



**Meeting Report
Stakeholder Working Group
Meeting on Wolves in California
February 26, 2014**

Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Conference Room
45211 County Road 32B,
Davis, CA 95618



Photo Courtesy of Gary Kramer

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

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1.0 Introduction

On February 26, 2014 the California Wolf Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) reconvened to continue their work toward the development of a California wolf management plan. The meeting took place at the Conference Room at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area in Davis, CA. The group's previous general meeting took place on January 29, 2014 in the Blood Source Meeting Room in Redding, California.

2.0 Meeting Objectives and Mechanics

The stated purpose of the meeting was to:

Continue to engage the Stakeholder Working Group in the wolf planning process and work toward the completion of a California wolf plan.

Objectives of the meeting were:

1. Discussion with CDFW Director Chuck Bonham
2. Receive updates on facilitation contract, OR7, Federal proposal for delisting, status review/petition and Fish and Game Commission hearing
3. Discuss SWG attendance and participation
4. Summarize SWG subgroup meetings
5. Discuss distribution, habitat use, and development of management areas for wolf conservation

The meeting was attended by 20 stakeholders, one U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) representative, and six CDFW staff. Appendix A provides a list of participants, their affiliations, and their contact information. Other attendees included three legislative representatives, whose names and contact information are captured in Appendix B.

The meeting agenda is provided in Appendix C of this document, and all slides presented are captured in Appendix D. The meeting began with a welcome from Mr. Mark Stopher, CDFW Senior Policy Advisor, and acting wolf management planning lead. After brief introductions and housekeeping, Mr. Stopher introduced Director Chuck Bonham. Director Bonham spent approximately one hour addressing the group, hearing their comments, and answering questions.

Next, updates were provided on the federal proposal for wolf delisting, CDFW's efforts at contracting for facilitation of the SWG meetings, OR7's location, and the status review/listing petition.

After the updates, Mr. Stopher engaged the SWG in discussion about their participation in and commitment to the wolf planning process, then one member from each of the wolf-livestock, wolf-ungulate and wolf conservation subgroups presented summaries of their respective group's work to date.

After lunch Mr. Steve Torres led discussion that consisted of a brief overview of how habitat models are developed, and then displayed the results of the Department's habitat modeling effort for wolves in California. Mr. Torres's presentation is contained within Appendix D. After a break the group discussed the current version of the project schedule (Appendix E) and its implications. The meeting concluded after Mr. Stopher solicited agenda items for the next meeting, and questions or comments from the legislative representatives who had attended.

3.0 Meeting Outputs

The SWG's standing ground rules are:

- Seek to learn and understand each other's perspective
- Encourage respectful, candid, and constructive discussions
- Provide balance of speaking time
- Seek to resolve differences and reach consensus
- Discuss topics together rather than in isolation
- Make every effort to avoid surprises
- Limit sidebars
- Turn off cell phones/switch to non-ring mode

The SWG's operating principles goals are:

1. If and when wolves establish in California, seek to conserve self-sustaining populations of wolves in the state
2. Manage the distribution of wolves in the state where there is adequate habitat
3. Manage native ungulate populations in the state to provide abundant prey for wolves and other predators, intrinsic enjoyment by the public, and harvest opportunities for hunters
4. Manage wolf-livestock conflicts to minimize livestock losses
5. Communicate to the public that natural dispersal of wolves into California is reasonably foreseeable given the expanding populations in the Pacific Northwest, inform the public with science-based information of gray wolves and the conservation and management needs of wolves in California, as well as the effects of having wolves in the state

Discussion with CDFW Director Chuck Bonham

Director Bonham began the discussion by informing the SWG of his history with endangered species litigation as an attorney involved with efforts to list the golden trout.

He then asked the SWG to tell him what their concerns are over the wolf situation. Below is a list of concerns the group shared with Director Bonham and his paraphrased replies:

