

Wolf Advisory Group

MEETING SUMMARY¹, NOVEMBER 9-10, 2021

WAG members present: Samee Charriere, Tom Davis, Diane Gallegos, Todd Holmdahl, Jess Kayser, Bill Kemp, Nick Martinez (intermittent), Lynn Okita, Dan Paul, Rick Perleberg, Caitlin Scarano (Tuesday), Lisa Stone, and Paula Swedeen

Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) staff members present: Candace Bennett, Staci Lehman (Tuesday), Ben Maletzke, Donny Martorello, Joey McCanna, Steve Pozzanghera, Annemarie Prince, Trent Roussin, and Julia Smith.

WDFW Commissioners present: Lorna Smith (participant) and Jim Anderson (observer)

Facilitation team: Susan Hayman, Elizabeth McManus, and Tristan Marquez

Meeting Action Items

Responsible Party	Action Item	Target Date
Facilitation team	Synthesize issues identified with implementing the SFA pilot/current protocol to frame a potential January WAG one-hour meeting topic regarding problem-solving/conflict mitigation.	Dec 15
WDFW	Determine availability of Scott McCorquodale to present at the January WAG meeting on how to evaluate science and use it in future development of WAG guidance	Dec 15
WDFW	Identify opportunities to amend the Range Rider RFQ to allow hiring of range riders now, rather than waiting until the 2022 livestock grazing season.	Dec 31
WDFW	Notify current members with expiring terms the Director's decision regarding their appointments.	Dec 31
Facilitation Team, WAG volunteers	Investigate potential options for CCT training in June 2022 and provide update to WAG.	January WAG meeting

November 9, 2021

Opening

Susan Hayman, Ross Strategic facilitator, opened the Wolf Advisory Group (WAG) meeting by welcoming members, inviting introductions, and providing an overview of the meeting objectives and agenda.

¹ This summary is a synthesis of the meeting discussion November 9-10. Detailed narrative notes for both days were consulted for this synthesis, and made available to WAG members and WDFW staff. They will be publicly available following finalization of the meeting documentation package.

The purpose of the meeting was to begin the transition to a new facilitation team; share experiences from the summer season; receive an update from WDFW on ongoing wolf policy priorities, Special Focus Areas implementation, and conflict mitigation actions; begin initial planning for 2022 WAG activities; and revisit ground rules.

Facilitation Team Transition

Hayman reviewed the high-level takeaways from the intake interviews that were conducted with all but two WAG members. Common themes of the takeaways included sustaining trust between WAG members and DFW Staff, identifying how to move from conflicts to opportunity, and establishing shared expectations. There were also themes about how the facilitation team can support the group by holding members accountable, connecting the dots to identify themes and opportunities, facilitating the onboarding process to help people engage, and creating more useful meeting summaries.

Narrative, transcription-like summaries of meetings are very important and useful to the group. There were no objections to continuing with this narrative approach and including a synthesized meeting summary as well. The facilitation team can also help by keeping track of topics where the group has already reached consensus. Some WAG members expressed interest in convening small groups for focused issues with suggested approaches then presented to the larger group. There was a general desire among WAG members to return to in person meetings soon. However, in person meetings would need to follow WDFW and Washington State safety protocols.

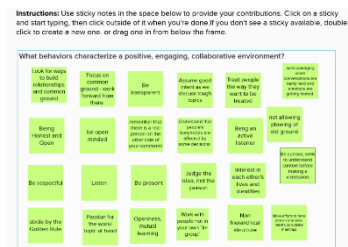
WAG members voiced their appreciation for the clear objectives that the facilitation team brought for the meeting and hoped that the team could help navigate conversations so that topics are not suddenly changed before everybody has a chance to speak on them. The facilitation team can also memorialize decisions and provide the context and assumptions that went into making those decisions.

The facilitation team will incorporate the recommendations and suggestions made by the WAG members into the support it provides during and between meetings. It will continue to seek advice from the WAG on other ways it can support, and members are encouraged to reach out the team with feedback.

