

**MEETING REPORT**  
**UTAH WOLF WORKING GROUP (WWG)**  
**Meeting #4**  
**30 March 2004**  
**Lee Kay Center; Salt Lake City**

**PARTICIPANTS:**

Jim Bowns, Allison Jones, Sterling Brown (alternate – part), Wes Quinton (part), Karen Corts, Trey Simmons, Clark Willis, Bill Christensen, Jerry Mason (alternate), Debbie Goodman, Don Peay, Robert Schmidt, Randy Simmons

Missing: Mark Walsh

Technical Advisors: Craig McLaughlin, Laura Romin,

Others: Dick Carter, Becky Johnson, Cindee Jensen, Miles Moretti, Kevin Conway, Larry Dalton, Joan Degiorgio, John Carter, Kirk Robinson, Bill Fenimore, Lee Howard

Facilitator: Walt Gasson, Dynamic Solutions Group, LLC

Recorder: Dana Dolson, UDWR

**DECISIONS AND ACTION ITEMS**

**The current list of WWG members and alternates is still not accurate or complete. Walt circulated a hard copy for changes. He will distribute a new list via e-mail.**

**Larry Dalton (UDWR) will give all WWG members and alternates another opportunity to sign up on our list serve.**

**Walt will make changes to the 2/24/04 meeting record (including the timeline) approved by the group today. It will be posted on the website.**

**Craig will make changes to the WWG Charter to reflect that the WWG will work with DWR after the RAC process is completed, to prepare a revised Management Plan for delivery to the Wildlife Board. The plan will go to the Wildlife Board in July 2005. Modifications to the timeline are noted below:**

<b>March 2005:</b>	<b>Final draft approved by WWG, posted on website</b>
<b>April 2005:</b>	<b>WWG reviews public comment, makes revisions</b>
<b>May 2005:</b>	<b>Plan to RACs for review and comment</b>
<b>June 2005</b>	<b>WWG considers RAC comments, drafts final plan</b>
<b>July 2005</b>	<b>Final plan to Wildlife Board</b>

**The WWG will write a letter to USFWS regarding the I-70 boundary between the southwestern and western DPS areas, and its impact on this plan. Craig, Trey,**

**Sterling and Robert will discuss this with FWS staff at an upcoming meeting and draft a letter. This draft letter will be e-mailed to the WWG for review by 4/12/04.**

**Alternates who attend WWG meetings when their WWG member is there may speak when recognized and asked to speak by their WWG member.**

**Additions/corrections to the draft March 30 meeting record will be accepted through April 13.**

**Suggestions on agenda items for the April 27 meeting will be accepted through April 13.**

**The draft agenda for the April 27 meeting will be distributed to the WWG via the list serve by April 20.**

**Walt and Spencer will provide the report on scoping meetings to the WWG by April 20.**

**Several WWG members and technical advisors accepted responsibilities for answering questions related to the final plan and/or contacting experts.**

**DSG will include Robert Schmidt (re: USU study) and Carter Niemeyer (re: wolf depredation and kill verification) on the April agenda.**

#### **REVIEW/APPROVAL OF 2/24 MEETING RECORD**

Several changes were approved to the 2/24/04 meeting record, including changes to the timeline. Walt will make these changes, and the meeting record will be posted on the website.

#### **REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS FROM 2/24/04**

The following items have been accomplished:

Agendas will be prepared by DSG facilitators [who will alternate meetings] and incorporate suggestions by WWG members and UDWR where possible. Suggestions for agenda items are to be submitted to DSG facilitators [both Spencer and Walt], 2 weeks prior to the next meeting date. Draft agendas will be distributed by DSG via email one week prior to the meeting date.

Miles Moretti will look into setting up a list serve, or other technology, to help communications.

Cindee Jensen will see to it that double-sided tent card name tags are available at the next meeting.

Craig McLaughlin will be responsible for needed changes to the charter and for reissuing the charter to WWG members.

WWG members need to respond to facilitators as soon as possible when they note needed changes to meeting reports – at least by the same time frame for agenda suggestions (2 weeks prior to meeting date).