- Can you share how the Department might consider dealing with wolves under a different framework other than the typical CESA listing? *Bonham: Through past experience with endangered species litigation I came to think about the idea of what I call a candidate species agreement in which you think about implementing the kinds of conservation actions for a species that should be done anyway for its success, so listing may not be necessary because you're already taking appropriate actions*
- Concerned about livestock producers' abilities to protect their livestock, especially in the early period of wolf reestablishment, when the wolf population will be very small, and pressure to protect them will be high *Bonham: I'm counting on this group to figure out a science-driven system for best determining how to deal with property damage; put together a plan you all can stand behind.*
- Concerned about answering to constituents, many of whom have predetermined ideas about what the outcome should be, or are willing to listen more to those who don't fully understand the situation. *An interruption occurred during the meeting at this point, and no response was made.*
- How has the Department's experience with mountain lions influenced your views on how wolves can be managed? *Bonham: I'm not sure the mountain lion is a good choice for that comparison. That issue went to the legislature and therefore the people; I respect that but I don't think advocacy should always drive wildlife management; it should be a science driven process. I hope with wolves we don't need to go there. I will say that the approach used for wolves in the intermountain west is different than the approach used in coastal states. I can't guarantee that in the future the Department won't suggest a wolf harvest, but I suspect we will have a plan that's more like Oregon than Idaho.*
- The experience in the intermountain west is similar to the Midwest; I guarantee the public will get involved, and after the plan is complete there will be attempts to undermine the plan. *Bonham: That's why our success hinges on the efforts of this group. I'm ok with approaching a species issue from both a science-driven conservation effort and for people to feel passionate about individual animals. I assume the prospect of limited take could occur, but there's no way to advocate for that in the bridge period or the beginning years.*
- Is there any plan to ask for money from the legislature? *Bonham: Since OR7 started to move to California we could predict the probability of their occurrence in California; we've taken longer to produce a plan than I'd hope for, and at this stage any legislator would ask us what our long-term goals are, I'm not yet able*

to tell them we have a way forward; when you folks bring me a plan you can stand behind then it will be my job to get it capitalized.

- What thoughts has the Department had about making the plan legally enforceable? *Bonham: Something that has gotten in the way in natural resources management is lack of creativity. I can see how you could make a regulatory scheme via the Commission that's contingent on the success of implementing a plan that prescribes triggers that open opportunities to manage conflicts with perhaps mitigation monies or lethal methods. You could link interim protections that would require the Department to provide regular updates based on clear metrics. There's an opportunity to get creative and I hope we have the problem of making a consensus plan enforceable. That's preferable to where we are now.*
- Do you think we'll be able to avoid what's happening in other states where when their target numbers were reached there were lawsuits resulting in wolf numbers going up with no ability to do anything about it? With mountain lions and bears our ability to manage them has been taken away by the voters and the legislature. Now you're going to have another predator you can't manage. *Bonham: The wolf population is likely to be greater in other states than it will ever be here; if your question is can the plan survive the test of time, I can't say no one will litigate. I hope the plan will give the Department some management flexibility, but I don't think California is on a path to hunting as a management tool. I said earlier that mountain lions aren't the best analogy for wolves; my hope is the stakeholders, the Department, and the Commission is able to manage wolves absent legislation but I can't tell the legislature what to do; we can't fight the bear or mountain lion fights here. Bring me a plan the stakeholders can stand behind and we'll have greater success.*
- My concern is if the plan is something the Department can see as a priority for funding; I'm concerned about developing a plan that suggests things that may not work based on the Department's inability to fund it. *Bonham: the budget process is highly structured, but you have my personal commitment that if the various groups agree on the plan I will make it a high priority for funding*
- Regarding wolf conservation, has there been a consideration given to thinking of wolf populations beyond our borders; can we manage wolves jointly with Oregon? *Bonham: I'm not aware of any barriers to that but I would be very interested in figuring out a range-wide rather than a state perspective. It's a different arena to protect one wolf than to protect 60. It's definitely worth considering, especially if you find common ground to persuade me to talk to my Oregon counterpart; a sort of joint powers authority to manage across the border. It could allow us to broaden the capital for implementation.*
- Has the Department made an estimate of what the cost of listing the wolf would be and if so, extrapolated toward finding funding? *Bonham: You're probably*

trying to figure out how to run your own cost/benefit analysis to figure out whether listing or not listing is better for your organization; my personal view is that you each get more opportunity to shape the future through a dialogue in advance of listing.

