

**Wolf Advisory Group
July 7, 2021, Meeting Notes
Zoom Meeting (Day 2)**

WAG members: Samee Charriere, Dave Duncan, Diane Gallegos, Todd Holmdahl, Jess Kayser, Bill Kemp, Lynn Okita, Dan Paul, Caitlin Scarano, Lisa Stone, Paula Swedeen, Rachel Voss, and Jeff Wade

WDFW staff members: Candace Bennett, Dan Brinson, Andrew Kolb, Donny Martorello, Joey McCanna, Steve Pozzanghera, Annemarie Prince, Trent Roussin, and Julia Smith

WDFW Commissioners: Molly Linville and Lorna Smith

Facilitator: Rob Geddis

Welcome and check-in

Rob welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed the agenda for the day.

Meeting Purpose

Get WAG member guidance on initial post-recovery planning issues for future WAG discussion and walk through the depredation investigation process.

Comment

For those who were not here yesterday, it was proposed it would be useful to most WAG members who haven't spent time going over the depredation investigation process, for the Department to walk members through from when the producer calls the Department about a depredation to when the Department goes through the determination. We are proposing this at one o'clock to try and see if it meets the needs. Post-recovery planning discussion and depredation investigation process is the proposed agenda today. Any questions, recommended adjustments, or comments?

No objections

Comment

A big part of the day yesterday was Department updates. If you go to the agenda, you can see a list of topics. I recommend reading the notes on the conversation yesterday, reaching out to your peers, WAG, or even myself after the meeting to get details. A couple of things to highlight out of those updates: A presentation was given on wolf rule development and if you go to our website, that [presentation](#) is posted. It really outlined major steps in rule development and timeline, so I encourage you to check that out. Another item that was asked was a walk-through of the depredation investigation process. Another topic was ungulates. We, the group, over the past year or so have openly shown concern for ungulate abundance and what we know and what we don't know. One thing

that came out yesterday was for me to propose a process to help WAG develop a common baseline understanding of what we know and don't know about ungulate abundance as a starting point reference because it is important to everyone involved. That is my broad summary for any of those that missed yesterday. Do you have any specific questions at this point that might help you?

Comment

I'm glad to hear about the next step on the ungulate conversation. I think that is going to be helpful. I'm wondering how the group feels about continuing a thread of making sure we revisit this topic in WAG meetings. I have thought for some time that once we turn our attention to ungulates, it would be interesting if we could find common ground. If some data comes back or there is research on habitat limitations, are there restoration projects we could all contribute to make happen? If there is funding needed, just getting attention of whether it is DNR, DFW, or the Forest Service, allow for improved habitat. Is that something we can work on together? It has been a while since we did something where we could work as a team to a common goal. It strengthens our relationships and places where we have common purpose. I think it helps the quality of the discussion and that is an example of an area where it seems we can do good work together. I'm interested in how we build on that baseline information that you are going to build framework for. I'm wondering what we do with that baseline information for future WAG meetings.

Comment

I'll attempt to summarize what I think the group said. I think we didn't come out and specifically state the future of making it a part of WAG meetings, but I think that was the implication. We are wrestling with what information do we need to at least come to a common starting point? From that baseline, where do we want to take that in the future? That is about as detailed as we got.

Comment

I want to say that I love that idea. I do think it is an area of common ground. I'm not sure everybody thought it was common ground necessarily. I would love to go through the process like yesterday, agree on what is important, get a baseline, then figure out next steps. That might dovetail what was said.

Comment

I wanted to make sure that in your summary you recognize the group had discussed the need for information, and I wanted to make sure we reflected on the fact that there is a lot of information in some situations depending on herd or location, so I think it is two-fold. Potentially, the group expressing interest in information they think is lacking, as well as the Department having the opportunity to explain what information *is* available and what *is* being collected. I think it is both. I just wanted to make sure it would be good for the group to have an understanding of what is being collected on a regular basis, depending on herd area or species.

Comment

Did that meet your needs or answer your question?

Comment

It answered my question quite well, thank you very much.

Comment

For those that missed yesterday, we started with the topic we are wrestling with now which is post-recovery planning. I want to point to the presentation about potential elements in post-recovery planning. It shared 21 different potential elements of post-recovery planning and alternatives for each of these elements. And that is where I think we should spend time. If you go to the website for this meeting, a 17-page [matrix](#) that lists these elements and alternatives was posted, and we may or may not be using the [PowerPoint](#) as reference for today. It primed WAG members, familiarizing them with elements and ideas to help with our discussion today. Anything I missed?

Comment

I don't think so. I just put links to the PowerPoint in the chat and the link to the more detailed document in the chat.

Comment

Thank you. On this post-recovery plan topic, I recommend we spend time on what the outcome we want from this discussion is. From the Department perspective, what would be useful to you? My guess is WAG feedback on these elements on a couple of ways. On one way might be which elements should we include in the post-recovery plan, if not all of them? I think that is one piece of WAG advice that would be helpful. For each individual element, there are different alternatives and ideas. It would be helpful to get a consensus for each element. I wanted to check in with the Department or other WAG members and ask if that makes sense.

Comment

I think that is where we want to start. Like yesterday, there are all these different elements to think about. They all have a place in post-recovery. A lot of different options are in there so we might analyze some or all in a draft EIS. We might not have to as there is maybe cohesion on some elements, some may put together or split apart, we might flag, "this element is tied to this, etc." Again, knowing that WAG's time is limited, where do we want to start? Do we want to go through each element and discuss and work on a list of prioritizations for WAG discussion? So that we make sure WAG dives into the most important topics where there is specific interest or cohesion. There are a lot of ideas on the page and the larger document, so what of those ideas should make it into a draft EIS for analysis? The draft EIS is what proposes different paths for the agency to pursue and the Department team to dive into analysis for. That is my suggestion.

Comment

If I understand, your suggestion is let's pick an element. There are different alternative ideas for each, so at this point you are not necessarily interested in WAG opinions, just

which to consider?

Comment

Not necessarily. I am interested to know if there is cohesion around a particular idea or lack thereof. I think if it highlights areas that we might need to work on more, I welcome what people have to say about it if they think some idea is completely ridiculous or if I left out something completely or if this idea works but only if combined with this one. I think we, the Department, want to know.

Comment

Let me propose a process. You have 21 elements shown yesterday, so a process could be going back and taking each element in turn again but using this as an opportunity for WAG members to ask questions and make sure they understand what the element is, what the alternative is, and offer initial reactions. If we spent ten minutes on each, that is like three-and-a-half hours. So, I think I could help time manage it. My proposal is asking WAG to make sure they clearly understand the elements at this point, and we get through the 21. Then after you better understand, the homework assignment over the next week is for WAG members to share with me where they would put those four stars. Where is the most important to start with? That is my proposed process. Feedback?

Comment

Part of the homework, too, is since WAG members represent larger communities, share what you learned in WAG to folks in your circles. That is part of this plan. We want to spread the word on what we are working on, and you WAG members would be a conduit of information to the circles that you represent or work with. It would be speaking to them about the elements too and seeing if there are any they prefer or have cohesion around. There is a long time before the next WAG meeting so that is a part of this process I want.

Comment

Based on what you just said, I have a context question. I remember when we did work trying to figure out how WAG's input affected Department post-recovery plan. At least among conservation groups, there is consternation about WAG being the only conduit of information. When we are assigned to reach out to communities and bring information back (like the protocol), there are people who get frustrated with that and feel their voice isn't being heard. I think WAG being one place to get information directly for people we talk to is great, but I was wondering if, just for context's sake, you can talk more about ways you are getting input. Because it puts enormous pressure on us. This is much bigger than the protocol because that was something that came out of a plan that already came from SEPA. I know once it gets to Commission there are formal ways, but as you gather information, are there places you directly interact with the public to get information or feedback so that it is not just us?

Comment

I want to remind folks that in 2019, we did do our scoping period. It was something like 120 days of scoping and over 8,000 comments received all around the state and we

presented information especially in rural areas with less access. We did webinars because we had to cancel public meetings (we scheduled 14 of them). I envision something similar once a draft EIS comes out. Prior to that, we will have to have stakeholder meetings and ways to meet and talk about different elements and have small groups discuss. I've got two other huge projects on my plate right now. Part of the introduction to WAG is to introduce to WAG and say, "the public is listening, get these out." The document shared yesterday is the first it has been shared, so there will be time to seep in. As far as a big circuit of public meetings, yes, that will come with a draft EIS. Before that, it may have to be sort of informal. There are some other items for me that come first so I don't have that specific plan laid out right now. Part of sharing it right now is to put feelers out. Now these items are on my plate, so it shuffled the priorities a little bit.