UDWR was approved to make needed changes [as approved by the group] to the charter and the last meeting record and to post the changed versions to the web site without further WWG action.

UDWR will revise the charter to include 3 alternatives related to livestock depredation, as APHIS is constrained by NEPA.

Craig will either append his current plan outline to the meeting report, or will send it separately to WWG members and alternates.

Facilitators will include an every-other-meeting [approximately] review and assessment of timeline considerations to help keep the group on track.

WWG assignment: By March 16 [2 weeks prior to next meeting], send important issues & possible experts & rationale for why to facilitators for help in building the next agenda.

By March 16, send any and all suggestions for the next agenda.

The draft agenda for the next meeting will be distributed to WWG on March 23.

The group established a set meeting date: the last Tuesday of each month. (unless a good reason dictates change on a case by case basis). Our next three meetings are scheduled for April 27, May 25, and June 29.

The group established a set meeting location: DNR Auditorium (rooms 1040&50), with the Lee Kay Center as backup when the DNR Auditorium is unavailable.

Craig will provide a draft of the wolf ecology part of the issues summary to the WWG three days prior to the next meeting.

### **REVIEW/DISCUSSION OF HJR12**

Debbie Goodman led a review of the 2003 joint legislative resolution regarding wolf management. A summary of her review follows:

- HJR12 created the framework for the WWG, setting the sideboards of our charter and our work product.
- We should be mindful of which items fall within these sideboards, and which are outside.
- The Montana Wolf Working Group listed all public comments it received, but reported them in two categories in its final report. Thus, they could document all input, but retain clarity on what was within their scope.

- We have no USFWS de-listing requirements for our plan. Our plan needs to be consistent with HJR12 for it to gain acceptance with all the various stakeholders.
- There are a number of “whereas” statements that provide the foundation for the resolution:
  - There is a Northern Rockies wolf recovery effort. Utah is not part of that recovery zone. Biological criteria for de-listing in that area have been achieved;
  - Dispersing wolves from the recovery zone are traveling into Utah. This point and the one above tell us why a Utah framework for wolves is needed.
  - Wolves are protected under state statute in Utah. The state has a legislated public process for developing wildlife management plans, and the Wildlife Board is central to that process. A policy for managing predatory wildlife species already exists in Utah;
  - Ute Tribal lands contain suitable wolf habitat. The state and the Ute Tribe are party to a cooperative management agreement for wildlife within tribal boundaries;
  - Hunting, ranching and livestock production are important considerations, as is the investment made in restoring wildlife populations.
- There are also a number of “therefore” statements, which provide the conclusion for the resolution:
  - USFWS is urged to de-list wolves in the western DPS, not to establish additional recovery areas, and to leave all of Utah in one DPS;
  - DWR is strongly urged to draft a wolf management plan for adoption by the Wildlife Board;
  - Objectives and strategies of the plan should be consistent with the Ute Tribe wildlife management objectives, prevent livestock depredation, protect investments made in wildlife management, fit with USFWS regulations and fit with other Utah species management plans;
  - It urges full compensation of private landowners for livestock depredation by wolves;
  - It urges distribution of the resolution to other agencies.
- It was noted that this resolution passed two standing committees and both houses with no votes in opposition.

Considerable discussion followed. The central points of that discussion were:

- “To the extent possible” – this phrase applies to all following statements.
- “Prevent livestock depredation” – How realistic is this? Is “reduce” acceptable or not? Is “minimize” an alternative? It was concluded that eliminating depredation entirely was unrealistic, but that doing our best to minimize it was OK.
- How should DWR “protect wildlife investments”?
- Should wolves be treated like other predators (i.e., black bears, cougars)? It was determined that they should.
- Compensation for wolf depredation on livestock must be sufficient for full restitution.