- It seems like CESA might create funding opportunities, but many can't fathom the costs; that should be motivation to get legislative support for funding outside of listing. *Bonham: I've seen the argument both ways: if you list, the economic impacts will be X and X is so large you should not list; on the other side of the coin, it's so hard to get the government to do the right conservation strategy that the force of listing drives it as a priority which then gets the funding; there's fairness and truth in both arguments.*
- Going back to enforceability, listing will clearly provide that. *Bonham: listing is a Commission decision; but one of the clearest results of listing is a prohibition on take and I understand the argued need for that. If you're trying to figure out if a no-list scenario is worth considering, you have to grapple with the idea of permitting take of an individual animal, and that's probably a stark difference between the two pathways. A conversation might be, can we have a prohibition on take during the early period when the population is small and then have data-driven ideas for extraordinary circumstances like compensation or other things that will help manage the next phase.*
- If the Commission doesn't list and they don't use their authority to prohibit take, then how is the management plan enforceable? *Bonham: if you could produce a plan that each of you could stand behind, then it's not unheard of that I could go to the Commission and advocate for the plan and try to persuade them to do something.*
- Is it fair to say that you recommended the wolf not be listed with caveats that were doable without listing but would provide the same protections to wolves if implemented outside of CESA? *Bonham: I think we can get to an outcome that meets each group's interests without listing, yes.*
- In Oregon there were statutes and rule language that needed to be created or amended to make the plan enforceable; some battles caused them to only be recently enacted but the regulations were enacted immediately which lent the ability for enforcement. In Washington the Commission says the plan is only advisory and they've adopted rules that expanded what the plan proposed for wolf depredation and the agency continues to put more rulemaking items to further undermine the plan. *Bonham: If you told me you all stand behind the plan you develop, and you want to pursue implementing mechanisms like immediate funding and regulation by the Commission, I'm going to put weight on the fact that the Farm Bureau and the Center for Biological Diversity advised me jointly. I would also say that you get this all the time where a party files a complaint, and*

then agree to a settlement and part is held in abeyance while performance of the settlement takes place. I hope this has been helpful. At the end of the day we're all Californians.

Updates

- Federal Proposal to Delist: The USFWS reopened the public comment period to allow for additional comment after the scientific peer review comments were released. Those peer review comments have not resulted in any changes to the proposed rule. To date they have received over one million public comments, and the period closes March 27. After all public comments have been reviewed a final action will be released, but the date for that action is not yet known. It will depend on whether any comments provide new information that would lead to substantive changes in the Proposal.
- The contract for a facilitator of SWG meetings has not been completed; there were four proposals submitted, and two were disqualified. One of the disqualified submitters has filed a protest, so the matter will be decided by the Department of General Services, hopefully no later than March 12.
- OR7 remains in southern Oregon, about half way between Crater Lake and Medford. There is a new pack to the south of the other packs in northeastern Oregon.
- The status review/petition was filed with the Fish and Game Commission in February; the Department's recommendation was to not list. Dr. Loft advised the group to read Director Bonham's accompanying memo if they had not already done so, in which he explains his position. The Commission will discuss the status review during the April meeting in Ventura, but they do not have to issue a decision at that meeting – in the past they have delayed decisions based on new information.

SWG Participation and Commitment

During this section Mr. Stopher reminded the SWG of the importance of their active participation in the process. He told the group of past experiences in which entities participated in order to influence the outcome, and even after substantive compromises were made, resorted to litigation. While he assumes people are acting in good faith in the SWG process, he believes that success hinges on everyone choosing to make their interests heard during SWG meetings. While the SWG has not developed a process for issuing dissenting opinion, the group could consider something similar to what Washington used, in which the agricultural community produced a minority report over the wolf population goals established in the plan. Several SWG members expressed

related ideas and concerns about the durability of any agreement we reach on a California Wolf Plan, including:

- In the Klamath accord, to avoid losing all the effort that had gone into the process they agreed that if the agency was sued, all members would file a brief in support of the agency
- A situation in Idaho in which agreement was reached over a grizzly bear issue, and when a new governor came in there was no support for the agreement
- When our organization has board elections there can be a change in support for decisions made under previous boards
- The burden is on us to communicate effectively so that our organizations and constituents understand what we've developed

Summary of Subgroup Meetings

Wolf-Livestock Subgroup

Ms. Lauren Richie described the progress the group has made since the last update. They rounded out their discussion of the two documents they developed to facilitate developing wolf-livestock management goals. Those documents are a comparison of management objectives and strategies in other states, and a lessons learned document that contains general statements about the wolf experience in other states. The rest of the meeting involved their discussion of preliminary proposals by both the agricultural and conservation caucuses for conservation strategies to consider in California. The next step is to place these proposals side-by-side to facilitate continued discussion.