Comment

Did that get at what you were looking for?

Comment

Yeah, it did. I appreciate it and I wonder if at some point we go back to notes. We spend two-thirds of meetings about public outreach ideas and maybe WAG as a whole can revisit it. I know you have a huge amount on your plate and whether or not you have time, I do remember there being extensive discussion about how input is gathered over time and how we were just one way to get unique perspective because it was across stakeholder group, but we are not the only way.

Comment

This raises a few different ideas and questions in my mind. It is raising the point that WAG is just one vehicle for public outreach, but I was wondering if there is a way to use WAG time to brainstorm ways WAG members are communicating with the public. I would like to come up with ways we are communicating with the public, what has worked and what hasn't, and brainstorm ways to better connect with certain audiences. I don't think we have formally talked about our role in engaging and representing the public. I think some of us come more inherently with audiences and others like myself are here more independently. I want to represent the public but I'm not really sure how I can best do that. As a group, maybe this should be one of our tasks right now.

Comment

I could not agree more with that. I think that is something that is not really clear to WAG members that don't represent an organization and aren't already answering to constituents. I think that is a fantastic idea. That is what I envision for this; not that it is only WAG or all WAG, but they are helping spread the message. I think that works best that the environmentalists only talk to people in their community, but groups that maybe represent different interests coexist on the same issue. I think the idea about reviewing in the old days is a great idea and I have written some of it down. I will read it to you briefly because it seems like you did brainstorm a whole lot: There are some ideas specific to livestock producers, association group meetings, capital meetings, junior livestock shows, and more in regard to information sharing. This would involve using the web as a resource to

reach a broader audience, having biologists who are out and about with wolves present information, and providing resources like an interactive story map on the history of wolves in Washington. There is a lot there. I just remembered I pulled that from previous notes and haven't developed a full plan because, honestly, the Department's priority on wolf plans have shifted completely. We need to prioritize that later on and I think WAG can be instrumental. And yeah, a backdrop of what is expected for WAG members and outreach or how to WAG members have inlets to communities if not already meeting with other groups.

Comment

I'm in a different situation. We were asked a year-and-a-half ago to review the first step of the SEPA process and draft. At that time, we met for two days and had Washington Cattlemen's Farm Bureau and hunter organizations. We only came up with 17 elements. We listed our preferred alternatives and comments. This was sent into the Department in January 2020. We can gladly review this again but the one thing I have to say is it is difficult to do element at a time. The complete document says it is important. There are probably areas in here where we put our preferred alternatives that these organizations could back down on, providing they didn't have to back down on some of the more key elements. It is the sum of the total of all these elements, so I will be amiss if we have to go through these and okay each element without okaying the whole. You could okay the element but turn down the whole. It is a sticky thing because it means I have to go back through this process again somewhere because these are my marching orders, and they are not necessarily my opinions. They are the marching orders of a lot of people through their organizations. This is more important than what one person feels, so it is not an easy concept.

Comment

I remember that document you referred to back in January.

Comment

And there was a lot of effort on one side of that document, and we never heard a word back from the Department.

Comment

Okay, I think we've got it and we can use it. For today, we are not going to ask WAG members to necessarily endorse an element or a particular alternative. Today it is making sure you have clarity on what the elements are and getting back with your communities. Which element do we, as WAG, wrestle with first? We are not asking today on which elements to accept or not.

Comment

I want to say I agree and appreciate that point that you can't really consider individually and have to consider as whole. I think that is what we are asking for WAG. I have ideas on what I think are linked, but again, this is part of having WAG discussion around it and having different discussions. Which of these things depend on another element? I

remember the document you referred to, the scoping comments, which were really helpful to me and the agency. All the scoping comments were captured, analyzed, and available for review online. Scoping comments don't typically get a response but that doesn't mean we didn't read them. The draft EIS is still a draft. There could be a few drafts. We are not even in a draft stage. This is pre-draft, so very early in the process. We are going to get some of this out on the table so we can incorporate what we have heard in these discussions. It is not about endorsing something today and you can't go back. It is about starting the discussion.

Comment

I propose you use your PowerPoint again and cycle through each of the 21 elements and again give WAG members to ask clarifying questions, to make sure they understand what this element or alternative is trying to say. If there is an immediate reaction, share that. My role will be time management. I'm going to try to keep a clock on it to nudge the WAG and move on to the next. We can shoot for a ten-minute window. We can go less, but quicker is better. That is my proposal.

Comment

It is the first link in the chat. I contacted all WAG members to take them through this PowerPoint one-on-one and I heard back from about two-thirds of WAG members, so did an intake process with two-thirds of WAG. And did it change anything? Yes, it did. Some brought up language clarification so that helped me to make the language clearer, which was part of the intention in making sure language was clear before sharing with the wider public.

Comment

I think based on that feedback, let's go through the slides. Again, what we are asking WAG members is not to judge whether the element is acceptable or good, but do you understand the element/alternatives and give the opportunity to ask clarifying questions.

Comment

One question. How much did you go to other post-recovery plans and other states and get ideas on alternatives? Just curious to how much that was contemplated.

Comment

Yeah, I have read through the management hunts for pretty much any state that has one, just so I am up to speed on what other states have done and currently do. I feel an important part of my job is understanding what wolf management looks like in other states. I want to make sure we in Washington and lots of Department staff do that. All that came into this, thinking about how other states do it. As far as format though, that is based on the 2011 Wolf Plan which is highly regarded not only in Washington but other places. And it is based on format that the SEPA requires. We developed the process to use the SEPA standard operating procedure (SOP) that looks at different alternatives and they are compared.

Comment

Thank you very much. Got it.

Comment

My plan is to go to these [pages](#) and wait to see some hands raised.

Page 2: “Number of regions.” I want to point out that this is not a work product that I myself created alone. This is something that came out of Department staff at all levels of the agency, so the ideas here are not solely my own. This is work that is on behalf of many Department staff including all Department staff on the call today. I wanted to make sure their efforts are called out here. Just because I’m presenting doesn’t mean it was me alone. Again, this is an idea about do we need to divide the state to manage wolves? Does it make sense to have boundaries once wolves are recovered? If so, what kind of boundaries would you think about? And are boundaries linked to other elements?

Comment

What is a metapopulation? A wolf metapopulation?

Comment

A metapopulation is a group of smaller populations that makes up a larger population. Depending on scale, you might consider it one population, but a larger scale you might see it as multiple populations. For example, we might consider the Northern Rocky Mountains ecosystems as a larger population, but that is made up of multiple, interconnected populations – so Washington’s population is part of a larger North Rocky Mountains, so you might say it is a metapopulation. There is some sort of level of genetic connectivity, but that needs to be assessed. When I say a metapopulation in Washington, maybe if cutting boundaries on Washington, you might consider it as areas like the northeast, southeast, North Cascades, South Cascades, southwest Washington, and Olympic Peninsula. Other staff, jump in if you have a different idea.

Comment

I remember when we did these intake calls, as I was trying to understand the different options to understand where I might ethically fall, you mentioned something on how other predators are managed. That was clarifying to me in a way. Would that be helpful here? As you go through these, say, “the standard on how cougars and bears are managed would reflect this option.”

Comment

Yeah, a lot of these elements you could specifically compare to bears or cougars. You could say does it make sense for wolves to fall the same way or are wolves different? Cougars have their own management units, PMUs, so that is designed based on cougar hunting. Washington State did lots of research that informed the cougar populations in specific areas. That was based on cougar-specific data. I don’t know if bears are managed by GMU.

Comment

An idea was offered that I think we can consider. Consider, how do we break up other predators? I don't think we have the time to answer all the questions right now, but maybe we capture the ideas and then we can go on. I also wanted to save you the trouble of answering all questions. Did I get that right?

Comment

I think that is fine. You are asking us to understand these, and our homework would be where our priorities are. I think for me grasping the differences in these options is challenging. When you said this is how other predators are managed in the intake call, that was illuminating to me in both the option and where I fall. So maybe you don't need to say on each of these how it compares to other predators, but it may be helpful. Or what are other ways to help WAG with the differences between these options. Just showing these and saying do you understand? I'm not sure.

