

**Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan  
Wolf Plan Stakeholder Representative  
Work Group  
Final Process Report**

**Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
and the Oregon Governor's Office**



**Prepared by Kearns & West  
For the Fish and Wildlife Commission**

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## **I. Introduction, Purpose, and Background**

### **A. Introduction and Purpose of the Wolf Plan Stakeholder Representative Work Group**

Kearns & West (KW) was hired to provide process support and facilitation for the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (Plan) update and the corresponding Wolf Plan Stakeholder Representative Work Group (WPSR Work Group) process. KW worked with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the Oregon Governor's Office, and designated stakeholders to develop and support a process to identify key topics for group discussion, to understand each other's interests, and to strive to reach alignment/agreement on an update to the Plan that organizations could support.

### **B. Background on the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan**

The Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (Plan) and its associated administrative rules were initially adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) in December 2005. Similar to other ODFW species plans, the Plan calls for Commission evaluation every five years. ODFW last reviewed and updated the Plan in 2010. A de-listing review concluded in 2015 and the current Plan review and updates began in 2016. The Plan acknowledges that any formal evaluation of the Plan could result in a decision by the Commission to enter into rulemaking and amend the Plan.

An earlier Wolf Plan stakeholder group was formed and met two times to discuss key issues for review. Following numerous Commission Meetings, stakeholder panels and testimony, and public comment, numerous Plan changes were incorporated to address the comments and requests of stakeholders as well as agency needs and Commission direction. ODFW released a draft of the Plan in March 2017, followed by a draft working copy in November 2017. Disagreement on several key issues became a barrier and it was suggested by several stakeholders and directed by the Commission that the WPSR Work Group be formed to try to find a proposal that organizations could support.

Due to the scope and challenge of the assignment, ODFW sought out professional facilitation services. After vetting through a proposal and interview process in spring of 2018 that included two stakeholder representatives as part of the interview panel, KW was hired to provide neutral process support through convening and facilitation services.

## **II. Process Approach and Meeting Highlights**

The WPSR Work Group Process consisted of two phases: 1) Convening and process design and 2) Work Group meetings. The first phase included convening interviews with a variety of proposed

representatives and stakeholder groups that provided a foundation to understand the scope, background, and main topics as well as an understanding of the range and diversity of positions expressed by various parties. The convening phase was followed by five WPSR Work Group meetings. Meeting participants included eight designated stakeholders as well as the ODFW team and the Oregon Governor's Office (see Appendix A). A summary of the meetings and elements of the WPSR Work Group process are outlined below.

### **A. Convening and Process Design: July to Mid-August 2018**

The Kearns & West facilitation team met with the ODFW team and received a foundation of background information and key issues. Kearns & West then conducted convening interviews with nineteen representatives from eight stakeholder groups. The convening interview process highlighted a common desire among stakeholders to support a healthy and manageable wolf population, reduced conflict with livestock, and a focus on non-lethal methods. It was clear there were many different opinions as to how to reach the overall goals. The convening interviews confirmed what ODFW had learned from previous stakeholder discussions and comments that had been made throughout the Plan update efforts leading up to this process.

### **B. WPSR Work Group Meeting #1: Kick-off meeting – August 30, 2018 in The Dalles**

At the first WPSR Work Group meeting, participants learned about each other's interests, issues, hopes, and expectations and described what they would consider a successful outcome. Members organized themselves around their interests and what they considered to be key/priority issues for the facilitated process. They brainstormed and prioritized key topics for discussion. The highest priority topics for discussion included controlled take, chronic depredation, and collaring.

It became clear that, although these groups have all worked together over the years, it was difficult for members to do the process work it takes to function effectively as a group in one meeting. This process of separate entities coming together as one group is often known as the "Forming, Norming, Storming, and Performing" process. These stages are necessary for a group to develop resilience for addressing complex issues, overcome challenges, find solutions that meet joint interests, and work constructively together. Wolf conservation and management is a topic of enormous scientific, policy and legal complexity; conversations on the topic raise passionate deliberation on strong positions rooted in deeply-held core values.

During the meeting, it became apparent that it was challenging for members to shift from their positions to focus on deeper core interest and values.

The groups had been focused on advocating for the positions that their organizations and members support and tended to articulate solutions that seemed to work for one group but caused conflict for

the others. This made for a challenging first meeting. Work Group members persevered and said they wanted to keep working together because they saw value in the collaboration.

### **C. WPSR Work Group Meeting #2: October 9, 2018 in Salem**

After the first meeting, the ODFW team focused on the primary issues identified at the first meeting, organized the discussion topics, and developed informational documents on those primary issues for the group to review and consider. The ODFW team provided a detailed overview of each topical area at the second meeting to help ground the conversation.