Revisiting Ground Rules

Hayman asked WAG members and the department staff to share which of the existing ground rules they thought were the most important. She then asked them to use a Mural Board (linked in image) to identify behaviors that provide an engaging and productive environment. Some of the behaviors included the following:

- Building relationships and common ground
- Being transparent - giving a holistic view of your opinion as opposed to holding something back
- Assuming good intent - being patient with one another if somebody says something out of ignorance
- Treating people the way you want to be treated
- Acknowledge when conversations are hard, and emotions are getting heated
- Be curious and seek to understand context before making a conclusion
- Remembering that there is a real person on the other side



- Listen and be present – everyone should participate and voice their opinions
- Work with people not in your own “in-group”

The facilitation team thanked WAG members for sharing their thoughts and recognized collective and individual responsibility for ensuring that the ground rules are followed and respected. The facilitation team will encourage and foster an environment where the behaviors identified by the WAG are practiced by all meeting participants.

WDFW Updates

Outreach and Education

A staff member for WDFW provided an overview of the department’s public affairs efforts and outreach throughout the past year. The updates can also be found on WDFW’s [Grey Wolf Update](#) page.

- January - Produced videos, gave a virtual presentation, and led a discussion about wolves as part of a Wild Washington lesson plan for middle school students in Science Club
- February - Published a blog post titled “[What to Expect when Wolves Expand to your Area](#)”
- April – The [annual wolf report](#) was released along with standard outreach and a [news release](#)
- June – Gave a presentation about carnivores in Washington
- July – Published a [blog](#) on wolf howls and what they mean
- August – Presented on the status of Wolves in Washington and wrote a [blog](#) on wolf pack history and how they are named for International Wolf Day
- September - Co-presented a webinar for Blue Mountain Land Trust on coexisting with wolves and presented on wolf management to a junior high in Mount-Baker Snoqualmie
- October – Recommended a wolf reading list for National Wolf Awareness Week, created a Washington Wild curriculum, made a video, and designed an activity for students to track various animals

The public affairs staff at the department is always looking for opportunities to connect with the community. WAG members are encouraged to work with them on finding ideas for articles and identifying other ways the department can engage with communities the WAG represents.

Wolf Population Monitoring

A department staff member gave an update on the summer’s trapping season. 13 wolves from 9 packs were trapped over the summer. There are currently collars deployed in 18 of the 24 WDFW-managed packs. There has been activity in Lake Chelan near Stehekin and some reports south of Lake Chelan in the upper end of the Entiat. In the Blue Mountains, there is a new pack north of the Touchet pack, and West of the Tucannon has had some interactions with livestock. People recreating and hunting on Washington lands are encouraged to upload photos and submit information to the department’s online observation tool. The public’s support is helpful to see where new packs are establishing.

The department’s Predator-Prey Project has finished, but it will take some time to be published due to the large volume of data that was collected. WAG members expressed a high degree of interest in this project. It is likely that project’s results will be released incrementally, with opportunities to share this out to the WAG as available. Further information for the Predator-Prey Project can be found [here](#).

Wolf-Livestock Conflict

The group was updated on Special Focus Areas (SFAs) in Districts 1 and 3. They were provided with an overview of conflict management such as range riding efforts that were being conducted in conjunction with the Forest Service, Northeast Washington Wolf Cattle Collaborative (NEWCC), and the Cattle Producers of Washington (CPoW). A department staff member noted that there were still challenges in getting producers and the department to meet and find solutions. The department has tried to get all the producers in a room to discuss the efficacy of range riders but found that it was not possible due to a combination of scheduling and personal conflicts.

WAG members asked a series of technical questions regarding mitigation efforts around wolf collar fixes. Department staff and the WAG discussed SFA designations and wolf-livestock conflicts in Northeast Washington. It was suggested that a producer from Northeast Washington should be added to the WAG. Department staff agreed, and will continue to explore opportunities to do so.

Several members noted that range riding is currently the best tool for mitigating conflict, but that its effectiveness lessens as wolves become habituated to it. WAG members stressed the importance of providing range riders and other conflict mitigation services to producers.

Some members expressed concern with WDFW's response to mitigate ongoing conflict with the Togo and Columbia packs, given the frequency of depredations and the timelines for evaluating incidents and taking action. Department staff informed the group that contracting and retaining range riders this season has been challenging. While there appear to be viable candidates now, WDFW contracting constraints are preventing hiring additional riders until the 2022 livestock grazing season. Department staff and WAG members agreed on the importance of trying to resolve this issue; staff committed to try to resolve the contracting constraints.

Some WAG members suggested it would be helpful to better understand how decision-making regarding conflict response is handled within WDFW. It appears to be a "matrixed" approach, without a single position (beyond the Director) where "the buck stops." The facilitators noted this as a point of future discussion.

