

Wolf Advisory Group Meeting Notes

March 21, 2018

Hal Homes Community Center in Ellensburg

WAG Members: Paula Swedeen, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Tim Coleman, Dan Paul, Molly Linville, Tom Davis, Nick Martinez, Don Dashiell, Andy Hover, Jess Kayser, Jessica Kelly, Ralph Kratz, Samee Charriere

WDFW Staff: Donny Martorello, Candace Bennett, Joey McCanna, Steve Pozzanghera, Trent Roussin, Bruce Botka, Tara Meyer, Scott McCorquodale, Todd Jacobson, Dan Brinson, Stephanie Simek, Robert Waddell, Annemarie Prince, Ben Maletzke, Dan Christensen, Joe Bridges, Matthew Trendera

Third Party Neutral: Francine Madden

Welcome and overview

The third party neutral welcomed everyone to the meeting and everyone checked in around the room.

The third party neutral previewed the meeting agenda. She also welcomed the new WAG members to the group. Each new member will bring a fresh energy and perspective to WAG.

This is a good time to bring new WAG members into the group, as discussions will now begin to plan ahead (long down the road) for wolf conservation and management in Washington, as well as how best to keep the public informed of those plans. What does that broader engagement look like, and how do you ensure you have broader stakeholder communication?

Everyone involved (environmentalists, hunters, and livestock producers) is a conservationist. Everyone is concerned about preserving wildlife and keeping habitat intact, rather than having it overrun with development and other issues. It's important to realize that threats to that value are outside. There is a value in working together, because we will be stronger from that work.

Public input session

Department staff went over the notes from the morning's public listening sessions. They discussed how the decision-making process, in regards to deterrents, could be explained better.

There was also a discussion about monitoring habitat for the benefit of prey, and as a result for the benefit of wolves, as well as talking about an entire ecosystem, rather than talking in a way that puts wolves against livestock, or wolves against deer.

Another group discussed the traveling aspect of WAG meetings and the public input opportunity in the morning. West side folks arrived to hear perspectives from the east side participants, but the session was not well attended enough for that to occur. This group also

discussed legislatures, and getting the opportunity to discuss the wolf issue with legislatures who are not intimately involved in the wolf issue to inform them.

The last group had a discussion focusing on department communication. The suggestion was for one-on-one communications to convey the department message to the community. There are some audiences getting messages from a third party source, rather than the department, or only getting portions of that message.

Wolf annual report

The department just presented the 2017 wolf annual report to the Fish and Wildlife Commission. The minimum wolf count was 122, which was up from 2016. There were also 14 confirmed breeding pairs and 22 packs, both also up from 2016. There were four new packs in 2017: Leadpoint, Togo, Grouse Flats, and Frosty.

There were also nine dispersing wolves this year, and 14 mortalities.

Are any of the breeding pairs one of the packs where lethal removal was used last year?

Yes, the Smackout pack was still a breeding pair.

What is the scientific basis for using the term “minimal count?” for this report?

We don't necessarily get every wolf counted every time we perform surveys. It doesn't always guarantee that we count every animal in that pack, but the minimal number is the number we're sure about.

We can verify that there are 122 animals, but we may miss some.

Could you be over counting as well?

No. We verify each individual and factor in 12.5 percent more, as defined in literature, to account for dispersers and those undetected.

Can you speak a little bit about the research going on right now?

One report just published focused on predation in wolves and what wolves were killing. Primarily, wolves are eating deer and elk and moose, with less than 5 percent of those packs eating livestock (cattle). Actual figures can be provided at any time. This did not focus on other carnivores. It also only looked at kill sites during the grazing season.

The other report was looking to try and predict landscape features and different metrics that could help us identify areas where wolves may be more likely to attack cattle. It found that areas in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming are a little more open, and most of the depredations

occur in those open places. In Washington, the landscape is a little more wooded, so the model had to be adjusted a little bit to fit. This report will be published soon, as it is in review right now. It's similar to what we've been finding: areas with more cattle and more wolves are more likely to have conflict.

Another project is looking at the stress of cattle in the presence of wolves. It is looking through fecal samples to understand the circumstances related to the presence.

The other major project being done by the department is the Predator/Prey project. The department is working with four graduate students from the University of Washington and looking at survival in deer fawns and elk calves, as well as adult does and cows. They are also trying to collar more animals, including cougar, wolves, coyotes, mule deer, and bobcats. The department will be working with the study and with the university to develop a new monitoring plan for wolves. We want to make sure we plan ahead for the time when we aren't able to collar every wolf on the ground.

The legislature just funded another study using scat dogs to collect scat and identify species to determine if wolves are moving south of I-90 and south of the Cascades. It will also help determine what is being eaten.

Department communications

The department is always looking for better ways to tell our story. There's a lot of noise out there right now, and the department's goal is to be the first and most accurate source of all news. Positive steps forward have been performed over the past few years, but there is always room to improve.

Monthly updates and weekly updates during management actions were new tools used last year. However, the department was late getting the first reports out there, which left a void in communications. Feedback from WAG and others was that the department was making people work too hard to find the new information. The department will work to improve these reports over the coming year.

The department is also in the midst of a website redesign. The current website is outdated, dense, and not responsive to the users. The new website is being tailored to the user experience, rather than what department staff members think should be included.

This next year will be focusing on improving the reports and improving the website to be a more focused, user-driven experience.

Is this all internal staff working on these projects?

The department contracted with a company who focuses on web design on a user-driven level.

While it's great that improvements are coming, how do you address the people who have visited in the meantime and not had a good experience? They may never return.

At the same time as the website redesign, the department is also looking for ways to improve the current website. One of the things being done is navigating wolf updates to the home page so they are more accessible to folks.

The new website is planned to launch November.

How many pages are on the current website?

Our site has about 9,000 pages, but for the redesign we are working with about 2,000.

By the time November arrives, is there a strategy for a check in with certain public users on what they've asked for on the website in regards to specific content needs for wolf conservation. There are some things that have been asked for that have never been on the website.

There are discussions going on how best to identify ways to do that.

We are first reviewing the existing content, and there are plans to incorporate outreach and education aspects into new pages as well.

Legislative session update

There was a wolf translocation bill that made some movement during this year's session. The bill instructed the department to initiate translocation, but before that go through the SEPA process. The bill did not pass, but the funding for it and the language was included in the budget. There was \$183,000 associated with that.

On the bill, the department shared some concerns and other thoughts to consider. The Wolf Management Plan does have translocation in it. The plan does not cover the SEPA process, which is why SEPA would first need to be initiated before any translocation was done. The department thinks, right now, that translocation is not a needed tool, but that could change. It's brand new, and the SEPA process will be initiated. More news is coming soon.

Are you concerned about how the discussion of translocation will change the first conversation about wolves in new communities? Is that going to make those conversations more stressful?

That's a great question. Yes, there are a diversity of concerns that come up like that. On one hand, in western Washington, are we then forcing that situation? It's also a federally listed species in the western two-thirds of the state, which adds more stress to that conversation. There is also a sense of urgency on the east side of the state regarding speeding this process along. And it's not just producers, but all types of citizens.

