

# WAG’s attention is turning toward preventing depredations

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So WDFW brought in Madden, who is based in Washington, D.C. As wolf wars in the West continue and lawsuits fly, the new WAG meetings are swaddled in phrases such as “path to peace,” “capacity building” and, above all, “conflict transformation.”

“What is conflict transformation?” Madden asks. “Conflict transformation is essentially peace-building embedded in social justice.”

The terminology can be a bit squishy, but underneath it are hard questions.

What are ranchers expected to do to protect their animals from wolves? When will environmentalists accept lethal removal — shooting wolves that prey on livestock?

And will people not on the WAG be at peace with what the panel advises?

So far, the jury is still out. Former WAG member Dave Dashiell, a Stevens County rancher, said he doubts the effort will succeed.

He was a pivotal figure on the panel, a link to north-eastern Washington, where most of the state’s wolves live. Wolves threaten his livelihood, yet he was initially willing to talk about reconciling wolf recovery with ranching.

But he said he left the panel in part because he lost confidence that other interests will ever accept lethal removal as a legitimate tool to control wolves.

“I think Francine is doing her best, but I think it’s an impossible task when you come down to brass tacks,” he said.

Don Dashiell, a Stevens County commissioner and Dave Dashiell’s brother, remains on the advisory group.

## Progress reported

The WAG meets every few months around the state. The meetings often straddle two days. WDFW pays for lodging and meals, including “non-working dinners” at which members learn about each other without discussing wolf policies. The idea is that environmentalists will learn what motivates and worries ranchers, and vice versa.

The meetings eschew the standard approach to policy-making: List an issue, discuss it and vote.

Madden said she focuses on relationships and processes, not the substance of an issue. Meetings have agenda items such as “Exploring the spectrum of human needs with respect to wolf conflict.”

In an interview, Madden likened wolves to a match that’s been struck and put to a barrel of dynamite.

The dynamite represents longtime conflicts, such as the rural-urban divide and feelings of being powerless and imposed upon. She said she’s trying to address the dynamite.

“Before there were wolves in Washington, these conflict dynamics existed,” she said. “All these things were already at play.”

Months into the experiment, some WAG members say they see progress.

“These past advisory groups were going nowhere,” said Diane Gallegos, executive director of Wolf Haven International, an animal refuge in Tenino, Wash. “All of the members of this group are willing to commit to try to get to know one another as people.”

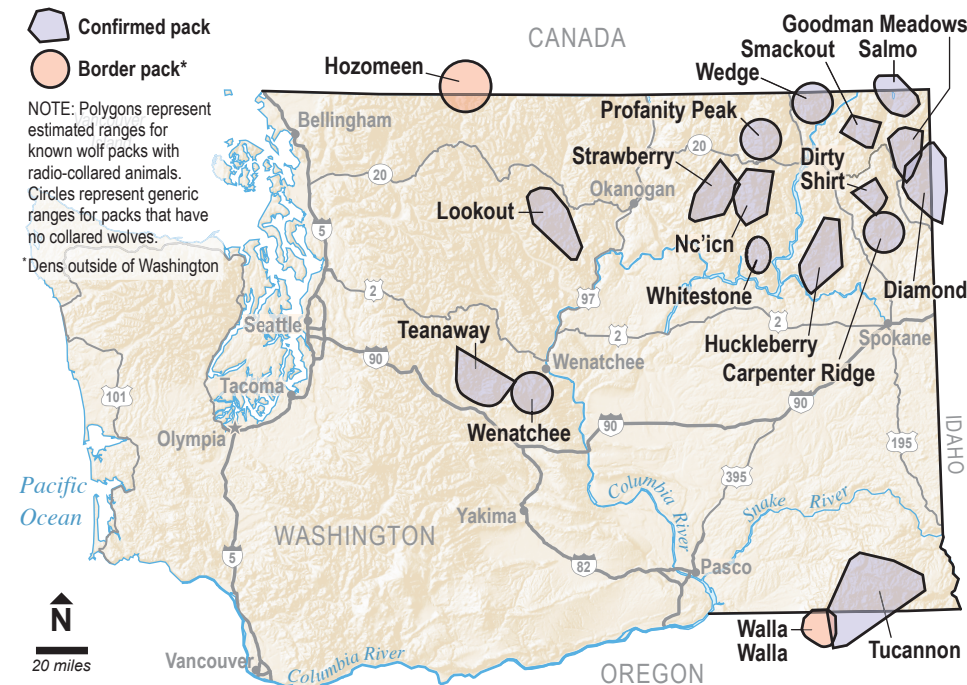


Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Stevens County rancher Dave Dashiell, left, and Washington Cattlemen’s Association Executive Vice President Jack Field listen during a meeting of the state Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Wolf Advisory Group on Sept. 3 in Tumwater. Dashiell has dropped out of the group, saying he lost confidence that WDFW or conservation groups will accept lethal control of wolves. Field has stuck with the group. “The only way I can ensure I can participate in the outcome is if I’m at the table.”

