

Wolf Advisory Group Meeting Notes

March 14, 2016

Olympia

WAG Members: Bob Aegerter, Dan Paul, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Jack Field, Janey Howe, Lisa Stone, Molly Linville, Nick Martinez, Paula Swedeen, Shawn Cantrell, Tim Coleman, Tom Davis, Tom Erskine

WDFW Staff Members: Donny Martorello, Jay Shepherd, Joey McCanna, Scott Becker, Ellen Heilhecker, Anis Aoude, Stephanie Simek, Tara Meyer, Matthew Peterson, Trent Roussin, Matthew Trendera

Third Party Neutral: Francine Madden

Welcome: The third party neutral welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave an overview of the two-day agenda. She went over the importance of taking risks together and exploring different options. She also pushed the members to be leaders in their respective communities and groups.

Question: Shawn asked if additional time would be needed after the recommendations made by WAG in the future.

Answer: If the advice is on a Commission process, there would be a timeline there. It depends on the nature of the recommendation as well.

Molly said that the timeline of May makes her nervous, due to active grazing seasons. She is concerned that the group will fall behind and not have a chance to get out ahead.

Paula said she thought May was soon enough, as June is usually when the turnouts happen.

Jack said the majority of USFS allotments will be June 1. He expressed that the Department should plan ahead for any processes that may be needed. If WAG is saying May, they should be done in May.

Donny said the process has been put in place to best meet the grazing season needs. There may be parts that require Commission processes.

Dave recommended moving the May meeting to April in an effort to get out ahead. The group agreed that they would like to have at least a check in by the end of April. A conference call was brought up.

The third party neutral said the thoughts will be considered as the meeting moves forward.

WDFW Update and Q&A: Donny presented the annual wolf population update. The presentation is available on the WAG Advisory Group page on the WDFW website. There are now a minimum of 18 packs in Washington, with a minimum count of 90 wolves. Donny said there are four new packs this year, including Loup Loup, Beaver Creek, Skookum, and Stranger. There were also two packs that were taken off the list. The Wenatchee pack was not detected, and the Diamond Pack has moved to Idaho.

Scott Becker went over the capturing and monitoring efforts for 2015. Fourteen unique wolves were captured, including 9 adults, two yearlings, and three pups. Twelve collars were deployed. Twenty-two unique radio-collared wolves from 13 packs were monitored.

Question: Why weren't all the captured wolves collared?

Answer: We don't collar pups, as they are too small for the collars to be effective.

Question: How were monitoring efforts in the southern Cascades?

Answer: We get very few reports, and it is a very large area to survey. Cameras have picked up no activity as of yet.

Question: Any tracks or scat to indicate any activity?

Answer: There have been pictures. In spring 2014 there was a photo of a wolf outside Goldendale. We haven't confirmed any packs or defined territory in that management area though.

Donny stressed that all counts, including successful breeding pairs and pack numbers, are the minimum known. The minimum count went from 68 last year to a minimum count of 90 for 2015. There has been an average of about 32% increase since 2009.

Successful breeding pairs increased from 5 to 8. These met the definition of a successful breeding pair, which is a male and female with two pups who survived to the end of the year.

Wolfs packs had a net increase of two, with four new packs and two no longer on the landscape.

There were 7 wolf mortalities in 2015.

Four packs depredated in 2015, including Teanaway, Smackout, Dirty Shirt, and Stranger. Washington is a little less than the Rocky Mountain average, with 22% of packs depredating.

The pattern of depredations means that larger numbers of animals depredated upon tend to be sheep. The nature of sheep makes them easier targets.

Question: Are we seeing an increase in packs migrating from British Columbia and Idaho?

Answer: It's tough to tell, but it is definitely a possibility.

Question: Is there anything that is a surprise, when looking at the numbers?

Answer: No. There is consistency, and the trends and patterns we are seeing hold no surprises. Everything is consistent with the modeling we have.

Question: Is there concern that we aren't seeing anything in the southern Cascades yet?

Answer: Good question. As you can see, northeastern Washington is becoming more and more saturated. Dispersers are moving westward. Somewhere in the next three to four years we should see activity in the southwest. It will certainly catch WDFW's attention if the northeast becomes more and more saturated and we aren't seeing any activity in that area.

Donny thanked everyone for the comments on the DPCA-Ls. They are currently being reviewed, and the Department appreciates the participation involved.

On the legislative front, WDFW has asked for some general fund state money to increase the pool of money for the DPCA-Ls. The hope is that money comes through and grazing season advanced notices can be given out for next grazing season. If the funding is not available, the goal is to focus on livestock producers who are in agreements already.

There has also been a request for compensation for cougar depredations. WDFW has the authority to compensate, but there is no funding available right now. However, it looks like the legislature could put the funding in the updated budget.

The panel to review claims is up and ready to get started as well.

Donny thanked the WAG members for all of their work during the legislative session. It helped a lot for the legislature to hear from a diverse group that was working together on the issue.

Break

After the break, the third-party neutral explained the nature of the inner and outer circles, and introductions were made around the room for those who may not know everyone present.

Finalize Vision, Mission, and Sufficient Consensus: The WAG members finalized the vision and mission statement for the group. These statements will be made available on the WAG Advisory Group webpage as well.

Vision:

- The Wolf Advisory Group envisions a future for Washington whereby entities have equal and balanced voices in decisions that impact their communities.
- Diverse perspectives are welcomed and heard.
- Mutual understanding of the needs of diverse communities in groups is achieved and respected.
- Wolves are an opportunity for shared, constructive problem solving.
- The deeper roots of social conflict in Washington are continually transformed.
- Healthy and sustainable populations of wolves and wild ungulates are achieved and maintained in balance.
- Minimize livestock and financial losses to livestock producers.
- Diverse communities, including rural, livestock producers, hunters, environmental communities, and interested public are kept whole, vibrant, and resilient.
- The best available science is used for decision-making on group recommendations.
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Fish and Wildlife Commission, and the Washington Legislature are providing creative inclusive recommendations for effective decision-making.
- Public dialogue and mutual learning around wolves, ungulates, and natural resource use is significantly improved.
- There is continual fostering of high quality dialogue and decision-making around wolves and related or emerging issues now and into the future.

There was a discussion on the fourth bullet of the vision, which discussed the resentment towards wolves. The resentment and conflict around wolves seems to be on a different platform than other carnivores. The goal is to get wolves on the same level of other carnivores. The bullet was reworked and all came to agreement.

Bullets six and seven were also discussed. Dave emphasized that many livestock producers' quality of life is affected by having wolves on the landscape, and that should come before financial considerations. When it says "keep whole," it means more to him than financial impacts. If a producer spends three months every year chasing predators, his or her quality of life is not whole, even with financial compensation. There's also a mental aspect. The group discussed what feeling "whole" means, and it was recommended to include the term "quality of life" in the vision so people reading it would know exactly what the group wanted.

There was also discussion on population objectives and what that means to the various interested parties. Different interest groups may see population numbers differently, with some seeing the minimum required for delisting as a minimum population on the landscape and others seeing that requirement as a maximum. There was talk about what the terms actually mean, and how they relate to the vision of WAG.

One comment was made that the vision for the future could be the most important thing WAG does as a group. It can be difficult to apply tools without knowing the direction Washington wants to go.