It adds another layer to those discussions.

We have listed and non-listed (wolves) in this state, so we would likely have SEPA and NEPA, correct?

As the bill was moving through committee, we checked in with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The department does have authority to move a wolf.

At the point when the wolf's last paw gets out of the cage and into the woods, it becomes a federally listed species. However, there is not a point where we would have to go through the NEPA process.

What's the timeline for the process?

December 2019.

The legislature also gave a one-time \$100,000 amount for nonlethal deterrent tools.

There is also some language in the Department of Agriculture's budget that includes funding for nonlethal wolf deterrence activities in northeast Washington counties. It specifically names coordination with WDFW on wolf projects. There was another \$40,000 each Ferry and Stevens county's sheriff office for wolf management.

The wolf plan says that if there are two caught-in-the-act wolf depredations that result in a mortality in a single year, the department will do an assessment.

Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol

The protocol went into effect last year. We are at the stage of learning right now. We also know we have a lot to work on. We want to have reflections on the protocol. It feels as though we need a little more experience. We want input, but we also want to keep moving on the other things we have to work on. This might involve creating a subteam within WAG to work on it as well.

We do want the protocol to keep being an adaptive process.

Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol: Brief Reflections

WAG members gave perspectives and reflections on the wolf-livestock interaction protocol as it stands now. They also flagged elements of the protocol for future, more in-depth discussions.

List of flagged elements:

- Waiting for three depredations when it's a cow-killing pack is too long
- Better understanding of the evaluation period
- Risk – observable and potential risk is not adequately assessed

- Management should adjust accordingly
- Taking pups as first action of removal
- Assessment of implementation of nonlethals
 - How does the public know about the quality of implementation?
 - Learning cycle
- Timing and quantity of report
- Prosecutorial assessment/evaluation
- Perform another review of science
 - This is Washington's science

Break

Context for long-term wolf conservation and management planning

What does it mean to create a process to create a plan for long-term wolf conservation and management in Washington? Plans can, a lot of times, get very rigid. You want to think about a plan that is adaptable. You are forced to make assumptions. Achieving a shared understanding of what the future realities will be is essential.

Developing a plan takes a good process. Developing a process is painstaking work, but you then have a process you can rely on in regards to decision making. All a good process does is create a space and opportunity for a good outcome. It takes a tremendous amount of courage and hard work. This group, WAG, absolutely has the tools needed to complete this process successfully.

A good process is also always context-specific. What may have worked in other situations may not work for this one. We can learn from what did and didn't work and adapt the new process to those needs.

Needs explored: human (un)met needs theory

This agenda item started with diverse small groups to discuss how human needs relate to long-term wolf conservation and management needs.

The members of the public present at the meeting also conducted this work during this time.

Essentially six human needs: identity, recognition, connectedness, security, meaning in terms of context, place, and personal fulfillment, and freedom.

- Identity: how you see yourself in relation to the rest of the world. This is your values, culture, politics, beliefs, etc.
- Recognition: respect, acknowledgement, legitimacy, saving/gaining face, dignity of self-worth.
- Connectedness: When we feel like we belong to a group, we have a sense of safety and security. When identity is threatened, people go back to the group of belonging.
- Security: economic, social, cultural, spiritual, etc.

- Meaning in terms of context and place: Where animals are that you care about.
- Personal fulfillment: Ability to reach your potential.
- Freedom: Having meaningful participation in decisions that affect you.

If these needs are not being met, people will go after them passionately and aggressively.

Everyone returned to the larger group to share what had come out of the smaller groups. See the meeting materials for the flip charts.

Group 1

- Security/surety
- Mental health
- Self-help versus government assistance
- Eliminating young producers
 - One wolf depredation could be detrimental to a young livestock producer
- Clear objectives to guide management (long-term goals)
- The distribution of wolves was unknown years ago and is now having an impact
- Information is power
- Process to recognize diversity of communities and perspectives

Group 2

- Security/freedom
 - Wolves are added security issue (in addition to other wildlife) that landowners do not have the ability to respond to
- Identity
 - Wolves represent a form of “wildness” and this becomes associated with human residence
 - Health of environment where a person lives
 - Legitimacy of being able to recreate and spend time in environment with wolves
 - Presence of predator moves game animals so your hunting spot is no longer a viable hunting ground
 - Being able to appreciate biodiversity that wolves provide while also understanding the livelihoods of people affected by their presence
- Connectedness
 - This has to be an issue where communities create connectedness within themselves
- Recognition
 - Folks within the department can be any of the stakeholder groups. It’s not the department against everybody. The department is everybody.

Group 3

- Ranchers and farmers not be vilified on the backs of wolves
- Funding for WDFW in the future

- People in rural communities don't blame all problems on wolves
- Make sure people know that there are wolves in Washington
- Resilient wolf population wherever possible
- A landscape where wolves aren't perceived to or actually do put ranchers out of business
 - Others as well
- Coalesce hunting sub groups into one group working with WAG
- Address fracturing hunting groups
- Recognition that hunters and their values have made it possible for wolves to be on the land
- Recognition that biologists have tough jobs and can't make everyone happy all the time
- Good two way communication between department and communities
- Recognition of trusting biologists in the field
- Have to have mutual trust
- Be as inclusive as we can

Group 4

- Freedom and security to do their business ("others not telling me what to do")
 - Within parameters of law and rules
- A lot of public lands (state and federal) that are multiple use lands
 - Avoid single focus
- Destigmatize wolves so they can exist
- People are a part of the ecosystem too
- Would like the agency to be able to make management decisions to meet species recovery and address conflicts
- Mutual trust
- Not having wolves as "victims of a trophy hunt" or devalued until they're considered "vermin"
 - Also don't want to put wolves on a pedestal
 - Treated like other wildlife
- Public safety
- General information out to people about where wolves are present
 - Both where they are now and where they will be later
- Ensuring we can still track wolves as the population grows
- Plan should allow for flexibility and change
- In post-delisting world, concerns about the heritage of hunting
 - Already challenging to retain and recruit hunters
- Make sure people are connected and appreciate wild spaces ("spirit in the West")
- Relationships built in WAG can translate to other species
- As wolves recover, reallocate resources to different species
- Recognition need that we see this WAG model works on a national level as well

Information needs

WAG members broke into different small groups to discuss the information needs they have.

- What is the information you need?
- What is the information you have that you need to share?
- What is the information that is conflicting and needs to be rectified?