Comment

I think that is a great idea. And in tandem to that, having the discussion of how wolves are different from other carnivores. And does that play into changes in how they are managed.

Comment

Any other questions in this element?

No questions

Comment

Before moving on, there is something in the introduction part of the larger document that is all just text. It points out specific elements that are talking about exactly that. That is a great point, how it compares to bear or cougar management. A lot of folks say, "hey, wolves are another large carnivore, so why wouldn't you do the same?" There are some cases in which that may be appropriate, and others it may not, so we list reasons. I could go through that if it makes sense. That does focus on controversial elements, but that provides agency perspective on some of those elements. I can share that as we go through these to talk about bear and cougar because that is what the agency did think about when making these. Great point.

Page 3: I can introduce this one, number three, wolf conservation and monitoring. How would you count wolves or monitor the wolf population once recovered? Maybe there is a wolf population with too many to make it reasonable to use a direct minimum count. What do most other states do? States with a population of wolves exceeding 500 animals, is it really feasible to count wolves the way you count a recovering population? What do we do with other types of wildlife? This is where bear or cougar could be different or could not be. DFW is doing work to estimate black bear density and there have been recent studies based on hair snare corrals. Invasive techniques to count animals versus noninvasive. Things that are more hands off versus direct count. There is always a level of trust

involved in the methods for estimating. Even now with direct minimum count, which is actually counting the animals, there is a trust issue.

Comment

Any clarifying questions?

No questions

Comment

I mentioned homework. When I think of the homework, it is not necessarily asking you to pick the few you would support. It is picking the few that are most important to you or maybe the people you represent would like to discuss first and dive into deeper or better understand. I don't know if that helps but as we go through these, it is which ones you want to dive into more detail first as a group. Again, not sure how useful it is to just read these again.

Comment

Please don't read them as written but if you could just summarize and we can give them plenty of time.

Comment

Page 4: This is something we specifically talk about in the longer document, about how it compares with bear and cougar management. As most know, we haven't translocated bear or cougar. However, relocation (moving an individual bear or lion because of a conflict) is somewhat routine in certain areas. Relocation is a different topic that is more conflict management, but translocation isn't something that is done with those other species. Wolves are different because they were eliminated from the state. It is a question of, "Is this something the agency should be prepared for in certain cases? To support other comanagers if that is their goal? Or is it better for animals to show up on their own?" There is a lot to think through here.

Comment

Could you clarify what a comanager is?

Comment

A comanager is, in this context, somebody else who has authority over managing wildlife (like a National Park Service or Tribe). They have management authority over wolves so they may want DFW to be a partner in something like this.

Comment

Can you say from the Department perspective what your view of translocation as use of Department time and resources is?

Comment

There are a lot of different views on translocation. I would encourage other staff to give

views, as I'm not speaking for the whole Department and not providing an official position. In general, most folks who manage wolves recognize wolves have incredible dispersal ability. It is what wolves do, even in other states. Wolves are so capable of recolonization. They just need time. It is not something the Department would necessarily pursue on its own, but there are reasons you may want to do it. Never say never. Wolves disappear in certain areas and maybe it makes sense to translocate. Most Department staff might say we are more thinking about idea two, where we want wolves to expand through natural expansion. But there are always unforeseen circumstances. I think there are a lot of different ideas on this issue, and I don't speak for all Department staff. A lot of thought behind that is not only wolf biology, but when you move wolves other than letting them on their own, it tends to be even more controversial. The agency is then responsible for wolf outcomes more than we already are. There is that social piece of it, too.

Page 5: Number seven is hunting of wolves; another one we wrote a detailed paragraph about in that larger document. Folks may ask why even consider wolf hunting. The agency's mission is to provide opportunity for folks, so it is something that is appropriate to consider in an EIS, whether that is something the agency pursues or not. Obviously, I don't think our agency has a position on this now other than if you are writing an EIS, this is something you need to consider. I think the bookends represent the wide range of options from not allowing hunting at all, to something similar to bear or cougar management. It is currently under idea four where there are reasons for bear or cougar. I think the thing that makes wolves different here, if they are different, is wolves have the history of extrication. The other carnivores weren't, across the nation as well. There is a history there that is different. It doesn't necessarily make the carnivores themselves different, but the rhetoric around it is. Can we do this in a sustainable way for the long term?

Comment

Since we are close to Canada and Idaho, can you explain what is going on in Idaho? I have seen dramatic headlines.

Comment

I don't know if someone else wants to jump in first. Idaho at this stage – this is one person's opinion – is in a different place right now and not everyone would agree. I think a lot of people in eastern Washington or see northeast Washington think it is the same. You heard some of that in public comment yesterday about the perception in Idaho maybe coming from a different spot. But individually, we have a minimum of 178 wolves in Washington. In Idaho, their estimate is 1,500. It is apples and oranges at this stage. Can Idaho have sustainable hunting? Sure. But is the legislation that came out targeting more wolves in a hunting season than might be appropriate? That is another question. Are you asking how it compares?

Comment

Yeah, I don't understand why there is such a reaction in Idaho to make such a dramatic response. Is it about the predators? Is it about the social issues? And you may not know, I

was just curious if you had any thoughts on it. I'm not trying to put you on the spot, just trying to understand.

Comment

As a Commissioner, I'm trying not to interject. But what makes Idaho very different is the legislature has taken it upon themselves to dictate how wolves are managed. That is something we would probably like to avoid in Washington. I wanted to point that out.

Comment

I was going to say this is what we know about what the Idaho state legislature and government has done relative to wolves in Idaho and leave it at that. I think we addressed where that regulation change has come from and legislature has policy body in Idaho similar as Washington has taken that action. Anyways, I hope that answers the proposal to reduce the wolf population in Idaho by 90%. Remember that on any of these topics whether it is translocation, hunting, or regions, these are all things identified in the plan. That is why the reference is there. All of these things are the result of the current guiding document which is why we are proposing to work through these in the post-recovery plan. Just, again, a reminder for everyone that each of these has a foundation within the existing conservation and management plan.

Comment

Yeah, it was said perfectly. At this stage it is our job to contemplate these actions and whether or not the agency has an opinion yet. I think a lot of these things are in the court of personal opinion. I don't know if it is appropriate. If you asked every person in this room, there are folks with all sorts of opinions. An important point was made too but I would also like to point out legislation around wolves is becoming the thing these days in Washington, Idaho, Wisconsin, and Montana. In many states that have or don't have wolves (Colorado voted to put wolves in the state), the legislature is directing wolf management in all those cases. It is difficult for wildlife agencies because a lot of the time agencies need to carry out things their Commissions or biologists don't necessarily agree with. That is one thing wolf managers deal with.

Comment

Based on what just said about legislation in Washington, I wanted to point out the last major bill the legislature passed in regard to wolves in Washington affirmed the state recovery plan. It was not in the vein of interfering with Commission decisions or DFW management, because you did put Washington in the same bucket as other states. Yes, Washington has passed legislation based on wolves, but none of them have directly usurped the authority of FWC or Department management. I just felt the need to point that out.

Break

Comment

Let's continue on the last element. Timing is good, with less than 20 minutes on each

element. This is where we left off, but I just wanted to give opportunity if anyone had questions.

No questions

Comment

Page 6: Number nine is “manage for landscape connectivity.” This is broad, not a lot extra to say on this one. I would like to hear if WAG had specific thoughts on this in a plan.

Comment

The crossing structures on I-90, is that what you are talking about? Have they demonstrated to be effective?

Comment

Yes. Not specifically for wolves, but for other species. Elk use that overpass and there are also coyotes documented crossing that structure.

Comment

With that overpass on I-90, there are 11 associated underpasses as well. On the other side of the overpass, there are several places where critters can cross under the freeway and there is fencing to guide them. That is really effective, and I imagine we will get camera footage getting wolves using that. We are working on funding for overpasses on I-97 and a lot of that is mule deer because there are a lot of collisions with mule deer there. That ties into our discussion with ungulates. I do think that even though wolves can make it over highways, that would be good.

Comment

I want to voice my support for Highway 97. That is great to hear.

Comment

If folks want to see footage of animals, there is a Facebook page called “I-90 Wildlife Watch,” which show lots of videos of animals using those. I agree that this could be a commonality, protecting places where ungulates cross.

