

Wolf Advisory Group meeting notes

July 10, 2018

Ellensburg (day 1)

WAG members: Tim Coleman, Don Dashiell, Tom Davis, Dave Duncan, Molly Linville, Paula Swedeen, Jess Kayser, Andy Hover, Nick Martinez, Ralph Kratz, Lisa Stone, Shawn Cantrell, Samee Charriere

WDFW Staff: Donny Martorello, Candace Bennett, Ben Maletzke, Steve Pozzanghera, Scott McCorquodale, Stephanie Simek, Annemarie Prince, Dan Christensen, Dan Brinson, Bruce Botka, Matthew Trenda

Fish and Wildlife Commission members: Kim Thorburn

Third party neutral: Francine Madden

Welcome and overview

The third party neutral welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave an overview of the agenda. She acknowledged that there is an enormous amount of stress in the world right now, and a lot of different causes of that stress.

WAG has transitioned into a long term, strategic group that will lay groundwork for future plans and efforts. This has occurred right as we go into another grazing season. This has added to stress, but at the same time, it's a necessary transition for WAG. The public process piece has been identified by both WAG and the department as a critical foundation piece, and WAG's work will inform the department. It's the department's responsibility, but WAG has been saying that the department needs WAG's help in that. It's nearly there at this point.

There's also a lot of uncertainty around WAG. The department has a new Director, some new WAG members will join in the future, and there is an upcoming transition to a new third party neutral. What's important is that WAG has a path to walk. That path will be laid out today, and WAG members should have a feeling that they know where this is going.

What is happening in society nationally is also impacting every single one of us. You can't lose sight of how that is having an impact. WAG members have to keep their capacity for collaboration, care, and civility.

There are fewer department staff members in the inner circle for this meeting. The department and WAG noticed that the department's footprint on the group was large, and it was recognized that the department's presence needed to shrink. All sides came to agreement on this, as no one wanted the government presence to overrun the process.

The third party neutral encouraged WAG members and the department to connect with the public during breaks and throughout the day.

On humour, the third party neutral acknowledged that the WAG laughs a lot in the group, and that can sometimes seem to the public that members don't take topics seriously. She emphasized that there is not one person in the room who doesn't take these issues incredibly seriously. Humour is a way to cope with the serious topics, and as it is human nature, it happens with everyone. She asked folks to please understand that everyone on WAG and the department staff members grapple with these issues constantly and take everything seriously.

WDFW update / status part 1 - Current wolf conservation and management plan

The department gave an update on status, including an overview of the current plan. There is a lot of information in the plan. As we start thinking about looking ahead, it's important to think about what's in the current plan as well. The department focused on a couple areas and highlights of the plan.

The first chapter is the wolf conservation chapter. The plan identifies that there are no federal recovery objectives in Washington. There were federal objectives in the northern Rocky Mountains and the Great Lake states. These objectives were based on breeding pairs (defined in the plan).

Another concept of the plan is that the wolf population needs to be connected for a diverse gene pool.

There were five different models conducted to estimate where wolves would go in Washington. That data was generated from nearby ecosystems (neighboring states). The model that seemed to fit the best estimated home ranges, square mileage of those ranges, and distribution. Distribution was based on historical range. The plan doesn't expect wolves to occupy their entire historical range, as the Washington landscape has changed. This is how three recovery areas were designated.

The plan talks about different levels of status designation (endangered, threatened, sensitive, and delisting). To change listing status, certain criteria must be met first (outlined in the plan).

The plan also estimated the total amount of wolves once 15 successful breeding pairs were on the landscape. The estimate was anywhere from 97-360. These totals coupled with the distribution, 15 or 18 breeding pairs, and dispersers from neighboring states would equal a sustainable population.

The overall amount of time to get to recovery is hard to nail down. The plan says it could take years, or even decades, depending on a number of factors. The plan states that after delisting, the department will create a new plan.

There is a wolf-livestock chapter that goes over expected conflict and the history of wolf conflict in other states (Great Lakes, etc.). It outlines potential nonlethal deterrents and husbandry practices that could minimize conflict. The plan also talks about relocation to address conflict, with references to the Rocky Mountain methods. Survival rates of wolves that are relocated are lower than wolves that are not. Those relocated wolves have a harder time joining packs, could try to return to their original range, or could continue with depredations in the new location.

The plan estimates expected depredation totals depending on how many wolves are on the landscape (for 100 and 300 wolves). It also lays out what requirements must be met before lethal control is considered.

The plan outlines when the department does do lethal removal, it will be incremental (one or two wolves followed by an evaluation period).

Caught in the act was passed by the commission at the request of the Legislature. Caught in the act is defined as biting, wounding, or killing, not just chasing or pursuing.

There is a chapter on wolf-ungulate interactions as well. The plan anticipated wolves would interact with prey. There is evidence that wolves have little to no impact on overall ungulate populations. However, there is also some evidence that wolves can have an impact on local populations and hunter harvest. The impact of wolves on ungulate populations is widely debated. Several studies show no effect on ungulate populations, while others show an impact. It can vary based on other factors as well.

The plan talks about the status of ungulate populations throughout the state, and how wolves on the landscape could affect herd objectives. Populations are heavily influenced by disease outbreak and winter severity. Populations are declining in some places in Washington and increasing in other areas.

The plan talks about fencing and interactions wolves might have with ungulates through fencing. The plan also talks about the wolf's diet, and how it will most likely be similar to wolves in the northern Rocky Mountains.

Question: What WAC is the current caught in the act rule?

Answer: WACs 220-440-080 and 220-440-020 (they reference each other)

The plan also discusses how reducing some hunting seasons may be on the table to address any declines in ungulate populations. If there was a case where there is an at risk ungulate population, where the main reason for the risk is wolf presence, the department may consider managing that wolf population.

There are many more items outlined in the plan as well. This was just a brief overview. There are 12 different objectives to achieve the four outlined goals of the plan, and also goes into detail on methods to achieve those objectives. The plan is available on the department's website at https://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray_wolf/mgmt_plan.html.

As we transition, there has been some concern that the department is hesitant or doesn't want to delist wolves. The department is a conservation and management agency, and we need WAG's help in reviewing and building what that path looks like for wolves. It's also more than just WAG. Wolf conservation and management, and how it looks in Washington, should be shaped by the citizens of Washington. The department knows this won't be easy, but there is a lot of faith in WAG and the WAG process.

It's incredibly difficult to take the complexity of wolves and try to describe it in 30 minutes. It would be like any of you trying to describe your job in 30 minutes. There are so many things involved in this, but WAG is one piece and will fit into that bigger framework. We look forward to working with WAG and engaging with the public on a post-delisting plan and conservation in the future.

Break

Elements of and timeline for the long term Wolf Conservation Management Plan and process

Purpose: To have WAG, WDFW, and a Fish and Wildlife Commission representative develop a draft path forward including roles, responsibilities and chronology for products and processes in developing the Long Term Wolf Plan; to ensure integration with decision-making bodies, legal requirements and public engagement; to prepare for August Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting and relevant Commission requests. Commissioner Kim Thorburn will be participating in this session.

WAG discussed the process to get to a final decision on a new wolf plan. This will include a SEPA-plus process, which will be the SEPA process with even more engagement from the public and more involvement from WAG. This will tie into different roles for WAG, WDFW, the public, and the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

WAG members participated in an exercise to plan out the process for the new wolf plan. This process will need to have WAG, WDFW, the public, and the commission in alignment. WAG also created a rough timeline of events to get a sense of the chronology. The exercise involved sticking cards to boards on the wall to populate the timeline and see how all the events relate to each other. There are some blank cards and some cards already filled out. The final project will be saved and presented to the commission in August.

