

# Wolves

## Advisory group ponders mission, decision-making

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**  
Capital Press

**SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash.** — The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife wolf advisory group devoted most of the first day of its two-day meeting deciding how it would make decisions.

The group spent most of the day Dec. 13 discussing its mission to represent the interests of livestock producers, wolf supporters and hunters. The group decided it would base decisions on a “sufficient consensus,” and discussed how to proceed when one to three people disagree with the majority in making recommendations to the state Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The group is made up of 18 members representing livestock producers, hunters and wolf supporters. The meeting Dec. 13-14 in Spokane Valley, Wash., is the group’s fourth since May.

The group worked to develop deeper relationships, said Donny Martorello, wolf policy lead for the department.

It’s “kind of a safe place where there’s some trust, respect and humility in the room, so they (are) able to be

honest and respectful to each other so they can have those good discussions,” Martorello said. “A year ago, tensions were very high, to the point where it was destructive to the process. Now these folks have engaged at a level where they understand the different values, the threats they felt before — they’ve communicated those openly. Now I think they’re a little better suited to having a deeper conversation.”

During the Dec. 13 discussion, Washington Cattleman’s Association executive vice president Jack Field told the group they needed to take action soon.

“Either we’re going to lead by example and do something or we’re going to sit here, roast marshmallows and waste time and the rest of the impacted world is going to pass by us,” he said. “We can act now or we can sit back and waste a hell of an opportunity.”

Consultant Francine Madden told the group the decision-making discussion was “drudgery” but would pay off. Otherwise, the group risks returning to the strained relationships, she said.

Field told the Capital Press he felt the group had

gelled to the point where it could get something done.

“I hope this is the jump-off point where we start actually making some decisions and really starting to move forward,” he said. “I’m looking forward to getting to those discussions immediately. It’s time.”

“You’ve got to crawl before you can walk,” said Nick Martinez, a group member representing the Washington State Sheep Producers.

He asked ranchers to be patient.

“Hopefully we’re going down the right road,” he said. “I know it’s a tough one for everybody to sit back and watch. Let’s see where we can get and go from there. It’s kind of hard to judge it midway through. Or, I hope it’s midway.”

“We’ve had four super-efficient meetings where we made leaps and bounds (of) progress and we were making real-world decisions,” said group member Molly Linville, a rancher in Palisades, Wash. “I just don’t want to slow that process down because time is of the essence here. We have a grazing season coming up. We want to have those plans in place.”

Linville said she completely trusts Madden’s process. She felt ranchers are “100 percent” represented, and said environmental community members on the group are considering livestock producers’ needs.

She said the group needs to provide public support to a “handful of producers” who have wolf problems, providing range riders and compensating them for losses.

“There’s a very small handful of producers that are taking the brunt of this ... we need to rally around them,” she said.

Linville told ranchers to have faith.

“I really believe if this WAG cannot make real-world decisions, then it’s not possible, I have that much belief in this group,” she said. “Try to bring the hysteria down, it’s not really benefiting anybody. By hysteria I mean listening to everything on social media, just believing everything they hear. Wolves are certainly a challenging predator to deal with, but it is something that can be dealt with.”

The group also heard the first of several presentations from hunters.

## Rancher leaves state wolf advisory group

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**  
Capital Press

A Washington state rancher who lost 300 sheep to wolves last year has quit the group that advises state wildlife managers on livestock-wolf conflicts.

In October, the Cattle Producers of Washington withdrew from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife wolf advisory group.

Now Hunters, Wash., rancher Dave Dashiell, who represented CPOW, said he decided not to continue on the group as an independent sheep producer.

Dashiell cited comments by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission chairman in the Yakima Herald-Republic in October. According to the Yakima paper, chairman Brad Smith described seeing a wolf in the yard of his summer home in Michigan as “cool” and “majestic” and said “I don’t hear these apocalyptic stories about (how) the wolf is the end of everything we know, the deer will all be eaten, the grandchildren will all be eaten.”

The column by Scott Sandberry was headlined “Washington residents’ fear of wolves is often overblown.”

“I thought, ‘They’re just playing us for a bunch of fools,’” Dashiell said. “With comments like that, I could tell we were going to get absolutely no help. Their idea of wolf management was to let them run and if they put you out

of business, that’s the plan any way. They denied that, because I asked them.”