Group 1

- Addresses for WAG meeting locations
- Economic impacts
 - Livestock producers (actual losses are hard to find)
- Clarification of acceptable tools
 - What does each community think is acceptable
- Depredations reported in timely manner
 - Could be double-edged sword
- Need to protect some information
 - Victim of depredation
 - People conducting lethal removal operation
- Impacts of social dynamics
- Need to know where wolves are located
 - To avoid specific conflicts if possible
- Need to know how to get/give more information with hunting populations and urban communities
- Keep searching for funding
- Better understanding of human social challenges and how to address them
- How wolves affect ungulate populations and other predators
- How do other predators affect wolves and ungulates
 - Is it fair to blame wolves for all impacts?
- Where do human predators fit into the conversation?
- How does human population growth impact wildlife populations?
- Need to know complete diversity of perspectives in Washington
- Are there new tools to deter conflict?
- What is the scope or breadth of the post-delisting plan regarding impacts

Group 2

- Number of wolves for a sustainable population
- How wolves are using the habitat
- What defines usable habitat
- More diverse external communication
- Look at adaptive management over time in Washington
 - How are techniques working here?
- Reconcile different management actions from other states
- What happens if the state delists before federal government delists?
- Overall compensation programs
 - Ease of use, fairness, etc.

- Preemptive information sharing from field staff to affected parties
- Recognition of *all* affected parties
- Long-term funding source
- Prioritize how money is being spent
- Are there impacts on other ESA species?
- What is the plan for public wolf survey?
 - Know how Washington population feels about these issues
- Have a plan to address potential change of tolerance
- Identify best way to communicate with future wolf habitat areas
- Information from producers currently using deterrence measures regarding effectiveness

Group 3

- Science that proves/disproves impacts of incremental lethal removal
 - Does it work? Does lethal removal work?
- Data from specific Washington regions rather than importing studies from other states
- Impacts of wolves on hunter success
- Intervention effectiveness
 - Looking at effectiveness of nonlethal tools
- How many wolves are there and where are they?
- Need to learn how to know more with less funding
- Understand what success looks like for those folks who are tied to wolf populations
- What do cattle and sheep die from?
 - Wolf predation is a cumulative part of what cattle die from
- Profitability of agricultural operations
- Margins of agriculture
 - Conveying that agricultural workers are hanging on by their fingertips most of the time
- Public lands, public wildlife, and private profit
 - Would like to separate this from the topic of wolves
- Value in farmers' contribution to conservation
- Effects of wolf mortality on wolf pack dynamics
- Science data to reflect the human dynamic and presence
- Robust information and acknowledgement that wolf biology is rarely exact
- Why hunting is important
- Something non-consumptive for a funding source to the department
 - If hunting population is declining, how do we backfill that funding?
- Other effects on prey populations
- How to educate population on recreating in wolf territory

Group 4

- Economic impact of wolves on producers
 - Individual and community levels

- Comprehensive literature review available for WAG on predator/prey dynamics
- Effectiveness of nonlethal measures
 - Detailed description of process in plain talk language
- Review of livestock industry in other states with wolves
 - Rocky Mountain states
 - Great Lake states
- Information on human/wolf safety
- Robust population estimates
 - Deer, moose, elk, etc.
- Wolf pack dynamics and structure and how that relates to individual pack behavior and population stability
- Public perception of wolves
- What would fairness and inclusion look like to general public?
- Public and WAG work with department to see nonlethal practices on the ground

Public comment

Information needs

- Cattle mortality information
- How do you ID the problem animal?
 - Or at least attempt to ID
- Information about unique grazing habits of both cattle and wild ungulates and how those might impact each other
- Science behind the wolf-livestock interaction protocol
- Science that supports the lethal removal (incremental)
- Good understanding of a breakdown of the numbers
- USDA statistics are available that could be shared
- What information is important to others and why?
- Understanding cultural views
- Communication should happen in timely way (as soon as possible)
- More transparency for this information
- Facts to understand wolves
- Continue to have good information on wolf behavior and locations
- Understanding forensics of when dead livestock are found
 - What does a depredation investigation look like?
- Information on changing land development
 - What suitable habitat exists in Washington
- Understanding indirect impacts of all predators
 - Weight gain/loss, reproduction, etc.
- Current best available science
 - Social science as well
- Public attitude surveys
 - Need updated surveys
- Published and available data from the department

- Information on packs
- Gold standard peer-reviewed science research
 - Prepared so no bias inflicted
- Grazing allotment info
- Population level info available even after recovery
- Economic impacts of wolves both negative and positive
- General public needs to understand how decisions are made and how to be involved
- Effectiveness of lethal versus nonlethal measures
 - Ethics of lethal versus nonlethal
- Public land use management knowledge
 - Knowing regulations

Human needs explored

- Not dehumanize people
- How is the money being spent and where?
- How do wolves affect other species?
 - ESA
 - Game species
- Knowing that there are 7 million+ citizens that should have a voice
- Lack of voice in decision making process
 - Need to be involved in wolf plan development
- Need for timelines and participation for input
- Sharing information for producers and allotments
- Plan should have best available science
- Laws should be followed
- Security around pet loss
- Security that there needs to be a self-sustaining wolf population
- Follow through from the department when they commit to something
 - Public education
 - Feels like a lack of transparency
- People want wolves for future generations

Public comment

- Public has had difficulty in emulating the success of the WAG process. I would ask conflict specialists and WAG to help public mitigate fighting amongst ourselves by promoting patience and respect of different cultures. Give us the opportunity to learn how to have these respectful conversations and listen before reacting. Providing that opportunity could be an effective way for us to have those conversations at home and within communities.
- Heard it a lot that the public wants more communication and more opportunity, but no one showed up to the listening session this morning. If the public is demanding this

opportunity, why are they not here? Is there something the WAG can do to make it more accessible? I came to talk to people who don't live the same way I do, but I came with half the public who was here this morning. What can you all do to make it more opportunistic to capture all of that public?

- I think providing the opportunity to engage with the public is important, but you guys don't do enough to market your successes. I think the public needs to understand, so they can get to a place of tolerance. Perhaps having some evening listening sessions would be really advantageous. Also, good job, WAG.
- I'm really interested in the comments about how the wolf isn't federally listed until all four paws are on the ground. If Oregon transferred wolves to federal areas of Washington, would you not be involved?
 - If it was federal land to federal land, it might require a NEPA process. There would absolutely be some input from the state of Washington if Oregon was bringing wolves over. At the federal level, another animal would be a benefit to the listed species. The U.S. Forest Service may have NEPA processes, and we would work with them. If the scat dogs detect wolves in the federally listed areas, it might change that.
- The current protocol calls for incremental removal. I was hoping someone could point me to the science behind that decision. Any academic papers you can reference for me?
 - I don't have it in my short-term memory right now. I will share that an earlier version of the protocol had a different approach. Through this new development, it was through that dialogue with WAG and the Wolf Plan background that this decision came to be.
 - There are some papers that reference this method as being somewhat effective. There is literature out there that we've cited in the lethal reports. We'd love to have more information, but we're going with what we have for now.
- It doesn't matter if it's a .01 percent mortality for wolves on cattle. If it's your ranch, it matters. That could put you out of business.

Check out

Everyone checked out around the room.

Meeting adjourned

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Third Party Neutral: Francine Madden

Welcome and check in

The third party neutral welcomed everyone to the meeting and everyone checked in around the room. The third party neutral went over the agenda for the day.

