

Wolf Advisory Group
Doubletree by Hilton
25 September 2014
Notes

In Attendance: Mark Pidgeon, Dave Duncan, Jack Field, Diane Gallegos, Paula Swedeen, Don Dashell, Dave Dashell, Dan Paul, Tom Davis

Staff: Phil Anderson, Nate Pamplin, Steve Pozzanghera, Dave Ware, Donny Martorello, Stephanie Simek, Joey McCanna, Jay Shepherd, Rob Geddis

Presenters: Elizabeth Bradley, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Lorna Smith, Western Wildlife Outreach

9:03 agenda revisions by Rob Geddis – Skip Item # 1, start at item # 3, then move on to item # 2.

Item 3 – Donny

Provided an update on wolf population status and management actions. There was a quick review on population and status and depredations, public responses, ext. As of this month, Washington has 13 packs and a minimum count of 62. There were 11 packs online at the end of last year. WDFW updates the map of packs in December and through the year we confirm packs. Goodman meadows pack and profanity peak pack are both now confirmed. On the map coming out in early 2015, there could be three to five new packs on the map and there may be a loss of a couple as well. Donny detailed some collars in diamond pack area and helicopter work planned for the lookout pack and Teanaway pack areas. It is cost probative to search for new wolves to collar in areas where we are unsure there are packs. Overall, we are still seeing a steady population increase. The Eastern 1/3 of the state is federally delisted. All areas of Washington are still state listed. We knew we were going to have wolf/livestock issues and have in place a means of reporting possible conflicts. WDFW works with livestock producers and with cooperative agreement for cost sharing to get preventative measures on the landscape. Also WDFW has created a composting site for deceased animals that is protected from predators on the Sherman Creek WLA. WDFW has targeted outreach and we do public meetings, trainings, talking about wolves with the community. Q: How many wolves were collared this year? A: Five in March and two in April and these collars include the study animals for WSU. Q: What type of collars? A: VHF, GPS pre-programmed to take data every couple hours. Another collar that is starting to be used is programed to be more online during the main conflict times. Q: What do the new collars cost? A: about \$4000 each. WDFW added two confirmed packs based on current knowledge. There were several depredations by three packs this season. So far, there have been 33 depredations on sheep that were confirmed, one on a dog, and three on cattle in the 2014 summer season. When we have a pack causing depredations, WDFW follows the Wolf Conflict Management flow chart to guide the conflict specialist to the appropriate actions. The 3-4 depredations range allows the department to consider lethal removal.

Described the huckleberry pack range and where the grazing allotment was. The area where depredations occurred is a significant timber area with rugged country. Donny went over the checklist items that were used during the Huckleberry depredations. He also went through the events starting in June where the producer found 4 dead sheep. In August, the producer found 5 more dead sheep and suspected cougar depredations. WDFW deployed a hound hunter to remove cougar. While the hound hunter was in the area, they saw large canid tracks and called in the Department. Conflict staff went in and confirmed the depredations as wolf. At that time, WDFW removed the carcasses from the area that were not too far decomposed. Immediately the department heard, "Did WDFW unknowingly put a