Page 7: Number ten is land management. This one is more complicated than what is shown, so I can unpack it again for those who were not here yesterday or let you guys ask questions. This is really about the Commission process that recently took place (grazing guidance and tools through lands decision) and specifically addressed livestock grazing on DFW lands. A number of Department staff were involved in that discussion and a number of you outside of the agency were involved in crafting that grazing guidance and management tools as well. Wolf management practices, things like lethal control, would be the same regardless of land management. The Department is not trying to reinvent the wheel. For items about federal grazing, we don’t have the authority to dictate federal grazing practices. It is not something we would consider in the scope of the state plan, specific to grazing practices.

Page 8: Number twelve is proactive measures for reduce depredation. I'm really curious what WAG members think about this one. A large Department team thought about this because this is incredibly important to the agency, but it is a different topic for discussion when talking about recolonization of wolves versus recovered populations. Are DPCA-Ls and contracted range riders something the Department should maintain into the future? Is that something another entity should take over? What role do wildlife conflict specialists have? We are already seeing the SFAs having some of the challenges with enough contracted range riders in certain areas and other entities becoming more dominant in an area. What does that look like going forward? The Department has talked about it but now it is time for others to weigh in.

Comment

As I look at this, I realize I need to get up to speed on what the proactive measures are to know what is consistent with other species. What are we doing with black bear and cougar? What does the Department cover cost-wise? It is an area of ignorance for me.

Comment

I will not go into all my feedback, but I wanted to point out that from a statewide perspective that House Bill 2097 requires that the state invest in this. So, whether it is DFW or another entity, the state has obligated itself in law to continue to invest to ensure ranchers have resources to implement nonlethal deterrents.

Comment

This is one where if it is flagged for further discussion, it would be great to have other Department experts here where maybe WAG would want a presentation on what it looks like. I have read through WACs, but I am not an expert. Wildlife conflict specialists could provide input as well, as some of them deal all about wolves and others not at all. Those would be our experts for this topic

Page 9: Number thirteen is the use of non-lethal injurious harassment such as rubber bullets. This one is something that I don't foresee too much discussion about. It is about hazing and whether that is something we want to talk about having any sort of program. I don't know how much this is actually used now or if it needs to be gone into great detail.

Comment

Any questions on this element?

No questions

Comment

Page 10: Number fourteen is wolf collar data sharing. The first thing I would ask is clarifying questions. I'm not sure how much more context I can provide other than this is a program the agency has now. Some find it really important for some folks to have but it is not consistent with how we manage other species. What is appropriate into the future?

And again, if there were hunting of wolves allowed, what would it mean for this? Given there is already hunting of wolves on Tribal reservations, what does it mean now? These are the questions.

Comment

Are there many livestock interactions with black bears and cougars? I just don't hear a ton of that. I'm looking at the differences and similarities between the predators.

Comment

I think for cougar depredations on livestock, those are usually focused more on calves and sheep, llama, and alpacas, so sometimes smaller operations. We do have a few per year associated with larger livestock operations for cougars. With bear, we get a handful per year in eastern Washington. Those are rarer but the same kind of size range as cougar, so calves and smaller sheep. In northeast Washington, cougar depredation on livestock happened fairly frequently, maybe even more so than wolves, but it doesn't have as big of a spotlight at this time. Does that answer your question?

Comment

Yes, thank you much.

Comment

Page 11: Number fifteen is depredation response and investigations. This one has only one sentence, so it may be confusing, but this is our status quo and what we would want to propose. Another alternative the agency doesn't have ton of control over is what if a federal entity would have the ability to do something like this? Something to think about. Wildlife specialists on the call may have particular thoughts on this.

Comment

Any clarifying questions on this element?

No questions

Comment

Page 12: Number sixteen is "lethal control by state/federal agents of wolves involved in repeated livestock depredations." The distinctions are really subtle here. The subtle difference is idea one says, "state or federal employees or agents", and idea two says "by WDFW consistent with other depredation removal or federal employees." Just to clarify when we talk about agents, are these people paid to do this? Or is it a Master Hunter-type program? In this particular element, we contemplated it as a contract, so somebody getting paid. Thinking about Master Hunters would be a separate element. There are companies that conduct wildlife helicopter work specifically.

Comment

That aspect of a separate contractor potentially being an agent is certainly correct. The other way this could be contemplated is common language we see in the current statute,

which speaks to agents of the state in which case they could be not necessary for compensation purposes. There is a different aspect other than simply being a paid relationship, and the language that exists is “agent of the state.” That could be a formalized agreement where WDFW is authorizing specific action by someone or some organization with a formal relationship as an agent of the state, which may or may not involve financial compensation.

Comment

I assume that would also have directives related to, if this agent was involved in lethal control, what happens to the bodies of those animals? Whether the agent could keep those bodies, or would they go to the Department?

Comment

Correct, those things would be prescribed by WDFW as the one that is authorizing the relationship as an agent of the state.

Page 13: Number seventeen is permitted lethal control by livestock owners in repeated livestock depredations. This is a similar topic, but this is specifically about permits.

Comment

Any questions about this element?

No questions

Page 14: Number eighteen is lethal take of wolves in the act of attacking livestock. “Caught in the act” legislation, or WAC 220-440-080. The act of pursuing, biting, wounding, or killing livestock. The Department stands with, I think, keeping it consistent with the WAC. That WAC is specific to wolves though, so there is a value to make things similar to bear or cougar. That would need some WAC revision to happen. That is maybe outside the scope of a plan but maybe good to think about.

Comment

Any questions?

No questions

Comment

Page 15: Number nineteen is the lethal take of wolves in the act of attacking domestic animals (e.g., dogs). This is the same thing, just about dogs.

Comment

Any questions?

No questions

Comment

Page 16: Number twenty is payment for livestock depredation. I'm interested to see what WAG thinks. The agency has been administering compensation since the 2011 Plan was in place, so is that something that remains appropriate into the future? Should it change? Should it be transferred to another entity to administer? Phasing out compensation altogether? I see this as something WAG has expertise in and I'm curious to see what members think on this one.

Comment

We have had discussions at WAG before and there was a work group for a while about revising and improving the livestock compensation programs. I'm wondering if there is a way to capture that. In general, your idea says provide compensation for wolf depredation, but it doesn't say about improving the current program. I know it has been expressed interest in both the conservation community and the livestock producer community, so there is a system that works better than the current one. Could you incorporate in your ideas actual modification or improvement of the current compensation system?

Comment

I think the short answer is yeah, we can incorporate what has already been done. I don't want to lose the larger question of what kind of compensation is appropriate post-recovery. Is it any? Is it x or y? I don't want to end the conversation.

Comment

I think that is a good point. We certainly don't want to discount that there would be an idea or option somewhere in between the status quo and these other ones provided. And yes, we had a work group working on that and that sort of seemed to take a pause for an extended period of time. I'm not sure if that was due to Covid or if it started to slow before that. But I think, certainly, there is still room for taking our status quo program but building upon it or improving it. I think that is work that needs to be picked back up again and continuous. Does that answer your question?

Comment

Yeah, thank you. I remember raising this issue a few meetings ago and it was said that the group was committed to getting a group back together and improving the system. I would hate for that to get lost but agree that broader discussion is still appropriate. I think that if there is going to be an effort to redo the program – and that will probably involve change in legislation – I think it should be durable so improving the program seems to be embedded in the conversation. I think those two conversations go hand in hand.

Comment

Page 17: Number twenty-one is payment for indirect loss. The Department team contemplated different options here. Is it appropriate to continue to pay out for indirect loss? Is that something we do for any other species? I don't believe it is something we do for other species. We may say, "hey, wolves are different so maybe we should keep doing it." Is it working for folks? Are there ways it could be reimagined?

Comment

Similar to the previous slide, this is also tied directly into that committee that started to work on improvements to our existing compensation programs, so I guess it can be folded in with the other one. You are correct; we do not pay indirect loss for other types of loss and I think we may be the only state that pays indirect in the way we do. Other states have a multiplier like what is indicated in idea two, but we are unique in that we pay for reduced pregnancy rates, reduced weight gain, and higher than normal loss in season roundup. A lot of expressed interest in trying to improve that program. It seems to have gained traction among producers. I would say in the last three years we have seen more of those claims than we have typically.

Comment

One more thing on this: I have heard a lot through WAG on issues with the process, so I think there are other ways to re-imagine it, like pay for presence program. I think, again, this is something WAG would have expertise in.