Because there are so many things involved in the process, it's incredibly important that each step is mapped out.

What is the final product for WAG and WDFW? The commission has requested some decision space within the plan proposal. Knowing what is expected will help shape that final product.

Comment

One other entity that cannot be forgotten is the Legislature. Funding often comes through it, and sometimes it gets involved in other ways.

Comment

The periodic status review is due and will be available soon. After that is published, the SEPA process will be completed for translocation (as requested by the Legislature). Federal delisting also plays a role in the timeline.

Comment

I'm confused. I thought WAG was an advisory group, and this sounds like we're being asked to write this ourselves.

Answer

Periodic status reviews are completed for species that have been classified as endangered, threatened, or sensitive. Recovery plans are developed for these species, and the commission requires a periodic status review to see how things are going. Providing testimony during the presentation of the periodic status review helps the commission make a decision on listing status and other items.

Question

Are we going to recommend hunting seasons for wolves or are we just going to say we think they should be managed?

Answer

There are several contentious issues with wolf management. What we are looking for is for WAG to help with those items. That could help us come together and find cohesion. And maybe that is one of those items. You do provide recommendations, as an advisory group, but if you come forward with cohesion on a big issue, that is tremendously powerful.

WAG can decide to have a discussion around certain issues, but may not come to a conclusion. You may have a discussion and then tell the department to make a decision from there. You can decide to what level of depth you want to go on any given issue. That just means you want to have a say in it. The commission will make the ultimate decision, but you can still have a say in it. The next facilitator should do intakes to figure out what you want to discuss and where you want to go with that. Don't feel like this exercise is prescriptive, or that you have to come up with the answer. Each item on this board is going to have to be massively unpacked.

Comment

I wanted to thank Commissioner Thorburn for explaining the periodic status review. Also, what I'm looking for is advice and input from WAG because you all represent different groups. As we're working through this together, we're getting input from each community. Also, your role isn't just feeding us, it's feeding outside entities as well.

Comment

I think the specific ask at this point feels missing.

Comment

I am still extremely confused as to why we haven't taken on the extreme social issue. I don't see how we can answer any of these items written out without solving the social issue first. I don't know why we can't sit down as a group to find a common ground on what we envision for the future. If we can't do that, why are we doing this? I have to know where I'm going before I make a decision.

Answer

WAG hasn't had a mandate yet to do it.

Comment

Who sets the mandate? We were told we were to find common ground socially. There is no agreement in this group right now. Are the original WAG members and the department going to agree on this?

Answer

That's why those items are listed out on the board. There will be discussions.

WAG has a demonstrated high capacity to come to decisions together. You've done it in the past. You are going to be adaptive with this exercise. If there are parts of this where you can't find agreement, then that's where you stop for now and work on those things. I would ask that you try and work on the assumption that you can do it.

This is WAG's process, and the department is honored to be here. The department has also tried to have a voice in a balanced way, without too big of a footprint. We've tried to provide good feedback to you as we've gone through the process. This means as you move down the line on those items listed out, you'll know that you have cohesion both within WAG and with the department included.

You don't have to go down in depth, but you can if that's what WAG decides. Maybe you just talk about different strategies, do an analysis about the costs and benefits of those strategies, and provide that to the department. That means it is at least informed by those discussions.

Question

Could you clarify what you meant by original WAG members?

Answer

I meant all WAG members. I'm sorry.

Comment

We were appointed as an advisory group to the Director. There may be something else that comes into this conversation when the new Director starts next month. That is another level that we need to be mindful of as we go forward. WAG has a very specific, active role in working with the department. We don't just respond to what the department gives us, but we also make recommendations. It empowers us and refocuses what we are supposed to be doing as a WAG.

Comment

I think we can get to where you are wanting to go. I think we have an unprecedented opportunity here. We've performed the role that was just laid out. There may be more we can do within the plan. We are being asked our opinion about how we want to provide input and shape the post recovery plan. We've been asking this for a while, and what you just said about wanting to get to the vision, can be put up there and we can decide how much time we want to spend on it. I think this exercise allows us all to have a common sense of the path we want to take. I can't think of having ever been presented with this opportunity, and I appreciate the department for providing it. I think this helps us and the public put it into context. I think we can use this exercise to come up with something we all feel good about. I think this is awesome.

Comment

I appreciate what you're saying, but I'm reminded that I'm supposed to be in an advisory role to the department, and the department reports to the commission. That is the chain of command. I'm concerned that even though this opportunity is here, I also want us to be productive and efficient and have a participatory role; All of us, not just a few of us who are excited by it. I'd prefer to just advise the department.

Comment

Nothing is changing with that. You are still advising the department. The department will have to present to the commission and the commission will approve or deny it. From what I've heard, the department needs a stakeholder group to help with the development of the plan, and they've decided to ask WAG to be that stakeholder group. A lot of the work is going to fall on the department (writing, presenting, etc.). Individually, you all want a say in what those strategies are for the development of the plan. If there is value in WAG talking together about that topic, then that needs to be up on the board. If there's no value, don't put it up there. You will need sufficient consensus on whatever you come up with.

Comment

It sounds like the vision piece would go on the WAG line very early. And there may be a purple arrow that points to the commission so they are hearing what WAG is thinking about the vision.

Comment

WAG might start with a vision, and that informs the department. We are mandated to get public input, and we want to get that public input. WAG is advising us, and we may have some pushback on what WAG recommends. From there, the department will present to the commission. This is still all going down the same path. What do you think is important in the next plan? Let's make sure we document those things and talk about them. What do those things mean for other stakeholder groups?

Comment

I think there is still some confusion around outreach.

Comment

That's why it's up there for a discussion.

Question

How do we go about the process of populating the timeline up there? What if we disagree?

Answer

If you have a disagreement, then after you populate the timeline, there can be a discussion point. We'll come back to this group and go over any point where there wasn't agreement. Bring that up to the big group and we can discuss it. As you usually do, you will then come to an understanding.

- After the discussion above, WAG and the department went through the exercise (see Meeting Materials for photos of the exercise).

Molly and Paula presented the results of the exercise. They said there were many attempts to check in as items were placed on the timeline. Most everything on the department's line has an arrow back to WAG, as WAG wants to hear about things the department is doing.

The first item on the timeline for each branch (Commission, Department, WAG, and Public) is trust. It's important that whatever is created needs to stand the test of time, because whatever is developed will have a lot of scrutiny.

The first few things on the list are needed to be done first on the timeline. Other items, in regard to timing, can be adjusted. This is just a good starting point.

Items with an arrow marked "L" will require Legislature involvement in some form.

Comment

Don't you think funding needs would be better on the department line? They will have better resources to identify budget needs, while WAG can provide input on those budget needs.

Comment

Good point, and I think because it mixed in priorities, opportunities, and limitations, it seemed more like a WAG item. We can switch it, but it seemed WAG would have a lot of input in those areas. This also relates to the Legislature.

On the department line, timing can be adjusted.

WAG is the how-to discussion, while the department is the doing it part.

The plan review card is where it is because it was felt that WAG should have input on when and how often the new plan should be reviewed and maintained. It ties into the commission and the department. Department and WAG will want to provide input before the commission finalizes the plan. Department can inform the final WAG recommendation (what is unrealistic, what might need adjusting). The department will be the body to finalize the plan.

