

Talking Points re: Grazing on WDFW Lands as it relates to Wolves

April 26, 2019

Context:

WDFW is working to provide direction on how we manage grazing on WDFW lands as it relates to wolf recovery and wolf activity. Our overarching goal is to maintain maximum flexibility for both our ability to meet the recovery goals of wolves and allow for viable grazing. This set of talking points outlines our current thinking, however, in February and March we are reaching out to interested stakeholders to get their thoughts and feedback on this approach with the intent to finalize any required policy, procedures, and/or Division direction regarding the construction of grazing permits in wolf habitat. Our goal is to have clarity by the end of April for 2019 permits.

This draft approach was developed over several meetings with a cross-section of representative internal staff (wildlife area managers, wildlife regional program directors, conflict biologists, district biologists, rangeland ecologist, lands stewardship and operations section manager, regional staff from Regions 1,2,3,5; science division manager, conflict section manager, carnivore section manager, wolf policy lead, lands division manager, wildlife program administration), with final direction and approval from the Director. It has been updated based on conversations with stakeholders.

Background on Grazing Permits on WDFW Lands:

COUNTY	Overall Totals			Subset of permits overlapped by wolf territories		
	ACRES	# PERMITS	AUMS	ACRES	# PERMITS	AUMS
Asotin	9025	6	1338	8530	3	1338
Clark	384	2	1100	0	0	0
Douglas	18286	1	2670	0	0	0
Garfield	1100	1	120	0	0	0
Grant	7118	5	1800	0	0	0
Kittitas	25954	5	1381	10341	1	737
Klickitat	8817	6	509	0	0	0
Okanogan	32943	21	4543	30342	19	3589
Yakima	2788	4	250	0	0	0
Totals	106415	51	13721	49213	23	5664

Seven additional unique WDFW permits, representing 22,481 acres and 3,754 AUMs, are located within ~10 miles of a pack territory.

The Department's Role

- 1) WDFW permits grazing to accomplish several goals. We value preserving the role of working lands across Washington and use livestock grazing when it can be done in a manner that is:
 - a) Consistent with Fish and Wildlife Commission policy to maintain ecological integrity,
 - b) Compatible with WDFW's fish, wildlife and ecosystem conservation mission,
 - c) Compatible with WDFW's goal to provide sustainable fish- and wildlife-related recreation; and
 - d) Consistent with WDFW's goal of preserving community character.

- 2) WDFW holds a higher bar for wolf conservation on our lands due to both our mission and the funding sources we have used to purchase lands. This may impact where grazing occurs on WDFW lands and/or the number of proactive deterrent measures required compared to lands not owned by WDFW.
- 3) Reducing wolf-livestock depredation is an overriding goal in all WDFW grazing permits.

A Measured Approach

- 1) Overall, we want to maintain maximum flexibility for both our ability to meet the recovery goals of wolves and allow for viable grazing in locations deemed appropriate for grazing in wolf country. We acknowledge that as wolf populations recover in Washington State, it will take time to identify chronic wolf/livestock problem areas that may not be appropriate for grazing.
- 2) WDFW will collaboratively develop a set of criteria with members from the livestock industry and other interested stakeholders to inform the Department's decisions on areas that may be inappropriate for grazing in wolf country.
- 3) Until these criteria and the data to inform their application are available, we will continue to negotiate renewals of existing grazing permits.
- 4) The Department will look carefully at where to allow grazing permits in wolf country (using criteria in #2 above) and how to create appropriate permit language.
 - a) All grazing permits in wolf country will require non-lethal, proactive depredation prevention measures. Those measures may exceed the requirements outlined in the wolf lethal removal protocol, which are generally "carcass sanitation/removal plus one other technique". Appendix 1 is an example.
 - b) The Department will work collaboratively with permittees and the grazing community to identify feasible non-lethal deterrent measures that meet the needs in locations deemed appropriate for grazing in wolf country.
 - c) During the negotiation of grazing permits in wolf country, a detailed list of feasible, required deterrent measures will be developed and made part of the permit. This ensures transparency for the producer, WDFW, and the public.

An Acknowledged Need to Mitigate Impacts and Other Potential Issues

- 1) WDFW will provide cost-share on our lands for proactive deterrent measures where possible.
 - a) We should all be aware that there is not an endless supply of funding to pay for such cost share.
- 2) Removal of livestock from the permitted area will be a tool in response to documented conflict. During negotiation of each grazing permit, the expectations and communication plan for livestock removal will be identified.
 - a) During the summer and fall of 2019, DFW will work with a cross section of producers in eastern WA and internal staff to develop the criteria to govern the negotiations related to expectations and communication related to livestock removal. Final plans will be negotiated between the lessee and WDFW.
 - b) Identifying alternative pastures across the landscape (and potentially across a variety of ownerships) in the permits is a goal of the Department and will take local land use into account.
- 3) We support lethal removal of wolves where necessary as an essential part of our work to recover wolves, this includes lethal removal on WDFW lands.
 - a) Requirements for compensation for livestock lost to wolves on our lands should be the same as on any other lands.
 - b) Livestock depredations on WDFW WILL count against the pack with regards to a potential trigger for lethal removal, consistent with any other land and federal law.
 - c) Producers will be compensated for livestock lost to wolves on our lands at the same rate as occurs on other lands.
 - d) Lethal removal decisions, regardless of land ownership, include a lot of deliberation and scrutiny and will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Proactive Implementation May Span Up To 5 Years

- 1) Current grazing permits, except where language indicates a potential update in negotiated requirements dealing with the avoidance of wolf/ livestock interaction, will remain in effect with no changes (BACKGROUND: the Blue Mountains permits from last year includes this placeholder language; our permits are typically 5 years in length).
- 2) DFW will work with existing lessees to encourage and develop and implement voluntary deterrent measures where possible.

“Wolf country” as used in this document indicates areas where wolves are known to exist (generally overlapping or within 10 miles) at the time of contract negotiation. While the WDFW Wolf Conservation and Management plan identifies suitable wolf habitat (Page 50) (defined by a model as having a greater than 50% probability of being occupied by wolves), wolves are not limited to those areas and may exist in other parts of the state. Models are not absolute predictors of wolf occupancy and WDFW will work with lessees to implement non-lethal deterrents if new packs establish on/near permitted property.

FOR DISCUSSION