Wolf Policy Updates

The group was updated on a large ongoing effort for wolf-livestock deterrence rulemaking. The department has discussed rule language, putting ideas together, and conducting environmental analysis. The department has presented on the rule making efforts and timeline and spoken with stakeholders about the rule ideas and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) alternatives. WDFW will present the current draft of the wolf-livestock conflict deterrence rule at the Washington State Fish & Wildlife Commission's Wolf Committee meeting on December 2, 2021, and seek the committee's guidance on moving forward to the CR-102 stage with the intention of filing it in February. SEPA analysis is already underway to analyze the environmental impacts of rulemaking and a Small Business Economic Impact Statement (SBEIS) will start on November 17th.

The group was updated on periodic status review to determine the listing status of wolves for the first time since they were listed as endangered in 1980. WDFW contracted a team to create a wolf population model to inform the status determination.

Staff provided an update on post-recovery planning, noting the WAG’s previous response to topics of interest regarding post-recovery planning, particularly its keen interest in wolf-ungulate interactions. While post-recovery planning will take a backseat to rulemaking in the first half of 2022, it would be beneficial to lay the foundation for more substantive discussions post-June 2022.

WDFW also provided an update on WAG recruitment. The WAG currently includes 16 out of a maximum 18 members. Eight of the members’ appointments expire at the end of 2021. Those with expiring appointments will receive a letter from the WDFW Director about their status on the WAG. A few WAG members advised that a new hunter representative and a producer from Northeast Washington should be added to the group.

Following WDFW’s updates, five persons provided public comment, as documented in Appendix A.

November 10, 2021

Opening

Hayman opened the second day of the meeting by reviewing the meeting agenda. A WDFW staff member informed the WAG of a decision by the department’s director to authorize the lethal removal of two wolves in Columbia County that morning.

A WAG member noted that a local nonprofit, Washington Wildlife First, offered to help provide funding for additional range riding or additional pasture at another location to avoid future lethal removal.

Preliminary WAG Work Planning for FY2022

Hayman introduced another Mural Board (linked in image) activity for WAG members to identify topics for future meetings. Several members identified Wolf-Ungulate Interactions as an important topic that needs to be discussed but is often set aside in favor other issues. The issue is particularly important to hunters, who have at times felt marginalized when wolf-livestock interactions dominate discussion.

Members also suggested in person Conservation Conflict Transformation (CCT) training, ideally once WAG vacancies are filled. The facilitation team will work with WAG members who volunteered to look at options and help coordinate CCT training by June 2022.

Topics identified for the next meeting include:

- Relationship map of Washington wolf management (i.e., Governor’s Office, Commission, WDFW, WAG, WIG, public, others)
- How to evaluate science and use it in WAG guidance
- SFA pilot/protocol implementation issues and opportunities for conflict mitigation (one-hour allocation for contained discussion)
- Beginning to explore wolf-ungulate interactions

Topics identified for a potential April or June meeting include:

- Wolf-ungulate interactions (continued)



- Post-recovery planning topic (to be framed)
- Wolf management science topic (to be framed)
- Lethal removal and effects of predation patterns
- CCT training/refresher

Additional topics suggested by members for future WAG discussion included:

- Process/permits/NEPA required for USDA Wildlife Services to conduct lethal removal of wolves
- Additional post recovery planning topics, including wolf hunting

WAG members were asked to add information needs to the Mural Board (linked in image) for topics proposed for the next meeting:



- Wolf/Ungulate Interactions
 - What are other states finding with wolf-ungulate interaction?
 - What other factors influence ungulate populations?
 - What is the latest on the Predator-Prey study?
 - What have we seen with the latest ungulate harvests?
 - How are different species of ungulates impacted by wolves (moose vs elk vs mule deer vs sheep etc.)? – could serve as an example of how to evaluate and use science
 - Under what circumstances might wolf predation be a major concern?
- Relationship Map/Decision-making
 - While we know WAG is advisory to the WDFW Director, what authorities do the other bodies have in decision-making?
 - Will our difficult conversations matter if these other entities undermine our collaboration?
- Focused Livestock/Wolf Interaction Topic
 - How can operations/implementation be improved, and are there opportunities for WAG assistance?
 - Advance SFA discussion—what did WDFW learn and what does it mean for further development of this program (problem-solving dialogue)?

The group agreed that the next WAG meeting will take place on January 6th and 7th (till Noon on the 7th). It will include a presentation on how science is evaluated and used in guidance, discussion around relationship mapping of Washington wolf management, as well as further discussion on wolf-livestock interactions. WDFW will verify if they can address information’s needs around wolf-ungulate interactions by the January meeting. The following meeting will occur in April or June.