Comment

I think we need to understand what the process is. I don't think the WAG recommendation is what will go to the commission. It will be a SEPA process that determines it.

Comment

I think there were two points being made on the plan review. The plan will go through the whole SEPA process, and WDFW will be working with WAG throughout the process. You will have time to comment and the department will take the recommendation to the commission. However, it sounded like there was also a comment on how often the plan should be reviewed.

Comment

If we come to the end of this and deliver something, where is the adaptation in it, and do we have a say in what that adaptation looks like? I think that we should.

Comment

That is a role I think I can play as an advisor. I think it can be fairly constructive.

Comment

Since it is a component of the plan, and it is prescriptive, then you wouldn't need a second card after that plan review.

Question

But then what happens after adoption? We'll need a piece in there about how often to review.

Question

What do you mean by regional differences in relation to overall objectives?

Answer

In the overall objectives, spell out regional differences within the state. I don't know if that's well spelled out in the current plan. Understanding population densities and the fractured environment. If nothing comes up regionally, and 300 wolves are all in one place, that isn't acceptable. There has to be some regional pieces in there if we're going to be successful.

Question

Do we have the distinction between outreach for the plan and outreach after the plan has been adopted?

Answer

Yes.

Question

Did you have conversations on public opinion and engagement and what that means on the WAG line?

Answer

My opinion is that this topic is one we need to talk carefully about. From my point of view, if someone is asking me to go out and do public outreach, that's more volunteer hours for me, right? Before I go out, I want to make sure we've really thought it out so I am not wasting those hours. Are WAG members going to attend open meetings for SEPA? How are we going to get the public to engage on this? There are communities that have shown up, felt unheard, and then not showed up again.

Question

Is this meant to be a write up of the engagement with the public? Or is this going to be the actual engagement? Depending on what that answer is, what you're talking about is actually down on the SEPA line, not the card for WAG where it's a summary.

Answer

The public opinion and engagement card is meant to be the summary of what happened in the SEPA process. Public process and how-to was added to the beginning of the WAG timeline.

Comment

This really helps me understand the sequence and what WAG envisions as their role. Can someone explain the orange tag that's up there?

Answer

An analogy is, say my dad is the owner of the company. I can do all the planning I want, but if I don't get that approval, all that planning is pointless. You need blessing from the boss. I want to hear from the commission about boundaries we're working in before WAG dives into the wolf management aspect.

Question

At some point in time, can we spell out the appropriate way to communicate with the commission?

Answer

I think that's a great arrow, and I think the commission does need to give sidebars. The periodic status review is going to be an opportunity for us to develop those. It will certainly need to be provided before any post-delisting plan is in place. We have a process where we request information from the department. This is called the blue sheet process, where the commission puts forward a "blue sheet" requesting something from the department. This latest wolf blue sheet was asking how we interact. I think very soon we need to hear what's going on for the front end of this. We want to hear WAG's thoughts on a public process (the commission has its own public process right now too). I think our understanding is that WAG is representing major communities that are stakeholders in wolf recovery and management, and that you, representing your communities, are able to come together on tough points. The commission needs to hear about WAG's role soon, to help us understand how this relationship will be. Advisory group comments and status are often filtered through the department to us. We also sometimes set up panels so you're not held by the three minute rule (for public comment). At some point, we might want to hear from a WAG panel.

Comment

Thank you, Kim, for that. I think the blue sheet for the August meeting includes roles for WAG, department, and the commission. I think we can get an update on what we're hearing today. I think we can present what we've done today to all of you.

Comment

I think the public process part is going to be important for that blue sheet.

Comment

When WAG has more power, as you do now, you have the responsibility to give more power. The more functional you become, the less you're seen as a citizen and the more you're seen as a powerful body. It's important to keep that in mind.

Comment

I marked the L on a few arrows because I think it's important we make sure key committees or legislators are informed of things that are going on.

Comment

Maybe someone could put together a key legislative engagement plan.

Comment

I want to bring us back to the beginning, where it was said that we can all make decisions and have hard discussions on these things. We may not come to consensus on certain things, but we can get there in different ways. Maybe one of our contributions could be coming up with a range of different options. That could provide a decision space for the public and the commission. Maybe when it comes to tougher items, we can outline some options, but not put the weight on our shoulders to come up with one option that we can all agree on.

Comment

Those become alternatives that allow that decision space.

Comment

And we can do the best we can, but the public is going to want more involvement than what we can provide.

Comment

Right now, the department is providing an update at the August commission meeting. What is the step to communicate this to the commission? How does that look?

Question

Are folks okay with this being presented as a draft to the commission? This is to explain the process WAG went through, as well as the process as WAG sees it for the development of the post-delisting plan. We still have to fill in some orange (commission) pieces.

Comment

With the caveat that this is a draft and should not be misinterpreted as being definitive.

Comment

Which is why it's Velcro and markers.

Comment

If the staff wanted to clean this up a little bit to align timelines, I would be okay with that.

Comment

I would encourage the department to have it done at least a week before the meeting so WAG members can comment on it.

There was agreement on presenting the finished result of this exercise to the commission as long as the department aligned timelines for each line and cleaned up the presentation slightly. The cleaned up version will be given to WAG members before the meeting so they can ensure it looks how it is supposed to look.

Question

Is there anything else Kim or the commission needs for this?

Answer

We are spending a lot of time on the August agenda. There are a lot of things that we cover. I think we're going to have to have a little bit of a discussion on how this update is presented. There might be an opportunity for a special committee.

Comment

For process, how to fit wolf into the commission agenda is a discussion point.

Comment

I would be interested in a draft overall timeline.

Question

Could you come up with annual benchmarks now, or is that something that is unrealistic? How long do these things take? Does this exercise need some shuffling, and could the department come back with a timeline estimate?

Answer

Maybe not a timeline, but an amount of time. The bottom line is very structured and has a timeline associated with it, but we can stretch it to fit the other parts of this exercise. This wouldn't be a timeline with dates, but a timeline with the amount of time each thing might take.

Comment

We should be realistic about how often we can meet and how long this stuff takes. This may be a discussion for after the new third party neutral discussion. Not exactly dates, but going through an exercise to be realistic about how long things take.

Comment

I think we all need to keep in mind that there are wolves out there right now that we aren't discussing. In my opinion, WAG should be having those discussions too.

Question

Do you think it's desirable to designate parts of WAG meetings to short term responsive items?

Answer

Yes. WAG has a vision, and the post-delisting plan is not the only part of that vision. We can't forget about the people dealing with things right now.

Comment

So, a plan would be to combine short term responsive with long term planning.

Public comment

- When I saw this project this morning, I was super dubious and thought there was no way they'd get through this. However, it was a lovely thing to watch everyone work.

- I actually kind of enjoyed wandering around here, despite being lost for a bit. I did want to comment on the agenda. There were five items that were supposed to be discussed today and those items were not discussed. That is not fair to the public. At the very least, please add a proviso on the agenda that the agenda is subject to change. I don't think many other places note that agendas can change, even though they do.
- I would like to know who is replacing Shawn.
 - Nobody from Defenders is replacing me. I don't get to pick who fills my spot.
 - The department will go through the recruitment process for vacancies to fill that spot.
- I've been wanting to attend for years, and I'm really impressed with the WAG group. I see the laughing as an absolute positive. I was just really amazed with the magic that's been pulled off and I'm really excited about it.
- I'd just like to second the ideas from Samee, because I think of the wolves we currently have in the state doing their thing. This work is very important, but keeping everything safe along the way is important.
- TPN
 - Just a reminder for WAG and WDFW, that part will have to be written into the timeline.
- WAG comment
 - Just wanted to note, having the proviso on the agenda is nice, but following the agenda is better.