As WAG goes through the process and learns more about the entire situation, there may be more space to discuss that final vision. In order to know where WAG is going, they need to look at the different points and clearly define them. For example, is there a sweet spot for population distribution throughout Washington?

To be successful down the road, wildlife populations all around will have to be kept in balance. This includes wolves, elk, deer, and other ungulate populations. Wolves will have to be managed at a level that lets all populations operate as a whole. There has to be a balance.

It was pointed out that delisting is not included in the vision.

It was said that the vision is supposed to give a broad statement to work with, without specific objectives laid out. Those objectives come later.

One suggestion was: Mutually agreed upon recommendations on populations of wolves and ungulates informed by the best available science.

Donny said that there is a vision that WAG achieves whatever they set out to do.

Healthy, sustainable, persistent populations of wolves and wild ungulates are part of the vision, as nobody wants wolves to be relisted again after they are delisted. The balance is important for the future.

Sufficient consensus was discussed next. It is allowed that three individuals can disagree with the consensus, as long as each is a member of a different interest group. Interest groups, for the purposes of WAG, include livestock producers, hunters, environmental groups, and Department staff members.

Sufficient consensus as defined by WAG:

- Decisions that result from a high quality, inclusive, equitable dialogue process whereby diverse views are fully and genuinely welcomed and considered, the issues are sufficiently discussed and understood from all angles.
- Absent members have an opportunity to provide input and are heard fully by all members.
- No more than three individuals disagree with the decisions and all three cannot be from the same side.
- Same side, or “in-group” distinction, for the purposes of WAG, are environmentalists, livestock producers, hunters, and Department staff.
- Where there is an overlap in “in-group” identities, the member may self-identify in line with the group in which they feel the strongest connection.

- Once a decision is reached, it will be supported by the entire group, including those who opposed the decision.
- Dissenting voices recognize that maintaining the long term integrity of the process and relationships is more important than the decision and therefore will work outside WAG and within their own group or community to uphold support for the decision within that community or group, and ask for their organization or group to stand aside and not take action to oppose or overturn the decision even if they themselves did not secure their preferred decision.

There was some concern with the final two bullets, as some members expressed that they cannot support decisions that go directly against the entities they represent.

It was said that, in the plan, the implication is that members would do their best to maintain the integrity of WAG decisions. It wouldn't mean that any of the organizations would stand aside. It would be that members share the values and decisions of WAG, as well as the dialogue and respect of the group.

Paula said that the idea behind the sufficient consensus was to share the dialogue of WAG and maintain the integrity of the group as a whole.

The bullet is about supporting the process, not necessarily the decision. Maintaining the long term integrity of the process is more important than any individual decision. People and wildlife are on the land, and there are communities that want to thrive, and wildlife populations that want to thrive. Going to an organization and asking them to stand down in order to make it better for the overall process and the long term goals is something that every member of the group should be trusted to do.

Paula shared that feedback from the public has been especially positive since the December meeting.

Tom said he cannot agree with that bullet, no matter how many try to persuade him. His hope is to never get to that point. He hopes that decisions will be made that won't require that effort.

The group discussed the process further, in an effort to keep the spirit of the agreement. It was suggested to remove the bottom two bullets. Paula said that the point of the bullets was to define what the rest of the process means. Without those bullets, what does the rest mean?

Sean said that should a deep disagreement arise, it is possible that his organization would not then continue to participate in WAG. He said it may be similar to other members with large organizations.

Dan Paul said he sees this as 18 WAG members, rather than the different organizations against each other. However, if there is that deep conflict, it may come to leaving WAG. It is important

that each member recognizes that around the group. With that fact in mind, the discussions may actually benefit.

Tom asked if this meant he would take his obligations to his organization as a secondary to the WAG.

It was recommended that instead of the words “advocate for,” the definition change to “ask.” If members ask their organizations to stand aside in an effort to maintain the integrity of WAG and the process, it could greatly benefit the wolf topic into the future. Tom said he could agree to that.

Edits were made to the sufficient consensus, and the group agreed to the edits.

Break

Complexity of Variables around Lethal Control: The third party neutral discussed how everyone has a variety of variables that surround lethal control and what the path to it looks like.

Donny called out that when the group sat down to talk about this issue two years ago, it was an entirely different environment. WAG has come a long way, and trusting in this process and letting it help come up with a better outcome is important.

The group members then discussed the different variables that surround lethal control.

The variables include:

- Timing (number of livestock depredated)
- What happened before first depredation?
- Was known wolf activity in the area to require nonlethals?
- Were there high quality nonlethals?
- History of wolf pack
- Do historical depredations count towards current total?
- Listing status (federal or state)
- Does it look like depredations are going to continue?
- What does the flowchart say?
- Are the depredations a pattern of whole pack or an isolated incident?
- Dead livestock (event or individuals counted)
- If five dead livestock are found, is that five events or one event?
- Species of livestock and how that relates to whether it counts and how it counts
- Injury versus encounter versus death
- Injury and severity of injury and what constitutes a depredation if injury
- Roaming dog encounters (“go out”) (distance, landscape)

- Land ownership (public, private, tribal)
- Opportunistic versus chronic, pattern/random
- One wolf, multiple landowners (pack depredating on multiple operations)
- Are there other reasonable preventative measures that can be deployed?
- Shared allotments (“common use”) (2-12)
- Every situation seems special (need something usable that can be implemented)
- Politics
- Number of livestock can be measured, and events are inconsistent
- Resource limitations of staff members on the ground (time, funding, etc.)
- Constant deploying new nonlethal techniques (have you tried this?)
- Lack of clarity in the process
- When is enough enough? (Agreement up front? Agreement on nonlethals.)
- Field staff members need to be trusted
- Livestock producers’ limitations in operations (resources)
- Limitations of nonlethals for producers
- Cooperation with livestock producers
- Consistency up front with definitions and expectations
- Saturation of packs, wildlife, and livestock in an area
- Common sense (trusting staff on the ground)
- Getting accurate information in a timely manner
- Flowchart oversimplifies the complexity
- Subset of Washington State residents will always oppose lethal control
- Risk management (WDFW Director/political)
- Wolf behavior
- Kill permits (death threats to producer)
- Kill permits (safety of producers and WDFW staff members)
- Kill permits waste of time (need helicopter)
- Presence of livestock carrion/afterbirth. The attraction that brings wolves in.
- Trust WDFW to do what is correct
- Number and types of producers
- Variability in cooperation among producers in wolf pack territory
- Logistical limitations in performing lethal control (speed, availability of helicopter, where to fly over, air space)
- Pack size
- Looking at population as a whole (will this impact the recovery of the species in Washington or wolves as a whole?)
- Balancing biological versus social carrying capacity (dictated by conflict)
- Inability to predict where conflicts are going to occur
- Publicizing lethal control affects WDFW and landowner safety
- Once decision is made for lethal control, it needs to be implemented as quickly as possible or emotions skyrocket
- Complexity of issues can’t be dealt with on a flowchart