Page 18: Number twenty-two is ungulate management. This was saying is it most appropriate to have this in a wolf plan or a game management plan? Specifically, about ungulate management.

Comment

On this one, is this already happening, ungulate management? Were you trying to call out something different than originally done? Because this seems to be front-and-center to what the Department is supposed to do already.

Comment

I think it is, but the previous plan specifically called out certain management actions that or could be related to wolf management. If you want to manage healthy ungulate populations for many reasons, we could talk about does it belong in a wolf plan or somewhere else? What sort of crosswalk between documents?

Comment

In my opinion, it seems they are very integrated and should talk about them in the same breadth. But I also worry about having two plans (a wolf plan and ungulate plan somewhere else) because, like you said, they do sync.

Comment

Page 19: Number twenty-three is wolf-ungulate interactions. This is listed in both the game management plan and the wolf plan. It is in both plans and was cross walked between the two. There is an element here about yes, you could put this in the wolf plan but ideally a wolf plan is a document maybe a little longer lasting than a game management plan (which is updated more often). So, maybe it makes more sense to have these metrics more adaptable when wolves are in post-recovery stage. Just an idea.

Page 20: Number twenty-four is outreach and education. Commissioner, if you don't have anything to say here, I don't know –

Comment

There is a lot to be said, but as you know, I'm fully supportive of as much outreach and education as we can do. We can't do too much.

Comment

I'm in agreement there and I think one item we would be looking for from WAG members is: Is there a more specific approach? If you look at the layout of the last wolf plan and page references I have provided, it would be great to hear what folks are thinking about or if there are more specific plans folks would like to see. I know we as the agency and public affairs work on this all the time, but there could be plenty to dive into.

Comment

We had an outreach and education sub-committee of WAG that did really good work several years ago. That promoted some brainstorming, and it would be interesting to reconvene a group to look at what was done a few years ago, look at what the Department does, and look at consistent messaging that could be taken up by organizations that regularly do this. I think it is a huge area for growth for all of us.

Comment

Page 21: Number twenty-five is about research. This element is similar to the last one, in this being a broad base but could be made more specific. In a plan that is supposed to last 5 or 10 years more than that, it is not something the agency necessarily wants to decide preemptively. It is more of a general statement, but I'm open to hearing other ideas.

Page 22: Number twenty-six is collaborative process. This is WAG's wheelhouse. It is about the WAG. Should WAG continue like the WAG we know now? Should it be regional? Do we not need WAG post-recovery? Something sticks out to me back to the question on what other states do; a lot of other states are rewriting management plans too. They are updating them with federal delisting of wolves. They are putting together advisory groups or technical working groups consisting of scientists. Other states seem to be putting them together specifically to get plans updated. Let's say we are after that process: What does that look like? What do we think would benefit Washington the most?

Comment

Let me take a shot at reiterating the homework request and answering any clarifying questions. Our time together with WAG is limited and in future meetings. One assumption is we might not have time to fully dive into every one of these elements. As the development of post-recovery plan goes, what is the most valuable use of WAG time? Where do we start with these various elements? The request is, now that you understand the elements on the table, where would you like to start spending more WAG time to have more in-depth discussions? Which of these elements might be of most interest to you? Whether an independent participant, or most interested from your group or people you

represent? I am giving each of you a limited number of stars, in this case four. In this list of 21 elements, where would you put your four stars? You have the freedom to put those stars where you want. For example, you can put one star on four different elements. Or if there is one element that you want to start with, you can put all four stars on that element. The ask is after today's meeting, you take time to think about it not only yourself but the group you represent and figure out where you would put those four stars. Which elements would you like to focus on first? Then communicate to me most conveniently. As I collect input and plot those stars, we should see groupings of the most important at large. And we would propose those next WAG meeting to dive deeper into those. Any questions on that ask?

No questions

Comment

How much time would you like to provide that input? It is difficult because some members are independent, and we have members tied to an organization. I want to give you plenty of time to think but not so much that we lose sight of it. Is one month a good time frame? Too long? Too short? Maybe July 31st, is that reasonable? Any objections?

Comment

Is the next meeting still planned for November?

Comment

Yes.

Comment

I'm just wondering why such a long hiatus. It is four months and then we have another meeting in January. Is it possible to move our meeting to October?

Comment

I think when I began facilitating, we mapped out the year with calving and grazing and other events and WAG member schedules. Because of grazing and conventions and regular annual events, this gap is typical where we have July then November. That said, we certainly can attempt to schedule something earlier if that is more helpful to you.

Comment

I thought hunting season played into that, too.

Comment

Yeah, you are right. I think hunting plays into that as well.

Comment

I think we need more than the end of this month if we are going to get organization input. I know I could take ten minutes on every one of these. If we want organization opinion on the stars, we probably need to go at least six weeks in order to get through those board

meetings and get consensus amongst boards. That is my opinion. If we are not going to meet until November, and even that interferes with a lot of our plans, I think we need a little more time to get organization input on these four stars for sure.

Comment

Okay, thank you.

Comment

I'm wondering of these ones you just ran through; do you see any as particularly foundational in deciding other ones? Where would you start?

Comment

Great question. I look for other Department staff to jump in as well. From a really broad sense, my own opinion is that there is a lot of rhetoric around when a species is no longer threatened or endangered; when a species becomes "normalized." To some people, it might mean that species is hunted, control for livestock depredation is maybe more liberal, etc. But it also means that maybe some of the programs of support around wolves (I'm referencing other states) as things like hunting or lethal control become more liberal as wolves become de-listed. Maybe some of those supporting programs go away. Compensation, data sharing, or other things put in place to bolster wolf conservation when they are in endangered status. I don't think the conversation in Washington has to be like that. I think it can be what does it make sense to keep long-term? Things are intricately connected. Hunting and data sharing are connected, hunting and boundaries are connected, and I think translocation is connected if you think about quick action for wolves. I would want to see WAG dive into the things that are social questions, which a lot are. Big social questions like the programs we have in place to help people coexist with wolves, are we keeping those around into the future? If so, are they administered the same? Those things in other states maybe become more liberal, are those things we want to consider in Washington? Maybe my specific answer is about all the programs. Compensation, indirect, data sharing, ungulate management. I think those are a lot more socially based and WAG can talk about balance. Other states have been a little more, dare I say, clear-cut, where they are cutting programs and liberalizing management. I don't know if that is the right path for Washington. We should talk about it. I'm interested to hear what other Department staff think. I think it is a matter of opinion.

Comment

I somewhat agree. Some of these issues are all intertwined and there are big social issues. It is very difficult to put stars on them because if you put four stars on one, you will want to put three on others. I think you should ask WAG and give them some time to go to their organizations, fill this out, or if they are independent just fill it out. Because I think one wrong thing in WAG is that we have got individual opinion rather than organizations' opinion. We have got to sit down and try to find interconnected issues or hottest issues and talk about it in the next WAG meeting. A lot of things are interrelated when we talk about this thing. We have got to talk about the whole series and documents before we can vote on one document. I would approach it a little differently than a star system, but that is

just my opinion.

Comment

I hear what you are saying, and I think I'm there as well. I feel a bit like the conversation was stifled today. Maybe WAG members didn't feel free to speak up and dive into issues important to them. I'm trying to understand if maybe you think it was only clarifying questions. These are issues that are going to be tough. I think teasing out the common values that members can work on together is important and places we don't agree helping each other understand the different points of view is important. Jump in if I'm wrong, but I feel things are a little stifled and that wasn't the intention of today.

Comment

I don't feel it was stifled. I think you did a really good job presenting. I was under the impression we should ask questions about this stuff, then had the opportunity to understand the issue and go from there. I saw someone write they had a lot of input on these things and others did too. I appreciate the educational experience and the way you answered the questions. I did not feel we were stifled, just at a certain point of the process.

Comment

Yeah, the process I proposed did lend itself to less discussion and discussion more to happen in the future. Helping pick a start point and we will see where the discussion goes. Picking stars may not be a good way to reveal interconnectedness of elements. But using the star exercise would give us a start point to start a discussion. Just because the stars tell us, doesn't mean we have to follow that path. We can pick what we think is best.