Wolf –Ungulate Subgroup

The ungulate subgroup last met on October 21st and updates from that meeting were presented at the last full SWG meeting. Dr. Loft explained that he wanted to hold off on meeting again until the Wolf-Ungulate chapter had been further developed. The deer and elk programs have been involved in writing their respective management plan updates and writing grants, as well as helping to develop the Wolf-Ungulate chapter for the wolf management plan. The next meeting is scheduled for March 19 in Sacramento, and the goal is to have substantive work on the chapter to present for discussion at that time.

Wolf Conservation Subgroup

Ms. Lesa Eidman described the work of the Conservation Subgroup which met for the first time on February 19. That meeting consisted of broad discussion on the initial types of information to evaluate, and review of a table comparing the wolf population

objectives for other states. Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming have set their goals from a game management perspective whereas Oregon and Washington approaching from a conservation perspective. Some areas of focus we identified were biomass availability, prey base, roads, where suitable habitat occurs, and effects on ungulate populations which ties in to the ungulate chapter. There is some overlap with other chapters, and in particular we want to know the ungulate populations, wolf impacts on other predators, what wolf caloric requirements are. These will help determine if California can support a viable population, or if California wolves would be considered more as an extension of the Oregon population, especially after hearing the Director's thoughts on that this morning. We did not produce a lot of answers yet, but just looked at the kinds of questions to ask as we develop specifics for California.

Mr. Stopher explained that without further fact finding, any conservation objectives would have no basis in science, and the group needs to see the data on suitable habitat, connectivity, resilience, and ungulate populations before they can offer a vision of what wolf conservation objectives should be.

Distribution, Habitat Use, and Development of Management Areas as Conservation

In this portion of the meeting CDFW Wildlife Investigations Lab Program Manager Steve Torres presented a brief overview of habitat suitability modeling, and led a discussion about using such models to establish a wolf management strategy. Mr. Torres explained that, because the available wolf habitat suitability models were developed for other regions, applying any of them to California would represent an educated guess. Further, such modeling is more of a process for understanding ecological relationships than it is for predicting outcomes. One value in such models is that their uncertainties and similarities can be used to establish management units. Mr. Torres showed the results of three wolf models the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service applied in California, those same models simplified with the levels of suitability removed, and a fourth map with the three simplified models combined. This combined map delineated three potential wolf management units: a northwestern unit, a northeastern unit with a Great Basin subunit, and a Sierra Nevada unit. Mr. Torres cautioned that the distribution of habitat types, availability and distribution of prey, potential barriers to movement, features that facilitate movement, and areas of potential conflict with humans, are all unique to California, and therefore any wolf distribution and habitat maps should be adapted to new information as wolves inhabit areas of Oregon or Washington that are more similar to California. Finally, Mr. Torres concluded his presentation with a suggestion for wolf management based on his work with bighorn sheep in California. During the 1990s, management units for those sheep herds were developed based on bighorn metapopulations. Metapopulations as described by Mr. Torres are systems of populations. One advantage of that approach is that it allows managers to monitor the

species regionally in terms of connectivity between populations (or herds). Further, what can be managed in such an approach is numbers of populations, accepting that some may disappear but others will recolonize. The size classes of each metapopulation can be estimated with relatively easy assessments, making this a practical management strategy that managers can influence.

Review Project Schedule

After a break Mr. Stopher presented the updated project schedule, acknowledging that it is very ambitious. After Ms. Kovacs returns from vacation, Mr. Stopher plans to engage her and Director Bonham with respect to that concern. However one reason for such an ambitious schedule is to capitalize on the efforts of this group before many changes in membership can occur. One member pointed out that the schedule appeared to indicate that the expert panel would be reviewing the plan concurrent with the public, and recommended instead that the public review period occur after the scientific oversight takes place. Mr. Stopher acknowledged the merit in that suggestion. Another member asked about SWG involvement in selecting the peer review panel. Mr. Stopher and Dr. Loft concurred that the process used in selecting the panel for the status review process worked well. That process involved the Department selecting from among a list of people recommended by stakeholders, in addition to some already selected by the Department.

Next, the group discussed a process for SWG review of the chapters. While some found the process of reviewing during a meeting monotonous, the group generally agreed that it was preferable to everyone separately sending in their comments via email, because it affords them the opportunity to hear and consider others' perspectives. Mr. Stopher will provide the group with deadlines for providing comments and edits for each chapter as those chapters are sent out.

