

Wolf Advisory Group
WDFW Spokane Region Office
21 May 2014
Minutes

Member Introductions:

In attendance – Mark Pidgeon, Paula Swedeen, Tom Davis, Bob Aegerter, Jamie Henneman, Jack Field, Linda Saunders, Karen Skoog, Carey Morris

Staff: Dave Ware, Donny Martorello, Stephanie Simek, Rob Geddis

Presentation: Summary Update on Wolf Conservation and Management.

Donny presented current status of wolf captures, monitoring, packs and potential denning activity.

Activity: 13 packs in the state, new activity south of Salmo, Klickitat, possible confirmed report in Blue Mountains (a pair and possibly a pup).

Mortalities: Ruby female hit and killed by a vehicle, incision from surgery healed well.
Adult male and female in Smackout...a collared adult male was killed by a cougar and recovered by WDFW.

Trapping in Salmo (sets being dug up) and Lookout...been unsuccessful thus far...Captured an animal in Lookout but it pulled out of the padded foot hold trap. Capture crew is pulling out of Salmo, Lookout, and Carpenter and moving to Dirty Shirt.

We believe Smackout female has produced pups, she is on her own (no mate), we'll hold off on trapping Smackout in order to give the female a chance to rear the young.

No recent activity in Wenatchee, working with Colville tribe, and checking other areas with known packs for activity.

Collar data sharing: Getting ready to share the data for grazing season. The GPS collars are experiencing problems with the desired fix rate that was requested. We are renewing or maintaining on-going sensitive, data sharing agreements. There are 3 entities data sharing occurs with: county authorities, individual producers within territories of collared wolves, and private timber companies for forest practices in and around den sites. Developing a new agency web-site for producers to log in and retrieve the data. The data is raw and provides exact coordinates.

Potential denning activity: Teanaway (may have changed den location), Wenatchee (unsure), Lookout (may have changed den location), Wedge (unsure), Salmo, Diamond, Carpenter (unsure), Dirty shirt (unsure), Huckleberry (unsure).

5 successful breeding pairs in annual report.

The other Ruby female has a VHF collar and is close to humans.

We will review pack status in December of each year.

WDFW is preparing survey protocol to use occupancy modeling to monitor the population through long term survey methods with an associated error.

Jamie asked for an update on federal delisting: WDFW expect a conclusion or final recommendation on the delisting by the end of this calendar year.

Certainly more packs out there then we are able to document. At the rate we are seeing expansion 39% growth rate seen / year. Fully expect more out there.

Linda: what is really going on...39% growth rate but only 1 individual more than in previous years...Donny: this is a minimum count...no error bar...it does ebb and flow some years a big jump some years a minor one.

Item 1: Game Management Planning (GMP) – Dave Ware

Dave presented the draft language associated with wolf management in the Game Management Plan. We decided not to include a full wolf chapter in GMP. Draft GMP says implement Wolf Plan until recovery. Address in general terms using public scoping in terms of monitoring and implementing WCMP; livestock-wolf interactions, ungulate-wolf interactions, start to draft what WDFW would include in a plan for post-delisting. Current process: open for public review next month and go before the commission late August/Sept. Note: this is an SEIS (an update) to the existing EIS.

Future meetings will include agenda items to start drafting post-delisting wolf management plan issues and needs. Had group discussion on role of proposed GMP, new post-delisting wolf plan, etc. Jack questioned who made the decision to not include the wolf chapter in the GMP. Dave indicated Department wouldn't have enough time to get this in the current proposed GMP plan given the issues and public comment on the topic. Jack indicated that the public wants to know now how wolves will be managed once delisted. Mark and Jack indicated there groups strongly support including a wolf chapter in the proposed GMP. Bob A. indicated support for not including a wolf chapter in the proposed GMP. Jamie: does the GMP influence other documents? Yes, the GMP drives the overarching directions on how we manage species.

Dave discussed general public survey results conducted by Responsive Management (Duda et al. in press). Discussed results associated with questions about wolf recovery, delisting, wolf-livestock conflict management, hunting, and satisfaction with the Department. Discussion about: incorporating science outreach in areas where survey results indicate information gaps; discussed importance of a balanced approach. Discussed Washington experiences with non-lethal tools even though not published yet.

**** Assignment: WAG members to send comments to WDFW over the next couple of weeks.

**** Assignment: WDFW will post full survey on the web.

Item 2: Protocol for Lethal Removal – Dave Ware

Brief update, Department heard comments/input from WAG, and is comfortable with current Protocol for lethal removal. Linda reiterated that she has concerns, voiced before, about protocol. Dave discussed that this process and group is not a negotiation but advisory. Jamie discussed concerns with checklist on delayed turnout date of June 10 and making the use of non-lethal munitions essential (trains wolves, making it harder if lethal control is needed later).