Comment

I would agree with that and I didn't feel stifled at all. I think we were just asking our clarifying questions and we will have spirited discussion in the future. I didn't feel at all stifled. I think you will get your wish and get lots of spirited discussion! I found this very helpful to organize my thoughts and it gives way to effectively communicate with folks in my spheres. This was very helpful to me.

Comment

You asked if we could stretch this out to six weeks before I bug you about the stars. Yes, we can. So, August 16th I'll start bugging people. How about we go with that for now?

Comment

For the rest of the day, we have a couple of producers that might be in harm's way, with fires near them. The remaining agenda item was the Department sharing information about depredation investigations. One request was walking WAG members through that. The person to bring up the topic happens to be a producer in harm's way and has the intent to be here at one o'clock. I'm proposing I will try and contact them over lunch and get a sense of whether they can make it or not. We reconvene at one o'clock and if they are there, great. Department staff, would you still be able to lead us through your

process?

Comment

I think some folks not here were planning to be here, so I think it is up to them.

Comment

I think the original plan was to be ready at one o'clock and see who can make it. Right now, for awareness, we have our Department WAG members and out of 16 external members we have 11 here now. There are five missing. At one o'clock we will reassess and see if we have enough people for it to be worthwhile to go through that process. Any questions before we break for lunch?

No questions

Lunch

Comment

Our purpose this afternoon is asking Department staff members to walk us through depredation investigations. That is the proposal. With this depredation investigation process, my initial thinking is we have enough folks here to ask the Department to walk us through, but I will pause to hear if we want to wait until we have some of the five missing with us.

No objections

Comment

Good afternoon, WAG. I was on another call, so I apologize for not being here this morning. I will also ask wildlife conflict specialists to help me out. I will set the stage and we will work with each other through this. We will get call – from a producer, range rider, Sheriff's Department dispatch – that there is either a mortality or injury. We will contact the producer. In the meantime, we respond in teams of two minimum (conflict specialist and biologist or conflict specialist and enforcement or who is available to go). We will get that set up. As far as time, I can't think of any time we have responded outside of 24 hours. If we get a call late in the evening, say seven o'clock, we will do that first thing in the morning. We set up a time to meet the producer and go out as a team. To set the stage, we have a mortality and an injury. For a mortality you have a scene and a location. But for injuries, it is extremely tough because 99.5% of the time with injuries, it has already been off the range or in process of off the range (in a horse trailer, in a corral, many scenarios). But one thing we do is treat every single one as a crime scene, as it says that in our protocol. We collect as much evidence as we can when we get there. In every investigation we do, it is in our mind that this evidence we collect and our determination, we have to present in court every time. We want to have a solid foundation. There have been some times when a team of two or three are out, and they are not quite sure if it is confirmed, probable, etc. That team may come back from the field and set up a call with district biologists. In years we have utilized staff in other agencies out of state. Not all the

time, but for an outside opinion to give to the investigation crew. Then they make the final decision.

Comment

The calls we get for depredations come in a variety of ways. Based on how and where they come in, we have had situations where we call producers or producers flag us down. It comes in a dozen or more different ways. Based on location of the state, we do a lot of internal and external coordination. We either call list chain of command of a potential wolf depredation, and externally we coordinate with the Sheriff's Office or our enforcement. I agree, I can't think of a time where it was a suspected wolf depredation that we were any later than 24 hours. Since we do all coordination and set up time with producers, we try our best to make it two people. We keep referring to the protocol, but Section 5 of the Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol outlines a lot of this. Page 9-13 talks about this process as well. Like was said, when we are going out, it needs to be a team of two. More often than not they are trained and experienced. We have an internal depredation investigation training. Experience comes mostly with WDFW experience, but some people have had depredation experience outside of WDFW.

We will walk through a mortality investigation: As soon as we are talking to the producer or reporting party or range rider or whoever called in, we ask them to preserve the scene. For example, if they are calling late at night, we ask can you tarp it to preserve it if it rains? Because we do not do depredation investigations at night. It is mostly due to safety but also because you can miss things at night, so we schedule for the morning. Once we get out there, or on the drive out there if it is with someone I haven't done a depredation with, we talk about the process. Once we get there, we ask questions we didn't get in the initial report: When was the last time you saw the animal alive? Has there been range riding activity? Asking what has been going on in this scenario. Did you see tracks? Did you hear anything? See anything? Are there close neighbors? We try to piece things together best we can. Once we get that initial conversation, we then usually look around the area before we start investigating, looking for tracks or scat or any type of sign. Then once we check out the scene, we will do the necropsy.

With the necropsy, we do an external physical investigation at first and take pictures before touching anything. Then we feel externally to see if there are areas we need to look at or cut around to preserve those areas. Next, we will shave those locations as well. I normally have like eight shavers on me. In between all these steps we are taking photos and if I'm training, I will talk people through it. Once we shave, we cut into the carcass and skin that carcass out. We look for scavenging signatures and look for a lot of that tissue damage that transpires when the animal is still alive. Differentiating between scavenging and potential injuries inflicted by wildlife. It is important to note we are not veterinarians. Conflict staff are not veterinarians. We are here to say if wildlife was involved or not, not if it potentially died of something else. We always encourage the producer to reach out to a vet for additional information. We ask at the beginning, "do you want us to preserve anything for your vet?" We are there only to determine if wildlife was involved in the injury or mortality.

Once we have done the necropsy, after we have concluded initial interviews and field area looking and doing the necropsy, myself and an enforcement officer or wolf biologist will

talk about what we saw off to the side. This conversation is about what we think happened or is the cause. In the protocol there is a table, so we talk through the six different types of determinations: confirmed, probable, or other classifications non-wolf related. Sometimes ones that come up are unconfirmed cause. You can look up those definitions. Depending on training level or experience level, if someone without experience is out by themselves, this might be an opportunity where we take this information back, have a group together, and discuss what this looks like. This piece may look a little different based on location and scenario. Once we have made that huddle (usually bring the Sheriff or others in as well), then we talk to the producer. Did I miss anything? There is so much there, sorry.

Comment

I will just add, of course, we say sorry for your loss. There have been times where it is a hobby farm or 4-H student; those are extremely tough. Usually, they have a young child there bawling their eyes out, so we really don't want to do the necropsy while they are there. We take that all into consideration.

Comment

Good point. If it is a producer we haven't worked with in the past, I usually ask for permission. If it is a domestic dog or situation where young kids are there, I usually ask two or three more times because maybe this is their only experience like this. Maybe they *think* they want to be there in their head but once it starts, they don't want to actually be there. Most of the time people struggle with it, so that is a really good point.

Comment

I guess that is basically what I was asking for, but I wanted to walk through some of the pictures. What makes an actual depredation versus not? We have a lot of pictures.

Comment

We do have a lot of pictures but there are brands on a lot of those pictures.

Comment

Use ours. I gave you full disclosure. Use ours.

Comment

Yeah, we do have lots of pictures. But what is it you are wanting us to explain more? What is the underlining issue you have or concern?

Comment

I have already been through that with several Department staff members.

Comment

I mean the best of intentions. I want us to have a conversation.

Comment

I think where she is going with this is there a lot of times these are called into us and there

is not a lot left. A few bones there, partial hide left. You are looking for all the information you can, but in the end, there is just not enough information to say it is a confirmed wolf or carnivore depredation. The hide itself is almost goo if you will. There has been a lot of times you have maggots crawling into your armpits. We may think this could have been, but we can't prove that yes, this was a wolf, confirmed.

Comment

Like was said, with mortalities they are usually in multiple stages of decomposition. We have had them still warm from dying to sometimes they are skeletal remains. In order to determine the difference between scavenging or attacked by a wild animal, we say this is what happens when bite force trauma on the skin and underlying tissue equates to blood vessel bursting... and the heart was still pumping when this happened. We are looking for those, and there are usually attack signatures. For example, bears like to attack along the spinal rea whereas a cougar is usually the neck area, sometimes muzzle. Canines there is a lot here, so usually hind quarters/groin area/armpits/depending on the canine. We are looking for those signatures in those locations. I have soaked hides for three days to rehydrate them to figure out something. A lot of times if you are thinking about where canines' attack signature is, those are the very soft tissue areas (anus or stomach area). Those get consumed first. Sometimes those are gone because of scavenging. Even injuries because you usually don't have a great scene like you would for a mortality. Does that get at what you are asking, other than pictures?