Adjourn

Wolf Advisory Group meeting notes

July 11, 2018

Ellensburg (day 2)

WAG members: Tim Coleman, Don Dashiell, Tom Davis, Dave Duncan, Molly Linville, Paula Swedeen, Jess Kayser, Andy Hover, Nick Martinez, Ralph Kratz, Lisa Stone, Shawn Cantrell, Samee Charriere

WDFW Staff: Donny Martorello, Candace Bennett, Ben Maletzke, Steve Pozzanghera, Stephanie Simek, Annemarie Prince, Dan Christensen, Dan Brinson, Bruce Botka, Matthew Trendera

Third party neutral: Francine Madden

Check in

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

Implementation plan for the public process

Purpose: To review purpose/needs developed by WAG in May; to have stakeholder groups prioritize the events/venues that are best suited for their community so that WDFW's public process efforts are more successful; to seek WAG/WDFW agreement on an implementation plan drafted by WDFW; and to determine what, if any, role WAG wants to have in the public process.

The third party neutral reviewed the purposes/needs, principles for public engagement, venues, and content for the public process. These items were identified by WAG members at the May WAG meeting.

One purpose/need was adjusted from the last meeting. This was the "WAG shouldn't make decisions without public engagement." This was changed to "WAG shouldn't make these decisions on advice without public engagement and no one else should either."

WAG members were put into their stakeholder groups for about 25 minutes to come up with the top three or four items that would be the priority venues or means of communicating. How do you engage with those communities?

The department put together a skeleton implementation plan of roles and responsibilities, keeping within funding realities. The plan has to be realistic within the present sideboards and expectations.

Producers – What groups to address

- Association/community group meetings
 - Monthly meetings

- Capital Press and local papers
 - Special editorials
- Junior livestock shows
 - FFA and 4H
- Conservation districts
- Grange meetings
 - Lions Club Rotary in smaller towns
- Face to face meetings would be most effective
 - Carefully choose the right message and the right messenger

Question

The department has some partnerships and relationships now with the Department of Agriculture. Did you talk about that at all?

Answer

We didn't actually, but that's a good point.

Question

On the choose the right messenger, is that the actual person or is it a personality?

Answer

Good question. I think it's a combination. It's the right message and the right person so the message can be received. It depends also on any history the person might have in the area.

Question

Under the neutral concept, would a department person without any history be considered a neutral, good messenger?

Answer

Yes, I think that would be okay.

A neutral person within the department would be okay. This is also where the department wants to get information from the producers.

I have seen a bias towards biologists in the department, one way or another. If you have a neutral biologist come in, there may be a bias one way or another on their position. There are a lot of people I've spoken with who just think there are too many biologists. So maybe if the person wasn't a biologist.

Question

Would an entity from a different department fit better?

Answer

Absolutely not. It has to be someone who can also answer questions. I haven't seen that bias towards biologists in general, just toward specific people.

It's these kinds of conversations that help us get in the room and have those interactions without already having tensions high. I think what I'm hearing is that we need to have the right folks there who have knowledge of wolves, livestock, and ungulates, but maybe it's someone from another division. Maybe those of us wolf biologists are there just as a resource to answer questions and listen, while the main person is someone else without that biologist background.

I think too a pre-meeting prep that spells that out for producers would be helpful so everything is clear about what producers are being asked. That will be easy in some areas and difficult in others.

Question

Would a round-robin type of listening session, with someone moderating it, work well?

Answer

I think that could be effective, as long as loud personalities aren't overwhelming and someone is moderating. You need someone running the meeting to take charge and keep people in check.

Know your audience. Different things are going to work in different areas.

I will personally say that I am happy, as a WAG member, to be a resource for the department if they want to reach out ahead of any meetings to see if any planned structure can work.

Environmentalists

- Listening sessions
 - Organizing new events
 - East side
 - Tonasket
 - Spokane
 - Wenatchee
 - Chewelah
 - Walla Walla
 - Community colleges
 - Community centers
 - West side
 - Seattle
 - Bellingham
 - Olympia
 - Port Angeles
 - Everett
 - Vancouver

- Facebook live events
 - Virtual town hall
 - Use the web as a resource to reach broader audience
- How we are all connected
 - Video from the department
 - Information that precedes or goes along with public outreach
 - Wolves in ecosystems
 - Humans in ecosystems
 - How are communities touched by wolves?
 - West side communities want that biological information
 - Presenting information and showing credentials would be good
 - Having biologists in the room who are out and about with wolves
 - Don't just present the information that keeps people separate
- Outreach materials
 - Department's new website as a solid base
 - Resource for people
 - Static / interactive story map on history of wolves in Washington
 - Maps for suitable wolf habitat in the state

Question

Would a QR code be helpful?

Answer

No one really does those anymore.

Question

Could you elaborate a little more on your vision of a successful listening session?

Answer

I think a successful one would start with a brief overview presentation. I would stay away from stations around the room and instead keep the group together. I think those stations around the room aren't as effective. People want to be able to build off of one another. Maybe if that's moderated, it could be even more effective. So some presentation first, with a question and answer session afterward with the whole large group. That will help inform a broader conversation.

In some of your locations, that could be hundreds of people, and as an agency, I don't know that we've seen a successful approach with that many people that allows that dialogue.

Maybe it's a bit of a hybrid between group and stations.

Comment

It used to be that logging on natural forest was a very controversial thing in my community. We had a public forum and had a panel discussion. Everybody got to express concerns and issues. It was very civil and there was good discussion. People in the community care about the science part too. If you can somehow present that and everyone feels like they've been heard, it can be effective. A panel discussion can be successful. If you give each side their time to say what they care about, and everyone is respected, it can be effective and successful.

There was a lot of wisdom in that previous comment. The idea of a successful event isn't so much that everyone wants to talk, but that their views are presented and received. In our case, it's that those messages are received by the department. They also want a feedback loop that shows how those messages have been included in the process.

I know there's limited time and resources, but I think there's a mix of events you can have. I like the beer and pizza idea every so often. It allows for really engaged discussion with a smaller amount of people (40-50 people). Those folks then go talk to their friends, or maybe engage with an electronic town hall. A few of those meetings sprinkled into the larger listening sessions could be very effective.

I just wanted to second the idea of a diverse panel discussion. No one gets picked on and the dialogue is super respectful.

Hunting community

- Sportsmen shows, surveys (specific questions), website (linked from surveys)
- Social media
 - Hunting forums
 - Constructive input
- Community meetings
 - Newspaper
 - Notify
 - Initiate discussion
 - Radio – outdoor link (west side)
 - West side may not have grasp of overall hunting picture – how to inform
- Conservation hunting groups
 - Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
 - Mule Deer Foundation
 - Various state hunting organizations

The hunting community is rather fractured. It's important to note that in a state with 7 million people, you're trying to reach a population of about 200,000. It's such a dispersed population, and such a small group. Within that group of people, you also have subsets. It's incredibly difficult to reach those individuals. There's a lot of people who feel like this issue doesn't matter.

I worry about this one a lot, because we ask a lot of our hunters. I'm worried that there's this fatigue amongst that community. On this one, we really need WAG's help to deal with the burnout that might be happening.

It comes down to that trust. I'm not sure how we can get them to engage, because right now there's no trust.

Question

What's the department's process to ask hunters things?

