

**Interagency Wolf Committee
May 28, 2015**

Introductions and Welcome: Dave Ware welcomed everyone and introductions were made around the room and over the phone. Review of the agenda and minutes.

Attendees: Eric Rickerson, Travis Fletcher, John Chatel, Gregg Kurz, Russ Morgan, Marion Carey, Ray Entz, Tom Hilken, Donny Martorello, Dave Ware, Roger Woodruff, Terry Smith, Daniel Raven, Mark Nutzman, Anna

Washington Wolf Status Update

Donny gave an update on where the agency is in regards to capturing and monitoring. We have one collar on the Tucannon pack, one on Salmo, two on Goodman Meadows, one on Huckleberry, one on Diamond, and two on Smackout.

High priority areas include Smackout, Lookout, Huckleberry, and Profanity Peak. We are currently trapping Profanity Peak. We trapped the two Smackout wolves since the last meeting. Carpenter Ridge is also on the list for late June trapping. Seeing ourselves being in Profanity Peak area for quite a while until the job is done.

There are three collars in Teanaway, after adding two this past winter. WSU is conducting trapping in that area. Teanaway, Lookout, Goodman Meadows are in the WSU study area.

With any luck, by August we will be able to finish trapping and get collars on all our targets.

Dave: One other topic is that we added members to the Department's Wolf Advisory Group, which met last week. The meeting was mostly a relationship building meeting, but a field trip of parts of NE Washington was conducted, and the group also met with three producers. The meeting seemed to go over well. Topics they will discuss are similar to the topics for the Interagency Wolf Committee.

Donny: We are starting an internal capture training session for those interested. It starts in June, and it focuses on Conflict Specialists and giving them the skill set to trap wolves. We'll be taking a subset of Conflict Specialists out with us for trapping Huckleberry, and hopefully those folks will be able to help with trapping goals in the future. Anyone interested should get in contact.

Collars are related to data sharing and the relationships between producers, county governments, and WDFW. Data sharing starts on June 1, 2015. Data that is shared is the last 14 days of data. Counties get info year round, while producers will get it from June 1 through December. The blackout period for producers aligns with denning periods for packs.

Daniel: What types of collars are you using?

Donny: A mixed bag of vendors and collar types at this time. Most of them, not all, are an attempt every four hours for data. In extreme cases on some collars we can get that data every

hour. So far everything is working fairly well. We have had a couple hiccups, but overall the collars are working well.

Greg: Can you talk about check-ins with WSU and how they go about trapping?

Donny: This is WSU's first year with this authority to do it themselves. We know where the traps are, when they are pulling them out, and will be treating them as kind of another member of the team. We don't want to duplicate any activities. We coordinate with Scott Becker.

Greg: Yeah I would like to keep up a daily or weekly track.

Donny: I can ask Scott to keep a weekly log of whatever activity is going on in those areas.

Greg: That would be great.

Roger: Environmental assessment is under lawsuit for wolf management right now, but we are able to conduct business as normal as the lawsuit proceeds. Lawsuit is in early stages and we are now providing the initial response to the complaint. Could take up to a year or longer until an answer from the court is received.

Anna: No updates

Daniel: No updates

Mark: Nothing too new at this time. Picked up five cameras in the Klickitat area and did not get any wolf observations.

Travis: We are making plans to let the livestock grazing season begin June 1. There is a lot of concern, especially from Profanity Peak, that we will start new grazing season as we ended last year's, with wolf depredations.

Tom: Could forest service get access to electronic collar data that goes to counties and producers? Could forest service get access to older data as well?

Donny: We will be sharing the shape file of the older locations, and right now we have someone putting all that information into a usable database to send off to you guys. Also to Travis, we will check in with Scott Becker and we can go over communication and where we are at with various activities.

Tom: Do you not share any denning sites, even if it is in the grazing allotment.

Donny: We don't actually know the denning sites. We have a system setup, like with other species, that if we have known sites, we make sure we don't have forest practices or other activities that would disturb den. If we suspect there is a den site after looking at live data, we will want to reach out to that producer and let them know. Then we can move into what actions to take next.

Greg: Nothing to report at this time.

