

Assessment Interview Summary
 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
 Trap Check Work Group

Overview

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission is initiating the Trap Check Work Group to address outstanding issues relating to trap check intervals. Kearns & West provides neutral process guidance and has been hired by ODFW to help facilitate and support the work group with the goal of creating a constructive and ongoing dialogue.

To assist in early planning for the Trap Check Work Group, Kearns & West interviewed 10 members – community and interest group representatives appointed by the ODFW Commission, lead staff and lead commissioners for each group. The purpose of the interviews was to learn about the Work Group member’s background and interests, better understand the member’s hopes and expectations for the process, highlight important issues to address, and hear suggestions for how to have a productive and constructive process.

This Assessment Summary outlines who participated, the questions asked, key themes from the interviews including work group member goals and expectations for the process, data needs and resources, key issues to address, challenges to be aware of, and suggestions for a successful and collaborative process.

List of Interviewees

Name	Organization
Kelly Peterson	Humane Society of the United States
Doug Nichol	Oregon Trappers Association
Jim Soares	Oregon Trappers Association
Tyler Dungannon <i>Alternate: Amy Patrick</i>	Oregon Hunters Association
Bob Sallinger	Portland Audubon
Quinn Read	Center for Biological Diversity
Jill Zarnowitz	ODFW Commission
Greg Wolley	ODFW Commission
Derek Broman	ODFW Wildlife Biologist
Kevin Blakely	ODFW Deputy Administrator

Q1: Share with us a little about your background, involvement, and interests related to beavers or trap checking.

The interviewees' backgrounds related to beaver management covered a broad spectrum of experience and expertise including:

- Multiple years of experience working on trap check issues.
- Multiple years of conservation experience including directing policy or program management.
- Campaign experience on issues of anti-trapping.
- Advocacy and petition work on the issue of strengthening trap check time regulations.
- Experience sitting on work groups and/or committees related to trapping.
- Many years of experience trapping and hunting.
- Environmental justice task force experience.
- Background in the timber industry.
- Environmental non-profits.
- Experience in responding to wildlife conflicts.
- Working on wildlife urban and state-wide issues.
- Experience in conflict resolution.
- Bringing litigation perspective on trap check issue.
- Background in natural resources.

Q2: Complete this sentence: At the end of this process, I hope that _____.

Interviewees completed the sentence above as follows:

- We ensure all voices are represented and heard.
- We rely on science, utilize empirical studies, and remain objective on decision-making regarding trap regulation.
- We have a non-partisan process.
- We have meaningful ODFW reform of trap check times that requires trapper accountability and better enforces trapping laws.
- We provide ODFWC with a concrete recommendation for rulemaking.
- We shorten and modernize the trap check times to a 24-hour period and wildlife laws in Oregon.
- We have no change in regulation and that a 48-hour trap check remains.

- We provide trapper’s perspective and build awareness around the on-the-ground workday of a trapper.
- We promote understanding of the dependence many, such as ranchers, have on trappers.
- We research other states trap check laws and identify the specious arguments, challenges, and improve them for Oregon.
- There is responsible wildlife stewardship.
- We build awareness and mutual understanding around the ecological benefit of trapping and promote a holistic perspective on the issue.
- We reach consensus.
- We realize the work that has been done in previous work groups and further advance the industry for more humane trapping.

Q3: What are the key questions to answer and important issues to address in the Beaver Work Group/Trap Check Work Group and why?

Interviewees suggested the following questions and issues to address:

Costs

- What are the additional burdens and financial implications of shorter trap check times?
- Identify additional costs to trappers.
- Understand costs to administer programs.
- Identify costs of potential damage that is averted by trapping.
- For state funded trappers, are there ways to get additional funding to employ humane methods?
- Who are impacted and how many people? Identify and provide data on the impacted groups.
- Understand the cost impacts on species populations of not trapping (increased population, increased risk of disease, etc.).