producer on a rendezvous site?” Sharing of location data, where WDFW shares the data on wolf collars for wolves on state jurisdiction. Since the Huckleberry male was captured and collared on the Reservation, the tribe elected to not allow WDFW to share the data. Once the depredations started, the tribe allowed the use of the data for the producers to see the location data. WDFW added preventative measures such as staff, range riders, etc. Staff members were allowed to remove up to two wolves if sighted near the sheep and the producer was allowed to remove up to two wolves sighted near the sheep. Dave Dashiell clarified that “There were no issues during the night time. It was in the early morning when sheep were moving out to graze and after the mid-day when the sheep were moving out of the shaded areas that issues occurred”. A video clip was shown of the herding dogs working the group of sheep. On Aug 22 there was the 5th confirmed depredation. The Director authorized the removal of up to four wolves. Why up to four wolves? It was hoped to remove some of the food requirements to switch the prey base away from sheep. There was one wolf removed and there were updates to WAG and a news release on the removal. On the 26th, the helicopter was called away to another job and WDFW started an effort to trap the wolves. Then there was depredation number seven on the 26th. WDFW confirmed with the producer that the sheep were being moved. Q: What is the normal grazing season? A: Generally they graze into November. Last year they moved the sheep off about first of October. Q: With the 12 depredations, none were seen from the producer. A: They were not. The depredations took place in the other areas that the herding dogs were not. Q: How were they working on protecting the herd? A: At the start of night the staff and producer would have a safety meeting and patrol the outer boundaries of the bedding areas. Q: Did staff haze the wolves with the rubber bullets that they had before we allowed the lethal removal. A: No, there was not an opportunity to haze the wolves with the rubber ammunition. Q: No additional staff were on the property until the 18th? Why was there the gap of staff in the depredations? A: WDFW worked with the producer and move the sheep from the initial areas of depredations. After the 2nd depredation, WDFW staff started to move in to assist. Staff were doing the day investigations and helping but no night patrols. C: Between 10th and 20th was one herder but it seemed like night time was not the issue but the problem was smaller bands of sheep that were outside the main flock. Q: Can Joey explain to the folks a day in the life in the field that our conflict staff works? A: We are reactive at this time of year. We try to be in multiple places at one time. Night time hazing is generally 5pm – mid morning. We patrolled the herd all night long. If the producer told staff where satellite groups of sheep were, they would try to patrol the satellite group as well. Since Aug. 28, the pack has moved back south toward the reservation. Q: Can you clarify that the department shouldn’t be used for hazing? A: Don’t know if we thought of that at the time. It may be something to work on in the future. WDFW does not have a policy on this. Q: Why not prioritize non-lethal at the early stages? A: We will come back to that question during the discussion points. The cost of the Huckleberry depredations came to about \$53,000 about half of that was for the lethal removal operation. Next steps, outreach to other producers that there is the pack there, data sharing agreement with the pack, continuation of pack monitoring, looking for opportunities to place more collars on the pack, and prepare for the next conflict season to prevent the behavior. Q: What is the typical loss of sheep on 1800 sheep? A: Last season the producer had less than 20 that didn’t make through the season. Q: On the collars, with working with the tribe, are they going to collar more? A: The tribe has asked to take the lead on collaring.

Updates on Profanity Peak pack: They were documented on a camera showing three adults and three pups. They have probably been in this location three plus years. There was a depredation on a cow and calf in the remote location. This pack has quite a bit of livestock on allotments in their range. WDFW is looking at the checklist for this pack and how to get this behavior modified. Q: Is there human presence at the depredation location? A: They check on the livestock every few days, it is a three mile hike to the

location. Q: What is the status of the trapping? A: No success as of yet but probably will pull out on Friday.

Updates on Ruby Creek: Currently only a single female. This is the wolf that was not spayed. The spayed female was hit by a car and killed. Normally wolves and dogs don't mix. The Ruby Creek wolf was collared on March 7. Started to see exploratory movements by the female and now she is moving near houses and acclimated to people and pets. She has been seen playing with dogs, and there is some concern that she may breed with a dog in the spring. She has been hazed by staff and is not affected. Generally she will move off but be seen in the same area the next day. Currently the cost of hazing this female is about \$8000.

Conclusions: The wolf population is still increasing. WDFW will be putting 3-5 new packs on the map in December. Issue on conflict is anticipated and WDFW is staying the course with the Wolf Plan. We are also stepping back and looking for ways/areas to improve and try to prevent future conflicts. Wolves are a very polar issue in the public. One of the biggest issues at this point is the understanding of the issues and getting the polarized public to common ground.