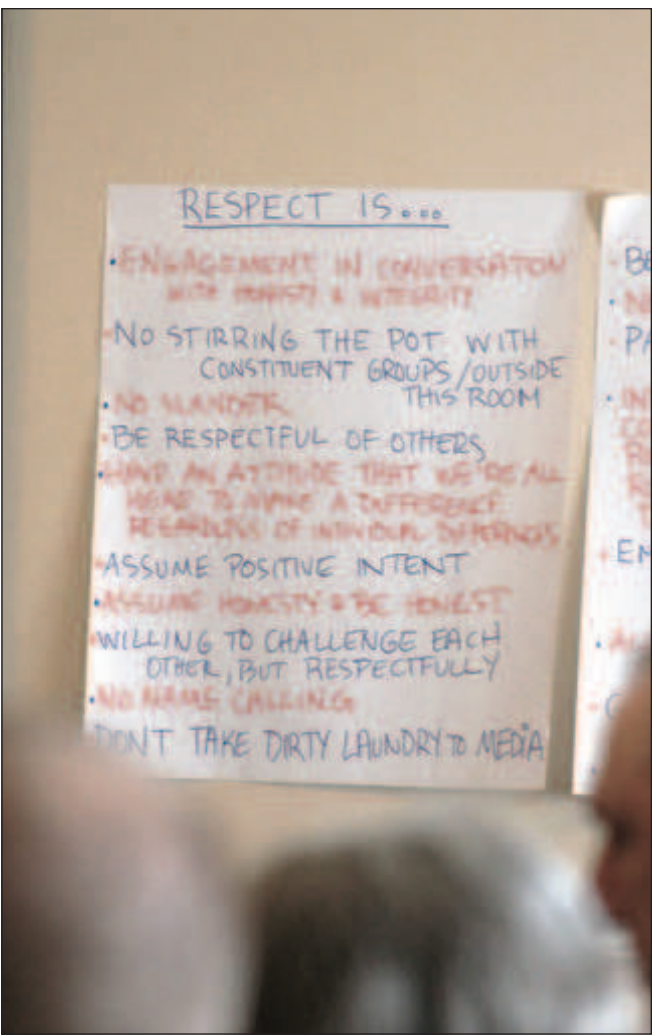
## Known Washington wolf packs

(As of March 6, 2015)



Source: Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Alan Kenaga/Capital Press



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

The rules that the Washington Wolf Advisory Group are asked to follow are listed on this poster. The group, composed of representatives of a variety of interests, is trying to come up with ways to manage wolves in Washington state.

Jack Field, executive vice president of the Washington Cattlemen’s Association, said the WAG has a clearer purpose than before.

The WAG’s attention is turning toward preventing depredations and clarifying when WDFW will lethally remove wolves in the east-

ern one-third of Washington, where wolves are not protected under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Once past those sticky topics, Field said, the WAG can take on other issues, such as reviewing the state’s recovery goals and planning for post-recovery wolf man-

agement.

“I’d like to have everything wrapped up, get everything done in a day, but that’s a little foolish on my part,” Field said. “I’m not the most patient person, but right now I don’t see any other way.”

Madden said the WAG will take up policy questions soon.

“We are going to be diving into some of these issues this spring, absolutely,” she said.

## High bidder

WDFW hired Madden a year ago for \$82,000 to assess the state’s conflict over wolves.

She interviewed more than 90 people and submitted a 43-page report that observed that ranchers and environmentalists agree that emotions over wolves are intense and escalating.

The report positioned Madden to win a two-year, \$850,010 contract to lead the WAG meetings, train WDFW staff members in conflict resolution and meet with other interested people, including ranchers and environmentalists.

While her work with the WAG is the most visible, Madden estimates she has talked to several hundred people about the conflict.

WDFW chose Madden over two firms, Triangle Associates of Seattle and Kearns & West Inc., which has offices in Portland, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

Madden’s bid was rough-

ly five times higher than the other two bids.

Her rates — \$8,000 a day for “facilitation service,” \$4,000 for “in-person engagement” and \$400 an hour for “remote engagement” — were also higher. And it was increased by travel expenses.

The other firms offered the services of several associates with experience in Northwest issues such as salmon recovery, mining and sage grouse protection.

Madden’s resume has more of an international flavor, studded with work on wildlife issues in Africa and South America.

Martorello said three WDFW reviewers scored Madden’s proposal the highest.

WAG member Shawn Cantrell, Northwest director of Defenders of Wildlife, said Madden has defused tension among members of the group.

“I think she’s the real hub of this transformation going on,” he said. “I think she’s really good at having people be heard and for a lot of us that’s what we want, to be heard.”