Comment

What I'm trying to get at here is the fact these packs are big. Especially the biggest pack, by the time they kill one and eat it, if I found it within five hours it is probably going to be gone. There is going to have to be something other than hemorrhaging that gives the Department enough evidence. The fact it was seen five hours ago. The fact it was seen in collar data there, but by the time the Department gets there it is completely eaten and gone. That was a perfect example of bite marks, but there is still hemorrhaging. I'm losing my mind about it. I have had so many investigations that didn't have hemorrhaging but had any other indicator. It is not *the* factor, but it is treated like *the* factor.

Comment

It is a great discussion piece for sure. If you look at the protocol it does surround hemorrhaging. I think we had this internal conversation about hemorrhaging. Actually, by definition, it is not an appropriate definition for what we are talking about so there may be more discussion there. What we are really looking for is that bruising, that trauma associated with a live animal. So, it is not scavenging. That is where that determination comes from and those guidelines are in the protocol for what that looks like.

Comment

I understand the frustration for sure, but I think it is worth clarifying we didn't come up with the idea for hemorrhaging as being critical for confirming wolf depredation. That was the Fish and Wildlife Service in the 1990s and has been used in agencies across the northwest ever since. The reason we use hemorrhaging is because wolves do scavenge

quite a bit. In some packs, they can get half of their calories scavenging carcasses. Wolves could have been feeding on a carcass but if there is not hemorrhaging, it is impossible for us to say the wolf killed that animal. When we are trying to determine if wolves actually killed it, we do need to see that. We have large packs in the northeast; the Carpenter Ridge pack has 14+ individuals. We have seen moose carcasses and were able to confirm they were killed by wolves. Skin is typically the last eaten so as long as we get there in a reasonable time frame, we have a chance to determine if wolves did or did not kill that animal.

Comment

Yeah, we are trying to determine if it was alive when it was attacked. There have been a couple times we showed up on scene and saw wolves on a carcass scavenging. We were able to get a complete necropsy on that and there was no sign the carnivore actually attacked and killed. It was scavenging.

Comment

I would second what was said in that the more of these you do, there are things you are looking for. I definitely understand the frustration, especially if they are small calves because those carcasses clean up quickly. But if there is hide left – I have soaked probably a dozen skins because they were so dry, we couldn't shave them – we definitely try to do all we can to determine what's going on and what happened. Unconfirmed cause means it could have been a carnivore, a wolf, or something else. We do have those, and I understand it can be frustrating, but sometimes that is just the case we are in. We have had multiple scenarios of multiple carnivores depredating or scavenging on livestock within 100 yards of each other. But I definitely understand concerns and frustration.

Comment

There have been times we have been into depredation cycle 6, 7, 8 confirmed injuries and another carcass is located, and we do a complete investigation and there is just not enough left to make a determination. In our minds, we are probably thinking it is in the same area, but we have to treat that as an individual. Maybe it is just bones and no hide left. That is a tough one for us because we think there is maybe something going on but there is just not enough left from that one carcass to say yes, it was confirmed a wolf.

Comment

I think one thing is when we are writing the report, I'm usually trying to add all the information; if there was cougar tracks, if there was bear scat, what we did with the carcass, everything, so that it is documented, and we are acknowledging there were all these factors associated. We really try to add that and if there is collar data in the area, or a previous depredation, we try to put in the report. We try to capture all that information.

Comment

That was a lot of Department staff sharing their experience and what they encounter. Is that addressing your concern? Is it sparking other questions you have?

Comment

I see plenty of investigations and heard the song and dance lots of times. Even thinking about how we could change something so hemorrhaging isn't – especially on these live animals but they still tell us they have to have hemorrhaging. Major infections that end up killing the animal but there is no other way they could have died? The fact the animals have been healthy and alive and traveling, those factors have to play a role. Cows don't just tip over dead in multiples. It just doesn't happen. The percent lost up here was next to none and now that we have wolves it is very high. Some common sense has to come into play. It is not considered because it can't be proven in court. All those listening to sue the Department about depredation investigations, this is all [expletive]. I would love to hear what other WAG members have to say.

Comment

The present system breeds a lot of hate and distrust of the Department. Whether there could be a better system or not I'm not sure. That is all I got to say.

Comment

I like that we are having the conversation and that we have a place to have conversation. But I also can't help but be human and feel defensive. I know you are here for the right reason. I just want us to take a deep breath for a moment. I know what you are sharing is close to the heart and it is how you feel. I can't help but feel human and feel defensive, but I don't want to say you shouldn't share how you feel. It is not a song and dance. We talk about this stuff routinely every year and try to continue to do a better job. It is a model that has been developed. The definitions, the process, the elements have been developed and around for a very long time. But the reality is sometimes we can tell and reach a determination but sometimes we can't. We have to deal with what we have out there, and we have to be able to describe it. It does set us up to be the bearer of bad news sometimes. It is not that we want to bring bad news and we do our very best. I'm 400 miles away from the people on the screen but I want you to know they are trying their hardest to do the best job they can with what is out there.

Comment

I think the other thing, too, is when we were working on the 2017 Wolf-Livestock Protocol we looked at Federal procedures and their protocols, and that is what we brought to the table when we created the 2017 Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol. We are always trying to look at those. It is not just this Washington is doing it differently. I will say the information we collect, other than California or Oregon, we probably collect the most information on our depredation investigation, for a variety of reasons. It is still good information that is important to collect. Just a little information and background on how we got here.

Comment

I wanted to address injuries. Injuries are really tough sometimes because they are in a different location when we get there. We look at bite marks, lacerations, location of where those are at. A lot of times there is extensive swelling. We shave, feel with our hands,

sometimes feel jelly. We have confirmed some injuries, but we can't all the time without enough information. A lot of times confirmed injuries come in a pattern. For example, this is the third or fourth one in the same locations typical for that pack. We are looking at that too.

Comment

I didn't attack the Department in any way, shape, or form. I'm attacking the process. We don't follow other states in a lot of things. Washington likes to branch out and do our thing, and this is one thing we can branch out and do our own thing. I'm saying there needs to be a better system. The system is broke. That is why I brought it up in WAG, to try to address the system.

Comment

I hear the frustration. I have never seen anything so I can't speak to it. But I'm wondering about compensation. I know that doesn't replace an animal, but can you explain the two-to-one compensation? And if that is done for probable depredations or just confirmed?

Comment

This also gets to other producers, before my time. That is why the two-to-one compensation for confirmed wolf depredations was implemented because sometimes there are times where you are not able to find that calf, but you have another calf carcass missing. There is compensation for two-to-one for over 100 acres. Other states do things differently. It is not perfect but that is one way to address if you have had a wolf depredation that we have paid two-to-one price at market.

Comment

Can you explain two-to-one?

Comment

Essentially, we go out and do a depredation investigation of a cow mortality. We can pay up to twice the amount for that confirmed depredation. For example, if there were 100 heads that were out and this one plus another didn't come back, so 98 came back, we can pay twice the value of that confirmed depredation. If there are potentially others missing that don't come back at the end of the year, we can pay that too.

Comment

For that two-to-one, some may ask, "how do you get there?" When they sell those calves in the fall, usually October, they get reimbursed double the rate.

Comment

What I heard was she is not attacking the Department but wants to have the conversation about the process or the system. I hadn't heard a response to that. Something was said about that was a process started in the 90s. Is there a way to reinvestigate this?

Comment

When I heard frustration about the system, that is where I started to struggle a little bit. We are the ones looking at a depredation situation or injury situation, and we are being asked to identify if wildlife played a role in a death or an injury of the animal investigated. There are specific, certain ways in which you would go about determining if wildlife were involved in death or injury of that animal. What we have described is what is required. If Washington tried to describe something else that would provide determination, we would essentially be asked to support something that doesn't exist. These are the signatures, these are the signs, this is the information that allows us to piece together the puzzle in some cases, or not in other cases. I guess I'm not able to specifically address the frustration with the system, but we are following methods that are *the* way in which we are able to make a determination or not make a determination relative to wildlife injury or death. I don't know how else to try to present that, but I think that is what we are trying to describe. There is not a new process whereby biologists looking at signature predation activity or other signs. There is no new information about what that looks like. We are using that information in order to provide information relative to if wildlife were involved in that depredation or injury or not. I don't know what else we would gravitate to that would not be immediately blown out of the water by the scientific community.