Russ: Went before commission in April to conduct a status evaluation of wolves to determine the listing status of wolves. Assessed the delisting criteria and presented that data to the commission. A lot of feedback consisted of either for or against delisting. The staff's position is that we can sustain delisting at this time. We will bring that in front of the commission, who has asked for options in line with partial state delisting. The process continues, and we don't expect a decision before fall at the earliest. Oregon is also working on collaring wolves at this time of year. Seven new collars this year to date. We expect more in the next couple weeks.

Marion: Working on poster on how to identify coyote vs. wolves. Hopefully that will help with identification.

Donny: Recently got an email regarding canid remains. What's the process for when remains are discovered on the road?

Marion: Right now it varies by maintenance area. Some may call because they do not have access to email. We are trying to educate and suggest our maintenance workers contact the WDFW biologists by phone or email. We can set a process.

Donny: Sounds like we need to get your folks the right phone numbers to call, including our regional offices and even USFWS.

Ray: Nothing to report since last time.

Coordination on Grazing Plans

Dave Ware gave an overview of the Department's coordination on grazing plans. There are four different methods of incorporating preventive tools. Relationship building, informal engagement (our checklist), deterrence plans, and damage prevention cooperative agreements. One-on-one outreach is our best method. The checklist is our list of talking points that we've learned from the last few years of wolf management. We've spent about \$250,000 on cost-share agreements around the state and we will go over how those are going so far a little later on. The deterrence plans are just starting out and are our newest aspect. We drafted deterrence plans for 15 out of 16 packs, which are working drafts at this time, and we will post them on the website so folks can go look at them. We think they will be effective. The key is to have producers working together instead of against each other.

Evaluating Risk and Prevention

We developed a map to get a handle on where we might expect conflicts. The packs that are in areas with major allotments are obviously our focus, but those aren't necessarily the ones that will cause problems. The map shows overlaps between packs and grazing allotments. We also look at pack size, which plays a major role in where a pack may go for food. You can expect these larger packs (6-10) to be more likely to cause conflicts due to amount of mouths to feed.

Packs with a history of depredations are also a focus. Lastly, how packs are monitored plays a role as well. Our goal is to get in contact with all of these producers and prepare for this grazing season.

Tom: Is the Lookout pack area in the Methow area with all of those grazing allotments on the map?

Dave: Yes, but another thing to keep in mind is that not all of those allotments are active. There is some depredation history there. We have one or two producers in that area. All of this information will be online for you soon.

Conflict Prevention Planning

About 20% of packs depredate. Washington hasn't hit that number yet, but we are still in the early stages. We do not expect a lot of issues this year. Many of our packs are smaller, and we do not expect a high risk from them. There are several packs we are concerned about, including Profanity Peak (size), Huckleberry (history of conflict), Smackout (multiple allotments), and Teanaway (multiple allotments and overlap).

The pack size of Profanity Peak pack is at least six. High overlap with livestock. Livestock numbers are over 1,000. Profanity also has a history of depredations already. There are no collars in the pack yet, which makes it a major priority for us. We are in there right now and will most likely be there for a while. We also want to put in at least one range rider in that area to help with prevention and identifying risks. If we can get a collar on a wolf, the range rider will help haze as well. Profanity Peak will probably be the biggest challenge this coming year.

Huckleberry Pack is also at least six. We do not know the number of livestock or how much overlap there will be, but there is a history of depredations. We have one collar in the pack. The producer who suffered losses last year will not be in the area this year, which should help, but this pack is also a high priority for us. There are existing damage prevention agreements with producers in this areas, as well as three range riders on contract. We will provide data sharing with producers in the area as well.

Smackout pack is five or more animals. The overlap with livestock is high, and livestock number 650 or more. There is no history of confirmed depredations, though there are suspected incidents. There are two collars in the pack, which helps with data sharing. Damage prevention agreements exist in this area as well. One producer employs a range rider.

Teanaway pack has five or more animals. The overlap is high with livestock, with over 1,000 animals in the area. There is no history of depredations, though a guard dog was attached three years ago. There are three collars in the pack, and data sharing agreements exist with producers. There are also damage prevention agreements and range riders present.