- Can't have lethal and nonlethal going on at the same time. Once lethal is done, you can go in and conduct nonlethal methods again
- Air space (need permission to be there for lethal [not pushing off])
- Afterbirth (a problematic attractant)
- What is the relative effectiveness of lethal versus nonlethal? How to look at the context of using lethal as opposed to nonlethal? Need both (can't just rely on lethal)
- How do we incentivize more uptake of nonlethals? (Plan work with willing producers, example with the producer plan done by WAG at previous meetings)
- Does mandating use of nonlethals have unintended consequences?
- What happens if there is an attempt to do lethal and the lethal is unsuccessful?
- What should the expectations be of WDFW staff or other resources to help the producer?
- What happens if nonlethals and lethal are tried to no avail? What then?
- Incentivize: Success breeds success. Find/support willing producers on nonlethals
- Some nonlethals (foxlights) can still be used during lethal operations
- Fire, flood, natural causes may make it more or less likely able to do lethal
- Social media/internet and use of it
- Support in the political environment to build trust so the political arena doesn't go wild
- How do we have transparency and also keep the people in the field safe (staff, producers)?
- Balance of transparency and communication
- Location
- Public tolerance for killing wolves
- Old protocol and flowchart was a product of distrust (producers, hunters, and enviros agree)
- Different protocol for lethal now versus a few years from now (when more wolves are on landscape, resources and recovery).
- Regional versus statewide (pack saturation)
- Pack saturation in a region
- Wolves learning depredation behavior (vis-à-vis less/more pack saturation)
- Non-livestock producer regular public with dogs, etc. What are WDFW's resources to reach out to them?
- Best available science that guides decisions (not as clear as it should be)
- Tools in the toolbox to do lethal control
- Location of depredations (fall/lambing)
- Public versus private land
- Confidence in the investigation (communication around it)
- Build trust in WDFW's call on depredation calls
- How will nonlethal work with higher densities of wolves?
- When WDFW does lethal, that builds trust with producers to do nonlethals in the future
- "Unknown" call can hurt trust because WDFW has high bar for depredation
- If lethal used too much, public support for public grazing will go down
- Overuse of one tool will degrade the acceptance of that tool
- Need a way to raise nonlethal on public grazing
- Is there an understanding (in WAG) that WDFW has all tools necessary to quickly and effectively remove problem wolves (WAG needs to support). Also, to identify problem wolves.

- Does WDFW have those tools (sharpshooter, helicopter, ground staff, etc.)?
- The difference between federal and state protection
- Management action vs. lethal whether state/federal listed
- People don't distinguish between WDFW and USFWS (USFWS talks only of moving problem wolves, while WDFW can use lethal or move)
- USFWS
- Staff time (multiple depredations going on at once)
- Funding
- Understanding the science
- Disagreements in the science
- Unpacking misunderstandings in science
- Deeper you dig into science, the cloudier it gets
- Blanket statements on science are dangerous
- Managing populations, packs, and individuals

Jack asked if the group could hear from those WDFW representatives on the ground that have dealt with issues with the flowchart and have been involved with removals.

Jay went over the situation with the Dirty Shirt pack. Incidents versus number of livestock is a big issue on the ground. Depredation events are an inconsistent way of keeping track. It can be hard to determine what an event really is.

Joey went over the Huckleberry situation. The number of animals proved to be a problem. Working all night and investigating during the days. Every nonlethal option was explored. There was a ton of human activity when the depredations actually happened.

Paula said that it is in the protocol to deploy nonlethal tools in the event of a depredation. What are the expectations prior to the first depredation? It is important to have clear expectations.

Paula stated that the initiation of lethal control started before the 21 days of nonlethal action, which is one area of concern with the Huckleberry incident.

Molly asked if people questioned that the wolves were depredating livestock after 21 days.

Answer: People questioned the use of lethal control.

Donny brought up transparency and getting that information out to the public in a timely manner is very important for all the reasons listed above. He talked about how the flowchart tried to simplify a very complicated thing.

Stephanie said the flowchart was simplified sort of by design in an effort to give field staff members decision space.

Dave Duncan brought up that there should come a point where they should all trust the Department to do what's right.

The third party neutral brought up that someone can't demand someone trust somebody else. Trust building has to be an explicit process.

Question: Why can't you implement lethals and nonlethals at the same time?

Answer: Safety is the biggest reason.

Diane said that the original lethal take document indicated a lack of trust in the Department, and now she feels completely different. Her level of trust in WDFW is much higher now, and she thinks we are in a very different place.

Dave brought up that a majority of people in Washington want wolves on the landscape, but also want wolves managed and controlled. There is a minority that does not want any wolves lethally controlled. Communication is a key factor in each case.

Bob said that there have been statements made that are misunderstanding the best available science. There can be a misunderstanding of the available science on all sides. The variable would be to unpack that misunderstanding.

There needs to be an understanding that there are disagreements in the scientific community.

Molly said that it is important to not make blanket statements about a species, as there may be different truths in different areas. Blanket statements on science are dangerous.

The third party neutral said that she will take the variables discussed today, develop themes for day two of the meetings, and have the members split into smaller groups to discuss the themes.

Break

The group discussed whether or not they wanted to meet again in April before the May meeting. An April check-in could be beneficial and could help with the progress for the May meeting. The merits of early May were also discussed. It was agreed to check calendars tonight and come back for more discussion tomorrow.

Key Learnings and Dilemmas: The third party neutral went around the room and captured thoughts from the group on key learnings about the path to lethal control.

Jack said they are 17 pieces of paper closer to a solution. He sees progress.

Trent said he has some concerns that time will run out before the next grazing season starts.

Donny brought up that trust is a big factor moving forward. He said it is also important that the path and policy is adaptive.

Paula said that there needs to be that balance between nonlethal and lethal action. Raising the nonlethal usage and effectively deploying the lethal action.

Stephanie said she's concerned about the timeline and what the product will ultimately be. She wants something simple that meets the needs of all parties involved.

Ellen said she's concerned about the timeline as well. How will this get done by May?

Dan said he is appreciative of everyone's hard work and feels bad about the extra work the third party neutral does for the group.

Tom said that he felt a sense of divide for the first time since the group started meeting. He thinks the group is still dedicated to finding that common ground, but the divide was there.

Anis said he is curious about the product they are looking to get out by May.

Bob said he is concerned about the process as grazing season approaches. The work needs to go fast, and WAG needs to not second guess.

Tim said that collaborative processes are messy and don't always yield what you want, but it's better than having no process at all.

Scott said that the complexity of the issue being discussed has potential for more emotions to come out than before.

Molly said lethal removal is messy and she feels real motivation to work on grazing plans carefully in an effort to prevent lethal removal altogether.

Lisa said she wants to make sure the process stays as simple as possible and goes quickly, but all sides do need to be heard from.

Diane said the complexity really hit her. With something this complex, it will be difficult to have a final product that is too prescriptive. This is particularly complex in the moment of action, when the Department can't communicate all the complexity. Trust will be very important.

Tom said it was very important to hear from the staff member working on the ground today. Having the experts talk through the processes was very helpful in guiding the discussion. The

importance of making sure the staff has all they need to perform the actions they need to perform. The limiting factor is important.

Shawn said he is feeling optimistic and he thinks it can be relatively straight forward. It is important to remember that the plan they come up with will be an evolving plan.

Dave said that he is cautiously optimistic that they can get there and come up with something that is simple and understandable for WDFW employees and the public. Trust in WDFW will be essential.

Wade said that transparency cannot come at the risk of someone's safety or at the risk of compromising the mission.