Q: What is the difference between a producer's day than a range rider? A: 4-430 you're up, direct the sheep to the location you are looking to get the sheep to. Throughout the day, monitoring the sheep locations and allowing them to stay close. About 7pm they are directing the sheep to the bedding area. Discussed possibly having a range rider there to get between the sheep and the wolves and keep themselves between the sheep and the wolves. WDFW will most likely see this behavior from the Huckleberry pack again with the testing the dogs and to getting back into the prey base of sheep. C: There are not too many places to go to that won't have wolves based on the data from the wolf locations. Based on the allotment and where the wolves den there might be a possibility for creating a line of preventative measures on the south side. Q: Is there some plan to apply fox lights or something similar to see if they are effective? A: Yes, there is a possibility.

Item 2: Liz Bradley

Introduction of Liz and thanks by Dave Ware for her travel out to present to the WAG. Liz is a Wolf management specialist for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks for a region in Montana. Information presented to the WAG will be more specific to Montana. In the start they had wolves slowly moving into the state in the 80's. There was an introduction of wolves into Yellowstone in 1996. The population recovery goal was 30 pairs. Currently they have to have 10 breeding pairs or 100 wolves to still be considered recovered. They have had Wolves in Montana the longest of lower 48 US states. Montana met their recovery goals in 2002. Montana holds 40% of packs in one region. At the end of 2013 there were 152 packs in state with a minimum count of over 600. Eastern Montana is mostly open agricultural land and doesn't have many wolves. The North West corner of Montana has the greatest number of packs. Wolves were delisted by congressional action in 2011. This action allowed consistent laws on wolf management across state. Planning for this started 10 years ago. There was heavy public input. Montana has had hunting and trapping seasons in 2009, skipped 2010, and now is in the 5th year with a season. Overall wolf mortality in 2005-2013 was mostly human caused. Dominant source of mortality for 2005-2009 was management actions by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. At the end of 2013 there was a stabilization of population counts. For wolves to be considered being put back on the endangered species list would be if their numbers were to drop below 150 wolves for three consecutive years or 100 wolves for one year. There has been a decrease in breeding pairs in Montana and Idaho. Currently, Montana works with the Wildlife Services on depredations. They have a 45 day control period. WS needs to receive state permission to remove problem wolves on suspected depredations. WS can

remove wolves for confirmed depredations. Maintaining flexibility is the key. It is legal to kill a wolf, cougar, or bear if attacking domestic livestock or domestic animals. In 2009 33% of packs had confirmed depredations. In 2013 17% of packs had depredations. The highest proportion of depredations is in Yellowstone area. There is evidence that the depredations are a learned behavior. Montana has had some producers that were having a lot of depredations and a neighboring allotment that did not have any depredation. They found that the pastures that were larger and further away from people had more depredations. But in areas that elk were present was most influential because wolves were looking for their natural prey base and would encounter the cattle. Montana has also seen that there is also a correlation on carcasses and wolf depredation areas. Where packs have historically dened and rendezvoused, there is not a lot of success seen in moving them from those sites. Fladry has been used and found it to be most useful in smaller areas. The effectiveness is increased when there is electrification of the fladry. Permanent electric fencing is the best option but can be cost prohibitive. There have been a lot of cases of dogs getting killed by wolves in Montana but are doing research on different breeds that may be more effective. Translocation of wolves was looked at and it was shown that it was not effective. Many of the translocated animals tried to move back to their original territory. It was better when tried in Idaho and since the location was mostly public ground it worked better. The longer the distance relocated was also a factor in the success. If there was a soft release of family groups the relocation was more effective as well. There were able to follow packs depredations and study the intervals of depredations. Compared to cases where full pack removal decreased the depredations to 2 years, partial was decreased to 2 months, two weeks for non-lethal tactics. Best predictor of recurrence was pack size. They found that the chance of reoccurrence increased by 7% for each animal in the pack.