Sharing information

A lot of overlap in information needs from the different groups from yesterday (including the public). The third party neutral went over some of the similarities from the lists created during the previous day's discussions. These themes will be fleshed out more in the future.

Eight major themes

- Process
- Plan
- Funding
- Impacts: Economic and other (plus/minus)
- Outreach
- Public Perceptions
- Science / data out there now
- Washington science

The department discussed how they implement science into decision-making. Research in general is often about exploring relationships between things. The goal is to find the cause and effect. What is the thing that drives some phenomena? The gold standard for chasing that has always been a controlled experiment. That is doable in many fields (in a lab, etc.), but in the realm of field ecology, it's really not possible. We might have some ideas about how something works, but that process is imbedded in a system that has many moveable parts. You're looking for the signal in the data, but there are so many changes from year to year that it can be difficult to sort out the noise.

A good research design in the field will help a lot, but it will never get you to the point of a classic controlled experiment. For example, with tracking the effect of winter severity on deer mortality, what does winter severity mean? Even collaring 100 deer and tracking them over three winters can be problematic because each winter will be different, each summer will be different (which could affect what happens in winter), and other factors will change as well.

A single, well done study might be really interesting, but replicating results is always better. If three or four studies find similar or the same results, that's when we start to think something might be there.

Science doesn't prove things; science attempts to disprove things.

Things that can make studies difficult is small sample size, effect size (for example, differences between two subspecies, e.g. mule deer and white-tailed deer), interactions, etc. In the last 20 years, science has kind of moved away from, "is this a factor on this outcome?" Eventually the research gets more interested in predicting the future. Scientists become interested in how much that factor affects that outcome. Wildlife scientists don't need to just be smart; they need to be relevant as well. It's more complicated than just doing good research. Public opinion always counts.

Can you help me understand within the structure of the department, how do you all talk about the science within the department?

There tends to be discipline groups. A lot of specialists. Those people talk. Then we have upper layers of management in Science and Game divisions where ideas get shared and direction gets talked about. Everything tends to go through a public process. For example, with hunting, every three years we collect ideas and vet those with the public and staff members. Ultimately those ideas get exposed to the Fish and Wildlife Commission, which is the decision entity for the department. We also have public advisory groups. Also, some of the department staff members around the room are starting a literature review club. Reading relevant papers on topics and getting together to discuss them. There are so many papers being added all the time, and we've acknowledged that we need to move through this body of literature together. We also grab the people (internal staff members) across the state who are able to give us input on any given topic. We will form smaller committees. Staff members are also authoring papers in their free time.

It's interesting that there can be tension between the scientists and the policy-makers. Science doesn't always illuminate the path. It provides some light, but sometimes a policy call has to be made using the best available.

Could you give your perspective on where we are in the field?

The science has evolved enormously. There were no classes on the human dimension back in the early 80s. Nobody told you how to deal with people at all. That has changed as well. There are classes now that talk about that human element. At the department, we still don't have a human dimensions specialist.

Mutual learning around science

The literature review club talked about how they split up topics because of the sheer volume of materials.

Literature review and predator/prey dynamics: What is the relationship between wolves and ungulates, and what happens to ungulates when wolves are recovered?

It's a huge question, and we've looked at a pile of studies from Yellowstone, Idaho, Canada, and Midwest states. The effect of wolves on ungulate populations varies widely. There are cases where wolves are a factor in driving ungulate populations down, but there are also other unique factors involved. On larger scales, where there are larger game herds, the effects are a lot smaller and a lot less significant. It's very complicated. It's hard to talk about wolves driving down ungulate populations, because it's such a broad theory. There are parts of that hypothesis that fall apart when you look closer. It's messy and really inconclusive. Wolves are dependent on prey, obviously. Prey drives the wolf population more than wolves drive the prey population.

Even really small impacts can change things for a person's perspective. Doesn't have to be wolves exactly. Even though a change isn't significant scientifically, it can be significant for people.

That's right, there is a difference. I'll also say that it's typically that habitat component that has a bigger impact on ungulate herds. A lot of times we are good at messaging when a change happens, but not the reason for that change. Our messaging can improve on that. Something can be attributed to predators, but really it was fire or severe winter or something else.

So it's a bottom to the top dynamic rather than a top to bottom dynamic?

It really depends, and there are a lot of different factors. That is a huge debate that you can track through the literature for a long time.

In cases where wolves have had an impact on prey populations, are there other things that came out?

Yes. In those unique examples, there is typically a major habitat component involved there. For example, with caribou, predators were drawn into that habitat because of logging. Dense forests were cleared, which brought in moose and deer to forage, which brought in more predators. It

also only seems to occur when there is another prey population present. So with caribou, there is moose and deer present as well.

Are there enough examples of wolves in single prey environments to make any determinations?

I don't know at this time.

I read a paper that was a review of all the studies going on in Yellowstone, and what was interesting was that despite all those studies, they're really not that sure what is driving changes. The interaction of all of those effects is so complex. There are great bodies of research out there that still haven't managed to give us an answer on reasons behind these changes.

There is also a combination of where the science is currently versus the perception and social piece. That has such a huge impact on how we move forward. You can go from place to place and ask the same questions and it will look different sometimes.

We also live in an age where science has become weaponized. This is true in a variety of situations and continues to be used in many destructive ways. How do we come to a common understanding and commit to having open eyes when we come across studies that say something different from what we want them to say?

In the editorial world, sometimes we'll see papers where it's pretty clear the beginning point is an advocacy position of the scientist. Those are typically a red flag. What we really want is the science to come through as an objective of posing a research question and then seeing what those data say. So that weaponized science is even present in the research world.

I am always concerned that we'll get into a situation where we don't make any management decisions because there isn't science available. Where there isn't science to base decisions on, we have to trust the department to make some decisions. We are in trouble if we are sitting here waiting for science. Let's not wait for science to make all management decisions.

It's kind of struck me lately, on the topic of weaponizing science, that a lot of the stuff that people tend to grab onto are present in the discussion of the paper, rather than what the paper actually says. The discussion will mention other factors that may have influenced these conclusions, even though there isn't any data from the study to support those conclusions. I think the intention of the discussion is to fuel future studies, but that can be lost on others who cling to those conclusions as fact.

We are also making our own science. Our situation in Washington is unique in the world, even from when wolves were here before, and we have to put trust in the people who are doing that science right now.

When we think about studies, our first step is to think critically about it and then discuss it with each other to sort of dissect it. From there, we think about if there are any parts that are applicable to Washington. The team pays attention to the whole body of science available, and is critical of all of it.

How does department staff prescreen studies to examine?

In the past, you can do keyword searches, and then you are looking for studies that quantified the effect, rather than generalizing. You also look at whether that paper has been cited or not. There are also journals that don't have a rigorous peer review process, or even don't have a peer review process at all. We screen those out.