Trap Checks

- Investigate the pros and cons of trapping.
- Identify the time frames for checking traps.
- List out pros and cons of moving from a 72-hour to a 48-hour check time.
- How often are traps checked? Explain variation on species and requirements.
- What will it take for the Work Group to reach consensus on supporting 24-48hr trap checks?
- Identify and understand the barriers to reducing trap check times.

Benefits

- What are the benefits (economic, environmental, social, etc.) of trapping for the state/ODFW/trappers?
- Identify the benefits of having animals on the landscape (water storage, wildfire mitigation, habitat cooling, etc.).
- What effect is trapping having on current populations?

Ethics

- Are people anthropomorphizing the issue?
- Explore ethical standards in both trapping and hunting.
- Is the continuation of trapping due to tradition and heritage?

Issues

- Trapping in Oregon is not a “one-blanket” policy.
- Existing disagreement on regulations change persists. Understand why regulations are subject to change.
- Other states have modernized trap check times, however, recognize conditions vary by location. The habitat may differ in Oregon by total amount of wildlife per square mile.
- Existing concern over biases of members of the ODFW Commission against trapping.
- Trapping closer to urban populations may be problematic, especially regarding domestic animals. A change that has been made is trapping can no longer occur near trailheads.
- Animal behavior affects trapper’s ability to check traps.
- Impacts of shortening trap check times.
- Trapping plays a role in helping ranchers manage predators, helps economy and rural communities, and help control populations.
- Concern over ODFW’s response when finding injured wildlife. Change regarding proper care of injured wildlife can be difficult for ODFW.
- ODFW is funded by the constituency of hunters, anglers and trappers, and concern exists regarding whether funds have been properly allocated for non-game public education and outreach.
- Increased public awareness of trapping could result in their lack of support in how animals are captured.
- Taxpayer money to support the recreational trapping program at ODFW is potentially not serving the broader interests of Oregonians.
- Trap check times should be humane, modernized, and reflective of how Oregon values wildlife.
- Better understanding is needed around the hunting and trapping process.
- Support science and best management practices for trapping in Oregon.

Q4: What are the challenges and barriers to addressing the identified issues and concerns? How might they be overcome?

Interviewees shared the following challenges and ideas:

Challenges

- How to separate bias from data interpretation and determining credibility of the data.
- Varying perspectives on what the trap check time length should be.
- Is this an animal welfare issue or a population control tool?
- Viewing the issues from varying lens and perspectives – species management versus individual animal treatment.
- Interests may be weighted unequally in the Work Group.
- Some come to the process with an interest in banning all trapping – it will be difficult to find common ground.
- Emotion is brought into testimony, presenting a challenge on both sides.
- Lack of willingness to compromise.
- Incorrect assumptions are made about how trappers feel towards animals.

Lack of understanding

- Blanket statements and calls for action on trapping-related issues. Attempts are made to restrict or eliminate trapping and the concern is lack of understanding or awareness of the science.
- Lack of awareness on the work that has been done regarding trapping requirements and the work that may still need to be done to guide management.
- Assumptions on trappers employing same reasons year after year for not meeting trap check time (costs, weather, other causes for delay, etc.). How can we help address these concerns so we can get to a different outcome?

Working with ODFW

- The way the agency is structured and funded is in support of and resourced by anglers, hunters, trappers, yet the ODFWC seems averse to these interests.
- The agency seems determined to maintain the status quo on this issue – why?
- Agency historically has been influenced by certain interests thus affecting power dynamics. Rural interests tend to have immense political power regarding natural resources and wildlife.
- ODFW staff historically has managed through a “wildlife consumption” lens rather than a “wildlife appreciation” lens
- The agency is slow to evolve; Oregon is out of mainstream in terms of humane and ecologically sound wildlife policy.

- The agency may want to strengthen trap check times but concerned about the power of the legislature to overturn these efforts.
- Petitioning and litigation do not feel like viable tactics for voices to be heard. Would like to work in a collaborative way to solve issues.