Checklist of non-lethal tools

Five major non-lethal requirements: remove livestock carcasses, remove sick/injured livestock, secure boneyards where applicable, calf/lamb away from wolves (wolves tend to prey on smaller animals), haze wolves with noise if encountered.

Some that are not necessarily required, but are still important: Turn-out dates (later the better), overlap with rendezvous sites and livestock, and ability to use multiple grazing allotments.

Travis: Last summer there was a meeting and tour with Cattlemen's Association. Cattlemen's spoke of relationship between livestock and location next to rendezvous sites. It's important to remember that what works somewhere may not work for another producer. It could depend on the circumstance whether or not location in regards to den site matters too much.

Dave: You're right. A lot of this has to be adapted to the situation. In at least two cases, we've been successful at bumping wolves off of their rendezvous site with no depredations. One thing some researchers found in Northern Rocky Mountains is that there is more risk to livestock if they are close to den sites and rendezvous sites.

Range Riders: Wolves tend to avoid humans, but they can get habituated. We've been using range riders extensively to increase human presence in and around livestock so wolves do not get comfortable there.

Depredation Prevention Cooperative Agreements include fencing, sanitation, guard animals, and repellents. The vast majority of these agreements include range riders for a variety of reasons. Helps in a number of different ways, including keeping livestock moving, getting sick animals the care they need, responding to interactions (don't let problem escalate), increasing human presence, etc.

Other prevention methods: At least 1 herder (ideally two) with herding dogs (3 guard dogs per 1,000 head), daily gathering of sheep for night penning (when penning is feasible), utilize human presence, remove sick and injured livestock, the use of fox lights or RAG boxes around night bedding or penning areas.

Bio fencing is not proven, but there is some evidence that it can be effective. Noisemakers can also be used to haze wolves. The effectiveness of these tactics depends on the wolf in question.

2015 Summary

WDFW wants to continue one-on-one contact with producers, continue to use the checklist (could be modified), encourage damage prevention agreements with new producers, work collaboratively with producers to craft unique deterrence plans, focus resources on areas evaluated as increased risk for potential conflict, and work collaboratively with land managers to implement BMPs on grazing leases.

We are still looking for some additional members on our working group. DNR is interested and it would be nice to have someone from the Forest Service on the working group as well.

Donny: Couple things I want to add to Dave's. We only have a limited amount of resources, so it comes down to strategic placement of that stuff. However, conflict can happen in any one of these packs. We don't want anyone to think that we've identified these risk places and that's where the issues will be.

Tom: How flexible are you folks in regards to moving those resources to where the conflict is?

Donny: We have the flexibility to move to conflicts. There are two parts to our approach, the proactive approach, which is where we are now with identifying high risk areas. There is also the reactive approach, which will occur if we need to move preventive measures to areas where conflict is occurring.

Dave: We have access to range riders and we have been fairly responsive in the past in terms of being able to mobilize and move resources. This is a huge priority for us and we are definitely mobile enough to move if we have to.

Donny: One other thing I wrote down is that the BMPs vary from allotment to allotment and producer to producer. There is no one tool that works the best. The concept is to look at the list of preventive things we can do and use that list to identify what we can use in any unique situation.

Also some questions: What is the mechanism to achieve that from the Forest Service perspective?

Tom: We've talked about this and we were thinking that we would list the suite of tools in the outreach letters.

Travis: It becomes a compliance issue and making these things a requirement is one flaw I see with these lists. Suggesting options to livestock owners is a great step, but telling them how to run their ranch is getting outside our decision space. What goes into the correspondence with producers from a Forest Service perspective depends on each different allotment. We talk about where people can travel and where to salt. It's more about protecting the resources the Forest Service has been charged to protect.

Travis: Is there value in these recommendations to producers? There doesn't seem to be anything new in these recommendations from the Department.

Russ: A lot of these things are not new in discussion, but there is more information on all of these topics. It's a slow process, and I think what you see with the checklist is that there are not a lot of things out there that will prevent depredation. It has to be the producers that buy in, but this checklist has two functions. One is a baseline for what needs to happen before lethal control, and one is a baseline for Best Management Practices. A lot of this is just going to take time.