Travis said that the term depredation, as described today, seemed like a simplistic view. The answer is not just working with one producer. The answer is more complex. How do you have something equitable for all producers when each producer is doing something different? Keep the on-the-ground complexity in mind.

Jay said that just determining what happened can be very complex. He echoed the thoughts of Travis, and said that trying to understand what's happening on the ground is getting more and more difficult. Keeping that complexity in mind is going to be helpful. We can't have a piece of paper that tells staff on the landscape-level what to do.

Nick is concerned about what will happen when the resources are stretched too thin or run out.

Joey said he doesn't want to carry a huge document with him. It has to be a streamlined process. WDFW gets more scrutinized for saying a depredation is non-wolf. Lethal removal needs to be a tool in the toolbox, and there is a time and a place to use it.

Tara said that she has dealt with a lot of wildlife conflict in the past, and she wanted to say that she is very impressed with the way WAG members communicate. She can tell they all are invested in the process.

Matthew Peterson said that he appreciates everyone's efforts and work. He sees a protocol to take out to ranchers as very valuable.

Tami said she is concerned about a rushed product in the end, and what that might mean for field staff members.

Public Comment

One public member said that at first she was wondering when the group would get to the real work, but then she realized this is the work and was impressed with the work the group is doing.

Meeting Adjourned

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WDFW Staff Members: Donny Martorello, Jay Shepherd, Joey McCanna, Scott Becker, Ellen Heilhecker, Anis Aoude, Stephanie Simek, Nate Pamplin, Tara Meyer, Matthew Peterson, Trent Roussin, Matthew Trenda

Third Party Neutral: Francine Madden

Morning Check-in: The third party neutral welcomed everyone to the meeting and greetings were exchanged all around. The variables around lethal control had been sorted into four distinct categories, including:

- Building trust and creating social change
- Juggling science and management
- Limiting factors
- Nonlethal/lethal balance

Each variable from the previous day was sorted to fit under one of the four main categories.

Continued – Complexity of Variables around Lethal Control: The third party neutral outlined the plan for the day, which included breaking into small groups to discuss the variables and what the path to lethal control for each might look like. After the meeting, members will have a chance to go back to their various interest groups and discuss these variables as well, preparing in full for the next WAG meeting.

The third party neutral reviewed the variables with the group, opening the floor for comments and further ideas for variables. Tom Davis recommended one additional variable, the management strategy of the producer, and it was added to the “Juggling science and management” category. Travis brought up that lethal removal can be viewed as a failure in wolf management, but if you look at the big picture, it can be viewed as a success. Wolves and producers are still present in areas where lethal removal has occurred. This variable was added to “Building trust and creating social change.”

Donny mentioned that the buildup to lethal should be a variable as well, including nonlethals, kill permits, removal of one animal, and removal of multiple animals. This variable was added to “Nonlethal/lethal balance.”

Diane said that when she hears that WDFW has a responsibility to protect livestock, she also wants to hear that WDFW has a responsibility to protect listed species. This variable was added to “Nonlethal/lethal balance.”

Jay said that there seems to be such a dichotomy between nonlethal and lethal, but lethal should be considered a tool in the toolbox. He also mentioned that human presence is the most important tool, as it not only acts as a nonlethal, but also helps in getting to lethal as more events are detected. That’s how the problems are found. Lethal supports long term recovery and success for the species, and there needs to be acceptance that it holds value. He reiterated that both nonlethal and lethal are necessary and should all be tools in the toolbox. This variable was added to the “nonlethal/lethal balance” category.

Joey said that lethal has its place and needs to be in the toolbox. However, there is a time and place for it.

Travis brought up timing, with respect to grazing and how quickly lethal is implemented.

A comment was made that the lethal tool does not just include a helicopter. There are many factors involved and it should be done right if it’s going to be done.

Diane said that she is hearing a lot from WDFW about how lethal needs to be in the toolbox, but asked: how does the fact that wolves are a listed species right now determine how quickly lethal is instigated? She reiterated that WDFW has a responsibility for recovery of a listed species, and in her mind lethal should be a last resort.

Donny said that it may be a philosophy factor. From WDFW’s perspective, the philosophy of where this event is occurring, where is it on the security scale? Where is this population listed? Resiliency of the local population and opportunities for growth play a part in those decisions. Thinking about impacts to recovery revolves more around those opportunities for growth.

Scott said WDFW looks at the trajectory of that population as well. If the population starts to level off or decline, the thinking may differ, but as long as populations increase, that gives the Department more options.

Joey reiterated that WDFW pushes nonlethals 24/7, but the question constantly comes up about lethal control. Producers want to know that lethals are an option.

Diane said she appreciates that stance, but brought up the dynamic that may occur when some producers use nonlethals and some don’t in the same area. What is the incentive to use nonlethals if lethals are going to be instigated no matter what?

Joey said WDFW markets the nonlethal methods for all predators, not just wolves. Protecting livestock is the goal, as it should be for producers as well. The lethal question comes up at the end of that.

Donny mentioned that in some cases, patterns are detected early on. In those cases, it may be better to address that situation early in the event of depredations in order to minimize lethal action. In those cases, if you wait, it may result in the removal of an entire pack. It is very hard to predict what will happen.

Scott said that full pack removal is incredibly rare. Usually lethal action includes two to four wolves. The Department does not want to remove entire packs, because new wolves would move in and staff members would have to relearn all of the behaviors involved. There are benefits to keeping that pack in place.

Diane asked if, for that reason, isn't it better to have greater protections in place?

Scott said that might be a little more conservative, but just because a lethal is used does not mean recovery will fail.

Diane agreed that she may be more conservative, but that is because the species is listed, and she hoped conservative was the preferred action in this case.

Jay brought up that lethal control is incredibly hard.

Paula recapped what she heard from WDFW staff and producers, including that lethal needs to be a tool in the toolbox, but said that WAG should spend some time unpacking the parameters about when the time and place is to use lethal control. She said she hopes everyone realizes that lethal is a tool in the toolbox, but factors that need to be discussed, and where conflicts arise, include: were the wolves killed too soon? Were the wolves not killed soon enough? Was it an unnecessary use of lethal? What do those specifics look like? What is that situation?

Joey said that if the pack is showing signs of continued depredation. If field staff and producers are doing everything they can, and depredations are continuing, that's when you consider lethal. Is there a pattern? Does the pack continue to come back?

Scott said you have to look at the time of year as well. Early in the year, the depredations seem to be more random. Later in the year, the patterns form and are more likely to continue.

Jay echoed Scott and said that August and September are the heaviest timeframes for depredations.

Shawn brought up the Dirty Shirt pack last year. He asked if WDFW staff felt like they should have moved to lethal in that case rather than the nonlethal actions that were used? Was it a

mistake to not have gone to lethal? There were four depredations before nonlethals were implemented.

Jay said that he personally felt the situation was handled correctly. It was a reaction that contained more work and exhausted staff, but he wouldn't look back and say it was wrong. However, the discussion needs to be had about what four depredations mean.

Shawn agreed, and said the plan as it reads right now is not clear on what that number means.

Joey agreed that what happened with Dirty Shirt was right. If depredations had occurred after the nonlethals were in place, lethal would have been the next step.

Trent brought up that while it was nice last year, there may be situations where nonlethals are not used, due to producer cooperation issues or other factors. It can get tricky.

Jay said credibility can be lost when you don't protect the neighbors of cooperating livestock.