You also kind of come in with a foundation from reading so much in school. I also go through the literature cited at the end and check to read them as well. You look at where the study was published. There are a lot of different aspects.

There are also foundational authors and researchers, and you always want to check their work. I am also always looking for a new creative idea. Is there something new that has come out? Should we be looking at that? Does it apply to Washington? If I can find something new and credible, I want to bring it to the table.

I just wanted to say that wildlife biologists have come a long way, and I think we all need to take comfort that we are at this point in the process. These people are not going to let these populations blink out if they can help it.

Third party neutral: Is wolf population control needed?

In general, carnivores have a territory they defend. In a population that's stable, you might see more wolves killing other wolves, or cougars killing other cougars, to defend that space. They evolve this way so they don't eat the prey populations to nothing. There is a wolf/wolf social tolerance. Biologically, I wouldn't suspect that we specifically have to manage those numbers down. You would expect a certain density and not expect wolves to "stack up."

A lot of wolf population size is based on the availability of prey biomass. Territory is also based on prey availability. Dispersers will also look for other areas. There are wolves fighting wolves, but that doesn't regulate populations as much as prey availability.

We should add that wolves dispersing have much lower survival rates. That disperser is much more likely to encounter other, non-friendly packs.

There is interspecies conflict. Is there limited biomass for other top predators?

Absolutely. We do see cougars and wolves killing each other. That is an area where we are still working on getting more science. But it is certainly there.

Where wolves are now, we also have to consider livestock as the prey base. If an elk herd is devastated, wolves are still going to eat before starving.

We have seen that. Wolves' natural prey is deer and elk, but cattle and sheep are still there.

When we've looked at studies around that, we've found wolves eating livestock, but not nearly as much as if they were a prey animal. Wolves seem to avoid livestock most of the time. Livestock is not always part of the prey base, and a lot of times they get overlooked. It's hard to say how much of the prey base livestock makes up.

Before wolves hit that self-regulation point, they're going to eat livestock. So the wolf population would need to be managed.

We haven't seen that in the research yet.

Would the predation rate on livestock be more if the ungulate populations declined over time?

We don't know that for sure, and we're not seeing it now. It's unheard of for wolves to starve to death. What typically happens is they leave. They choose to disperse before they starve to death.

We don't really have evidence to say yes or no, because we manage the population to keep that balance. So yes, we know that these animals move on and disperse. The movements are based on where ungulate populations are. Do they eat livestock? Sometimes, but we manage it. So we haven't allowed it to go to that level. And in other states they do the same thing.

The discussion so far says that wolves will self-regulate, but it hasn't accounted for the human ecosystem factor. Where wolves interfere with that human ecosystem, they need to be controlled.

There's a real question about what control means in regards to wolf populations and if that's even possible. In Alberta, they're killing 1,000 wolves a year to protect caribou, and every biologist up there will tell you that it hasn't been effective and wolves are back within a week.

If you're trying to control the wolf population, you're going to have to kill 30 percent of the wolf population multiple years in a row. It would be socially unacceptable, expensive, and most likely not effective.

In terms of livestock being more vulnerable as the population gets larger, as the discussion evolves around what the world would look like then, making sure tools are available, both

nonlethal and lethal, is something we need to dive into. It's a localized issue. The question of wolf populations and whether they need to be controlled is at a different level. I think Washington is a place where we've implemented nonlethals at a scale before the population got too big. We've had an opportunity to get ahead of the curve a little. I don't think any of this discussion means that as a society, we will stop making sure producers have what they need in the toolbox. Around livestock producers, there is always going to be that toolbox to keep livestock safe.

Also, what I've read indicates that predators not only don't drive prey populations down, but also predator populations don't go up. This is in healthy ecosystems. Wolves were a part of that study, but there was also lions and other predators as well. Is Washington a higher level of ecosystems? Might we be in a place where the wolf population won't grow to match the prey populations?

I think everyone here is smart enough to know that if there were no people on the landscape, wolves would not need to be managed. However, we have to think about those human interactions. You may have a good prey base for wolves in a certain area. However, if hunters perceive that area to have a lot of wolves, they may not go there. Adjustment for those factors is also what we have to look for. How are we going to interact with them?

The word "need" makes it hard to have a conversation. "Need" is meaning something different to a lot of different people. We might want to discuss what that word means.

How many wolves are in the Teanaway pack?

Eight

How many deer/elk do they eat every year?

There are a lot of studies with different things. There are some general rules. It can be 20 adult deer (or equivalents) per wolf per year. Again, that's just a general. There is variability throughout the science.

In Washington, range sizes are generally two packs per WDFW game management unit. It's important to remember that game management unit sizes vary wildly throughout the state.

If there is an impact, what are the queues and signals that we should be monitoring so we can detect it early and determine if it's real?

The scientific part of this has determined wolves regulate themselves. That's nothing new. But then we didn't have fractured landscapes, wolf plans, or other factors. Nowhere have I read in the plan or anywhere else (legislature included) about natural fluctuation. It's not wildlife management. I'm very disappointed in this discussion so far.

Just to be clear, this isn't making any decisions. This is just a discussion on the different perspectives.

I understand that.

Important to keep in mind that the research wrestles with the idea of whether or not that deer would be there even if the wolf didn't kill it for food.

Obviously you can control wolf populations, but to do so (numerically), you would have to kill so many wolves. It would be 30-50 percent to have that controlling impact.

So what is the goal right now? Because I'm not sure.

I'm not sure either. I just wanted to say that the idea of population control is incredibly complicated.

There have been goals and population management for other species. What is wildlife management but control? Do we really want to manage wildlife through natural fluctuations? I can speak for the hunters that they don't want to do that. We are still going to have to control predators and prey to come up with a publically acceptable balance. Natural fluctuation is the dark ages.

I think we've learned that this is about understanding each other's needs, and we've heard those needs today and yesterday. The challenge is meeting all those needs simultaneously. There are needs from many different perspectives. How do we have science help inform us as we think about finding that very creative place that helps us meet all those needs? I think that's what the discussion is about today. We really have to understand each other's needs as well as our own needs.

I think we're close to recovery of wolves. How many wolves does it take for recovery and how to balance with livestock? I don't know. But we have to manage it holistically. We can't manage it on natural fluctuation. It blows my mind if we even think about managing that way. That would be doing the wildlife a disservice. That's why we have wildlife management. We have fractured habitats, and we're going to have to try things, and if they don't work, we have to try something else. I've said this before, but I don't think we'll have a hunting season for wolves in Washington. What hunters are concerned about is that ungulate populations will be there. I think we somewhat have a goal, and I think we need to have goals and objectives. I think we can agree on objectives. We need to talk about things we can agree on, and not try to micromanage the department. The department has to understand that they need to achieve objectives, and managing through natural fluctuations isn't going to get us there.

I respect where you're coming from, but I do find it a little offensive. We were asked to bring the science forward. We are not making any decisions today. We are discussing the science that is out there so we can use it in the future to inform the decisions we make.