Suggestions

- Develop an overarching document that details Oregon and other states trapping requirements to promote understanding by all work groups members involved in the process.
- Provide data and evidence to aid decision-making.
- It will be challenging to look at the entire trapping process and all species at once. Recommend looking at one species or ecosystem and finely tune management for wildlife, hunters, and managers.
- Deep dive to understand how different species react differently in different kinds of traps and trap check intervals.
- Identify ODFW culture and role in the process. Then identify issues that need to be addressed and information that needs to get out. There is value in identifying a baseline. ODFW and the Work Group can find common ground and work to develop recommendations that the group agrees on.

Q5: What are the information, data gaps, and resources the groups should consider?

Interviewees identified the following data gaps and information needs and research to consult:

Information and Data Needed

- What are other states doing, and why/why not replicate it in Oregon?
- List out states trapping regulations and refer to records on all different types of trapping (damage, predatory, furbearer).
- Identify non-target species being impacted.
- Data is needed on animal conditions and impacts from the trap and trap check time length.
- Detailed information on industry standards.
- Identify incidences and prosecutions related to trapping.
- Understand the pros and cons of setting traps closer to high density populations.
- How to properly manage population numbers.
- Annual reports that detail quantities of traps, number of days spent trapping, and the total number of animals trapped.
- How much do trappers contribute to the public?

Research to consult

- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies recommendations on trapping.
- Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) information on trapping.
- Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) full list of state trap check times.
- State of Montana, Washington, California trap check regulations.
- The Wildlife Society produces papers on trapping.
- Wildlife Ecology Institute, Helena, Montana.

Q6: What ideas and suggestions do you have for how we work together in an effective, productive, and successful collaborative process? (Including topics such as: operating protocols, frequency and length of meetings, materials development and review timeframes, public comment, media).

Interviewees Offered the Following Process Suggestions:

- Short virtual work sessions on a weekly basis with “homework” or a 2-hour meeting twice a month with time between sessions to process meeting content.
- Hold at least one long in-person meeting/workshop.
- Be mindful of busy schedules and keep everyone attentive and engaged in meetings.
- Be clear about the focus of the meeting.
- Enforce good meeting protocols.
- Recommend a mix of virtual and in person meetings.
- All participants have equal time to speak in meetings.
- Goal is to strive for consensus and provide the commission with one set of recommendations listing out pros and cons.
- Promote transparency and identify interests, priorities, and biases of stakeholders.
- Ensure meetings with the commission are public.
- Do not make work group meetings open to the public.
- The role of the work group should be clear.
- Inform the public about the work group conversations.
- Utilize visual aid tools (whiteboard, etc.) in virtual meetings.
- Be aware of people’s comfort levels with virtual technology.
- Ensure a space where all members feel acknowledged.
- Provide a packet to Work Group members with information on trapping.

Q7: What are some of the lessons learned from previous efforts?

Interviewees offered the following reflections on lessons learned from previous efforts:

- Some have worked on this issue on work groups before and find the challenge persists of working with those in disagreement with others.
- Compromise is important.
- Ensure compromise has a foundation of science-based wildlife management.
- Avoid being out of sync with other states on trap check regulations.
- Work groups that consist of an imbalance of interests may set a process up with a forgone conclusion.
- Maintain focus on the issue at hand in the process.
- Require the agency's commitment and attention on the process to keep the outcome focused.
- Decades ago, committees were developed to react to polarizing issues. Learn from past experiences of participating on such committees.
- Relieve pressure on stakeholder groups on this issue. ODFW's role as a regulator is to make a recommendation and to do so based on best science and data available.

Q8: Do we have the right work group members to address the issues outlined above? Are key groups overrepresented or missing? Check your correct contact information and the information about your organization.

Reflections and Suggestions on the Work Group Composition

- Ensure there are members whose positions on trapping are guided by science.
- Seems like trapping interests are overrepresented on this group.
- Include other organizations that trap in Oregon, such as animal damage control organizations.
- Varying perspectives on whether the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) should be included on the Work Group.
- Question on whether Oregon Outdoor Council should be included – aligns with trappers and could have the work group become unbalanced.
- Suggestion to include the Oregon Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)

Q9: What questions do you have for us?

- What is the time frame for this group to develop recommendations?
- Are consensus recommendations the goal? What are we trying to effect?