Following the discussion of WAG work planning, eight persons provided public comment, as documented in Appendix A.

Closing

Elizabeth McManus, Ross Strategic Facilitator, invited WAG members and WDFW staff to provide final comments. Many expressed appreciation for this meeting and anticipation for the next meeting. McManus thanked participants for their time and closed the meeting.

Public comment received at the end of each meeting day is paraphrased below:

November 9, 2021

- Adrienne Dorf from Washington Sierra Club:
 - Another update that came focused on recent depredations in Columbia County, we had talked about a wolf poaching that was not sent out as a separate update, it was buried in a wolf report. Each time there is a depredation there is an alert. But if a wolf is killed, it doesn't come up that way. It feels biased to me. Now apparently there was a wolf killed from a car hitting it, but nothing came out as an alert. Somehow, I feel it is not balanced.
 - I am surprised how much collaring has been done in the last few months because we have talked about how stressful it is for wolves and dangerous for WDFW staff and yet we are still doing that. I know information was presented about other tools like voice recordings to limit how much collaring you are doing. It just feels like we are doing a lot of collaring for the amount of stress and danger it puts on both staff and wildlife.
- Dave Hendrick of Ferry County:
 - I work with county producers. There is a need for a Ferry County representative on WAG to help build that trust. There has never been one. I can tell you the longer this goes on, the less effect WAG will have on participation with WDFW or any buy-in on WAG policy. Once again, trust is still a huge issue and perception is definitely out there that retribution is alive and well. Not just around Forest Service allotments. Another thing driving people away from WAG is, I think, they are worried that if they are on WAG that it will come back and bite them or their neighbor or something like that.
 - I work for the conservation district and am one of four people that make decisions on nonlethal Department of Agriculture money, so I hear from those NGOs out there doing it. To make it more positive, it has been much better this year. What I have been hearing from them is still tremendous frustration with DFW, but the amount of communication is much better. I would give a lot of credit to the two NGOs because one in particular, the NEWCC representative, really took it on himself to make communication better this year. I have seen huge improvement and will comment the rest tomorrow.
- Ilene Le Vee:
 - I am so impressed with how you have handled today's meeting, facilitators. Big plus for organization and trying to represent multiple perspectives. Hats off as always to all the staff. It is a tough predicament. I won't share more perspective but the whole group gave me more to think about. I am a rancher and landowner in Klickitat County. This just certainly gave me lots of food for thought and I will tune in tomorrow.
- David Linn with Washington Wildlife First:
 - I heard most of it and it is good conversation, but a few things to raise points: With regard to Togo, it would be good to get more timely depredation reports from the department. I know some of it needs to be blacked out, but once the recommendation goes to the Director, it seems to take long to get a copy of that.
 - One depredation in Togo was a calf that had to be euthanized. Based on information in the report, the depredation occurred the day after the RAG box was removed. Since this was an SFA, it seems there should have been more deterrence in place in not removing them. It seems like a lack of attention there.
 - I also noted that several calves involved in depredations were born out in the field as opposed to offsite. That is something from the wolf protocol that shouldn't be

happening. I also noted that on one pasture there was a rendezvous site and a den nearby and I don't know if enough attention was taken to that.

- Finally, with regard to Columbia County, the department report notes that the estimated age of injuries was 3-to-7-weeks-old, which seems like a long time.
- Steph Taylor with Northwest Animal Rights Network:
 - Our organization has been following the process for years. In the past, we expressed frustration about the process feeling stuck but that was partly facilitation. We want to thank the department for taking action and welcome the facilitation team. Thank you for encouraging those to speak up. I want to encourage people to speak up from animal conservation programs. I also want to second the previous comment; why are we just hearing about the death of the wolf in Columbia County? I want to ask the department to better inform the public. Thank you and I will further comment tomorrow.

