we have requirements for attendance, etc.

Cindy – do we want to keep the three-year membership. It could be difficult to some to commit to that and may make a difference on who we recruit.

Alicia believes the three-years is reasonable and typical.

Jenny suggested that the momentum of the membership needs to keep going.

Working Group Reports

Wildlife Rehabilitation Services Working Group

Cindy volunteered as Co-chair of the group.

The group is finishing up a letter to send to those people who express interest in wildlife rehabilitation permit and a list of resources such as Ethics, euthanasia, principal veterinarian. Twelve people responded positively with initial contact.

Cindy is wondering what to say when the people are contacted. Lots of emotional aspects to rehabilitation, plus space and time requirements. People should be screened for commitment to those things. It's possible that facilities cannot help with the 1000 hours of training, because of the amount of work involved for training. The candidate really needs to make a commitment. Criteria for commitment that the volunteers or interns begin on? Should people who are purposefully training for a permit pay to train?

Cindy – Steer them into committee work to show commitment. Can they get some hours from committee work?

Cindy reported that Rep. Mike Chapman is very interested in a “wildlife rehabilitation stamp,” like the duck stamp, to raise money for rehab. Cindy will be meeting with Rep. Chapman.

Endorsement and Training Working Group

Alysha asked if facilities could get reimbursed for endorsement training

Tricia – It's possible that through the increased spending authority there would be funding for that.

Alicia said these trainings are a huge undertaking and that volunteers and interns, as with general rehabilitation training, really need to be vetted for ability and commitment, and screened heavily.

Jenny – need training mechanism for payment. Fee for service of training on special endorsement? We could try standardized learning outcomes, not necessarily training.

Alysha – the group is coming up with a video list (Teams lost Alysha)

Alicia has a list of what the tasks are. The procedures can be filmed as they are being done then use them as videos for training. Standardize a template for the videos and curriculum. Tasks assigned according to expertise when doing the curriculum.

Outreach and Public Education

Craig dropped off Teams.

Jenny – Craig sent email to the group about what resources are available especially on WDFW website. How to outreach public and let them know content exists. Do press release prior to TV interviews to talk about baby season challenges and baby biology.

Need baby season public education NOW. Want press release.

Tricia will reach out to Sam to organize education release and TV interview.

Next regular WRAP meeting July 10, 2021. Time 9:00 am.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00 pm.