This portion of the meeting concluded with discussion about efforts at outreach to California tribes. The Department has made several attempts to include tribes in the wolf planning process, and has not yet received any responses.

Conclusion and Wrap-up

The date for the next SWG meeting is March 26th at the CDFW Office of Training and Development in Sacramento. Mr. Stopher solicited agenda items and SWG members offered the following suggestions:

- Invite Director Bonham back
- Have additional chapters available for review
- Invite agency staff and/or stakeholders involved in the planning process in Oregon and/or Washington

- Invite experts on livestock conflicts and other topic areas
- Invite agency staff from other states, such as Oregon, currently involved in wolf management

Finally, Mr. Stopher asked the legislative representatives for any comments. Those comments are captured in Appendix B.

Action Items

- Mr. Stopher will convey the group's concerns about the ambitious timeline for drafting the wolf plan to Ms. Kovacs and Director Bonham
- Mr. Stopher will generate an email with deadlines to comment on Chapters 1 and 8

APPENDIX A. WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Name	Affiliation	Email
Stakeholders		
Mike Ford	Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	mford@rmef.org
Marilyn Jasper	Sierra Club	marilyn.jasper@mlc.sierraclub.org
Rob DiPerna	Environmental Protection Information Center	rob@wildcalifornia.org
Pamela Flick	Defenders of Wildlife	pflick@defenders.org
Noelle Cremers	California Farm Bureau	ncremers@cfsf.com
Linda Leeman	The Wildlife Society – Western Section	lweeman@gmail.com
Randy Morrison	Mule Deer Foundation	randy@muledeer.org
Robert Timm	UC Davis Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources	rtimm@ucanr.edu
Bill Gaines	California Houndsmen for Conservation	bill@outdoorheritage.org
Jennifer Fearing	Humane Society of the United States	jfearing@hsus.org
Mark Rockwell	Endangered Species Coalition	mrockwell@stopextinction.org
Rich Fletcher	Mule Deer Foundation	richfletcher@sbcglobal.net
Pat Griffin	CA Ag Commission - Siskiyou County	pgriffin@co.siskiyou.ca.us
Jerry Springer	CA Deer Association	jerry@westernhunter.com
Lesa Eidman	CA Wool Growers Association	lesa@woolgrowers.org
Damon Nagami	Natural Resources Defense Council	dnagami@nrdc.org
Amaroq Weiss	Center for Biological Diversity	aweiss@biologicaldiversity.org
Lauren Richie	CA Wolf Center	lauren.richie@californiawolfcenter.org
Justin Oldfield	CA Cattlemen's Assn	justin@calcattlemen.org
Kirk Wilbur	CA Cattlemen's Assn	kirk@calcattlemen.org
US Fish and Wildlife Service Staff		
Lisa Ellis	Biologist - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	lisa_ellis@fws.gov
California Department of Fish and Wildlife Staff		
Eric Loft	Wildlife Branch Chief - CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)	eric.loft@wildlife.ca.gov
Chuck Bonham	CDFW Director	chuck.bonham@wildlife.ca.gov
Mark Stopher	Senior Policy Advisor – CDFW	mark.stopher@wildlife.ca.gov
Karen Converse	Environmental Scientist – CDFW Wildlife Branch	karen.converse@wildlife.ca.gov
Steve Torres	CDFW Wildlife Investigations Lab Program Manager	steve.torres@wildlife.ca.gov
Lora Konde	Environmental Scientist – CDFW Wildlife Investigations Lab	lora.konde@wildlife.ca.gov

APPENDIX B. PUBLIC PARTICIPANTS AND COMMENTS

Name	Affiliation	Email
Legislative Representatives		
Erin Ryan	Congressman Doug LaMalfa's Office	ErinMarie.ryan@mail.house.gov
Brenda Haynes	Congressman Doug LaMalfa's Office	Brenda.haynes@mail.house.gov
Catherine Bird	Senator Ted Gaines's Office	Catherine.bird@sen.ca.gov

- It would be nice to hold meetings further north
- John Williams at Oregon State University has done a lot of work with wolf-livestock interactions, collared wolves and cows

APPENDIX C. AGENDA

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Wolf Stakeholders Working Group (SWG) Meeting
Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, Davis, CA – February 26, 2014
Conference call number 877.581.9247
Participant code 173035

Purpose – To continue to engage the SWG in the wolf planning process and work towards the completion of a California wolf plan

