



Minutes Deschutes County Wolf Depredation and Financial Assistance Committee

Meeting #1: Monday, June 26, 2023, 6:00 p.m.

Deschutes Services Building, DeArmond 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 6:00 p.m. by Jen Patterson. Present via Zoom: Emily Weidner, U.S. Fish and Wildlife. Present in person: Phil Chang, Deschutes County Commissioner; Nick Lelack, County Administrator; Dave Doyle, County Legal Counsel; Jen Patterson, County Strategic Initiatives Manager; Donna Harris; Sarahlee Lawrence; Johnny Leason; Ethan O'Brien; Bridget Moran, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish & Wildlife; Aaron Bott, Wolf Biologist, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; Ashanti Samuels, Owner, Pitchfork T-Ranch and Long Hollow Ranch; Andrew Walch, District Wildlife Biologist, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; Jack Harvel, Reporter, The Source Weekly.

II. Review and Adoption of Committee Charter

Jen Patterson presented an overview of the committee charter highlighting the mission and purpose, record keeping, membership, ground rules and expectations. Sarahlee Lawrence moved to adopt the charter. Donna Harris seconded the motion. Adoption passed unanimously.

III. Nominating a Chair

Nick Lelack presented an overview of committee chair responsibilities. The committee discussed chair nominations and Donna Harris nominated Commissioner Chang for Chair. Commissioner Chang agreed to serve an interim term of 6 months. Donna Harris moved to nominate Commissioner Chang. Ethan O'Brien seconded the motion. Nomination was passed unanimously.

IV. Presentation on Public Meetings

Dave Doyle presented an overview of public meetings and public official roles referencing the following documents, available on the public committee website: Reference Guide – Public Meeting Laws and A Guide for Public Officials. A quorum (3 or more) of committee members cannot talk about committee meeting concerns or business outside of this meeting unless it has been publicly noticed. Minutes are kept and will be reviewed by committee members, once adopted the minutes will be posted publicly. Legal Counsel recommended that committee members develop and adopt a media policy to include consensus on whether individual committee members can speak to the media or nominate a representative or staff liaison to field media requests.

Commissioner Chang asked: If a quorum wanted to meet outside for a field trip, can that be publicly noticed and if so are committee members free to participate in that type of activity? Dave Doyle stated that is appropriate

activity as long as it is publicly noticed. Typically public notices should occur seven days in advance however an emergency notice can be done within 24 hours

Donna Harris asked if committee members can publicly discuss committee business. Dave Doyle stated yes as it is public record. Meetings are recorded and posted publicly.

Saralee Lawrence requested to discuss and determine media policy. Ethan O'Brien asked if the committee would like to have a united front. Saralee indicated she would not like to publicly comment to media and suggested that for the first six months no individual take a position on behalf of the committee. Commissioner Change stated that sometimes a lack of information/media response can lead to dis-information on the subject and suggested that a response could focus on facts about committee roles and responsibilities and not (for the time being) address hard committee decisions. Jen Patterson stated that, if preferred by the committee, a staff member or committee chair could respond to media inquiries. If there is a media inquiry that is opinion based Jen will work with committee members to coordinate a unified statement before responding to the media inquiry. Any committee member is able to provide individual statements to the media as long as the response is not represented as being on behalf of the committee as a whole.

V. Two Business Representatives to Serve on Committee

Due to time restraints committee members opted to have this discussion at the next committee meeting.

VI. Presentation from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Aaron Bott, Wolf Biologist with ODFW, presented on the history and nature of wolves in the region. Wolves have the greatest distribution of any terrestrial animals except for humans with a territorial range from Canada to Central Mexico. Wolverers were eradicated from the region in the early 20th century. They were re-introduced in the mid-1990's and in 1999 the first wolf siting in Oregon was confirmed. Wolves are highly territorial and will defend their territory to the death. Wolves live in family groups called packs with an average size of 6 which is typically made up of a mother and father and several generations of off-spring. Their home range is 100-240 square miles.