Answer

Typically it's public meetings, and literally there are more department staff at those meetings than public members. We also receive online comments. We also talk to hunting organizations. We email notices out to everyone with email addresses. Those links are on the website as well.

Comment

You used to pack the room.

Question

Is there a hunter reporting requirement in Washington?

Answer

Yes, but hunter reporting is very low, and the penalty is a \$10 administration fee.

Question

Are there publications that reach hunters that could be a vehicle to get messages out? Is there a way of using those?

Answer

In other states, there have been television shows and magazines that talked about things going on. That is a funding thing, but maybe that's something we think about long term.

The challenge sometimes is there is a range of hunter views that exist within hunting organizations. A lot of times they are weary of getting involved in these controversial topics.

I was thinking maybe local meetings more than banquets or magazines for those hunting organizations.

The Game Management Advisory Council asked for a discussion on wolves and we went to present. WAG will be getting some of their input. It's one thing to reach out to them, but one of the messages we heard was they are not engaging because the trust is not there. The message we heard was that we need to go back and talk about things with them before they feel like they

can engage. There needs to be engagement to build that trust before the hunting community can get there.

Comment

On bear education in the northeast, Defenders of Wildlife is working with the department on trying to reach folks out there (bear spray, etc.). It seemed good, but it's small, almost one by one. We might learn some lessons from that effort on how to reach some of the audiences. Feedback we heard was very positive.

I think that's how it's working. I think it's growing. More presentations are being done, and I get calls about doing more. It takes a long time, but I think it's snowballing that way.

We do the same thing on the west side, but we get more requests than we have time. I don't know how we offset that. It's a struggle I have often, and it's really challenging.

Department

- Venue implementation
 - Local to local
 - Liaisons to organizations and advisory groups
 - New website
 - More effective than current site
 - Social media
 - More effective for some than others
 - Diverse outreach teams
 - Use Wolf Internal Group
 - Build agency / team capacity (CCT)
 - Work with other agencies
 - Cabela's / REI / etc.
- Public opinion survey
- Listening sessions
- Myth-busting strategy
- Evaluate our last process for wolf plan outreach
- Public Affairs consistent and informative messages to media
- Add in time on employee work plans to do all of this
- Develop timelines/roles and responsibility
- Hire a SEPA person to help with workload

I am constantly reminded what we, as a department, have what we're building towards, and what we lack. Twenty years ago, this agency cut its education and outreach branch, and we've been paying for it ever since. It goes to trust, strategies, and tactics to do this kind of work. To hear the comments this morning, I am energized.

Part of our job is identifying the most effective strategies and implementing them.

We also talked about making sure there are a lot of connections with WAG and other places.

Question

Have you looked at contracting out that SEPA work?

Answer

We did talk about that. We have a number of SEPA things, and the route we decided to go was to hire a new staff person because of the four or five different SEPA items we're going through that are all kind of connected.

One of the other ways we can reach the entire state is through visual means. We've worked with TVW and various media outlets. I can guarantee there will be a lot of media interest in a process like this. Now the stakes have become much clearer for people in this issue.

Question

After this meeting, is the department going to consolidate this stuff and get back to WAG with something solid?

Answer

I think we have to, yes. This conversation is helping a lot with how we want to shape things, including how wolves are presented on the website.

There is a sense from the public that this outreach is just not happening. I feel like what WAG wants is to get that concrete timeline/plan. How long is this going to take? I want to get it down in concrete, so when WAG next meets, the department can say, "Here is the implementation plan benchmark, and here is what we did.", and, "Here's what we're doing, here's the roles and responsibilities, here's the actual, tangible thing."

Great question. We have done many plans before, and I think we're at the stage where this helps us say it's time to start because we have this joint timeline with elements. So now, the department will build an adaptive project plan, where things can be adjusted. All of these elements go on that flowchart, including who is doing what, costs, etc. We have enough now that we can build that. We can say, "Here are the things that are going to happen in the next six months."

From my perspective, I would prefer a longer deadline if it's more realistic. I have in the past felt some frustration. I know you all want to say what we want to hear, but I would rather you be honest about workloads and capacity. Be realistic about the amount of time it's going to take.

We are well aware of how trust can erode when we miss deadlines, and it makes me glad to hear you say that.

This is an issue that has burned me for the last five years. In my opinion, we've failed on the outreach piece. It always gets pushed back. We often have these plans, but we never deliver. We have the outreach associated with this process, but we have outreach needs that are there right now. We need to have specific tasks so we can reach these goals. We don't advertise what we have done, and what we have changed, and we need to do a better job of that. I don't want to put more work on our field staff, because doing monthly reports are a task, and we're still not doing well on that. I'm frustrated about how we've performed on outreach so far. I think it's time we regroup on this, and I think you will see a change in the future. Everyone recognizes we haven't done well and there needs to be a change.

Thank you for that, because we're not all feeling the same thing. I'm feeling confident. We've created plans before, and those plans didn't have what we have in this room. We are going to create a really good plan. I have tremendous confidence. There are stressors we feel, and workload issues, but we're going to do this and we're going to do a really good job.

We can come up with the best plan in the world, but if it's not implemented correctly, it won't do anything. So we cannot forget about that piece. It has to be implemented.

Public

- County fairs
- PSAs
- Television and radio ads
- Letters to the editor
- Local colleges
- Education for kids
 - Moving up through generations
- Interviews – local television and radio
- Personal connections
 - Book clubs
 - Religious institutions
 - Zumba
 - Talk to people everywhere all the time
- Billboards
- Council meetings
- County commissioners

If people hear about wolves 30 or 40 times from ads or whatever, you will have more engagement with the plan.

WAG's role going forward in public process

- Invite local WAG ahead of time for community meetings
 - Can help with location
 - Can help with engaging with the crowd

- Can get people to attend
- Get on county agendas
- Have WAG and WDFW at meetings with public so WAG can represent WAG
- Diverse WAG members on panel discussions
 - Where possible and applicable
- Put some sideboards/boundaries on time/event obligations on WAG given limited time
- WAG helps in designing venue, structure, process, messengers, message
- Within boundaries, WAG members go to other stakeholder groups
- Sideboards
- Unified message
- Get things done
- WAG to help WDFW ask the right questions
- Ask what are your concerns, needs, and values that you want to see reflected in the plan?
- Survey

Question

How does the implementation plan get done?

I don't know how you can have outreach without vision and overall message stated first.

I would second that.

I hear that message, however it seems more genuine to have these listening sessions first. WAG then takes those sessions into account before that vision and overall message are formed.

I tend to agree with having the vision and overall message first. I think with hunter engagement, you aren't going to get a good response without having those.

The agency has done SEPA a million times. We first start with scoping. We have a way to conduct that scoping process to meet SEPA requirements. This process is going to be a little different. This is a new look, and WAG is informing it and is a part of it. The department is asking WAG to help us do scoping differently, in a way that matters.

Could the implementation be wrapped into the timeline we are creating? Would that be okay?

I respect the piece on public engagement, but it can also become really nebulous. That's what we're here for. We are here to engage with people and come up with ideas on how our groups feel about how things should look. We then come up with that range of objectives. We take that range of objectives to people and present those ideas.

I think it's time to implement some stuff, put things in writing, and get work going on the ground. Let's do it and get it done.

In those items on the board from yesterday, what I saw are both of those outreach approaches. Outreach is kind of everywhere on that board. I'm also getting a sense of getting things done. The department can initiate scoping soon, but my sense is that you all want to see that schematic.

