



## Minutes Deschutes County Wolf Depredation and Financial Assistance Committee

Meeting #12: Monday, November 17, 2025, 5:30 p.m.

Deschutes Services Building, Allen Room, 1300 NW Wall Street, Bend

**This meeting was conducted in person and by video. It was video recorded and can be accessed on the committee website: [Wolf Depredation Compensation and Financial Assistance Committee | Deschutes County Oregon.](https://www.deschutescounty.org/wolf-depredation-compensation-and-financial-assistance-committee)**

### **I. Introductions / Call to Order**

This meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Commissioner Phil Chang. Present in person: Phil Chang, Deschutes County Commissioner, committee member; Nick Lelack, County Administrator; Jen Patterson, Deschutes County Strategic Initiatives Manager; Steve Pappa, committee member; Ethan O'Brien, committee member; Johnny Leason, committee member; Sally Compton, committee member; Aaron Bott, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), Wolf Biologist; Emily Weidner, US Fish & Wildlife; David Andrews, USDA Wildlife Services, Wolf Conflict Specialist; Zach Kendall, ODFW Assistant District Wildlife Biologist; and Scott Duggan, OSU-Cascades, Livestock Extension Agent.

Chang opened the meeting, described the purpose of the session in the context of preparing for the next state grant application cycle for depredation compensation and prevention funding, and previewed the agenda items: business representative candidates, the 2025 grant funds balance, and a review of the market rate sheet.

### **II. Approval of September 15, 2025, Minutes**

Johnny Leason moved to approve the minutes. Ethan O'Brien seconded the motion. Minutes approved unanimously.

### **III. Business Representative Candidates**

The committee conducted a meet-and-greet with the four candidates for the open business representative seat, scheduled in first-name alphabetical order. Staff explained that official committee members would submit post-meeting rankings one through four by email, and that the lowest aggregate score would be recommended to the Board of County Commissioners for appointment.

Amy Knudson introduced herself as a program manager with Central Oregon Community College's Center for Business, participating in a personal capacity. She described a background in science education and prior involvement with the Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project. She outlined current work building workforce trainings and frequent engagement with regional businesses and agencies, along with volunteer outreach with Think Wild. She discussed coalition-based efforts she has seen in Arizona, recurring conflict dynamics around depredation and poaching, and the use of trained volunteers to help deter wolves where producers are interested. She emphasized informed decision-making and consistent communication among stakeholders.

Karan Swaner stated that she is a retired U.S. State Department employee who moved to Central Oregon to develop a sheep operation. She explained that her son has taken over the business. As part of their operations

they use livestock guardian dogs and brings animals in at night on a 70-acre property. She described regular interactions with a broad cross-section of residents through riding, an interest in improving local integration of wolves on the landscape, and the importance of public understanding. She referenced observations from the Sierra Valley in California and noted potential effects on local prey species such as elk and deer.

Karl Findling introduced himself as a 37-year Deschutes County resident with family ties to the sheep industry, and a background as a hunter, outdoorsman, and small business owner. He summarized conservation and public-lands involvement with organizations including Oregon Hunters Association, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, and Friends of Hart Mountain, and recounted observing an early Oregon wolf breeding pair in Hells Canyon. He stated a preference for non-lethal management first and described his intent to work in a middle-ground role between producers and wolf advocates. He referenced management approaches used in other western states and in Europe and discussed the challenges producers face during losses while seeking coexistence.

Ryan McHugh introduced himself as a wealth management professional and longtime Central Oregon resident with prior experience in biology, wildfire, and forestry, board service with local organizations, and personal ties to ranching and 4-H. He described himself as a hunter and discussed perspectives shaped by time in Idaho and Montana, noting differences in state management approaches. He stated that wolves are a keystone species and also a predator and discussed balancing outcomes so that large landowners who bear most costs of wolf presence are made whole. He suggested that compensation should give producers clear assurance of coverage and consider secondary impacts beyond the direct value of lost livestock, and he described community connections that he views as relevant to the committee's work.