Conclusion: Every depredation is a unique event. Pack removal will decrease depredations the most. Partial pack removals are not very effective. This was less effective if it was after 2 weeks' time from the depredation. Social disruption in the packs was not an issue that increased depredations. Overall depredations on livestock have been on the decrease when there has been removals allowed. Lethal control after depredations has been swifter and created less depredations. Pack size has decreased to 4.8 from 7. 2013 was the lowest depredations in the past several years and wolf removal was low as well.

Questions? C: Thanks for the information, in the charts you had the breeding pairs and it was appreciated. Maybe WDWF should do this as well. Q: If there is a removal how does this work? A: Consistent management across the state but use a lot of different techniques based on the situation. Sit on carcasses overnight. Q: Regarding translocation, was this being used to address depredation? A: Yes this was used to try to address it and has not been used lately due to ineffectiveness and or not suitable locations. Q: How many staff in the agency are wolf staff and what is the cost associated? A: 5.5 wolf management specialists spread out through the state. Also there are seasonal crews that trap and collar wolves as well as volunteers that work with them. Currently it is required that \$900,000 be used on wolf conflicts and issues. They are also starting to get wolf license revenues to offset this cost. Q: Have you tried techniques on carcasses that might scare the wolves? A: Not that I am aware of.

Item 4: Lorna Smith, Executive Director on Western Wildlife outreach – Living with Livestock and Wolves

Western Wildlife Outreach has developed materials to hold workshops that would bring conservation districts in to train them on giving information to producers. Also she wanted to bring attention to a literature review that lists, and summarizes the studies associated with wolf-livestock conflict and makes recommendations for use in Washington. WWO is hoping to start workshops soon. There is also a

series of fact sheets to come later. We have a video clip that we are going to use as an intro into the workshops. (video played) This video will be the initial introduction on deterrents and methods. C: Lorna is presenting today to get feedback on the video and what the WAG members would like to see on this video. Contact Lorna with comments.

Item 5: Stephanie Simek - Review and Provide Advisement: Ruby Creek Female

The Department is looking for guidance from the WAG on the Ruby Creek female issue. We are looking into possible options as to how to handle the situation with this wolf. Her behavior was more of acclimation to the human presence as well as domestic dogs. She has gotten more familiar and is easier to approach and habitually at a particular location near homes. It is thought that she might feel that the dog that she is playing with is her pack. Currently we have a conflict specialist who is hazing her back into the wild. There are mixed emotions of the local inhabitants on her living in such close proximity to the city. Now some have moved to intolerance, some are still afraid, and some that are ambivalent. This situation is running the risk in this area of social intolerance. County commissioners in Pend Oreille County have contacted us about this animal's behavior and what she has been doing in regards to the domestic animals. Currently there is a seasonal employee to haze and deal with this wolf. There are concerns from the commissioners that sooner or later that a local resident may remove the animal illegally. They have requested that the Department capture the animal and place her into captivity. We have talked about the range of options and let the commissioners know that we will be discussing this in the WAG meeting today and we need to take action. This issue initially started with an increased management aspect. We talked to local residents and asked them to possibly haze her back out into the forested area. There was increased monitoring and WDFW employed a range rider to haze her back into the correct areas. We increased efforts as of late using rubber bullets, cracker shells, less lethal deterrents, and she has been moving out but coming back the next day. More recently we have started tracking her movements and trying to upset her pattern. Q: Is the seasonal staff member only working on hazing the Ruby Creek female or does he have ability to help Jay? A: A few hours a day helping but mostly working on the Ruby Creek Female. Kris sent the Yellowstone habituation policy out to folks on Monday. Hope you had a chance to get a look at it. Immediate concerns that are identified are the breeding with a domestic dog, safety, and habituation of her to humans and livestock. Two options in the Management plan: Euthanasia or Translocation, and there are criteria to warrant relocation: See MGT Plan.