Travis said this is a bigger issue than one pack, one producer. Each producer on Forest Service land is doing something, even if not signing agreements with the Department. He also addressed the listed aspect that Diane mentioned, and said he thinks WDFW is focused on the recovery of the species rather than the individual.

Molly said that lessons will be learned on the way, and patience is a must. Things need to be tried to see if they will work. How does WDFW deal with wolves they know are livestock killing? How do you deal with them? What does lethal look like at that point?

Donny said there is a difference between preventative nonlethals and nonlethals as a reaction after a depredation. We want preventative nonlethals in place. Are there case specifics involved? There are other factors, like air force exercises, that can't be put on the flowchart. There are always other variables in play.

Tim said that there are some components not represented in the balance. Social pressure is a key factor and can impact management. There is a fear factor involved as well. The push to talk about how lethals will be enacted is difficult. He said he understands and appreciates the work that goes into livestock producing. Anything that gets in the way of freelance animal husbandry can create conflict. Cultural and local government plays a factor as well. Fear mongers are a small minority, but raise this idea that the world is going down because of the wolf population. Tim said the social complexity in wolf recovery is very heavy. Wolves are one of the most misunderstood and attacked animals in North America.

Paula read the wolf protocol in place at the time for Dirty Shirt. The protocol assumes nonlethal measures have been deployed before lethal action is taken. There is an expectation that there

will be nonlethals before lethal action is taken. Something WAG needs to think about is that whatever they come up with needs to be easily understood by the public.

She also said there is a struggle around what to do in situations where one producer uses nonlethals and others around the area don't. She said she agrees with what Tim said, but they still need to be clear about when an action is taken. She asked if it was possible for WDFW to use more intensive hazing tactics in the event of a producer not using nonlethals? Rubber bullets are an option, even though WDFW doesn't like that due to habituation. Hazing could be implemented quickly, and can be superintensive.

Trent said he spent many years hazing bears. With wolves, in order for hazing to be effective, you have to catch them in the act. If not, the wolf may be sleeping or something and then they just scare them for, from the wolf's perspective, no reason at all. No learning will occur if you don't catch them in the act. It is almost impossible to enact.

Jay said it has happened, but it is very difficult and you have to keep doing it forever.

Ellen agreed with Trent, and added that it also depends on the time of year. It can be a complete waste of time.

Scott echoed Trent and Ellen, and said the intensity needs to be around the clock to even have a chance of being effective.

Paula said that it needs to be direct, and focused during the right time of day. She said she hears what they're saying, but it relates to human presence.

Jay said the Air Force had an attractant, as they were slaughtering livestock when they shouldn't have. They weren't hazing as people think they were.

Travis said that hazing is similar to the translocation issue. You can't just chase them away. They will be put in a new place, with new situations. There are no vast expanses of wilderness.

Trent said hazing in general is not meant to move an animal out of the area. That would be a negative consequence.

Paula brought up Huckleberry, and how there are other sheep and cows in the area but no depredations have occurred. Did the other wolves learn because they were chased and shot at from helicopters? Did they learn because the female was killed? She wanted to know why that worked, if hazing is considered an unrealistic option.

Nick said that they are not authorized to harass a federally listed species.

Stephanie reiterated that it is important to think about what we are teaching wolves. All we are teaching wolves if we chase them with helicopters is that helicopters mean they should hide. The staff on the ground are thinking about every factor involved. Lethal is not the thing we think about all the time, but it is one of the tools, and a protocol needs to be in place.

Paula said she raises these issues because she knows they need to be raised, and has no intention of implying Department staff doesn't know what they are doing.

Stephanie appreciated the comment, and said she just wanted to make it clear that WDFW does not only think about lethal action.

Anis said that putting people in a helicopter is a serious thing, and if it is going to happen, it's going to be to implement lethal control. It's dangerous work and the risk is too great for hazing only.

Joey agreed with Anis on the point, and said we don't want to train wolves to fear helicopters, as helicopters are used to collar wolves.

Jay said what he really thinks the WAG should focus on is the way to get nonlethals spread across the landscape. The reactive stuff is not the way to go.

Diane asked if it was possible to use as much nonlethal as possible during the heavy months, as it would be so much more rewarding than implementing those lethal actions. She said the biggest concern is distinguishing between those producers who do implement nonlethals and those who don't.

Joey said what the staff members do is look for the highest risk areas and use heavy nonlethals in those areas. They focus on areas where problems have occurred or where they suspect problems might occur.

Donny said that long term, the nonlethal plan that worked for Dirty Shirt (staying out 22 days) is not sustainable if only WDFW. If nonlethals are already in place, staying the course could be the best option.

Jack said he's ready for WDFW to develop a draft and come back to WAG so they can move on.

Tom Erskine asked if there are any black and white issues that they can decide upon right now. Does WAG trust the staff members from WDFW around them? Is there a number that can be agreed upon?

Diane said that, in her view, the conversation occurring right now is doing just that. Each member represents a different population in the state. She has a huge amount of respect for WDFW staff members. A lot of the questions she asks are asked because she knows her

constituents want the questions asked, not because she doesn't know the answer. She said she does think the discussions need to be had.

Tom said he wanted to make sure that the questions being asked are the ones that need to be discussed.

Trent said he appreciates the opportunity to talk about actions like hazing because making it more clear to people could help in explaining why it might not be the best option. The members can then take that information back to their specific groups.

Stephanie agreed, and said that defining these terms with each other and coming to agreements is essential for moving forward.

Tom Davis said that having staff present and bringing that experience into the discussions is essential. He brought up the situation with some producers using nonlethals and some not in the same area. He asked how they might deal with that moving forward, in terms of lethal action.

Jay said that complexity is there with every pack. Every pack is in an area where there are producers who use nonlethals and some who don't. Nonlethals need to be proactive, and strides are being made in that direction. How to get that proactive stuff on the ground is something WAG should focus on. A plan for the next five years or so would be nice.

Joey asked about nonlethals. What are the right nonlethals? What are the wrong ones?

Paula said the group went through that exercise at previous meetings. Some nonlethals aren't realistic in certain cases. Each producer will have some that work and some that don't. Each producer is a unique case. What they've heard repeatedly is that range riders who have access to collar data, checking on the livestock regularly, is the main tool. How do we make that the most common thing on the ground?

Molly said that it also rubs her wrong when people talk about the "wrong" nonlethals. Some people wouldn't count some things she does on her ranch as nonlethals, even though they work for her unique situation.

Nick said you also have to look at cost-effectiveness. It's not realistic to expect a rancher with 10 cows to hire a range rider.

Tom Davis echoed Molly's concerns, and asked about the process for a landowner in the event that the landowner and the staff member disagree on the nonlethals used.

Stephanie said that is why there is an “other” category for nonlethals, and there has never been a case where a conflict specialist has said a nonlethal method did not qualify. If a conflict did arise, a Director’s waiver form could be filled out.

Anis said there need to be two separate preventative plans, one for proactive and one for reactive. If something is dead, what happens next?

Donny said there can be an incentive for those who used proactive methods.

Paula said that is why the discussion is happening, to put that protocol in place.

Joey said that it relates to the management plan discussed at earlier meetings. If those proactive methods are in place, lethal can be implemented faster.