What does management mean? That has a spectrum of so many meanings, and each person has a different idea of it. We use that word, and it has those different meanings. The other word is control. What is control? When you're talking about it from the scientific standpoint, my understanding is that if you're managing for conditions (habitat, biological and social elements, etc.), you're not managing for a number. You're managing for conditions that meet the needs for everyone. I think that's what everyone is talking about today. You're letting habitats fill in while also managing for any conflict.

Break

Back to the original question, we need control on impacts in a specific spot. I wanted to clarify that it is localized, and not statewide.

Just wanted to say that this is important because scientists often debate this stuff in a different format. Today is not about planting a seed or whatever. This is to dig into the science so we have a mutual understanding of what is there. This isn't meant to lay a path for something in the future. We want to use it for meeting everyone's needs, rather than combative.

I want to say that I love this sort of discussion because it gets at the identities. This is why I like science. This gets the focus on the reality of livestock on the landscape with wolves. We know that there are systems that livestock producers have created to work within the natural ecosystems of predators. They've figured it out and they have almost no predation at all. I appreciate that this discussion lets us think about this differently. We also recognize that 300 million people have had an impact on wildlife populations. Humans changed the dynamic on the landscape hugely. Using science and neutral platforms, we are analyzing the effects of all this. I think we are going to figure it out. I think we do care, and we are very passionate about people and wildlife too. The biggest challenge for producers and livestock on the landscape with public lands and public wildlife is in the spring time. That is a crucial time to make sure livestock are not placed anywhere within 800 meters of a den site. That's according to research. So if we manage the grazing processes, we can adapt. That's where I think science is important to help us make important decisions.

I think we all have different needs and see the issue somewhat differently. I really appreciate the conversation and the work of WDFW staff members to bring this literature discussion forward. It does bring forth the need that through the plan and through the commission we are going to manage. I don't think the goal has changed, but I want to say it again. We need to protect our livestock producers. We need to be able to maintain economic viability over time. It will change, but it needs to still be there.

I also want to thank the staff for all of the work involved. Based on our best understanding, where is the space for all communities to get their needs met? Control and management mean different things to different groups. For the environmental community, if the term “management” means that when the population is recovered, there is a sport hunting season, that makes a lot of people nervous. Can we manage with minimal wolf death? What I’m looking for are opportunities to do that in a way that causes the least disruption to pack structure. How do we meet those values while also meeting the values of livestock producers? What else can be done to ensure livestock operators stay in business? What are the opportunities for all of us to make our needs known and hear the needs of others? One nugget that came out today is that wolves don’t tend to hunt out their prey populations. That’s good news! We need to keep using our mutual learning of the science and come to these conclusions and make these decisions that benefit everyone.

I think of management in a lot of ways. One management tool is hunting, one is closing roads, one is raising animals in enclosures so they don’t get eaten by hawks. It’s important to remember that there are many management tools.

We do have great interest in maintaining wildlife in this state at or near the levels and goals set out by the department. We don’t want it to suffer by game management unit. We want to see the same numbers for deer and elk. I think it’s the department’s job to apply whatever tools they need to achieve these objectives. It’s important to maintain that level of prey base, because if that goes away it’s hard to say it won’t affect the livestock producers. We have to manage this holistically across all aspects. We can’t just manage single species.

We’re not trying to manage for dramatic ups and downs. We’re more interested in smaller fluctuations that are consistent over time.

If it was all left up to Mother Nature, would we see massive increases and decreases in wildlife populations?

I think when you have a simpler system with a specialist predator, a lot of times you’ll see those cyclic moves with big curves and crashes. As you get into a multi-predator and multi-prey system, it really dampens that variation. Interactions between predators and other factors contribute to that.

How do humans play a role in that? Do you see it more with people on the landscape? Are fluctuations mild or wider?

It is still mild.

Animals are programmed to minimize searching for food, maximize eating the food, and then go find safety to digest. That attitude means that animals are not going to eat themselves out of house and home.

So we know wolf populations aren't going to be cyclical, but that's because they can switch prey bases. Will prey fluctuate instead?

Wolves are opportunistic more than anything. There are also beaver and other smaller critters that they eat. It's not necessarily a focus on a certain species. Wolves are opportunistic. Now, if there happens to be more white-tail, they may average more white-tail in their diet. If there's just a few elk, you probably don't get a lot of elk.

Wolves are also scavengers. Also, when wolves have taken a hit in population, it's usually related to disease.

I felt like we were asked to bring forward some science for some information sharing. This allows us to answer some basic questions and inform, and allows us to see how this science relates to the needs of all of you. This is by no means making decisions. This is working with everyone to make sure we're at similar knowledge areas. I'm looking at this as information sharing by people who are forward thinking and wanting to be informed.

I think scat is a cool way to study wildlife as a noninvasive methods. It relates to diet and can tell you the preference of the predators. The opportunistic aspect is also based on how much energy it takes to find that prey. If it takes a lot of energy, a predator might switch over because it's more likely to survive.

Can the preference change back pretty quickly? Like, if you go after something weaker and get your energy back, do you switch back to the tougher prey?

It can change within a year. And that energy level can change minimally to make a difference. A lot of times, for example, wolves avoid bulls, but after a hot summer, they may switch to targeting bulls. Seemingly small differences in animal health can have huge effects. It all ties to all of these complex systems.

Does our system have stressors in it already? Are there stressors in habitat? How will science inform us about what Washington looks like through that lens. Added to the information needs.

Lessons and examples from other places

Department staff looked at several different plans from the USA and Europe.

One of the things we keep talking about is the minimum metric, and what we've found is that it varies. It seems they always say, "at least ____" is what is sustainable to keep the species on the landscape. Most are managing above that minimum though. We also found that there were a lot of missteps in other states and other countries. I know we all know that, but what we do in WAG is incredibly important. It's the social aspect and also the funding portion. In Italy, for

example, there is a brilliant wolf management plan, but the funding is not there. The Great Lakes is another example of a misstep in process.

There are some states and countries generating revenue from hunters and other recreationists. We may want to think creatively about how we want to frame that in our state. Some states don't have fees at all for hunting.

Hunting wolves itself has a lot of variability. Some places have no hunting at all, others limited, and others with no limits.

Most places have a compensation program, and most places have a maximum limit for that fund. Some places also compensated for hunting dogs. We may want to discuss that, but not necessarily do it based on what we saw in other states.

Several states started strong with collaring, and several states and countries are setting up volunteer groups to help track and monitor. Genetic sampling is becoming more popular as well.

For Minnesota's plan, is the compensation program just for wolves or for deer and elk damage as well?

Just wolves.

Is the department able to use drones for a wolf survey?

One of the things no longer in place is an actual moratorium on agency use of drones. That has been lifted, and we were able to enter a pilot approach looking at an existing moose project. This specifically uses drones to go in on collared cows and observe for calves at their side. There were some limitations (weather, etc.), but the technique shows promise. There were some positive aspects. An observation that could take up to six hours can be done with a drone in 20 minutes. We will continue to look for applications where drones will be successful.