One value I always think about is that we want to make sure we're asking the public the right questions. That will ensure we get the right information to make those decisions.

I hear the comments on developing vision first. I'm wondering if there's some sort of hybrid. Maybe if we have a vision statement that is inclusive, where everyone can see themselves, we could then go out to the public. On the sideboards aspect, there are some places the plan just cannot go due to laws in place. My concern is that people may feel like the outreach is token and that WAG already has made up their minds.

Are we going to ask the public for tools to manage wolf populations? Are we going to ask them about population densities? Are we going to ask about impacts that should trigger action?

I always start with what are the concerns, needs, and values of WAG before decisions are made. Maybe you go with that approach to the public. What are the concerns, needs, and values of your various communities? What concerns, needs, and values should be reflected in the plan?

We don't want to present something to the public that seems completed. A way to do that is to conduct a public opinion survey. That could include focus groups, town meetings, or a lot of other things, but that could generate information we can use.

I think we need to have some public outreach before a vision. If we do a vision, we've already started the process. If we come up with some general questions and present that to the public, then we can build a vision and move on from there.

As a department, we can help with providing an avenue to get those questions out. This group should develop those questions. My concern is reaching the hunting groups, which aren't necessarily as organized.

I would like you to consider what your stakeholder groups said before about listening sessions and face to face meetings. Does the survey meet that ask? It might work with some groups, but it might not. Part of this whole thing is about trust. A survey isn't going to build trust.

The problem with the survey is that you're not reaching folks. You do surveys now, and you're not getting the response.

We did a user survey on the website where we got 20,000 responses, and that has helped us develop a baseline. It proved effective in that case. It might not in a different case. But we have followed up with in-person meetings, listening sessions, and focus groups.

I look at surveys as the marketing tool. When I see a survey come, I think someone is trying to influence me. I don't trust them.

Question

I'm wondering how much of the current plan moves forward into the next portion? Some might feel comfortable with the objectives if they saw them implemented.

Answer

I think the current plan will inform elements of the next plan. I realize what you're saying, that part of that is just words on a page. I think our current plan is strong, and we don't want to reinvent the wheel. The implementation of the plan is there too. We want to be realistic and make sure things we have in the plan are items we are going to do, and that we have the capacity to do.

Can we talk about the general approach outlined a little earlier? Is it the concerns, values, and needs piece? That proposal sounded good to me and I'm wondering if we can get a sense of how people feel about that approach.

What if we try to get some public outreach initiated over the next nine months, and work on developing the number of questions in a general format? Each group, or the WAG as a whole can work with the department to develop a survey for those who cannot make the public meetings.

I think we try to get it started now, but we don't want to set deadlines that we aren't going to meet. We aren't going to get a whole lot done during the grazing season. The "slow" time, if there is such a thing, seems to be from November to February. I think that can be our target, and maybe we can hit it before the next grazing season.

The first stage of the outreach is the scoping piece. That's asking about the topics people think the plan should cover. You can let that inform, or you can start the dialogue about a vision and use that scoping to make sure you captured everything. I think either path could work.

I think the website being launched in November should play a role in that as well.

Break

A potential timeline was developed (very general and vague).

- WDFW to get the timeline developed yesterday to WAG by July 31

- Need WAG feedback before it's presented to the commission
 - WAG needs time to provide comment
- Trying to get it out sooner
- Early public engagement / outreach
- Commission meeting in August
- Develop questions for scoping
 - WAG check in Nov. 30
 - Test questions and refine with communities – Mar. 31
- Initiate SEPA and public engagement

There is also an element to consider in that the new Director doesn't know about WAG, so making sure that alignment is there. Let's also please not forget the folks on the ground who are affected right now.

One of the elements of getting it to the commission is getting it to the public as well. So sooner would be better.

WDFW update / status part 2

- Protocol
- Litigation
- Depredations assigned to packs
- Data sharing
- Caught in the act
- Current plan – review

Protocol

The department gave an overview of the current wolf-livestock interaction protocol, which can be found on the website at [link].

Question

Do you have a standard for the department to communicate with the public?

Answer

It's evolved. We used to do email, but now there's an email notice with the update housed on the website.

WAG members may want to create an evaluation committee or adjustment committee for the protocol once the sample size is larger.

The sample size is larger than two right now, because that two number only accounts for lethal removal. We purposely spent a lot of time on the preventative and proactive side of the protocol. I think there are other ways to evaluate. We need to have those areas be part of the evaluation.

The current monthly report includes a table that outlines depredation status for packs. For notices on updates, folks can sign up for the wolf email list on the department's website.

I want to second the point on the sample size.

Question

I know I'm signed up for some things on the email list, but one of the frustrations I have is that as a WAG member I sometimes have to go look for it. Is there a way for the department to include all of our emails in those updates?

Answer

Not exactly. There is a long list currently on the website of every single update we've done. They're all in one spot right now.

Question

Could there be more consistency with the email notices? Sometimes the department doesn't send out the notice.

Answer

Absolutely.

Litigation

On the litigation relative to the Sherman Pack in 2017, the hearing date did occur. The judge dismissed the case as moot. Since the Sherman Pack is no longer on the landscape, the court could provide no relief. The judge asked that the department provide an eight hour notice to the public before any lethal removal action. The department agreed to that. The department already gives notice to the public, but this clarifies the eight hour aspect.

Question

Is it automatic or is there an opportunity for WDFW to say you've followed the protocol and you think everything is legal? Can you challenge any restraining order? Or is it automatically granted when anything is filed?

Answer

I did not hear the judge specify anything other than the eight hour notice. Everything else stays the same. There was no other indication of any other requirements from the court. My understanding is that we do have an opportunity to counter, but the judge did not speak to everything else.

Comment

If we have to go to lethal removal, the whole point is to change pack behavior. This seems to go against the protocol.

Other than on a weekend, we have the period of time when we're looking at that depredation, then the next day we're usually having a discussion with the Director, and then the next day it's implemented.

The other litigation is related to the public disclosure request process. I can't share a lot because it's ongoing. I can share that we are considering a settlement, but are not considering things that would violate WAG.

Assigning depredations to packs

There was some confusion about how depredations get assigned to packs. When looking at pack areas, we can get out there and see if depredations overlap with where we have confirmed wolf behavior. So with Togo, the pack wasn't confirmed yet, but we were able to assign two depredations since we had evidence of wolf behavior in that area.

Question

Do you keep all records of depredation? For example, if it's a cougar kill?

Answer

Yes. There are classifications outlined in the current wolf plan and the wolf-livestock interaction protocol. It's a joint effort with Enforcement. The classifications are confirmed wolf, probable wolf, confirmed non-wolf, non-depredation, unconfirmed cause of death, and non-wild wolf (domestic dogs).

We also have the requirement to post all depredation data on our website within 48 hours.

Question

Can anybody go online and see that?

Answer

Yes, as long as our webpage is still functioning.

The domestic dog piece isn't really part of the plan. It does have domestic dog listed, but that's similar to bobcat or other. Another issue is a glitch in the online system. We are working to integrate the Wildlife Program reports with the Enforcement Program reports to capture all predator depredations in one place.

All of this information seems important. Do you also keep track of which pack you think it was?

In the annual report (every March), we keep track of all depredations as well. And yes, we try to keep track of potential packs. Each depredation report contains all of that information, and based on feedback, those reports can get adjusted.

One of the key issue areas for my stakeholders is the indiscriminate nature that seems to be associated with the wolves who get killed. In the case of the Togo, you have those two predations in November. Did they occur at the same time?