The topics were discussed in two groupings. The first grouping was *Initial Topics Proposed for Resolution*. These were considered “easier” topics for discussion with clearer solutions and greater levels of agreement among stakeholders. These topics included: 1) Collaring priorities, 2) Investigations, 3) Other sources of mortality, and 4) Compensation.

The second grouping was *Key Topics/Issue Areas Needing Further Discussion*. These were considered more complex topics with less agreement on solutions among stakeholders, and a need for deeper level of discussion. These topics included: 1) Chronic depredation/lethal removal, 2) Controlled take, and 3) Funding needs.

ODFW developed informational documents included a summary of the current status of the topic, solutions that had been proposed on the topic either by ODFW or stakeholders, and what the likely outcome for the topic would be if the Work Group did not propose an agreed-upon alternative.

During the October meeting, members discussed these topics, and some worked together to come up with a proposal that merged a number of topics into one larger proposal: *A Non-Lethal Deterrence Plan Proposal*, often referred to by members as the “white board proposal.” A few members presented an outline of this proposal and the group discussed and added content through a collaborative whiteboard process. While some members expressed concern around the feasibility of implementing the proposal and had questions about how the proposal might meet wolf conservation and management goals, many stakeholders were starting to collaborate and feel hopeful that they would be able to achieve alignment across the varying perspectives.

The meeting ended with participants committed to considering and sharing the *Non-Lethal Deterrence Plan Proposal* with their organizations or members, checking in during a conference call, and then further discussing the proposal at the next WPSR Work Group meeting, along with other topics. After the meeting, ODFW worked to develop a document that outlined the proposal, provided ODFW’s evaluation of the proposal, and presented various facts, statutory requirements, and background information related to that proposal. The document also included a list of questions for group consideration to help assess the viability and effectiveness of the proposal.

#### **D. WPSR Work Group Meeting #3: November 5, 2018 Webinar/Conference Call**

In order to maintain momentum between in-person meetings, a conference call/webinar was conducted as a check-in call to assess progress. It was challenging to conduct a meeting by phone for a group that had been working together for only a few months.

On the call, ODFW reviewed the list of questions that they had posed in the document sent out after the second WPSR Work Group meeting. Work Group members shared their perspectives to begin refining the *Non-Lethal Deterrence Plan Proposal*. The group made some progress by identifying portions of the proposal that could gain traction, although there was still strong diversity of opinion and feasibility concerns. They also suggested developing sample individual non-lethal deterrence plans (with participation of ranchers and ODFW biologists) to help provide a case study on what the proposal could look like on the ground.

After this meeting, members were again asked to compose and submit responses to the ODFW list of questions to more thoroughly explore the *Non-Lethal Deterrence Plan Proposal* and to gain a better understanding of what the proposal would look like in practice.

#### **E. WPSR Work Group Meeting #4: November 27, 2018 in Pendleton**

In preparation for the fourth meeting, a few ranchers volunteered their time to develop a sample non-lethal plan. This sample plan was presented at the WPSR Work Group meeting and helped share practical elements of a non-lethal deterrence plan. A Site Evaluation used by Defenders of Wildlife to work with landowners on non-lethal deterrent methods was also presented.

Work Group members continued the evaluation of the *Non-Lethal Deterrence Plan Proposal* and considered what difference such a program would have in comparison to current non-lethal methods/practices. The group utilized ODFW's question list and answers they provided to build a foundation of common information and insight. Members identified substantial issues that needed to be addressed and also highlighted areas of significant value in the proposal.

The meeting included discussion of a Policy Action Package (POP) presented by ODFW. Members reviewed and provided their support to the POP, with one member abstaining. Members also discussed the definition of chronic depredation and controlled take along with what message the project team should take to the December 7 Commission Update. Members wanted the Commission to know that they supported continuing the conversation to try to reach some agreement and agreed to meet one more time. The meeting concluded with ODFW agreeing to draft summary documentation and draft language for the updated Plan for group consideration prior to presentation to the Commission.

## **F. Commission Update: December 7, 2018**

ODFW and KW presented an update to the Commission sharing the Work Group's progress and reflected on the ongoing facilitation process.