Agenda

- Gather in the meeting room – Headquarters Building 8:45
- Welcome, Introductions and Changes in SWG membership 9:00
- Agenda and Ground Rules 9:10
- Discussion with DFW Director Chuck Bonham 9:15
- Updates: 10:15
 - 1. Contract facilitation for SWG meetings/Wolf Plan
 - 2. OR7
 - 3. Federal proposal for delisting (Lisa Ellis)
 - 4. Status Review/Petition and FGC hearing (Eric Loft)
- SWG attendance and participation 10:45
- Summary of subgroup SWG meetings/planning 11:15
 - Wolf-Livestock Report – (Lauren Richie/Mark Stopher)
 - Wolf-Ungulate Report – Oct 2013 (Eric Loft)
 - Wolf Conservation Report – February 2014 (Lesia Eidman/Mark Stopher)
- LUNCH (SWG members on their own for lunch) 11:45
- Distribution, Habitat Use, and Development of Management Areas as Conservation (Steve Torres) 1:00
- BREAK 2:30
- Review Project Schedule 2:45
- Future meeting date (March 26, 2014) location and agenda for next SWG meeting. 3:00
- Meeting Review and Conclusion 3:30
- Questions from the public 3:45
- Adjourn 4:00

Attachments:

Subgroup Reports
Revised Wolf Plan Schedule

APPENDIX D. POWERPOINT SLIDES PRESENTED

Slides Presented by Mr. Stopher

Slide 1

**California Department of Fish and
Wildlife
California Wolf Stakeholders Working
Group (SWG) Meeting
Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, Davis, CA
February 26, 2014**

Members please sit at tables. Public
attendees please select chairs along
the walls

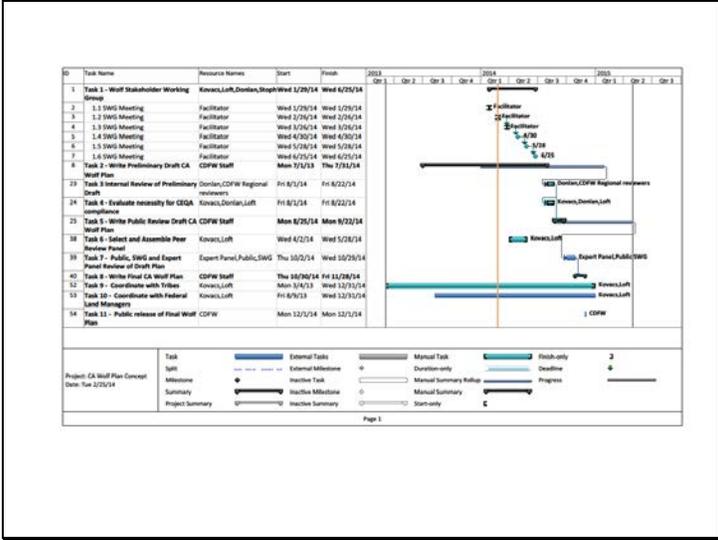
Slide 2

California Wolf Stakeholders Working Group (SWG) Meeting
Agenda

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SWG GROUND RULES

- Seek to learn and understand each other’s perspective.
- Encourage respectful, candid, and constructive discussions.
- Provide balance of speaking time.
- Seek to resolve differences and reach consensus.
- Discuss topics together rather than in isolation.
- Make every effort to avoid surprises.
- Limit sidebars.
- Turn off cell phones/switch to non-ring mode.
- Reminder to public regarding their participation.