Dashiell estimates he lost roughly 300 sheep to wolves in 2014 and eight in 2015. The state paid for 24 sheep confirmed killed by wolves, he said.



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Northeast Washington rancher Dave Dashiell talks during a meeting of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s wolf advisory group Sept. 3 in Tumwater.

## Wolf advisory group members say they seek common ground

### Environmentalists appreciate open dialogue with ranchers

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**  
Capital Press

**SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash.** — Members of Washington’s wolf advisory group say they are forging relationships that will ultimately benefit ranchers and other citizens.

Paula Sweden of Conservation Northwest said the level of trust has increased.

“And I think that trust is genuine,” she said. “We’ve taken the time to talk to each other during the meetings, but also between meetings. I feel like I could pick up the phone and call my colleagues within the livestock and hunting community and it’s not awkward. We have a rapport we didn’t have before. That really helps.”

Sweden said she recognizes the need for flexibility in how ranchers protect their livestock. She cited advisory group member and sheep rancher Nick Martinez and his family sharing their experiences and what they are doing.

“It’s not that I was unfamiliar with these issues, but when you get into it and a livestock producer is open to talking through the issues — I so appreciate that he was willing to be open to that dialogue,” she said. “I’ve learned a great deal about their resilience. We have a lot of common values. It’s not that I didn’t think that they were there, but now I have the direct experience to really appreciate that.”



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Wolf advisory group member Diane Gallegos, executive director of Wolf Haven International, speaks with Sandy Podsaid, a Kingston, Idaho, resident who addressed the group during the public comment period, following the meeting Dec. 14 in Spokane Valley, Wash.

Dan Paul, state director of the Humane Society of the United States, said the group continues to generate trust.

“It’s been illuminating to see the individual relationships and how we all are very similar as people, but also how a lot of our actual views cross over as well,” he said.

He said he is aware of the pressure on ranchers.

“We are working hard, and we really do hear loud and clear the struggles they’re facing,” he said. “It’s just about finding solutions that work for all Washingtonians.”

Diane Gallegos, executive director at Wolf Haven International in Tenino, Wash., said the members had to spend time building relationships and a process to address the issues. Doing it now will help things move more quickly later, she said.

“We want to make sure we’re fully informed and understanding those issues,” she said. “We’re closer on what all of us want to see in the state of Washington than we are further apart. We want a vibrant agricultural community and we want the wildlife in our state to thrive.”

The advisory group wants to find a balanced way to meet those goals, Gallegos said.

“They’re complex and they’re difficult, but when you’ve got deep respect for one another and you care about one another, you work really hard to make thoughtful decisions to bring everybody with you,” she said. “We don’t want to leave anybody behind.”

## Group updating rancher agreements

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**  
Capital Press

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s wolf advisory group will refine the department’s livestock damage prevention cooperative agreements with ranchers.

The department is revising the contracts to better align with changes recently adopted by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission, WDFW wolf policy lead Donny Martorello said.

The wolf advisory group is considering prioritizing areas based on the risk of wolf attacks and department funding limitations. For the biennium, the department has allocated \$650,000 for the agreements and \$300,000 for contracts with independent range riders.

“We’re not at all in anyway saying there are producers out there that are low priority,” Martorello said. “It’s just, can we be strategic and make sure we get our resources spread across the landscape in a way that addresses the high-probability stuff?”



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife wolf policy lead Donny Martorello, center, participates in a group discussion about damage prevention cooperative agreements with ranchers during the wolf advisory group meeting Dec. 14 in Spokane Valley, Wash.

The department will also seek feedback to determine whether the agreements are meeting ranchers’ expectations.

The department hopes to have revised cost-share agreements in effect for the upcoming grazing season, Martorello said.

In the event of a wolf attack, the language will reduce the number of questions of whether a rancher has taken

the necessary steps to protect livestock, Martorello said.

“For the first time, we have a diversity of stakeholders from livestock producers and environmental organizations to hunters who have come to an agreement and said, ‘This is the practical and feasible level of preventative measures that feel right for this area, this specific circumstance in this allotment with this producer and this species,’” Martorello said.

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