



Minutes Deschutes County Wolf Depredation and Financial Assistance Committee

Meeting #6: Monday, June 10, 2024, 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.](#)

I. Introductions / Call to Order

This meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m. by Commissioner Phil Chang. Present via Zoom: Sarahlee Lawrence and Ethan O'Brien. Present in person: Phil Chang, Deschutes County Commissioner; Jen Patterson, Deschutes County Strategic Initiatives Manager; Nick Lelack, County Administrator; Donna Harris; Johnny Leason; Gordon Jones; Stephen Pappa; Aaron Bott, Wolf Biologist, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; Emily Weidner Fish and Wildlife Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife; and Scott Duggan, OSU Extension, Department of Animal & Rangeland Science.

II. Approval of April 1, 2024, Minutes

Donna Harris moved to approve the minutes. Ethan O'Brien seconded the motion. Minutes approved unanimously.

III. Update on Sub-Committee

Stephen Pappa, Ethan O'Brien, and Donna Harris provided an update on their sub-committee meetings that reviewed the application process for applying for Wolf Grant funds and to improve the application process for committee consideration. The sub-committee created a cover page specific to Deschutes County grant applications that outlines the information the committee is looking for in consideration of grant applications. The cover page will be distributed with any requests for grant fund applications.

IV. Update on Agency Partners and County Committees Meeting

Jen Patterson is part of a working group of county staff, committee members, and agency representatives from across the state to develop tools to support existing, newly established, and upcoming county wolf committees. There have been two meetings over the last several months on topics including best preventative measure practices and tools, development of committee materials, discussions on whether there should be standard reimbursement prices for confirmed and missing depredations, and other ways to streamline committee business to alleviate burdens from individual committee members.

Gordon Jones asked how the tribal lands fit into county committees. Aaron Bott responded that tribes have access to a federal program that they can choose to work directly with and are not dependent on ODA dollars. Tribes can opt to partake in the ODA program, but Warm Springs Tribe specifically utilizes the federal grant program.

V. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Update on Wolf Activity in Deschutes County

Aaron Bott, Wolf Biologist with ODFW, gave a quick background on wolf biology specifically related to resident wolves. Wolves are a territorial species and Deschutes County has two groups of wolves that are residential. The Metolius pair which is on the Deschutes/Jefferson County boundary line and the Upper Deschutes pack on the Deschutes/Klamath County boundary line.

The Upper Deschutes pack has 5 adults - mom, dad, and 3 yearlings that will reach sexual maturity next February – they could disperse from the pack at any time. The pack whelped in the Springtime and later in the Fall Aaron can provide more information on how many of the pups have survived. Typically, there will be 6 pups with, on average, 2 pups living to the end of the calendar year. One of the wolves has a radio collar and per the data collected the pack spends most of their time in Klamath County. There is not a lot of livestock in their range and the livestock that is in their range is in Klamath County. There has not been a known depredation from the pack.

The Metolius are a breeding pair but have had no successful pups survive to the end of any calendar year. It is difficult for just one pair of wolves to successfully breed pups. The Metolius pair has been one of the most difficult pairs to continually track and attempt to collar (unsuccessful to date), but it has been an ongoing effort by Aaron.

Phil Chang talked about the importance of knowing what the possibilities of depredation are and asked Aaron for his thoughts on where the committee should be directing prevention efforts.

Aaron discussed how much easier it is to be proactive and not reactive. Proactive measures are there to keep conflicts from happening. Wolves are like any other animal and can become habituated, reducing the temptations ahead of wolf activities helps to mitigate conflict.

Gordon Jones questioned the grazing allotment of a rancher who has had a confirmed depredation and received missing claims. To what avail do preventive measures have meaningful impact on 100,000 acres of grazing land.

Aaron discussed that per the ODA program, compensation occurs in the County where the depredation or other claims occurred. The challenge with missing livestock falls under the responsibility of the producer and they should be keeping track of how many livestock they are putting out on their allotment and how many they are bringing back. If allotments cross county lines, then the counties should discuss the situation and make the best determination with the information provided.

Sarahlee Lawrence brought up that Ashanti and his cowboys have record keeping practices in place and are in close contact with ODFW.

Ethan O'Brien thanked Aaron for his work on the ground and mentioned that the committee really takes into consideration the information Aaron provides. Ethan had heard that a wolf walked through the area he ranches and was wondering if there were any kind of warning signs or notifications from ODFW. Aaron advised producers to reach out to ODFW to let the agency know what livestock and where they are ranching which can be very helpful in keeping the lines of communication open. If Ethan or anyone else wants to contact ODFW to get more up to date information on wolf activity, ODFW can provide the information that they have available. It's important to realize that the transparency is there but the information is not as up to date as many people assume. At most, ODFW will get two signals in a 24 hour period on wolves that are collared. A lot of the producers encountering wolves are, for the most part, already in conversation with ODFW. The higher concentrated human centers are, the less likely it is that wolves will be in those areas. The Metolius Pair, in particular, uses a lot of national grasslands area, and they follow elk. 80-90% of wolves prey are elk.