Consensus from the WAG members is that this wolf does constitute a problem. Q: What does she eat? A: We believe that it is small wild animals and think there is a possibility that she is eating dog food as well. C – Jack: In the beginning we decided that we would not relocate problem wolves and I believe that this is a problem wolf issue. Q: How about a SEPA for Translocation? A: To translocate we do not have to have a SEPA to relocate in the wolf in the same recovery region/zone. C - Jack: It does not help recovery goals to move this problem animal from one portion of the recovery zone to a new portion of the zone. Call for support of Translocation: Dan P. supported and supported by Paula if we can find a suitable location. It was referred to Dave Ware on how translocation may be achieved. It is unknown by Dave on any location to possibly place the female that meets the translocation criteria. Q: Why is it not acceptable to envision a translocation to another zone? A: A SEPA would have to be completed, and we would have to move her into a federally listed zone. This would prolong the process. Keep in mind her behavior is not wolf like. Where would we find the parameters in the plan and also not allow her to continue the behavior. We would have to collar and monitor the wolf to make sure she did not interbreed with a domestic dog. Q: Does the removal of one problem animal pose a risk to the recovery of the species? A: No since she is not actively with a pack and unlikely to breed and increase numbers. Q: Interested in realities in capture and placing into captivity. A: Dan P. – Would not be our first choice

to relocate the animal. She is considered a problem wolf that doesn't do any depredation but seems like this might be the best option for the animal. Diane – When we went through the Wedge issue she received calls asking why they did not think to put them into captivity instead of removal. We typically don't like to take wild wolves and placing them into the Wolf haven sanctuary based on quality of life on the smaller acreage allowed to roam. However, this is a possible consideration based on past experiences. The Ruby Creek female would still be state property and if the quality of life was not good, we would expect the state to euthanize the animal. Q: How would you classify her as not having quality of life? A: Linda Saunders is here and can take my spot or you can follow up later. Dave to Liz- Did you have any issues like this in Montana? A: No we did not have an issue like this. The reason we didn't place this into the plan was it does not seem to be a good option. If we do decide to capture this animal and place her in captivity, this could be an option the public would push WDFW to do in the future for other issues.

Euthanize, and there are criteria to warrant lethal removal: See MGT Plan. Jack is in favor of removal. The cost that WDFW has incurred hazing this one wolf was brought up. This wolf may tip the whole apple cart. Let's follow the plan. Jack does not support capture and captivity due to the fact that it may not just be this once. Mark concurred with Jack. Diane brought up that this is a rare occurrence and may not happen again. There is a social tolerance for wolves and a social tolerance of killing wolves. We are thinking that it would be difficult managing this female. Q – Paula: If the county commissioners are requesting removal and placing into captivity why shouldn't we try to do that to their wishes? A – Jack: Our board believes that the removal and to euthanize is the best option. C – Tom: In the plan we have a couple choices that we can utilize and shouldn't stray from the plan. This is not an easy decision and hope it is not a slippery slope to consider placing this animal into captivity. Think that this is worth looking at going forward. C – Steve: Based on the commission requests, they are well aware of the public sentiment of lethal removal and were their best option to remove the animal and increase public safety as well as not euthanize the animal. C – Jack: I think this is very dangerous ground to consider. We are going to be back here discussing this issue again in the future.

Nate would like to share his thoughts on the discussion; he will be taking this to Phil in the near future. Majority of WAG was in favor of relocation into captivity. Members requested to be noted: Jack - adamantly opposed, Dave D. – captivity is not the answer, Mark - Hoping to send a recommendation to the Department on what to do with the female and characterize it. Paula - Translocation does not seem like a viable option based on her behavior, Captivity discussion, there's a difference of opinions and would like to request WDFW talk to the Wolfhaven staff on the possibility, and some members are opposed to the issue of relocation or captivity. Don D. – If captivity is not in the guidance document it probably shouldn't be entertained. If WDFW does the removal it would be humanely and might be more accepted. Dan – If it does come to removal WDFW should do the removal based on the humaneness.