## **G. WPSR Work Group Meeting #5: January 8, 2019 in Portland**

In advance of this meeting, ODFW developed draft language for the updated Plan to recommend to the Commission. The language included ODFW staff recommendations on the topics that the WPSR Work Group had been discussing, incorporating feedback and points of agreement from the Work Group discussions. ODFW shared this language with Work Group members, noting that the language represented ODFW's best effort to create a program that addresses all stakeholder needs. ODFW indicated that the agency was looking for suggestions on any changes to the proposed language. The topics included: 1) Collaring priorities, 2) Investigations, 3) Other sources of morality, 4) Compensation, 5) Funding needs, 6) Chronic depredation, 7) Controlled take, and 8) Non-lethal tools and techniques. ODFW also developed draft proposals and materials at the group's request, including options for incorporating the fundamental components of the *Non-Lethal Deterrence Plan Proposal*.

Prior to the meeting, four of the eight stakeholders sent an open letter informing ODFW, other WPSR Work Group members, the Governor's office, and the public that they would not be attending the upcoming January 8 meeting. The stakeholders expressed in the letter they did not perceive their perspectives and positions were being considered or reflected in the Plan update. The stakeholders' letter to the WPSR Work Group and the letter to Governor Kate Brown can be found attached to the January 8, 2019 WPSR Work Group meeting summary (see Appendix F).

ODFW, the Governor's Office, and the remaining four stakeholders met to discuss the draft language to the updated Wolf Plan. At the meeting, those Work Group members in attendance reviewed the proposal for the eight outlined topics to refine the language and strive for areas of alignment.

For the members present at the meeting, most agreed on a broad level with ODFW's recommended updates to the Plan. They worked through the key topics and issues together and were, for the most part, aligned with ODFW's recommended updates although some expressed that the agreement was a compromise for them. At various times throughout the meeting, stakeholders and ODFW staff mentioned the open letter as well as the absent four stakeholders' previous comments and perspectives from past meetings to try to understand how they might have responded to the proposals if they were present.

## **H. Upcoming Commission Meeting**

It is anticipated that ODFW will present a proposed updated Plan and associated administrative rule language at an upcoming Commission meeting. As part of the meeting facilitation contract with ODFW, this report provides reflections on the WPSR Work Group process and will be provided to the Commission, Governor's office, and as part of the WPSR Work Group process documents on the ODFW website.

## **III. Process Reflections and Lessons Learned**

The facilitated process focused on coalescing stakeholder expertise around information exchange and interest-based joint problem solving. The process engaged the eight stakeholder groups, ODFW, and the Governor's Office in learning and understanding each other's core interests, identifying priority issues, developing ideas, and ultimately, brainstorming resolutions together.

The proposed purpose was to develop collaborative solutions among the stakeholders, ODFW, and the Governor's Office in an effort to develop the policy recommendations to update the Plan. The collaborative process provided an opportunity to inform the proposed recommendations for the Plan and incorporated the feedback and perspectives of the represented parties. The facilitation process also provided an opportunity for stakeholder engagement, dialogue, and information sharing, aiming to support policy formation that benefited all groups. Ultimately, this kind of robust process could support effective implementation of the Plan.

Following are KW's reflections on the process and recommendations for future process consideration.

### **A. Open and Transparent Process**

All WPSR Work Group meetings were open to the public. All documents, including agendas and meeting summaries, were posted on the ODFW website before and after each meeting. There was a brief opportunity for the public to provide input on meeting agenda topics toward the end of each meeting, providing valuable perspectives and reflections for Work Group consideration.

### **B. WPSR Work Group – One Piece of an On-Going Effort**

It is important to note the Oregon Wolf Plan update process began well before the WPSR Work Group formed and will continue long after the Work Group process is completed. This Work Group process was one part of a much larger form of representation in updating and implementing the current Plan.

Stakeholders were asked to move very quickly through the multi-stage process that is necessary to work effectively as a team – often referred to as “Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing.” The stakeholder groups attended numerous other meetings and an earlier group process convened during 2016 Plan review processes that included panel presentations for the Commission and testimony of draft Plans. The stakeholders were asked to participate in the WPSR Work Group process and work very quickly through complex issues at a point they had already become “process weary,” fixed in their strongly-held positions, and found it difficult to find value in the alternative options presented. It is hard to know if more time would have made a difference and it is important not to be predictive of how else these challenges could have been addressed.

### **C. Value in the Opportunity to Voice Diverse Perspectives**

Stakeholders approached the facilitation process understanding it was an opportunity to find common ground. However, there was uncertainty around whether this could be achieved. The groups recognized that the most desirable outcome would be to find consensus agreement on a proposal to bring to the Commission and recognized the value in meeting and hearing from each other. While a consensus was not reached as a result of the facilitation, there was still notable value in the process of providing a space for stakeholders to speak openly with each other, share diverse opinions, and discuss their perspectives, ideas, and suggestions on key topics.