#### **IV. Grant Funds Balance**

Staff reported a remaining balance of \$3,871.34 in 2025 funds that must be spent by January 31, 2026. The carcass removal program has seen increasing monthly invoices and cannot be held in reserve against the current balance. Consistent with prior committee direction, staff contacted producers who previously received grants to request brief updates and any additional funding needs not to exceed \$2,500. One request was received from Lizzie Hyde on behalf of her parents for the Hatfield Hyde Land Trust, seeking \$2,500 in additional prevention funds for drill stem and range-riding services. The drill stem, described as heavy-duty metal pipe, is being used to build a small enclosure for young and wounded animals; a diagram was provided with the request. The applicants were invited but did not attend.

The committee also reviewed timing for the 2026 ODA grant cycle, noting that applications are due December 31 and will be reviewed at the January 13 meeting; the County website was updated accordingly, and no applications had been received as of this meeting.

During discussion, members asked whether the approximate \$1,300 that would remain after a \$2,500 award, could be reallocated. Staff explained that the committee has broad discretion to allocate remaining prevention dollars if they are spent before the deadline, citing last year's end-of-cycle purchase of additional Foxlights for the shared deterrent "library." Staff also stated the committee could allocate more to the Hatfield Hyde Land Trust than the amount requested, or return unspent funds to the state.

A motion was made and seconded to allocate \$3,000 to the Hatfield Hyde Land Trust, to reserve the remaining \$871.34 for the carcass removal program, and to purchase batteries for Fox Lights in mid-January with any remaining unspent grant funds. The motion passed unanimously. In discussion of the motion, members asked whether \$871.34 would be sufficient given rising landfill costs. County staff explained that, if a minor shortfall occurred due to billing timing, costs could be addressed in the subsequent 2026 cycle within County fiscal-year constraints; members commented that leaving roughly \$800 for the final months appeared reasonable.

During this discussion, staff summarized statewide funding context and statutory requirements discussed on a recent inter-county call: of \$1.2 million budgeted for the biennium, \$600,000 is slated for the 2026 ODA grant round, with at least 50 percent required for preventative measures pursuant to SB 77, potentially limiting the pool available for depredation reimbursement. Staff also noted a potential—but not yet confirmed—federal contribution of \$100,000.

## **V. Review Market Rate Sheet**

The committee discussed current requirements for setting market value rates used in depredation claims. Staff relayed that statute requires establishing a market value rate before reimbursement but does not require an annually adopted rate sheet, meaning rates could be set case-by-case. Chang proposed seeking input from the prior subcommittee that developed last year's rates on what, if anything, should be updated this year. Members and agency partners discussed the practicality of a simplified approach used in other counties, including averaging Central Oregon Livestock Auction rates for the week of a depredation and the weeks immediately before and after, with weight-class considerations.

The committee further discussed use of multipliers above market value in specific circumstances. Staff and members agreed the standard remains market rate; applicants who believe a multiplier is warranted should describe the circumstances and intended use supporting that request. Staff stated they would incorporate language into application materials indicating that the committee will evaluate rates based on the Central Oregon Livestock Auction averages during the month of the depredation and the month prior and after, and will add guidance on how to present multiplier requests. Staff also noted the importance of caution to avoid creating an expectation of automatic multipliers.

## **VI. Public Comments**

No public comments.

## **VII. Next Steps**

The chair and staff briefly addressed committee attendance and quorum. County Administration offered to bring options—consistent with practices on other county committees—for handling absences and participation to the next meeting for committee consideration; the chair reserved a brief time on the January agenda for that discussion.

Staff will circulate an email to committee members to capture post-meeting rankings of the four business representative candidates; the resulting recommendation will be forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners for appointment. Staff will update the Wolf Committee website and application materials to reflect the December 31 application deadline, the January 13 review date, the current rate-evaluation approach based on Central Oregon Livestock Auction averages for the relevant period, and guidance for any multiplier requests. County Administration will prepare attendance-policy options for discussion at the next meeting. The committee will reconvene on Monday, January 13 at 5:30 p.m. to review any applications received.

## **VIII. Wrap up and Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by  
Jen Patterson, Strategic Initiatives Manager,  
Deschutes County Administrative Services