November 10, 2021

- Rachel B:
 - I am pleased with how the new facilitation is going. I hope it will make WAG more functional and encourage participation from all members.
 - I am disappointed in state resources that make sure cattle producers graze on wolf land. Wolves are native and this is mind boggling to me. I don't know of any other business that gets as much support from the department. It is too much focus in these meetings. Many scientific studies show that wolves are part of a healthy ecosystem and I hope WAG can recognize that.
- Dave Hedrick of Ferry Conservation District:
 - Impacts to landscape is not something that gets brought up in WAG. We have been doing site visits for the last month or so and wanted to keep in mind this is not Yellowstone Park up here. It coincides with what producers are dealing with as far as not being able to find range riders and being impacted by wolves. The producers up here have been dealing with that for 10 years now and it has taken a toll on the landscape, so what I am seeing is overgrazing of pastures this is due to late turnout to get calves bigger before getting out to Forest Service allotments and moving cattle during year to avoid wolves. This really came to fruition because of our drought conditions this year. We are going to be dealing with consequences of that even if we have normal moisture in the future.
 - I understand talking about the protocol, but I will say when people are talking about numbers and comparing to other states, numbers don't tell the story when you are looking at the landscape. Those are thrown out by people that are profoundly disconnected from landscape. Not sustainable for producers and the landscape. The credit card we have been using is maxed out here and dealing with land conversions because people make more by selling lands. The landscape needs to be part of the WAG conversation. Part of it is the silo effect of DFW. You have the conflict people, the policy people, the biologists... All local people work really hard on the ground and hats off to them, but we have to do better. I appreciate that. That is all I have.
- David Linn of Washington Wildlife First:
 - I am dismayed to learn the Director ordered a killing of wolves by issuing kill permits. Private individuals to hunt wolves is alarming. Details on these permits is not released publicly, but the public has right to know what is authorized. Who will kill, what

methods are allowed, using dogs, limited to which geographic area, can hunters kill at rendezvous sites, and what ensures wolves are involved in depredations? Predator reports have not been released. I put in a public document request for the recommendation to the Director but it will be weeks/months before getting a response. Did learn about the reasons during WAG, but it's troubling; livestock owners trying to avoid conflict, but the department has failed them. Bureaucratic red tape in the way of providing range riding. If the department is unable to provide help to avoid conflict, they should have called to the public to help before problems develop. Washington Wildlife First is prepared to work with producers and provide funding to prevent continued conflict with the Columbia County pack. Funding range riding, providing alternative locations for cattle. We ask producers to turn in kill permits to DFW or WWF. We hope the next time a situation is developing the department will call on us before the problem happens. You can contact me at dplinn@wawildlifefirst.org to discuss in more detail.

- Illene Le Vee from Klickitat County:
 - As a rancher and someone who prides themselves on how we police our lands, that includes policing wildlife associated with our lands. If the environment is not conducive to safety of our animals, they are placed in protective environment. Concern with comment is if there has been an arrangement between producers (don't like that term but) to pasture individual cattle on their land, that is private property, and they have the right to police protection on their animals. If they are grazing on public land allotments, that is a totally different situation. In those situations, I am in support of protection of wildlife in those. I hope WAG gives interest to health of our ungulates across the state. I am seeing more where our ungulate population is severely disadvantaged with their health. I want to know how the department and associates intend to or can adjust for that circumstance. Thank you and good luck. It was a fascinating meeting.
- Steph Taylor with Northwest Animal Rights Network:
 - Frustration with timing of kill order announcement. Last few were during Commission meeting or WAG meeting which does allow time for the public to ask questions and formulate comments. Many questions we have that remain unanswered and we are frustrated this kill order was even made, especially because we are frustrated the department resources are going toward protecting cattle and think it would be a detriment to bring in wildlife services and they do not have a great track record for helping recovery effort. If want to go into how climate change is affecting ungulate population and how wolves can help toward chronic wasting disease to so want conversation to move forward. Thank you.
- Jana
 - I appreciate the meeting being well facilitated and I learned a lot from producer perspective directly impacted. I agree with the person who said there seems to be an emphasis on producers at the expense of wolves even if wolf population can tolerate some lethal removal. First, I don't see a mention of producers using guard dogs, wondering why that doesn't seem to be prominent while I have seen helpful in other regions.
 - Also, about climate or about ungulate-wolf interaction, it is important to look at effect of drought and forest fires and how having cattle grazing on public lands is affecting ungulate and, in turn, wolves. Cattle being on the landscape affects all of this. Thank you.

- Justin Dixon
 - As a producer and a local elected official, I think we need to support our producers in every way possible. They are the people that make these communities survive. These small rural communities could not put kids in schools and the workforce so any support WAG could give to ranchers or producers in the area is extremely well benefited for those small communities. Thank you.
- Jim Salkas *via Chat: Does the Group distinguish between and provide different / alternative actions for depredations on private vs. public land?*