Comment

That was helpful for sure. One thought I had is I don't know this protocol. In a criminal suit, you have to have beyond reasonable doubt and 12 people, or a judge agree on that. On a civil suit it is a preponderance of evidence. Are we saying on a depredation it is beyond reasonable doubt or is it the bar preponderance or is it something else? Or maybe I have got the wrong comparisons here.

Comment

When I said the Feds have been doing this since the 90s, I meant they have been doing this since wolves have been on the landscapes. That is the standard. To your other point, that is a good question. When we go to a confirmed, we do need to see that evidence. It doesn't need to be beyond a reasonable doubt that sheep was killed by wolf. We leave rooms for probable depredations. In probable depredations, maybe we don't necessarily need hemorrhaging. All other evidence may be there, but we just can't find the hemorrhaging. That is what probable was designed for. That is why we included probable depredations in the protocol in 2017.

Comment

I want to point out we keep speaking about the protocol but page 91 of the wolf plan it says, a confirmed will have "bite marks and subcutaneous hemorrhaging" and probable is everything else bitemarks, everything except for hemorrhaging.

Comment

Everyone else touched on what I was going to say but I think it is a couple of other items. Wildlife service uses hemorrhaging, so this is the standard for all wolf depredations or kills, as well as this is what is used for other species, not just wolves. For example, in elk and deer mortalities. It is not just livestock related, but for other mortality investigations as

well.

Comment

I wanted to bring up that in Washington we are unique in having the type of indirect compensation program we have, and part of that indirect compensation is it doesn't require any depredation at all (confirmed or probable) to qualify for payment. It requires that wolves are in the area, that loss isn't reasonably explained by another cause, and then the DPCA requirement. That is almost a safety net that they are still eligible in many cases even when we can't get conclusive evidence.

Comment

That answered my question I was going to ask if probable depredations got compensated and it sounds like they do. Thank you.

Comment

When you hear the reasons, the frustration, what is going through your head? Even if you are not sure.

Comment

I was listening to her describe situations where she feels like there have been depredations but there isn't hemorrhaging because the animal is still alive. Is that what you are saying? Just trying to make sure I am understanding the details. My question is more general. It sounds like there is frustration because there are situations where it is apparent it was a wolf-caused depredation or injury, but they aren't getting compensated for that or that is not getting recognized. The main reason is because there isn't hemorrhaging. Is that right?

Comment

Yep, exactly.

Comment

And then the Department is saying in response that that is covered by probable depredations. Just trying to make sure I'm getting a general scope of the argument.

Comment

What I heard was probable depredations were covered under indirect losses. So, a confirmed cause is compensated, and probable is covered under indirect losses.

Comment

It is not that probable depredations are paid for with indirect payment, it is that the indirect compensation program does not require wolf depredation. It requires wolves being in the area. In an indirect payment compensation scenario, a producer doesn't even have to have lost cattle to a confirmed depredation.

Comment

My question would be does that feel like it helps or is it not enough?

Comment

It took two-and-a-half years to get paid for an indirect loss. That is why indirect loss claims don't get filed.

Comment

I have been in on this discussion forever. The Department was up against the wall on what they could or couldn't do from a legal point of view. A lot of producers out there don't understand this. I think there should be more education on what you are doing and why. I'm concerned when this discussion gets off into compensation. A lot of producers out there don't take compensation but are still losing livestock a lot more with wolves on the landscape. Education would probably help.

Comment

First, just so we are clear because we are jumping around. For compensation, we do compensate for confirmed, we do for probable, and we do for injuries if they are over \$500. Those are direct. The indirect is what was what was talked about. The other piece: there is by definition swelling or hemorrhaging associated with hemorrhaging, so it doesn't have to be dead for that bite trauma to be noticeable. You can, based on information at the scene, look at injured livestock and if it is early in the injury can determine if it was wildlife related. The definition of hemorrhaging has been around for a long time, but it is actually not the definition. It is bruising, swelling, fluid associated with breakdown of muscle tissue associated with bites. You can look at a bruise and it doesn't have to be dead for me to say there was an issue there. But as healing progresses, that slowly progresses if the animal is not dead. I hope that clarifies and doesn't make things more muddy.

Comment

I had a quick question. He said a lot of producers aren't accepting compensation and I was curious why.

Comment

A lot of people who firmly believe – and I guess if I was involved in depredation, I would believe the same – that that they are not raising cattle to feed wolves. I want the problem resolved where I have the least amount of depredations. I don't want to get paid for depredations. There are pretty strong feelings across the producer industry, and here I am talking about producers when I'm here representing hunters. I'm not in the business of raising cattle or feeding wolves. I want the problem solved, not a bunch of checks. Especially if you got breeding programs. Getting compensation to get another cow is not necessarily a good answer. There are a lot of strong feelings in the industry about compensation. I am willing to have a compensation discussion, and I was on that committee, but it just kind of died. Did that answer your question?

Comment

It did, thank you. I appreciate it.

Comment

I thought everybody on here was under the same goal that they did not want livestock-wolf interactions. This compensation program seems just like a backstop option. The #1 goal is to prevent the interactions, and this would be a backstop if they do happen.

Comment

I think that hit it perfectly. From an agency perspective, we fully acknowledge wolves have effects that we can't necessarily document well or account for. There are livestock killed by wolves there is not enough evidence for the Department to confirm that. There has to be evidence for the Department to make a determination. That is just beyond any sort of court situation. We are professionals and that is just good science. Our Wildlife Conflict Specialist can only work with what is there. There is full acknowledgement, and there are other systems in place (two-to-one compensation, indirect compensation, probable things). I hear you loud and clear and I agree that compensation is not supposed to be the answer. It is not supposed to say livestock loss doesn't matter, but one reality of having wolves and livestock share landscape is that there will be some losses. For ones there is evidence for, we want people to be compensated. Yes, the first goal is to prevent conflict in the first place, but there is acknowledgement that there will be losses and we want to provide what we can provide. It doesn't solve it. That is what staff is trying to hit home. There are all these systems to address that in the best way we can since we can't address it fully.

Comment

I agree with most everything just said. I don't think the system can be changed much to stay within the good science. But the goal should definitely be to not have these depredations. We are putting a band aid. There is a lot of resistance in the industry, and I'm personally on the resistant side. I don't want the loss of an irreplaceable calf. I don't want money for her; if I did, I would have her on the market. It is just a band aid. I think that is what was kind of said. I'm just backing her up. I don't see how you could change the present system and not get sued. But you could do more education to producers to why you have this present system determining what category it falls into. A lot of people don't understand this. I have been through this about six times.

Comment

I am processing the frustration. There is a lot here and I think she wanted to bring this issue to the surface and get to hear the limits in what the Department working with so there may be more to go with this topic. I don't think it is at rest, but it is something to explore further after the meeting with members and the Department. I don't have a sense we can really accomplish anything particular with this topic now but wanted to give space for any members that want to keep talking about this right now or tell me if I'm wrong.

No objections

Comment

That was our last agenda item for the day. What I would like to do is get ready to go into public comment, review the due outs, and ask if I have forgotten one. When we had a discussion on ungulates and how to establish a baseline on what we know and don't know about ungulates in the state, my task is to talk to you and propose a process on how we establish a baseline. Another is on the depredation investigation with the Department presenting a process, but I think the Department has done that. After this meeting, I will have conversations with Department members and see if there is anything we can alleviate or improve. The other one I ask of you is on the 21 potential elements in post-recovery plan, decide where would you put your four stars on which ones to talk about and go into more depth first. I will give it about six weeks for you to make those recommendations back to me in whatever way is convenient and then I will share the results. Another couple of things to note: There was interest in reconvening past working groups (a compensation working group, an outreach and education working group) so I have got those down to explore more and not forget. That is what I think are the due outs. Have I forgotten any?

Comment

I'm confirming the to-dos but have another question. We talked about moving to in-person meetings. I'm wondering if there could be a virtual option since some of us may be used to that.

Comment

Yes, I will explore that to see if we can make that happen. It is probably a good time to acknowledge a member of the public ask if the public can provide virtual comment as well. I can explore if we can do a hybrid meeting.

Comment

Everything is different now, so this is new territory here, but we did have that conversation before Covid and landed on that there is a high value in being face to face. It is a much more meaningful meeting and there was concern of having the option to phone-in where it becomes more convenient, and you start losing the power of face to face. That is where we were pre-Covid. Things have changed, but that was the value of face to face.

Meeting Adjourned & Public Comment