Answer

Pretty close. They couldn't have been the same day.

Question

We know that wolves migrate and may be passing through. How do you ascertain that the wolf pack later identified as the Togo pack was responsible for those depredations? It seems to me to be a little arbitrary.

Answer

Particular to the Togo pack, there were sightings and reports, but nothing consistent. With the Profanity collar, they were going north. We didn't have anything 100 percent concrete. When we had a depredation, we went out and confirmed a pack. Because of that, based on when the depredations occurred, I followed the tracks back to the mortalities. We were getting comments from producers and other range riders, so we had suspicions. Sometimes we're able to quickly identify a pack, but this one was one of those situations where we had suspicions but couldn't say anything concrete.

Question

What about the fact no non-lethal deterrents were being used? Why would that depredation count?

Answer

That's something where we come together and talk as a team. That's something that comes into account. The protocol gives us some flexibility there.

When we hit four depredations, that doesn't mean we automatically go to lethal. It just triggers us looking closely at the situation.

Question

Just to clarify, the Togo pack currently has two "strikes" from November, but this recent depredation didn't count to the four total?

Answer

Yes, it was determined the expectation for nonlethals wasn't being met.

It doesn't mean that it didn't count. Deterrents, again, are to change pack behavior. We are looking at everything in totality when we have these conversations. We talk about all of it. Everything counts, including sightings, comments, etc.

Maybe a better way to say it is that there have been three depredations in the Togo pack range and two of those meet the threshold for lethal removal.

Yes. Again, we talk about every aspect in our weekly conference calls.

Question

How does this work with a non-confirmed pack?

Answer

Part of that is looking at the recurring depredations. We still proceed the same way as you would with a confirmed pack. We still go out and do investigations, communicate with producers and others on the ground, and discuss as a team. Depending on the area of the state, there can be more or less certainty. The main thing is the investigations keep going on and our protocol is the same.

We don't dismiss it. We're trying to keep up across the state as packs form. We just haven't had success in some places. As those fill in, we are trying to put time into those places. Where we have those issues and depredations, we want to be responsive.

We have two competing high priority needs: getting collars into the packs, and getting collars into the predator/prey study packs. We're working on balancing that. Many states don't trap in July/August, but we do because we want to get as many collars as possible.

Data sharing

We've been sharing wolf collar data with producers for the last five years. When the program was put in place, it was based on other species data sharing and wasn't really refined to wolves. Over the last couple of years, we started looking at our data sharing and seeing where we could make it a little more robust.

There are few data sharing programs across the country, and sharing raw data is kind of unique. When we originated it in 2012, we made some assumptions. We had a blackout period to protect the identity of den sites.

So we've been looking at our program and talking to producers and county commissioners. Through some of our discussions, we realized the denning period is actually longer than the blackout dates. We want to be sensitive to when wolves are on den sites and rendezvous sites, so dates needed to be adjusted. We wanted a new system where the user could actually reset their password. That helps secure the system and makes sure the folks receiving the data realize the sensitivity of it. We are the only state in the country that does data sharing this way, so we wanted to clarify the language in the contracts so folks understand it more clearly. It's also important to realize that the data tells you where wolves were, rather than where they are. So we've built a system with a section block with time built into it, so the most recent location is the darkest on the map, as well as the heaviest activity centers.

One tool biologists have used is to focus on activity centers and home ranges. Home range tells you the hotspot of where that animal's activity is. It gives a summary of the data to tell you where wolves are hanging out, but not necessarily where any wolf is at any given time.

Also, those locations are dependent on the collars. We are trying to go from a point data system to go to a more movement based, activity center approach.

The information I was getting back from producers was that they knew when something was going on long before the point showed up on the map. There are people who are nervous about the change, and we incorporated a lot of the feedback to try to make this a useful tool. What gives them the most information and provides value?

Comment

There is a lot of emotion on the producer side about this. True, you're the only state that provides this, but you've provided it and now the producers feel like it's being yanked away from them. That has not helped with trust.

We have no information to make a better informed decision.

The third party neutral recommended going around the room to hear concerns.

Data sharing concerns

- Why black out denning?
 - Don't we need to know where dens are to avoid them?
- Trust – the impression is WDFW doesn't trust producers
- It's damn hot
 - Need something to take back to producers
- There's a perception of a delay in the data
- Concern about the change and how it affects commissioners
- Fear of unknown / new
 - Can we have a pilot and test it out?
- Timing of change
 - Learning a new system in the heat of grazing season
- Awkward rollout
- Should have given people six months education which would have prevented distrust
 - Need training
- Changing dates
- Can't keep cows out of dens if we don't know where the dens are located
- Grazing allotment turn out
 - Sometimes only one location to turn out no matter what
- Data being blocked out too long
- Producer autonomy and time saver of access to data during blackout

- WDFW needs to get WAG input and information
 - Partial consultation of select members of WAG is bad
- Timing sucked
 - Leads to conspiracy theories
- Feels like accusations/punishment of entire community
- How do these changes protect wolves?

Data sharing change

- Focus on high activity and patterns over time
- There is no processing time
 - No additional delay
- Producers can have a conflict specialist sit with them to go through changes and learn other aspects of tools and give feedback on how it works
- Both types of blobs contain last 14 days of activities
- You can click on the blob and get the time/day of when wolf was there
- Like a weather map on television (blobs)
- Producers requested / WDFW agreed
 - Both section block and KED blobs
- New blob gives location and probability of activity (old point data doesn't give probability)
- You can pick dates and funnel down date ranges
 - Doesn't have to be 14 days
- 61 people/entities total
 - Training

There was a discussion on how the new map will work. The analogy was that it will be similar to how weather is presented on the news each day, with darker colors where rain is heaviest. Producers will learn how to read that weather map.

Question

Have producers sat down with these different models yet?

Answer

I presented printouts and met with producers to show them what it looked like. Based on feedback we received, we went with section blocks and heavy activity areas. As far as the system itself, they haven't logged in yet. I was printing out papers and taking them out.

Conflict staff did go out and visit with data sharing producers to hear their input. At that stage, we were saying it could be section block and KED. They asked to toggle between both, and we agreed with that.

Comment

If you have a pack without a collar, we don't know where the den is located. Even if we do have a collar, it can be a while before we know where the den is located. However, when we do know, we share general locations so we don't have livestock being put out on top of a den site.

Counties have talked about the producers that do not have data sharing agreements and may choose not to have them at all. They are relying on the county to provide general verbal information. We are having the exact same challenges in regard to county participation as we are today with producer feedback. I have another round of discussion with the counties that I've committed to doing. They were waiting for what happens here in WAG.

If producers want the data, they should be able to look at it, rather than have to wait for department staff to share it each day.

The concern that I have is around the blackout. I like that the blackout has been moved to be more relevant to when den activity is happening, but I'm really hearing what producers are saying about how that makes their job more difficult. I think that should be discussed at the next WAG meeting.

I feel like for the past three years WAG has been trying to save the department from themselves. I feel like we've been pretty clear that producers don't like change. To change something this impactful in what is perceived as the middle of the season (stressful time), is bad. Did you not foresee that this would cause a tornado of conspiracy theories? And to not bring that up to WAG members beforehand? I feel like this should have been anticipated. Aren't we all tired of damage control? People's feelings are crushed over this. I hope that is clear to everyone.

I think selecting part of WAG to consult with on anything is a bad idea. Consult with everybody, or don't consult with anybody. But always consult with everybody.