There are also some FAA considerations. They are a lot safer for staff (other than helicopters, for example).

There is a period of desensitizing that has to take place with drones. Our use of drones affected the behavior of livestock and guardian dogs, for example (*example provided by WAG member*).

Related to compensation, did you see any consistency in where the programs were housed? Who is doing those functions?

I wouldn't say we were able to see one working better than the other. In the USA, it's the agricultural programs within agencies. It's more local control around permits for removal, but

compensation itself was broader. Most committees contained a variety of stakeholders for reviewing applications.

The response to depredations varied by area as well. Many states are using USDA. In the European countries, it varied more, from local officers to a broader team.

In the countries where there are wolves, are reindeer an agricultural animal?

Yes.

I was curious because in a cultural sense, I've seen that folks don't care about cows as much. In these countries with reindeer, is there more acceptance around wolf management?

Great question. One article I read talked about Scandinavian countries, and the parallels with Washington were very similar.

Just from secondary personal experience, my family abroad just thinks of reindeer just like cows.

I think if the department can use drones, that would be good for them. The compensation part is tricky. A producer can be compensated out of business. It's better to use management to minimize the impact. Compensation can be too difficult to be a usable tool.

Some areas did manage not for a statewide minimum, but more for a habitat/topography minimum.

Most every population we looked at was protected. Most had plans for more active involvement. All of them identified more available habitat, but the human factor minimized the ability for wolves to occupy those areas. There were a couple intensive management portions in some plans. All of them targeted increasing ungulate populations. You have to have an excessive amount of take on wolves to actually see the impact on ungulate populations. At one point it was 60 percent take.

The advantage of Europe is that we can look there for areas similar to the west side of Washington. In all of those European areas, from what we read, ungulate populations were stable. There's so much more we can look into with what we're doing in Europe. We do the best we can with the information we gather, but recognize there is still uncertainty in that.

Are there any other plans integrating a pay for presence program?

Just the southwest right now, besides the Scandinavian countries.

On the European side, hunting and the culture of hunting is very, very different. The concept of a general public hunt does not exist in Europe.

We got through 19 plans, but know that there is a lot of other information out there.

Break for lunch

WAG's Role

- Helping to ensure a fair, open, inclusive, and transparent process for driving decisions related to the plan
- Helping reach diverse Washington communities and audiences
- Continuing on the outreach portion, including outdoor recreation
- Bring in diverse ideas from communities
- Balancing the science and social needs of stakeholders
- Vet and process ideas
 - Website content (dummy site/dropbox)
- Be creative! 😊
- Being well-versed in the current plan to see what can be moved into a new plan
- Helping manage the political arena and take an active role in that
- Help department get science and plans from elsewhere
 - Molly
 - Ralph
 - Diane
- Setting example for making respectful decisions
 - Modeling what we'd like to see elsewhere
 - Change the world
- Ensure all affected user groups have their voices heard and concerns addressed
 - Subgroups within groups
 - Some are easier to engage with than others
 - Where has current process not worked as well? What should WAG/department do about that?
- How do we reach non-impacted/non-interested people before they are impacted?
- Expectations of department staff members
- Same side conflict stuff
- If WAG does the plan, we need a third party neutral
- Soldier on together
- WAG to help develop the plan
- Another process outside WAG to engage with the public outside this room
- CCT evening listening sessions
- How do we design a broader public outreach?
- Stakeholder engagement plan
- Pushback on the department constructively
- Third party neutral in-house (department) reduces expenses

- Having WAG develop alternatives
- Need intentional process with commission
- Develop vision, purpose, needs, and framework
- Capacity for department to create a team solely dedicated to CCT tasks
 - Independent entity
 - Process owned by everyone at the table, including government agency
- Need diverse voices in WDFW in the process to build trust

Are we taking on options in developing the plan itself or are we a forum for processing ideas? We represent interested stakeholders, so we could inform the department as the plan is developed. Or are we a working group to help develop the plan and options for the plan?

And if not WAG, is the department forming another body?

We know our planning process has the standard SEPA process with EIS process. As that is going, our plan writing process is also ongoing. So now add that to Conservation Conflict Transformation. Imagine working that content like we did with the protocol, and having points of cohesion. After that, SEPA and plan writing start. So when we get to the SEPA process, we've found the points of cohesion. It's a different level of input because those points were found beforehand. I'm not saying that's how the department is going to do this. It's just a way we can combine SEPA and CCT into one process.

Wasn't the Wolf Management Plan done in a similar way?

There's a lot of similarity because there was a wolf working group that helped the department draft the plan. There was also a huge public component of that (65,000+ public comments). We went through blind and scientific peer review. Where the public agreed, we incorporated those items. That worked well, but it wasn't the only piece. There were still the 7.5 million people in the state. The plan was constantly undergoing changes, and the peer/science review was incredibly important.

As WAG members think about their role, we want to make it clear that we need you and want you in this process. As much as you want to be and more. You helping us through this process makes it more durable.

Having a third party neutral, who isn't just the department, could help. I think the department needs to look at something like that.

I would be incredibly sad to lose this WAG dynamic. I feel like we soldier on together and have an active role in assisting the department in creating the post-delisting plan.

One thing the department is attempting to do is train in CCT. One aspect of that is training department staff to serve as a third party neutral.

I think those of us who have had the opportunity to go through the WAG process have that trust, but I'm not sure the general public will have that trust. No matter how much CCT training there is, you're still the government.

We really want this to be successful and replicated. We want this to be foundational within the agency. That means that we are going to attempt to provide this third party neutral support going forward. I'm making the argument that we can do it with our staff. If others are concerned about that, then we need to hear it.

Third party neutral: The one edit is that the department needs to earn their neutrality. Whoever is up here has to earn their neutrality. Think about this: obviously Donny and other have been in that role, but I will be here to provide support for a little while after I'm no longer serving as the third party neutral. I'll still be available for a little while. So, is there a way WAG can give the department the opportunity to earn that neutrality? If it's not working, you can then provide that feedback.

I'm not saying department staff won't have the skills to do it. What I'm saying is that you can't change the fact that you're government employees. I don't think this concern is from the people in this room. I think it's reflected in the wider public.

It sounds like department and WAG members want the WAG to function pretty heavily in the development of the plan. I think we need to be aware of that, because I don't think any process can look like something we've done before. It can't be just us who comes up with those ideas. We need to engage with a wider audience.

It's tough for the department to serve as the third party neutral, but there are also people who wonder why they would spend money to bring in an outside contractor.

Reconciling relationships and establishing the right process to go forward. So, I'm agreeing that we need to reach out to the broader communities, but we also need to create this space out there. That is on us (the department) to take responsibility on that. We are practicing and training on third party neutral experience in our Wolf Internal Group and in other aspects of the agency. We are practicing on how to be neutral on content and focused on process. We all have to build that muscle and practice it repeatedly.

If this is going to be a department member, I think it should be someone without a history or a bias in wolf management. It will be more challenging with a department staffer initially, but I think it can work. We just need to be careful of who that person is. It's a challenge.