### **D. Differing Perspectives on Information, Sources, and Values**

The process and discussions involved numerous complex scientific, technical, and policy topics and stakeholders had diverse perspectives on which information sources to use and how they could be applied in Oregon. Additionally, they utilized their unique expertise and anecdotal information that lead them to diverse and divergent policy proposals. There were also distinctly divergent core values and principles on how wolf management and conservation should occur on the landscape. These core value differences created significant challenges in considering strategies, opportunities, and compromises.

### **E. Development of Materials and Work Product**

ODFW organized materials, conducted background research, and presented information at each meeting. Throughout the process, ODFW drafted and presented proposed updates to the Plan after receiving feedback from the stakeholders. On reflection, it would have been useful to instead engage stakeholders in “holding the pen” so that ODFW and stakeholders jointly drafted proposed Plan updates. This would have required small-group dialogue between meetings and more time between full WPSR Work Group meetings, but also could have resulted in collaboratively-developed solutions with more ownership and buy-in on the final product. This joint drafting approach could have allowed members to come together around common interests, collaboratively brainstorm

solutions and strategies, and ultimately could have created stronger support for the final proposal and its eventual implementation

## **F. Use of Objective Standards Towards Jointly Drafted Proposals**

It would have been useful to jointly develop objective standards to evaluate proposals. Objective standards can help parties evaluate proposed solutions using a scientific-based approach. With more time, participants could have utilized meetings to develop a shared vision and a set of common values, collaboratively draft proposals that could meet that vision, develop evaluation criteria, apply the criteria to evaluate proposals, and then discuss outcomes to create a shared agreement. This objective evaluation process could have led members to think more deeply and critically about proposals and how various solutions may or may not meet the shared vision.

## **G. Role of the Governor's Office**

The Governor's Office initiated the facilitation and WPSR Work Group process. The Governor's Office initially suggested to the Commission that ODFW staff and the representative stakeholders use a facilitated process to strive towards addressing the remaining challenging topics where there was the strongest disagreement. The intent was to determine if there were areas of alignment and to find places where stakeholders could collaborate in bringing forward joint proposals to the Commission.

The Governor's Office participated at each meeting and provided their insight and expertise around proposals for updating the Wolf Plan. They offered both a legislative and Governor's Office perspective as well as asked helpful questions as the group considered proposals. Additionally, they offered suggestions for pathways towards funding to help increase the likelihood of implementation.

## **H. Consideration of Alternative Outcomes**

Throughout the process, WPSR Work Group members discussed their interests, values, and positions and developed proposals to move forward. The process could have benefitted from greater and more explicit opportunities to consider the alternatives to a negotiated outcome and whether a consensus proposal stemming from the WPSR Work Group process was potentially better or worse than other alternatives. This type of analysis would have offered group members a strategic approach to consider the risk and benefit of supporting a Work Group outcome versus using unilateral pathways of meeting their interests and outcomes.

## IV. Summary

Significant progress was made through the WPSR Work Group considering the anticipated outcomes that ODFW, the Governor's Office, and stakeholders had hoped to achieve during the process. Work Group members had an opportunity for substantive dialogue on complex issues. They strove to understand diverse perspectives and to address opportunities and challenges in seeking common ground and communicate with their constituents to seek support for updates to the Wolf Plan. The value in the facilitated process came from the focused dialogue between parties, the opportunity to learn about and better understand one another's interests, values, and perspectives, along with understanding the depth and breadth of options available for wolf conservation and management on the landscape.

The Work Group facilitation process was a small part of a much longer continuum of dialogue and advocacy amongst these stakeholders, ODFW, and the Commission. The Work Group process added valuable content and perspectives. The Work Group provided a deeper understanding of an ongoing conversation and helped to further inform policy regarding the necessary updates and changes to the current Plan. Our hope is that this foundation of information and understanding is utilized for Oregon and its citizens in consideration of the pathway forward.

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## V. Appendix

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- B. Audience Participation Roster
- C. Operating Principles
- D. WPSR Work Group Convening Interviews Summary
- E. WPSR Work Group Meeting Agendas
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  - ii. October 9, 2018 Proposed Meeting Agenda
  - iii. November 5, 2018 Proposed Meeting Agenda
  - iv. November 27, 2018 Proposed Meeting Agenda
  - v. January 8, 2019 Proposed Meeting Agenda
- F. WPSR Work Group Meeting Summaries
  - i. August 30, 2018 Meeting Summary
  - ii. October 9, 2018 Meeting Summary
  - iii. November 5, 2018 Meeting Summary
  - iv. November 27, 2018 Meeting Summary
  - v. January 8, 2019 Meeting Summary
    - 1. Stakeholder Letter to WPSR Work Group
    - 2. Stakeholder Letter to Governor Kate Brown

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