Dan Paul brought up that they need to find a way to incentivize folks to implement those proactive approaches. If the wolf kills, that clock has started and it is set up to fail.

Paula said the social support for lethal control goes up when those proactive nonlethal methods are in place. If WAG can find a way to incentivize that deployment, social tolerance will go up.

Jay brought up that the nonlethal proactive approach is the next hard job for WAG.

Molly said that on the landscapes where there are multiple producers, some proactive and some not, she feels like WDFW needs to do what they can to protect everybody, including the non-participants. It can be that the non-participants do not get compensated for their loss, but those who do participate do. Would non-compensation be an option?

Dan said that, from his group’s perspective, the wolves are caught in a rigged game. How do we even the game for all involved?

Trent said he can understand how the perception is that wolves are set up to fail, but the vast majority of wolves never touch livestock. This process will never apply to them.

Donny said it might be beneficial to approach this in a different way. Assuming everyone is using proactive methods may be the way to go. Figuring out what lethal control looks like in that situation could be a start. Then it could go back to what it looks like for those not implementing proactive methods.

Scott said consistency from the Department is what builds trust not only in WDFW, but also in the processes.

Tom Erskine said the issue he’s dealing with is where are the guidelines for size of operation? Some of these plans seem to assume that all operations are the same size.

Molly said she feels strongly that any time you put animals on the landscape, they are your responsibility and producers have a responsibility to those animals to keep them safe. It's crazy to think that WDFW should protect your animals if you do nothing. She said that she does not feel that production size is a key factor.

Nick said the biggest concern for him is that if it's a cougar killing his sheep, he can shoot it and stop it. If it's a wolf, he just has to watch.

Molly said they shouldn't put animals out in wolf country if they can't be responsible.

Jack brought up that in northeast Washington that is unrealistic. Private land plays a part as well.

Nick said he feels responsible for every animal on the land, but because of the federal protections on wolves, he cannot do anything more to protect them.

Molly said if a producer is on 40 acres and cannot protect animals, that is an issue.

Tami said that Tom is correct in wanting to talk about smaller landowners. On the west side, that's all there are. It doesn't make sense for those operations to hire range riders. She is looking for guidance from WAG on what to put in place to help these smaller, private operations.

Break

Principles for Effective Path to Lethal Control: The third party neutral asked if the group could pursue the variables they need to unpack on the way to lethal control. They can figure out what that lethal control path looks like, then circle back to the preventative measures. WAG really needs to dig into that path to lethal control at this point.

Donny wanted to start with the definition of livestock. What does that term mean to the group? Donny said there have been situations now where there is complexity around the term in regards to dogs, dog breeds, whether they are guarding or not.

Joey said by definition in the wolf plan, it's only a depredation if the dog is actively herding or guarding. This is in regards for the purposes of compensation and lethal control. If there is a depredation on that dog, that counts towards lethal control.

Diane brought up that guard dogs are a nonlethal, and wondered then why that counted. She said that when they had the conversation to add guard dogs, it was in terms of compensation. It wasn't to add dogs to the checklist as a depredation.

Nick brought up that if the wolves kill a guard dog, that's a quality nonlethal that is no longer there, and that should count.

Diane said that a dog being attacked depends on the location as well. If it's on the perimeter, that is different than if the wolf comes into the herd and fights with the dog there. If the dog is a mile away, is that different than if the wolves come in.

Dan Paul said that while the dog may be killed, that defense worked. That's a nonlethal that worked in defending livestock.

Nick brought up that if the wolves come back the next night and kill livestock, then that method did not work, and now the producer is down a nonlethal method.

Paula asked about what the behavioral response to lethal for wolves would be based on territorial versus eating livestock perspectives. Is there something to think about with regards to how the dogs are being deployed?

Nick brought up that if dogs just keep getting killed, that should count towards the depredation count.

The conversation turned to the difference between a dog getting killed defending the livestock versus a dog being killed for another reason. If the dog gets killed doing what it is supposed to be doing, some felt that should count towards the depredation count. If the dog is off wandering around and gets attacked that way, there may be a difference. These attacks may have nothing to do with the livestock. They may have to do with the nature of the canines.

It was suggested that a retroactive method might be the way to go. If a dog is initially killed, it may not count at first. However, if livestock depredations then occur after that, the dog attack would retroactively be added to the depredation list.

Nick asked what happens if the guard dog is the fourth depredation.

Trent said that event would count, as there were already depredations occurring.

It was asked if injuries to dogs should count the same as a dog kill. If the dog is out there and is injured or killed, the sheep may have moved due to the event. By the time they are found, it may seem like the herd is too far away.

Molly asked about the situation on smaller plots.

Paula said the intent of the dog should be considered. Guard/alert/ alarm/etc.?

Terrain could also play a part in the situation. Depending where you are, you may not have the alert that the dogs give. Common sense needs to be considered. Reality is messy and difficult to categorize.

The political push was also brought up. The push to do something if a dog is attacked. Keeping it simple was recommended.

Diane said that having the Department step up makes it easier to relay information to constituents.

Jay said pinning down a location for these events is difficult.

The next variable to unpack was a recommendation to have the L3s draft something and bring it forward to the group by Friday.

Paula said that while it would be beneficial to see what the L3s could come up with, from a process standpoint, the group would be doing that today in small groups. The idea is to be inclusive and allow the group to come up with a set of options. It would delay things a bit to just react to what the staff members come up with. Having staff participate in the groups today could help. If the need is still there to create something and come back, then that discussion can be had.

Jay recommended that if at the end of the day the L3s take what the group unpacks and creates a draft based on that, it could be effective that way.

Tom Davis said he would prefer to lean on the expertise of the staff members on the ground. Whatever the group comes up with today, the heavy lifting will still need to be done by the WDFW staff members. He supports the development of a package to review.

Donny said that while that is a good idea, there also needs to be ownership by everyone in WAG. He doesn't want to shortchange anyone in the process.

Stephanie asked who would be creating the draft. What roles do other staff members take in that process?

Trent said that having it by next Friday seems insane.

Joey said that they've been thinking about this for the past three or four years. It would be a draft for WAG to poke holes in and talk about.

The third party neutral suggested they get through the meeting today and give that information to the Department. The Department is then allowed to come up with different options to give WAG an opportunity to comment and make suggestions. That way the WAG gets to keep

ownership. WDFW would decide which staff members worked on that. The idea would be to unpack these variables, let the Department staff hear those comments, and then putting together a suite of options with different views. Those options would be brought back to the group at the next WAG meeting.

The group continued to discuss the strategy for the draft proposal. It would be important to unpack as many variables as possible so the Department staff members could get that input and be fully informed when creating that draft.

Donny and Diane both said they want to hear the creative stuff from WAG members.

The third party neutral tasked the group with coming up with the main variables on the path to lethal control. She will then break the members into small groups to discuss those variables and develop recommendations.

The variables include:

- Count individuals or events as depredations?

Right now, WDFW counts events. The flowchart is event-based, recognizing that wolves may come into a sheep herd and the result could be three dead sheep. That's one event, even with multiple livestock.

That's where the boxes don't work very well, because you are looking for that pattern. There are consequences to too much lumping and too much splitting. There has to be some principle for separating depredations into events. This could also be species-related (cow/cow-calf – number versus event). Consistency is needed.

When the carcasses are found seems inconsequential. It's more about when event occurred. What were the conditions that led to this event in the first place?