The most developed resource for applying this approach right now is in this room. The staff members in this room are the ones who have received the most training.

The problem is it will pull a staffer out of an active role, and each voice here is valuable.

I do think that with the training that the department has, and the process that's been built, I think it can help to have leaders in communities who aren't department staff members. I also wanted to call out the Fish and Wildlife Commission and making sure we bring them along with us.

What are the limits/sideboards of WAG's role in developing plan?

- Existing plan should play out
 - Stay committed to this plan in meantime
- Not micromanaging the department
 - Provide higher level input
- Advisory
- WAG is not doing SEPA
- Within agency's goals and vision statement
- Within state and federal law
- Think about economic feasibility of recommendations

Printing a hard copy of the Wolf Management Plan for the following people

- Jessica
- Jeff A.
- Paula
- Jess
- Andy

Vision for 2028

Not a mission statement and not goals and objectives. The vision is the "what" and the "why". It is not the "how" and not the "who." What does the world look like ten years from now?

- Everyone is good with it or can live with it
- Wolves recovered across the landscape and rural communities are vibrant and doing well
- Rural/urban divide bridged
- People feel at ease with what's going on in their backyards
- People feel secure (broad, human needs kind of way) no matter who they are
- Diverse and sustainable source of adequate funding for WDFW
- WDFW can diversify funds and meet diverse needs (people, fish, and wildlife) and address diverse species needs
- Wolf conservation and management is a source of cohesion in Washington
- Department is a trusted, high functioning, collaborative, well organized, credible agency in all communities
- Healthy, sustainable, wildlife populations and ecosystems
- Multiple use on all public lands
 - Acceptance of that

- Harmony
- Using noninvasive monitoring techniques
 - Safety aspect (both biologists and animals)
- Maximize staff and wolf safety
- Atmosphere of innovation
- Less conflict
- 21st century federal grazing reform
- WA/WAG seen as a successful model in the state and around the world
- Restored, healthy habitat across Washington
 - Habitat we currently have
- WDFW/WAG are producing and sharing new knowledge
- Society feels empowered, included, informed, and recognized by all

The third party neutral will draft various vision statements for WAG members to discuss at the next meeting.

Plan for next WAG meetings

* indicates a topic seconded by other WAG members

- Last year's outcomes / protocol*
- Timeline for the next wolf plan
- What does fence line weaning look like?
 - Firming up structure after departure of third party neutral
- Start designing how WAG interacts with larger public in development of the plan
- Developing prioritized communications and outreach plan
 - What needs to get out now by whom
- How are we going to generate all information needs outlined yesterday
- How to generate resource funding needs
- Hear from department conflict specialists on prep for this year's grazing season
- Process for the plan development*
- Department talk about reason for pack names (split issue)
- SEPA 101
- Science collection via guests
- Public opinion surveys
- Brief overview of the current Wolf Conservation and Management Plan
 - As well as the commission letter (wolves in Washington) outlining future steps
 - Whatever it would take to give WAG an updated refresher
- Where people are at with what the plan should look like
 - Soft discussion

Are there resource guests we would like to have visit?

- Dr. Wasser people and dogs
- James Goertz – moose topography
- Fish and Wildlife Commissioners

- SEPA coordinator
- Azzura Valerio, Gabe, Zoe

Public comment

- I felt like the meeting was a great opportunity to get to know everyone and understand perspectives. I live on the west side, so understanding the east side is important to me. I think WDFW can help create more public trust by sharing information about the thought processes that occur after a depredation. Weekly reports are vague. What else were you thinking about while out in the field? Let us understand the complete response to the depredation. For the coming season, I would like to see an increased focus on identifying potential conflicts prior to the grazing season started. Looking for wolf dens and looking for areas where proactive methods can be put on the ground. Maybe you're already doing that, so tell us about it. The public has skin in the game too. Many of us are concerned about healthy wolf populations for our future children.
- I wanted to let you all know that we drove a long way and spent a lot of money because it's important to us to listen to all sides. We don't want you all to think of us as producer haters. I would like to think the same thing as others (that they're not all haters). I constantly see social media comments that are full of hate. Those social media groups have a lot of followers, and public opinion might matter. Knowing that operations are being run ethically can influence that public opinion. I've seen photos taken on public lands with debris, manure, and tree stumps everywhere. That land is ours too, and we have a right to demand that it's cared for and that it's available for our use too. I think it's far too much land that is allocated for livestock production. I think recreation use would bring in a lot of money too. People want to see wildlife. This is the new generation. Our younger generation is full of more healthy living, more wildlife recreation, and more. Things are changing, and we need to think about that as we move on. We'd like a breakdown of the amount of money that's spent and where and how. Hunting is important to some, and some of you will think differently. To me, if we're not killing all those deer and elk, we're going to help livestock producers because the prey base will be there. There are a lot of different things to think about. What it comes down to is we don't want our wolves killed anymore. There are other options. Thank you all for coming, and I try to put myself in other people's shoes, and I really do respect everyone who is here.
- I wanted to say how much I appreciated the presentations and the literature review. I was wondering if there would be value in doing a similar process and presentation might help better inform the general public. It might help WAG members better relay that information to their communities.
- I think the science discussion today was really good, and I share the enthusiasm for that. That discussion is long overdue. I hope what I'm about to say next is useful information. There's a large portion of the public that finds it inexcusable that since 2012 the state has

undertaken kill operations five times, killing 18 wolves. This happened through protocols, while the WAG was in place, and without first making sure that everyone involved in those decisions had the same understanding of the science involved. So the discussion today is exhilarating to see, but also underscores the frustration we've felt over this time period while these operations have been going on. It may be exciting for some of you, but because of what I just described, you have majorly lost ground with the public because it was so delayed. You've got some ground to make up. I don't mean to diminish your excitement. I just want to tell you that you have some ground to make up. We've been in relationship with wolves in the state for the last ten years, and in the last six years, the state has cheated them six times. That population still feels alienated and distrustful. I would urge you to keep that in mind for the outreach and communication piece. The subject came up about having a WDFW employee as a third party neutral. It would be a hard hoop to jump over due to the distrust for the department. From my perspective, the department has a mission statement to follow. The department is a stakeholder, and I think it's unfair to the other stakeholders to have these meetings facilitated by the department. There are many members of the public who feel the same way as me. I hope you take that information into consideration.

- I feel fairly calm about the wolf issue right now because it's been some months since the cows were out on the range. So you start feeling it might be better this next year. I certainly hope and pray that is what happens this year, that wolves are not killed on our public land. But it hasn't happened in the last number of years. I will get really worked up again, especially if the same producer has wolves killed again on our public land. Wolves deserve to be able to live in those wild areas in peace.
- We'll have already started nonlethal deterrents on the ground by the time the May meeting hits. You will meet some of those folks on the ground for the Spokane meeting. We also need to make sure everyone is on the same page when it comes to packs in the state.

Meeting adjourned