- The wolf management plan should parallel the bear and cougar plans and follow the overall policy for predator management. This philosophy should be consistent, but does not prohibit specific differences unique to wolf management in Utah.
- The I-70 boundary between the western and southwestern DPS areas has a significant impact on the development of this plan. The resolution urged FWS to change this boundary, DWR has urged them to change this boundary, but they remain unlikely to do so.
- Buffer zones bordering I-70 could be an option for this plan.
- Down-listing of wolves in the southwest could change this also, but is unlikely to occur soon.
- This plan's adaptability and flexibility is of paramount importance to deal with the changing realities.
- HJR12 deals with all of Utah, and its guidelines for wolves cover the whole state – both north and south of I-70.
- This WWG could consider, within its legal constraints, specifying or recommending alternatives and options for dealing with wolves moving from the western DPS into the areas south of I-70.
- We may need to consider the legislature's desire to keep northern wolves away from the I-70 zone.
- A sub-group consisting of Craig, Trey, Sterling and Robert will discuss this with FWS staff at an upcoming meeting and draft a letter. This draft letter should consider several ideas:
  - Are there certain issues that can be changed in our development of this plan? For example, what happens when gray wolves from the north cross the I-70 line? What management options do we have? What tools are at our disposal? Can this line be moved? We should lay out the WWG position if FWS cannot be flexible on these issues.
  - The subgroup will e-mail a copy of this draft letter to the WWG for review by 4/12/04. (See action items above.)

### **REVIEW/DISCUSSION OF DRAFT PLAN OUTLINE/CONTENT**

Craig McLaughlin distributed copies of the 3/25 draft outline for the plan. Copies had been sent to WWG members via e-mail. He briefly reviewed the outline and asked for comments. A discussion about the draft outline followed. The major points of that discussion are summarized below: [members with additional thoughts and suggestions were urged to send their comments directly to Craig via email]

- Clear distinctions between major sections and sub-sections are important.  
Example below:
  - Habitat
    - Habitat assessment/analysis
- What are the major components?
- Any missing components?
- Any added?
  - Strategies: monitoring wolf populations
- Other content considerations:

- What confidence intervals do we want around estimates in this plan?
- Level of funding has implications for level of monitoring we recommend.
  - Tax check-off will provide match (50:50) for State Wildlife Grant funding.
  - Funding for depredation compensation could come from Defenders if they approve of our plan. Could come off the top from tax check-off funds.
- We will need an executive summary. Detailed discussion of monitoring, etc. could be in an appendix.
- Should have a section on coordination with other agencies.
- Should have a section on research needs and priorities.
- Add a section (see outline p. 2) on other relevant species (i.e., sage grouse, pygmy rabbits, etc.)
- Management objectives for population, gender and age distribution (similar to those in the black bear management plan). Population objectives might be numeric or non-numeric.
- A section on recreation and the impacts of wolves on recreational activities.
- Adaptability – not necessarily a specific section, so much as a concern for the overall plan.
- Habitat assessment and viability – this may already be covered, but should definitely be in the plan. Habitat quantity and quality should be considered. A map might help.
- Identify areas that are not compatible with wolves.
- Should depredation management be covered under “Current Status and Distribution of Wolves in the Intermountain West”? (p.1) We should change the heading or make another section to cover this.
- Discussed adding a section on interactions of wolves with the “greater ecosystem” (i.e. trophic cascades, etc).

### **REVIEW/DISCUSSION OF DRAFT ASSESSMENT**

Craig also presented the 3/25 preliminary draft of the “Assessment of the Biological, Legal, Social and Political Factors Influencing Wolves in Utah.” He distributed copies of the document to the group. Copies had been sent to WWG members via e-mail. He briefly reviewed the assessment and asked for comments. A discussion about the preliminary assessment followed. The major points of that discussion are summarized below:

- The USU document should be referenced where needed.
- Different scientists’ work should be used to broaden context.
- Examples from Alaska and Canada should be used.
- We should include human effects on prey populations, with and without wolves.
- The issue of wolf abundance and prey abundance in pre-Columbian times should be addressed. It is possible that human impacts on prey populations kept wolf populations low before human diseases impacted Native Americans in the West.
- We should add more on non-lethal, non-capture methods of reducing wolf depredation.

- Predator – prey relationships should include bison/wolf interactions.