## Ranchers skeptical

The Cattle Producers of Washington, an organization of ranchers, quit the WAG in September, saying the panel was pointless and a forum for WDFW to talk things to death instead of controlling problem wolves. The group also complained that Madden had fostered a secretive atmosphere by persuading WDFW to close portions of two WAG meetings, contrary to department policy.

The Cattle Producers’ position hasn’t changed since then, although the group’s vice president, Stevens County rancher Scott Nielsen, said he was impressed with Madden. “I think people naturally like her and naturally look to her for solutions,” he said.

But he said he can’t see the WAG being anything but counterproductive for ranchers.

Nielsen said ranchers are already attuned to protecting their herds from wolves, without the involvement of conservationists, who he said have an unrealistic confidence in deterrence measures.

“I don’t want to throw water on everything they have. You can sound so hard-

nosed. ... But they’re not inventing the wheel. We’ve been living with predators a long time,” Nielsen said.

“If you are a responsible rancher, you do everything you can to protect these animals. If you don’t, then you shouldn’t be in the business,” he said.

WDFW’s policy is that it won’t consider lethal removal until at least four cows or sheep have been killed and the rancher has exhausted other ways to protect his animals. The policy — illustrated by a flow chart with lots of boxes and arrows — leaves room for interpretation.

Nielsen said the policy practically requires ranchers to wait for their animals to be harmed. The effect is to force ranchers to move on, he said.

“We end up being removed from the landscape,” he said. “You should be talking about only one” depredation.

## Lawsuit effective

If one is looking for a tangible effect on Washington’s wolf policy, environmentalists willing to sue have been more influential in the past year than the WAG.

A federal judge in December ruled in favor of conservation groups that sought to keep the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Wildlife Services from assisting WDFW with the lethal removal of wolves.

The judge agreed with environmentalists that even though wolves are not federally protected in far Eastern Washington, Wildlife Services would have to conduct an in-depth environmental review before shooting wolves at WDFW’s request.

WDFW says it also has the ability to shoot wolves, but the department had relied on Wildlife Services.

Dashiell, the Stevens County rancher, cited the lawsuit as one reason for leaving the WAG.

Dashiell estimates he lost 300 sheep to wolves in 2014, and Wildlife Services, at WDFW’s direction, shot one adult female wolf in response. The outcome upset environmentalists and spawned the lawsuit.

“I always contended that with the first wolf that had to be killed, the cooperation was gone, and this lawsuit proved it,” Dashiell said. “It doesn’t seem like a whole lot of trust-building.”

Several conservation groups participated in the lawsuit, including Cascadia Wildlands, which is not represented on the WAG. Cascadia’s legal director, Nick Cady, said the lawsuit reflected the groups’ enmity toward Wildlife Services’ activities in the West, not an unbending opposition to lethal removal of wolves in Eastern Washington.

Environmental groups are watching the WAG, aware that lethal removal is part of the state’s wolf recovery plan, he said. “Nobody’s bailed entirely from the process yet,” he said.

Another environmental organization involved in the lawsuit was the Kettle Range Conservation Group, whose director, Tim Coleman, is on the WAG. He, too, said he can accept the idea of lethal removal, but he wants robust preventive measures, such as a school for range riders.

“Because the wolf is in recovery, the public expects these extra measures be used,” Coleman said.

# Pacific Northwest weather will be warmer than normal in the summer

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California, Nevada, Utah and Arizona will also be wetter than normal in May.

The Pacific Northwest will be warmer than normal in the summer. Douglas said, but also have adequate moisture.

“You guys are in really good shape this spring and summer,” he told farmers in the audience.

July will be wet, which could cause problems with harvest, Douglas warned.

The weather will dry out in August as an enormous ridge of high pressure develops across the U.S.

Douglas also said it will be the first hot summer for the Corn Belt in four years, which could impact corn and soybean production, depending

on the timing.

The El Niño condition that has been pumping storms across the Pacific Ocean to the West Coast will end this spring, he said. The planet will then enter a temperature pattern similar to 1976 through 1997, which means drier conditions in the Pacific Northwest, especially during the winter, due to more high

pressure ridges along the West Coast.

“The entire period will end up with precipitation anywhere from 5 to 10 percent below normal, which may not sound like a lot, but when you start compounding it in terms of the effect on groundwater, runoff, reservoirs and lakes, it becomes a problem,” Douglas said.

“It’s encouraging,” farmer Raymond DeRuwe of Dayton, Wash., said of Douglas’ forecast for this year. “Moisture is yield. Every inch of moisture is worth eight bushels of wheat (per acre).”

Kevin Lyle of Connell, Wash., was pleased to hear about the moisture in the spring. It could make for a better crop than in recent

years, he said.

But rain during harvest could increase sprout damage concerns, Lyle said. Farmers receive lower prices at country elevators when their grain has sprout damage.

“Hopefully it’s not too wet into summer (during) harvest, is the main thing,” he said.