Item 6: Dave Ware and Nate Pamplin - Discussion on WAG Structure and Role

The commission received a petition from several Environmental groups to codify lethal removal actions and livestock owner requirements to use nonlethal measures in WAC. The commission has denied the petition and directed WDFW to re-evaluate WAG's role and to get a facilitator. An independent facilitator would also be used to review whether we need a lethal control rule. How would the WAG like us to hire this facilitator? C - Paula: One consideration is having a facilitator at a regular business meeting may not be needed. Today was an interesting discussion on the Ruby Creek female. Sometimes we may need a mediator when there is more conflict on issues. The facilitator's role may only be part of the issue. Today was one of the clearer ways to note our contributions. Should we be

more formal like the forest practice board or more informal as we are now? C – Tom: Like Paula I have had facilitators and would be cautious of those used by ecology. It is difficult to find a good facilitator. C – Diane: I would request that the facilitator have a successful history in wildlife conflicts. Dave W. would like to tease a bit more out of the members. Such as if we would like to go more formal to determine budget and how to set the structure. In terms of a vote how WDFW uses that information. We brought the charter with us and if folks think we need to work on the charter we can start there. Right now it's an advisory body and we have tried to get good representation on the WAG. Paula raised the question to make the group more formal to allow ease of decision making. Tom expressed some concerns over placing a facilitator and possibly hindering the group. C – Diane: We have a lethal take guideline and the facilitator would need to be trusted by all members to allow for good discussions and meeting. C - Dave D.: Don't make it too complicated. Sometimes it can be just an open can of worms and just be a meeting.

Item 7: Dave Ware - Wrap up and other business

Should we do a mid-winter and a spring meeting? Maybe have a meeting just after the first of the year for a mid-winter and sometime in early march for a spring meeting. Q: Would the spring meeting be to talk about how the facilitator will work with the group. A: Yes. Q: If we are going to redo the purpose, might we do that at the same time as the facilitation portion? A: That would be fair but given our discussions today it would be good for the agency to get a facilitator that would help. C: We would like to have the commission discuss what they would like from the WAG. Nate – This is a Directors Advisory Group, so we are going to work on this with the Commission. No solid support or direction on the next meeting time. WDFW will work on a doodle poll to determine the next meeting and possibly work within the ideas and direction the Commission gives the agency. With the possibility of a new director we may need to wait until the next director is here to determine our direction.

Agenda items for next meeting:

Work on hiring a facilitator and get a RFP to be placed out.

Conversation on lessons learned that we can use into the new wolf season.

Revisit checklists established by WAG to see if it was beneficial or should be updated.

Revisit Flow Chart

Try to do some information sharing and update on projects.

Losses and compensation that we have incurred to see if we were close to our projections.

Stephanie gave a heads up that there is a possible WAG field trip to the Teanaway for WAG Members.

Public comment:

C: Liz have you had any issues that seemed to be more the location than the wolves themselves? A: yes, there are areas that have issues. Sometimes it is just because the prey base move and the wolves don't.

Q: How did we come to the decision of four possible lethal removals? A: It was up to four wolves and we wanted to remove a significant number of wolves to reduce their food requirements.

C: WSU is looking for better cooperation with their research on monitoring and deterring wolf conflicts. They have had depredations that the WSU staff has been working on that have successfully been abated. They are looking for more livestock producers to work with WSU to make greater use of their program and be able to abate more issues. Expressed concerns about the program that he is running and was told to go home when they offered to assist in depredations. He will be recommending to the Governor that we can fix these issues and that there should be more cooperation within the state. C: Nothing new but a reiteration of thoughts, strongly encourage the department to work with WSU and

do more outreach. C: Outreach specialist for WSU also asked the producers to work with the WSU folks in their project.

3:02 Adjourn.