Donny said that the Department is scrutinized on every single thing, and the expectation is that each depredation is classified correctly. The reality is not always that simple. The best strategy may be to have something in place that WDFW staff tries to follow as best as possible, with the understanding that it can be impossible to tell sometimes.

Diane says it's more about consistency. Being consistent with communication and behavior is very important.

Scott said the main problem is it's all subjective, and staff are not experts on livestock decomposition. It can be impossible to tell if multiple animals are depredated on the same day. However, for the most part, it is rare that wolves kill multiple cattle on the same day. Sheep are

different. Twenty sheep can be killed in one night, and that only counts as one event currently. Developing something that is more adaptable and flexible is important for those situations.

Ellen said that while some may not pressure for exact identification, others definitely do. Staff members feel the strain all the time, and there is a lot of pressure to identify depredations correctly. Also, it is definitely possible that cattle are killed on the same day.

Wade said that the longer the wait between a depredation and lethal control, the less the impact on that pack in regards to learning new behavior.

Paula asked if there was more support that could be provided, such as training. She also asked if there was someone they could call to help with the situation. Could WAG in any way lessen that pressure?

Ellen says the main issues come from the state of the carcass. Sometimes staff goes out and it's only a backbone or a leg and it's impossible to identify. The best way to learn is to just continue to do it. The experience is where the learning happens, and there are always new situations.

Stephanie said it goes back to trust. If the decision is made, it needs to be believed.

Jay said there are categories, such as probable and confirmed, that are available to use as well.

Dan brought up that trust seems to be the main concern, and unpacking additional variables could help with that trust aspect. Creating a spectrum for decisions could also be beneficial.

Jay said that if communication was better (why these are events, why we think there's a pattern, etc.) That final count is the hardest one to make, because of the implications and all of the pressure from every side.

The third party neutral asked if L3s would prefer to not have a number for lethal control. That way they could look at the patterns, etc. and move forward from there.

Ellen said it has been beneficial to have those definitions (probable or confirmed).

Diane said she feels sensitivity to the idea of "if it's not wolves, what else could it be?"

Scott said that it has been beneficial to take producers out to the investigations and show them what staff members look for and what they are seeing. That builds the trust and the dialogue with those producers.

Diane said she thinks it is important for the public to hear a calm voice coming from the Department. If hysteria hits, it hits all of us. If everyone committed to staying as professional,

clear, and consistent as possible with communication, attitudes will change. She said it is much better to hear “We made a mistake” than to have someone trying to cover up something.

Joey said there is a lot of thought that goes into the process.

Tom Davis addressed the idea of having no set number. He said people on the ground want some kind of clarity about what the decision making process looks like. Scott agreed that there needs to be a number, but is that number an event or dead livestock? That is key to developing that consistency and trust.

Jay didn't think it would work without a number. There was agreement throughout the room on that point.

The number could differ depending on the species. Should the count be different depending on the region of the state? Protection status plays a part.

Other variables recommended for discussion included:

- What makes the decision to go to lethal control and is that the right person?
- Reset clock? How long are events recorded in sequence?

The group discussed the reset clock timeframe. There are many dynamics, as each spring the pack is different, with different animals present.

Scott said that if a pack has a history, you may act quicker the following year. It is hard to predict exactly when and where those events are going to occur.

Shawn said that when he hears from people who want lethal control, it isn't for retaliation, but to prevent additional depredations. The randomness is a significant piece to consider.

Travis said you can't underestimate pack size. As pack size increases, demands for food supply are higher.

Paula said that research has shown that larger, stable packs don't actually kill as often. Smaller packs could actually kill more. They eat less, and are always looking over their shoulder, so kill more often. There is research on both sides.

Travis said it's true, and every time someone thinks they know something about wolf packs, the packs do something different. Wolves have unpredictable behavior.

The current plan has a lot of variables. It's four months of events, but six months if the events are chronic. It depends on whether action was taken on the pack the year before as well. This is in full view of the public, and there are other variables as well.

Tim said that there are those in the community that love wolves, but don't get active in the public Commission meetings. There are a few loud voices at those meetings, however, that seem to run the show.

The third party neutral said that she hears from producers a lot who don't hate wolves, but they want to know that there is a sense of control. They want to be heard and want to be part of the discussion. This can be true on all sides.

The next variable was brought up by Shawn, and he asked about how many wolves would be killed in the event of lethal control.

Jack said that there is a ramp up protocol in the plan for cases like that. Donny went over the process and reiterated that WDFW is learning throughout these processes each time. Right now there is a very small sample size of two cases.

The third party neutral asked WAG members to determine the guiding principles for lethal control. The following items were suggested:

- Quickly implemented
- Most humane method possible
- Quantifiable
- Flexibility in implementation
- Consistency (in communication as well)
- Clearly communicated
- Cost effective for agencies
- Trust and support (WAG has WDFW's back)
- Ethical/humane considerations
- Collateral impacts (both ways)
- In the public interest
- Emphasizing staff and producer safety
- Based in biology/science
- Protect private property
- Leads to more uptake of nonlethal
- Maintain robust working landscapes
- Used with a goal to achieve recovery and delisting
- Easily understood
- Viewed as one of several tools
- Minimize depredations in the short term

Suite of Draft Options for Stakeholder/Constituent Considerations: The members split into groups to discuss the guiding principles.

Each group shared what happened in the discussions. Jay presented the first group's discussion. Communication was first for them, and starting with conference calls and email notifications would be a good place to start. These would include information, specifics, incident reports, and discussions.

Then an after action review and lessons learned would follow that communication after the event.

For protocol and implementation, there were several ideas:

- Are there currently nonlethals/proactive methods?
- Are any reactive nonlethals appropriate?
- Kicking decisions back to Department for timing of lethal

They talked about having a depredation count as one and a half for use of quality nonlethals. It would only count as one if there are no nonlethals.

These measures could be an easier way to keep track. Donny mentioned that it is a very creative idea.

BUT

What are quality nonlethals? How much counts? Can there be fairness in monetary help? If incentive is created, can the Department live up to that incentive for everyone involved?

The positive of this is that no one gets penalized, but being proactive results in benefits for those producers.

Question: What about somebody where we really don't think there are wolves? The only thing they can possibly do is sanitation. Is that enough to count if a depredation occurs?

Answer: We didn't get quite that far yet. That first depredation might still count as one. If there is action after that first one, subsequent depredations would count as one and a half. Talking to conflict specialists about methods that can be used is a way as well. That can get people to the one and a half.

The people who are right up front wanting to get ahead should get the credit. There wasn't a reason for them to jump on early until this plan was introduced.

Question: If the Department is doing the actions instead of the producers, is that going to count?

Answer: This gives more authority to the conflict specialists as well.

Molly said that she would hate to think that those producers would benefit from dragging their feet.

Nick said that's why it falls to the conflict specialist to make the call in those situations. That puts the incentive on the producer if the Department can't respond. Conflict specialists can then tell producers if they want that one and a half count, they need to step up as well.

Paula said there is still an issue with those producers who do not want WDFW on the land or don't want to participate. Do you take action on that pack? Because the WAG has agreed that nonlethals, reactive or proactive, should be implemented before lethal action is taken. Do you still do reactive nonlethals? How does that count? Whose responsibility is it to get to that place if the producer is hesitant to instigate nonlethals?