### **INFORMATION/REPORT FROM SCOPING MEETINGS**

Walt presented the group with a preliminary draft of the information from all ten public scoping meetings. He posed two questions to the group:

- What format would you like to see in the report on the scoping meetings?
- Can we use information from this preliminary draft to begin putting issues in their proper place in the plan outline?

The group declined to place issues from the scoping meetings in the draft outline without further analysis. A discussion about the content and format of the scoping report followed. The major points of that discussion are summarized below:

- Make the Preliminary Summary the “Summary” and then create an “Executive Summary” for posting on the website. The Executive Summary can provide a full overview through a content analysis with no reporting of numbers of dots/votes in the executive summary.
- Some information is not included in the Preliminary Summary. It includes only the issues that were selected by groups as their “top three”. Data gaps exist due to missing comments.
- Numbers are problematic. There are inaccuracies in the number of dots that are on the charts vs. the number of dots that should have been distributed to participants. The dots may/may not indicate specific insights.
- Numbers are not necessarily problematic. They seem to reflect the truth, and people should be able to read them and interpret for themselves.

After some discussion, Walt was asked to provide, for internal WWG purposes, a report is needed which:

- Reports all issues and advice;
- Includes the “top 3” issues and advice, with accompanying dot totals;
- Summarizes the top issues and advice with rank and intensity, as in the WY example
- Includes a one-page executive summary, which will be posted on the website.

This report will be provided to the WWG by April 20.

Public scoping comments in written and e-mail form, submitted to UDWR, will be cut off on April 9.

### **USE OF EXPERTS IN DEVELOPING THE PLAN**

Walt distributed the list of experts suggested by the WWG so far. He noted that it totaled 35-40 different individuals, and there simply was not sufficient time or money to hear from all of them. He asked the WWG what they wanted to do about this, and the following recommendations were made:

- Decide on the questions first, and then decide who, and how many experts are needed.
- We could look at more local experts.

- We should consider the credibility, legitimacy and professional status and objectivity of these experts.
- Are there people who can come and address the information needs that our experts cannot?

The group then identified some questions that they feel should be answered for this plan. These questions should be answered internally first, then, if necessary, asked of experts who may or may not need be here in person. The questions are:

- Based on habitat and current prey populations, what are the probable impacts of wolves on:
  - Wildlife management objectives; and
  - Livestock and domestic animals, relative to a managed wolf population? Our internal technical advisors will take the lead on this question, and refer it to outside experts, if necessary. We would only let our own WWG people take a stab at answering these questions if the results are peer reviewed. If no expert is coming or we aren't "contracting out" to any expert to help answer these questions, by default in those cases there must be a peer review.
- How difficult is it (physically, politically and economically) to stop the growth of wolf populations? Our internal technical advisors will take the lead on this question, and refer it to outside experts, if necessary (see point above).
- What are the total economics of current Utah big game populations, including:
  - Red meat value;
  - License revenue;
  - Guides, outfitters, taxidermists, etc.
  - Local economies (gas, lodging, etc.)
  - Hunting – total retail sales
  - CWMU total revenues
  - True dollar values, based on conservation permits. Don Peay will take the lead on this question, and collaborate with outside experts as necessary to achieve the peer review requirement.
- Damage assessment criteria – what killed it, what was the value of the animal, what compensation should be paid? The WWG would like to hear from Carter Niemeyer on this topic.
- Understanding of Utah citizens about wolves, and the values, preferences and attitudes about wolf management. Robert Schmidt will take the lead on this, bringing data from the USU study to the WWG.
- How effective are non-traditional, non-lethal methods in reducing depredation? When? Where? For how long? Is it wolf-specific? Sterling and Clark have the lead on selecting ranchers from the list provided by Suzanne Stone. Robert Schmidt has the lead on contacting Dr. Schivek.

The group also discussed the option of having an economic advisor on call. No decision was made on this question.



NOTE: The above discussion is not over and will be taken up as the next meeting or as soon as possible. There are additional questions the group has, and we did not get to them during this meeting.