Donny: From the Department's perspective, we don't want to be perceived as government regulation. What we're after is getting to a level of good communication with all producers. We want to know if Forest Service has any things that are required with regards to removing carcasses or sick livestock. Are there things that Forest Service has that wouldn't be perceived as government strongarming?

Travis: We talk about carcass removal and destruction of a carcass. We also talk about livestock depredation and keeping the site as is so it can be inspected. Our only requirement is if there is a suspicion, the producer needs to contact WDFW.

Donny: What are the opportunities you have when you interact with permittees? Is it one-on-one, all at once, only in letter?

Travis: We contact permittees a lot. It's how we have good relationships with these folks. In a typical year, starting early spring or end of winter, we have an all-permittee meeting. At those meetings, we get about 50-75% of permittees to come to those meetings. We talk about general things and updates. It's mostly general information sharing. We hope to explain to permittees where they fit in with our actions. On top of those meetings, we meet one-on-one with every single permittee. We get feedback on what their needs and concerns are, then we document all of that in a turnout letter. We have communications over the phone and on the allotment. We talk more as things come up during the year.

Donny: Does communication increase as things change or depredations occur?

Travis: Sometimes we can be out of the loop when things go bad as far as depredations go. I rely on permittees with getting information for what's going on. If what they are doing looks like it is outside the things agreed upon in the turnout letter, we go from there. It's not always just wolves and cows, it's about cows interacting with all the other stuff out there too.

Donny: If there are things that are good fits because you already talk about them in the annual operating agreements, then we would be interested in pursuing those. If there are any common threads we would be happy to work with you there. We do not want to come off as government regulation. We want to help these producers with methods to prevent conflicts. Could you email me an example of a turnout letter so I can get a feel for what they are? If not that's fine, but it would be useful to see one.

Travis: Absolutely. I'll pull the permittee information off of it and send it to you.

Donny: We want to make sure we all understand we will never share any permittee information at all. We will not release permittee information at all.

Travis: Yeah, with the new regulation in the Farm Bill, we cannot release permittee information at all.

2015 Protocol for Consideration of Lethal Control

Dave Ware presented the flowchart for consideration of lethal control. WDFW's flowchart is a little different from what they did in the Rocky Mountains. The main requirement they had was a sanitation peace. WDFW is a little more stringent. This flowchart was developed after the Wedge situation. Several members of the Wolf Advisory Group, on both sides of the wolf management issue, would like this chart modified.

If a pack has a history of depredation and a lethal action was ordered in the past, only two depredations are necessary before considering lethal action.

Travis: Depredations seem to become chronic before that fourth confirmed depredation. Have you considered revising this. Four seems like they are definitely on a path to no good and have maybe been there for a while. Montana has a rule in place that after one depredation, they will shoot any wolf that comes back to that carcass.

Dave Ware: In Idaho and Montana, the wolves were already delisted when they took that response. While moving quickly is a better way to keep things from getting chronic, it will be reassessed as the science develops.

Donny: I think our value is that if we see wolves tangling with livestock and it becomes chronic, we certainly don't want those wolves being the ones populating the state. However, really defining chronic, we look to the public and stakeholders to define what that is, whether it be 2 or 3 or even 4. It's on the table for WAG, and the hope is they can come to some consensus. If they do, that brings a lot of power with it.

Dave: 20% of packs depredate, and a big majority only get into trouble once, at least annually. So defining chronic and defining the best time to go in is still evolving. The process we have is certainly subject to updating, probably frequently.

Eric: The Federal-State coordination strategy is an approach that was done between several states in the past. It's important in several respects. It identifies who the authorities are, as they are not always clear. This plan is built around WDFW, USFWS, and WS. What the strategy involves is around major areas, who is the lead agency, what do we do in the event of an accidental wolf capture, what happens when a dead wolf is found (media, reporting, etc.). Who are the key contacts for each of the agencies from a policy perspective (Roger, Eric, and Dave).

Investigating and monitoring wolf activity: It's clear WDFW has the capacity to perform investigating and monitoring for wolf activity in the state. Support is handled from USFWS and WS. DFW would probably still be the first to respond in reporting situations.

In regards to reporting a dead wolf, for example the I-90 wolf, we could probably work on a little bit there.