Comments around reiterated that this would put more responsibility on the producers.

The second group had Donny speaking for them. He gave an overview of what their group came up with. Early thoughts included keeping it simple, how the pathway starts with a depredation event, and how the investigation process needs to be objective to build trust. There should be an effort to minimize political pressure at the depredation site and use the investigation as a training opportunity for those watching. This features good communication and cooperation with the sheriff.

The path to lethal could be put with the Department for the first year, with WDFW taking every opportunity to educate the public through outreach programs on wolf behavior and procedures. WDFW could also reach out to folks to help in those cases in order to include more participants.

The decision making authority was also discussed. A lot of pressure is placed on the L3s in the field. Political pressure and the fact that wolves are listed play a part. Maybe the final lethal call could be HQ, but the implementation decisions could be performed by the L3s.

Question: are there concerns about HQ being the final call slowing the process down?

Answer: Not exactly. It was an effort to ensure the safety of staff in the field and protect them.

Molly's concern was that it would stall in HQ and that would reflect poorly on staff in the field.

That aspect was not a major concern discussed.

Shawn said he couldn't imagine the Director (anyone in that position) wanting anyone else to make that final decision for lethal control.

Travis said part of the process is to rely on the people on the ground, but the nature of wolves is that they are going to be political.

Diane said that while the decision needs to be fully informed by the Region, the red light/green light needs to come from HQ. After that, staff in the field can decide on the implementation. Consistency is a huge issue in this regard.

Donny encouraged more dialogue back and forth between L3s and the Director.

There was also discussion on when to start lethal action. Bulleted:

- Number versus qualitative description (science-based data)
- Lethal is a last resort
- Only when depredations are imminent
- Dependent on the incentives for proactive nonlethals
- Lethal is a tool

The discussion was tied to the incentives for proactive nonlethals. The idea is to implement lethal in a way to build trust for more decision space for WDFW in the future.

Maybe there is a maximum number that says WDW will implement lethal control. The incentive could be to provide lethal action sooner for those producers proactively using nonlethals.

Dave said this relates to the previous group, but this version could be implemented even sooner if the situation calls for it.

Donny said the discussion never really branched into what to do if there are some producers using nonlethals and some not in the same pack area. They don't know what that maximum number would be.

Trent liked the idea of having the maximum, but incentivizing the idea for those who use proactive nonlethals. The previous group hadn't gotten there quite yet.

Nick said being consistent across the state would be the main challenge. That's why they settled on that one number, but how you get there is different depending on the situation.

Travis said the reality is that it is different every single time.

Would that number change depending on species (sheep versus cattle)?

The last thing the second group talked about was the reasonable level of proactive nonlethal methods. The shift from reactive to proactive on the landscape, incentives, and overall landscape considerations (some tools won't work for all producers).

Group three looked at the preplanning aspect. It is essential that the preplanning is well thought out so everyone involved can be on the same page (weather, people, topography, timeframe, decisions). Clear communication is made, and the decision for lethal will be supported if it is made.

Another thing they talked about was holiday weekends. There may be areas that need closing during those timeframes. Can that be done? It could be a topic for WAG and the Interagency Wolf Committee to discuss. There is some preplanning already, but a strict process could be perfected.

The ramp up would be deferred to WDFW.

Communication was heavily discussed. Periodic updates fully vetted by WDFW, recognizing the safety of the operation and the staff. There also needs to be a protocol in place beforehand. An announcement and an update when the operation is complete. A summary for WAG and a public outreach project for the greater public.

On the how get to lethal control question, all they had time for was to agree that folks should be able to protect their property.

Stephanie added that in the event of lethal action, a notice went out to WAG to inform them of the decision and the reasons behind it. The next notice would go out after the operation was completed. Each update would tell what would happen next, then the next update wouldn't come until that action was completed. Get everyone on the same page at all times.

Also, a standard list of lethal options could be put on the WDFW webpage for folks to reference.

The level of information disclosed was also discussed.

Explicit communication, not necessarily news release worthy, should be in place to inform WAG of any actions that will be taken place and the events that led to that action. There will be a lot of pressure to share a greater level of detail with elected officials especially.

The third party neutral reviewed the group process with the WAG members. It seemed to be a beneficial exercise overall. What does the process look like going forward?

It was decided that Department staff would take the topics discussed today and bring back a draft to WAG for review. WDFW should have that draft completed by April 5. The WAG

members will then have a chance to review the draft with stakeholder groups, and the discussion will continue at the May WAG meeting.

Shawn said that makes sense if there aren't any red flags with the draft, but if there is one big issue, that should be communicated to the WAG group before the May meeting.

Diane wondered why no one from USFWS was present. The third party neutral said that she and Donny are meeting with them tomorrow and will relate that concern.

Final thoughts were taken around the room and members expressed feeling pretty good about the timeframe and process so far. It was said that there is still a long haul ahead.

Diane did say she hoped there was a team working on some consistent messaging.

Wade said he noticed some inconsistency with the mission and values of the group. He took offense from one quote by a WAG member referring to employees of Wildlife Services as "Wildlife Assassins." The WAG members thanked him for his comments.

There was appreciation that this topic was not only discussed, but there were agreements made. Some folks who were concerned about the deadline of May were feeling much better about the situation.

Public Comment

Miranda Wecker said she was happy to be present. The issue started in 2005 for her, and she was up and down wondering if Washington would find a respectful solution to this issue. She said WAG members are the pioneers. She said the history of the conflict remains, but what she admires and finds encouraging is that everyone here is very civil to each other. They treat other citizens of the state respectfully. The political environment is very polarized, and seeing the WAG work together in a rational way is a breath of fresh air. A lot of folks didn't think this discussion on lethal removal would be possible this soon with the new WAG, and a lot of credit should be given to the third party neutral.

Miranda said she has come to respect, enjoy, and admire the ranching and agricultural community. When WAG talks about pushing and encouraging them to embrace the new century, she wants the environmental community to think about things in a different way too. She wants the environmental community members to speak up for that ranching community. This is a problem that affects the broader public. The way the broader public views the wolf issue can be influenced by the environmental members of WAG. Everyone on the WAG has a responsibility because they now represent the public interest.

The second public comment thanked everyone for the work and energy of the last few days. She loved the addition of WDFW staff in the group. One issue is having the different level of

expertise, and having biologists in the room is a huge benefit. She suggested that when discussing a topic, it is important to know what the current plan says. She also suggested to have endangered species representation in the room. It could give yet another perspective.

The third public comment said WAG just had the most civil and respectful discussion on lethal control in the history of the country.

The fourth public commenter said he expected some fireworks, but he was very impressed with all the members and how respectful they were. He said nothing ever gets done in the meeting, so now it is up to everyone to go back and inform stakeholders of these decisions. Without trust in the Department and faith in each other, agreement will never be reached. Now it is time to take that faith and trust and expand it to the general public. In the end, there is only one side. He also said the Cattleman's Association is very in favor of maintaining the cost-share agreements. They work really well and they want to continue them. They asked to have that passed on to WAG. He thanked everyone for coming, especially those who volunteer their time and are not paid to show.

Final Thoughts

The third party neutral wrapped up the meeting, saying peace is an active process, and WAG members need to be advocates for that change. She asked them to take that message outside.

Meeting Adjourned