Deschutes County has a pair of wolves, known as the Metolius Pair, which is most likely a male and a female. ODFW has been documenting the pair for the last 2 years. Cameras have been deployed across the county to monitor the pair. One of ODFW's responsibility is to monitor the wolves by coordinating with federal and state agencies along with many public citizens who monitor wolf activity. The pair has yet to have a radio collar placed on them – however ODFW is working on attempting to collar the pair. Radio collars are not a save all for information as they can be unreliable and undependable due to a variety of factors. Wolves are able to move about quite freely. ODFW is pretty confident the Metolius pair are the only two wolves in the area however it should be expected that more wolves will come into the area in the future because it is a very favorable habitat and it is expected that the Metolius pair will breed at some point. This could change as soon as tomorrow or in 2 or 3 years. The pair will become more active in the fall and at that time it could be determined if the pair have pups, however at this time there is no indication that they have pups.

The ODFW District Biologist is responsible for confirming a wolf depredation. It needs to be a confirmed or probable wolf depredation for eligibility of funds from the depredation wolf grant program. Preventative measures are eligible grant funds and if preventative measures are employed it is likely other depredation sources will also be reduced. At least 30% of the grant monies need to go toward preventative measures. Depredation compensation can include livestock and working dogs. Ethan O'Brien asked if there is a definition for working dogs. Aaron Bott indicated that defining a working dog is one of the responsibilities of the committee members.

ODFW's responsibility is to determine if a wolf was the source of the depredation and in order to do so they need to be on the scene pretty quickly after the kill. The fresher the kill the easier it is to determine the source of the kill. Wolves are scavengers – they would rather choose to eat a carcass than kill a livestock but they will kill if they need food. Wolf predation, like any predator, has a pattern to the kill.

Wolf activities are new to this part of the world and this generation. There are other parts of the world that have ranched with wolves for many generations, a lot can be learned from them in providing education tools and resources to assist in preventative measures. There are tools that work including: removal of attractants

(carcasses, bone pits, etc...), grant money to hire people to patrol land and bury carcasses, livestock protection dogs, husbandry adjustments, fladry, fencing (a 4'-5' fence has been shown to work), and alarm systems (flashing strobe lights).

Ashanti Samuels spoke to the depredation that occurred on his land, he has ranch land that crosses over Deschutes County, Jefferson County, and the Warm Springs Reservation – grazing range encompasses over 100,000 acres. A confirmed depredation from the Metolius Pack occurred in May and he has seen wolf activity on a weekly if not daily not basis. Ashanti has been working closely with ODFW in implementing preventative measures. Having the type of cattle who protect their calves' helps in prevention of depredation, he considers the breed of cattle to help defend against predators. The cattle that have been predated upon are typically weaned from their momma and are around teen age. Wolves don't only kill the cattle, they stress them as well – which can run the weight off them and impacts their ability to breed. As a rancher, cowboy, and steward of the land Ashanti values all the wildlife, even wolves and coyotes, as long as they are doing the right thing. Sharing the landscape with wolves is going to take persistence and more hours and time to work on preventative measures. It is another full time piece of the ranching operation and Ashanti is committed to doing so. Ashanti's ranching operation has spent about \$25,000 this year on extra preventative measures. They collar the cattle with a tracking device which allows them to know where the cows are located and create electric fence boundaries in real time.

Ethan O'Brien asked what Ashanti would like to see from the committee to specifically help with his, and others, operations.

Ashanti stated that compensation definitely helps and to have committee members: educate themselves; ask questions to find out more about wolves; make sure to learn why it is important to have some compensation; why ranchers commit to preventative measures; evaluate who wants funding and why; and; consider if those requesting depredation funding have preventative measures in place to help with depredation issues.

Commissioner Chang asked if there are any specific preventative measures that this committee can look at to submit funding requests.

Ashanti Samuels responded that he would really need to think about that; money can be used in a lot of ways and they are pretty new at this process. It will be important to make sure the funds are available because they will be needed and will be used.

VII. Next Steps

Jen Patterson will send out a doodle poll to determine a time for the next meeting, either late summer or early fall, and an email to the committee members for ideas of next meeting topics including filling the business representative positions.

VIII. Public Comments

Andrew Walch, District Wolf Biologist with ODFW, thanked the committee members for serving and is available to any individual who has any questions or comments.

Bridget Moran, Field Supervisor with U.S. Fish & Wildlife, thanked the committee members for serving and offered to present at a future committee meeting.

IX. Wrap up and Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

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