Where there is some further discussion needed is the reporting of suspected wolf depredations on livestock. What we've talked about so far is that in the case of a potential wolf depredation is

that those individuals would confer with no more than 1-2 people who USFWS feel comfortable with identifying wolf depredations. Certainly DFW has those types of folks that can identify these situations.

The realm of data sharing is another place that needs further communication. In the case of listed wolves, how that data is collected and shared may be an issue. The USFWS wants to be ready for if someone requests that data through a request, we want to be able to say yes or no in regards to that.

Travis: What are those five required non-lethal actions required for?

Dave: Those are required for compensation or the consideration of lethal action.

No questions directed at Eric at this time.

Marion (DOT): It would be helpful if I could get phone numbers of contacts so our maintenance workers can call the right people if they find anything on the roads.

Russ: Is this a draft or is this a final project at this point?

Eric: This is a draft. I initially thought the document lacked detail. My hope is to at least have a final draft in the next couple weeks for review.

Dave: Could you talk about translocation and lack of authority for lethal action.

Eric: Courts have ruled that we were misapplying the use of the lethal take permit and lethal take was removed from the listed areas of the state. Relocation of problem wolves was put on the table. This has been done in the past, but it is very controversial. Perceptions can fluctuate from the public as well. The final draft of this should be done by July. Relocation can occur after two depredations, if it looks like non-lethal means are having no effect. The wolves would have to be moved within the same region they were in before (of the three regions). I know the state is not really comfortable utilizing the relocation strategy. This is something we are working through the details on right now.

Dave: Typically how we respond to a depredation call is we send two staff members to conduct the investigation and we try not to make the call on site because there is so much scrutiny and controversy over it. Our folks have investigated hundreds of depredation calls, but not necessarily wolf depredations. We have them come back to the office, write up the report, participate in a conference call where everyone has the write-ups and photos. After the review, it is the investigators who ultimately make the call. This would trigger the process (not yet finalized, as Eric said) for translocation and other means.

Donny discussed data sharing and gave an update on the status of data sharing. We have an online tool where a user signs in with a user name and password. Because we share data with these producers using this new tool, what about collars that were put on by tribes? We want to develop these data sharing relationships with tribes and honor those agreements.

Anna: I do work closely with the tribes, and I can be a voice for them or vice versa. I do want to reiterate that with tribes, it's a government to government relationship. If you do require my help with anything I am here to provide services in these relationship situations.

Donny: Absolutely. What we want to figure out is whether, for example in Profanity, is it better if it's a state collar or a tribal collar.

Travis: I want to say that it's imperative that it's a state collar. Tribes have come out and said they will not share that collar data with producers. I think it is critical that it be a Washington collar so that data can be shared and help producers.

Donny: Even in a situation where it is a state collar, it will be important to meet with tribes and let them know that they will have access to that collar as if it were their own.

Communication Plan (Donny): The majority of the communication for us will be at these meetings. But there will be events that happen between meetings where we want to make sure we are keeping up with each other. We have a single email that has everybody on it that can update on collared wolves, pack confirmation, wolf mortality confirmation, depredation on livestock confirmation, any lethal removal of wolves, relocation of wolves, any wolf presentation at a larger public forum (commission meetings or town hall meetings), forwarding the annual report when completed each year, and any products that come from the Wolf Advisory Group. We want to provide these updates typically within a day or two of the event.

Things like start and stop dates for trapping, that level of coordination is happening, but it would happen at the regional level, not with this group. This includes confirmed den activity, wolf activity, reported depredations that are unconfirmed or depredations that are confirmed but with an unknown predator, or other items.

Annual Report/5-year review (Donny): It was said back when the Wolf Management Plan was developed that this group would put together a 5-year review of how it has held up so far. Dave and I will put together a one-page report to circulate to all of you that you will be able to add to or review and then we can work to finalize that review.

Update on amending wolf plan (Dave): There is a bill in the legislature that calls for extensive review of the plan and other aspects of wolf management. If that bill passes, this group will more than likely be involved in the review.

Next Meeting Items

- Send out the communication plan outline for review
- Get together after the summer season to review the summer's activities.
- Meeting date could be in October/November for this group.
- Donny will send email out with documents for review and will take input on the agenda for the next meeting.