ODFW does not share collared information on any wildlife and considers it sensitive information to protect the

wildlife.

Stephen Pappa asked if ODFW writes a report if there is missing livestock. Aaron confirmed that ODFW writes reports when producers contacts ODFW with information concerning missing livestock.

Phil Chang asked if there is an analysis on why the Metolius Pair had so much depredation last year and why there hasn't been any incidents that the committee knows of this year. Aaron responded that there were two known conflicts last year and the producer and ODFW worked very closely together to implement preventative measures which Aaron considers a success story. If producers can think proactively about conflict it can be a successful tool in mitigating or stopping conflict from happening in the future.

VI. Mitigating Political Impact on Producers and Ranchers

Jen Patterson briefed the committee on a phone call she received from a state agency. Wolves are a political topic and when producers, who are impacted and utilizing state dollars for compensation and preventative measures, are publicized in the media they can get in the crosshairs of the political climate. Some producers have expressed frustration at trying to do the right thing by mitigating wolf conflict but having their business impacted from media stories. Jen consulted with legal counsel and the committee has the option of redacting some/all personal information from grant applications. Jen turned the discussion back over to the committee to consider options and preferences.

Phil Chang discussed the political drama surrounding wolves on a national, state, and local level. How can the committee do good work in mitigating conflict and doing prevention work with producers while staying out of the hot seat. Various parties could be trying to use producers and the committee as pawns in the political game surrounding this topic.

Johnny Leason asked if the grant applications are public from ODA. Jen replied that they are not but indicated any grant agreement between a grant recipient and the County could be made available upon public meeting requests.

Stephen Pappa stated that consideration of redacting personal information from a grant application seems reasonable.

Johnny asked whether the producer submitting a grant application could opt to have personal information redacted.

Emily Weidner responded that redaction is the process US Fish and Wildlife use for sage grouse agreements, all personal information is redacted and that they only know the recipient as "Applicant A or Applicant B".

Phil Chang asked if the committee members could individually receive unredacted information from applicants and then have the information redacted and referred to applicants as "Applicant A" during committee meetings for reference. Jen will check with legal counsel and this discussion will continue at the next committee meeting.

Gordon Jones made a point of the need to know the history and/or reputation of a rancher.

VII. Outreach and Education Strategy

Committee members discussed the pros and cons of sending out a Press Release, announcing availability of grant funds, widely versus a notifying a smaller, targeted audience. Johnny Leason asked Aaron Bott if there is anyone the committee should be reaching out to specifically. Aaron knows where the wolves generally frequent and can identify specific communities that are at a higher risk of interaction with wolves.

Jen Patterson discussed previous challenges of targeting ranchers and producers for public outreach. Scott Duggan may be able to send out information through his listserv. Emily Weidner responded that NRCS could possibly send outreach materials through their listserv. Aaron added that localized information is a better avenue to pursue outreach efforts.

Stephen responded that Aaron's suggestion of having a flyer for agencies and organizations who have direct outreach to ranchers and producers could be the best avenue to explore in a public outreach effort.

The committee discussed changing the Press Release into a flyer and distributing it to partner agencies like ODFW, US Fish and Wildlife, OSU-Extension, and Central Oregon Rancher Magazine. Jen will convert the Press Release to a Flyer for the committee to review and then distribute to targeted organizations.

Aaron discussed different preventative measures including fladry and fox lights, which are two big tools for spending preventative measure funds. Flashing ear tags are another preventative measure that has proved successful. Techniques like range riding really have the greatest impact in the long run, Aaron recommends compensating people for technique changes as the best resource for using preventative funds.

VIII. Volunteer County Email Policy

Jen reviewed the new county email policy.

IX. Review Media Policy

Jen reviewed the current media policy which, in summary, states that no individual member of the committee shall speak on behalf of the committee or take a position on behalf of the committee. Any individual may speak to the media on behalf of themselves.

X. Committee Chair Consideration

During the first Wolf Committee meeting Phil Chang agreed to be chair on a 6-month temporary basis, that was 1-year ago. Phil is more than happy to relinquish the role or continue serving as chair. Donna Harris motioned to have Phil Chang serve as chair for a term of one year starting June 10, 2024, Stephen Pappa seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

XI. Public Comments

No public comments.

XII. Next Steps

Committee discussed and decided to meet on a quarterly basis starting in October and prefers using a doodle poll for scheduling the meetings. Next topics will include carcass program for preventative measure discussion, grant application redaction discussion, grant application considerations, and expenditure of remaining grant funds (if applicable).

XIII. Wrap up and Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

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