Comment

First, thank you all for sharing your feelings on this. This has been really hard, and it's been a long process for us (multiple years). It feels incredibly awkward that we called some of you and not all of you. Our intention was to show our plan and get some more input. It wasn't meant to leave some of you out. We thought we were doing it for the right reason so we had diversity of input.

The previous comment captured most of what I wanted, but I did want to say that this has been a two year process for us, and it has been mentioned in WAG before. Having said that, yes this should have been a specific agenda item, and I will apologize for us not reaching out to all of you. You were all mentioned as a primary source of input for our process over the past two years. I do feel like every time something like this comes up, it gets pushed aside for something else, and then we get blamed and criticized. To then be slammed by all the producers about this hurts.

I listened and I hear that. I remember being caught in the meat grinder, and I'm sorry you feel that way. I wish what I said came across more as constructive criticism, rather than how it was taken.

I have a great deal of respect for the department, and that's why I'm on this group. Maybe this is a teachable moment, and trying to judge someone's intent is impossible. All I know is this could have been rolled out differently. I hear what you're saying, and I feel similar about it. Let's see where we are now, and do the best we can going forward. Let's learn from this and move on and work together as this data sharing rolls out. Let's make sure all of us are successful as we move forward on this.

Question

Can you run this new system with the old system?

Answer

What we're turning on is the KDE and section block on July 16. We may be able to do that, but it's a larger conversation.

We can take it into consideration.

I have had producers specifically ask for that as well. Some just want to look at it and figure it out on their own.

That's been the foundation of the discussion with the county as well. Another thing that's been brought up with our technical team is being able to look back in time and pull up those examples to compare the different systems.

It might be good for producers to have that so they can compare.

Can we take that back and ask what a training week would look like? I understand what a change this is, so I want to take it back to the full team.

I think it would take about three months (August – October) for a full training.

It sounds like there's been pushback from two counties, and discussions are ongoing with them. If you land on a certain decision, it should be the same for counties and producers, and not end up in different places. Everyone should be treated the same way. Consistency between counties and producers is imperative.

Would it be possible to show old, old data to WAG and the public? Say two or three years old? Would that violate the policy? I think that might be valuable at a future WAG meeting.

Question

How many department employees know how to run the system? Are there enough that can train the producers in a short amount of time?

Answer

Yes. That is possible with current WIG.

Thank you everyone who shared everything today. We heard what you were saying. We want to go back and talk to the rest of our team and talk about this 30 day training period. We can then get back to WAG by the end of the day Friday. We want to include the rest of our team before any decision is made on that training period. The training period would have all three data sharing options turned on (point, KDE, and section block).

Question

Are you going to follow up after the training with some sort of evaluation of how producers feel?

Answer

Yes. I think at the end of the grazing season we can go back and talk about what worked and what didn't. We can review lessons learned.

Question

Why just 30 days?

Answer

I guess how we landed there was to have cohesion, and to have something in the middle of one week and three months. I wanted to honor the concept of a training period. You will hear back from us on Friday by the end of the day. And that includes all WAG members.

Comment

If there is some kind of narrative that comes with that, it would be helpful. Answers to questions.

Comment

We can chalk this whole thing down to lessons learned as well.

I think the biggest thing was the trust part. It wasn't so much about the change.

When your phones ring, call us. It would be good for everyone to get everyone else's phone numbers.

Third party neutral

Short version is that the department knows that having a department person as the facilitator doesn't work. We've worked hard to try to find a different solution. We have not found another

resource at this time. That doesn't mean we're giving up. We're not done looking yet, but wanted to let you know that we haven't found anything yet. We will need to have a dialogue about another solution.

There were two options explored at the May WAG meeting. Steve was asked to find a non-WDFW state facilitator. Turns out that was not available. Other people looked for other folks and couldn't find anybody. Paula was asked to look into private funding (from WAG), but there were very few responses. Also, ten members of the WAG did not like that idea. We'll have to discuss other options.

Another option is to just not have a facilitator.

I would prefer we keep our momentum, and if that means that in the interim a department staff member is used as a sort of facilitator (note taker, scribe, etc.), that would be okay with me.

TPN Options

- No facilitator
- Supplemental/legislature
- Rob G. – WDFW
- WDFW “scribe”

The third party neutral said that WAG can be adaptable. It is okay to try something and then determine if it works or not. If it didn't work well, try something else. You can try something in the autumn, then try the supplemental idea if it doesn't work. Do not lose the social aspect you have together.

I totally agree that we need to continue to meet. The worst thing that's happened is when we didn't meet for a year.

WAG agreed to continue to meet regardless of how this situation shakes out.

Other things to work out are time, date, and location of the next several meeting dates. There are also vacancies on the WAG that need to be addressed. Also, some WAG members have terms ending in December of this year. A conference call by the end of the first week of August?

Public comment

- I am a former science and math teacher. This is better data. You've taken location frequency and your predicting probability. The new data sharing is a better model.
- Yesterday I commented on the fact that it was unfortunate for the public that the agenda got changed. Of the remaining items, there were a number of things that still weren't discussed. The department said they would update quickly, and they did not. These topics are things that people want to know about. Going brief does not meet our needs

of being heard. My constructive suggestion is that if the public has asked you to talk about stuff, don't make it brief. Actually talk about those things. It feels like we're not being heard at all. I really like that the data sharing was being discussed factually, but there is a lot of emotion. There was a similar aspect around the Togo pack. People are rejecting the attribution of the depredations to the Togo pack. The first the public heard about it was in the monthly updates. I thought about every WAG meeting I've been to, and reviewed notes and the protocol. Was this agreed to by WAG members? It's not in any of the notes or in the protocol. It was sprung on the public very much the same way this new data sharing plan was sprung on producers. There was no discussion that could lead us to believe that it could ever happen. There's a big trust concern there as well. What are you doing next that we didn't know what was coming? There's some damage that has been done there. If there had been a go around, I don't know that anyone would have said much, but I want to emphasize that this is a critical issue. I think a full discussion would have revealed what the producer does. There's no evidence in the records from those times that the producer was doing anything that was suitable. It can't be any two nonlethals. It has to be the most likely to be successful. We have no information on how long they were in place either. Everything about this Togo pack situation feels wrong. Many organizations aren't stomaching that, and it should have been handled differently, and it should still be handled differently. I really encourage you take this into consideration as hard as you take the data sharing into consideration.

- Would anybody be interested in Oregon's perspective? We created a system that had a polygon of two or three square miles, bigger on allotments, and huge in wilderness. We shared with livestock producers who had livestock in the area only. When it started, it was an emergency, and we weren't able to do a whole lot other than inform producers. We heard positive feedback from producers, but then there'd be a depredation on their property even though data showed wolves not in the area. I bring this up because I wonder if this is something that's sustainable over time. We can't keep collars in all the packs. It's hard. It's a huge amount of time. Over time, as you look at the next wolf plan, you might want to look at other ways you can help livestock producers. There might be something there that you can come up with. Maybe there's a better thing that can be used. Collars don't mean anything in the summer when wolves don't travel together. They're not very helpful. Don't focus on the wolves, focus on the livestock. That might be something to consider as well.
- I want to thank the previous commenter. It seems a lot of us are expecting WDFW to solve our problems. Sometimes I think we're putting too much on them. We need to watch the cattle, and not always just talk about wolves as terrorists. I feel like long term, the radio collars have a limit. If we have more packs, it seems they will mingle more. I want to say thanks, and I really appreciate what everyone is doing here.

Adjourn