Item 3: WAC Development – Dave Ware

Dave discussed draft WAC codifying actions and public requirements associated with lethal removal of wolves by the Department. Jack asked question if producer would be denied compensation if had a depredation but they/department didn't know wolves where even in the area. Dave discussed there is allowance for special situations. Tom asked for inserting language for emergent situations; Dave will do. Some discussion about "if appropriated" in WAC; Dave will look at language revision to match RCW. Dave will add in 3a, documentation is made by Department. Jack recommended striking 3bii entirely. Linda expressed concern about the Department's definition of repeated depredations (min of 2 depredations, at least 1 being mortality). Paula discussed the role of best available science and incorporating that into WAC language.

Dave discussed WAC and commission process for rule making. Next step of this WAC is make revisions, submit CR 102 and collected written public input, schedule hearing for public testimony for Aug, with Commission adoption in Sept 2014.

Item 4: Communication – Dave Ware

Discussion about what level of information would WAG members like to be regularly briefed on and how quickly.

Jamie discussed concerns with outreach associated with WWO how members of the public may view WWO with a bias (not neutral on wolf items).

Interested in email update on depredation outcomes once a determination is made; agreed for confirmed and probable wolf events. County Commissioners may want advanced notice of ongoing depredation incidents.

Management Scenario Discussion – Dave Ware

Discussed scenarios: what actions are available in federally listed area?
What do you do with other orphaned or injured wildlife?

Karen expressed concerns regarding the 2 Ruby pack females: when you have a dog with a wolf and the dog returns home...is the wolf or dog tested...it should be? This needs to be explored.

Linda: Endangered species have stricter guidelines as to what we can do.
Yes, it is dependent upon where and what listing and the particular scenario...for example is the animal injured and it is more humane to euthanize.
End product is similar to protocol but maybe more of a narrative.
Wolf Response Guidelines: are these still in place? Yes.

Discussed examples where we have euthanized other carnivores for similar scenarios but we may not do this for wolves.

Linda: in terms of habituation non-lethal techniques have been used successfully.

1. Wolf livestock conflict in Federally listed segments of state: We've done non-lethal to the extent that we can...lethal is not on the table...capture and relocate may be an option but the success may vary. The Service is the decision maker...If this is the tool that we have to follow then we need to get the mechanisms and items in place. How do we do this?

Relocation would have to be in the same recovery area. USFWS makes the decision... WDFW has this in place where we are the lead. But it may not be a viable scenario...and relocation if it is not going to fit then what?

USFWS is the lead in the Fed listed side...How does this unfold for Reservation lands? Defer to Reservation co-managers but they would need to stay within the Fed restrictions.

Question: have the feds already done a NEPA?

*** Ask Feds have they done the NEPA

DNR if health, safety, threat, will do what the USFS won't/// Local plans that don't match fed gov. but the local economy is in threat. In WY this was adjudicated

Comment that delisting will change this.

Discussion that Side Boards are needed: WDFW has the ability to write sideboards

Items to consider:

Don't move outside of Recovery Zone

Federal lands

Do we radio collar it...where do you take it?

2. Wolf Dog Interactions

Problem animal seriously should be considered to be removed.

Especially in an area where not listed it doesn't make sense not to lethally remove.

Recommend the animal be lethally removed.

Karen: the Ruby wolf is still in the area...she is still visible to the public...she may or may not become a breeder.

WDFW worked with the community and overall it went well.

When animals are keying into dogs... What do we do?

Tom: what do we know about how wolves will respond if relocated...will they return? Will they continue that behavior?

Mixed results from science to relocate animals.
Shoot vs euthanized difference of view and response

6. Wolves habituating to communities:

Karen: We need to decide on level of tolerance of a wolf hanging around; we don't want people/residents to shoot the wolf. Suggest that we don't wait long to remove the animal because it will endanger community members and relationships. One side may like it and others may not.

Also, some members expressed "calling a lethal take euthanasia" is not acceptable...it is a last resort; there is more comfort about capture and euthanize vs just shooting.

Item 5: Future agenda items

1. Post-delist plan
 - a. State of science on packs management, impact of various actions, etc
 - b. What type of zones, ecological, regional,
2. Draft scenario protocol; WAG provide any additional scenarios
3. Revisit the proposed WACs
4. Federal rep come to meeting