Slides Presented by Mr. Torres

Slide 1

Habitat Suitability Models & Establishing a Management Strategy

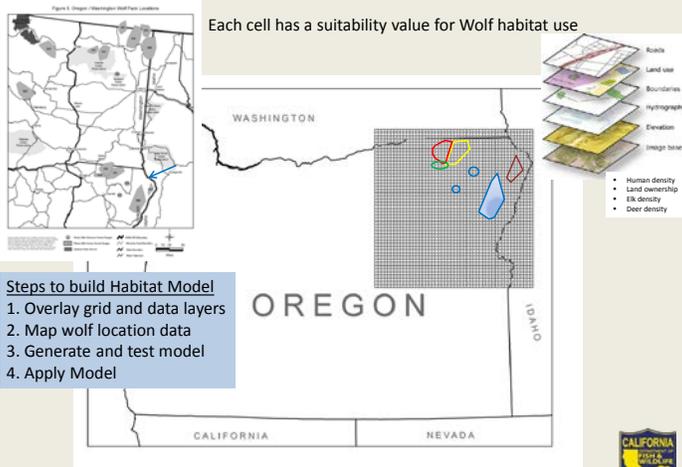


Gray Wolf



Slide 2

Each cell has a suitability value for Wolf habitat use

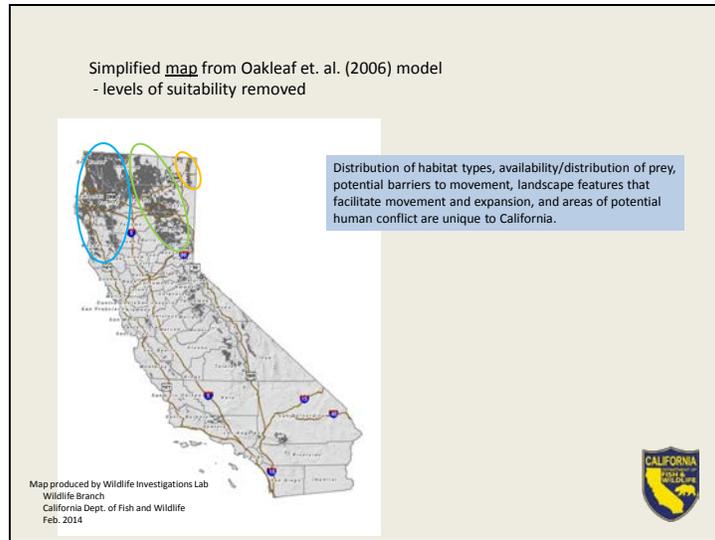


Steps to build Habitat Model

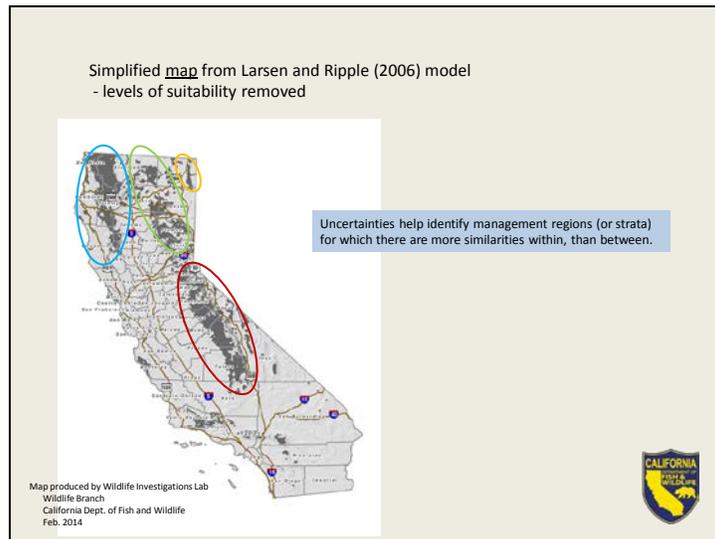
1. Overlay grid and data layers
2. Map wolf location data
3. Generate and test model
4. Apply Model



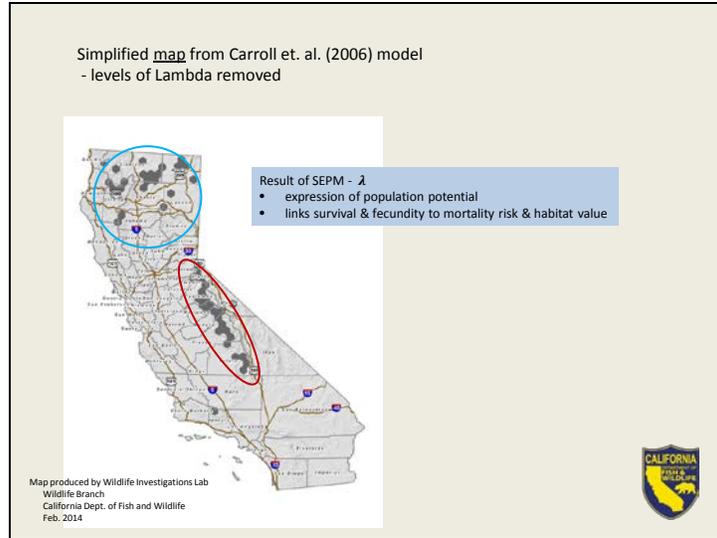
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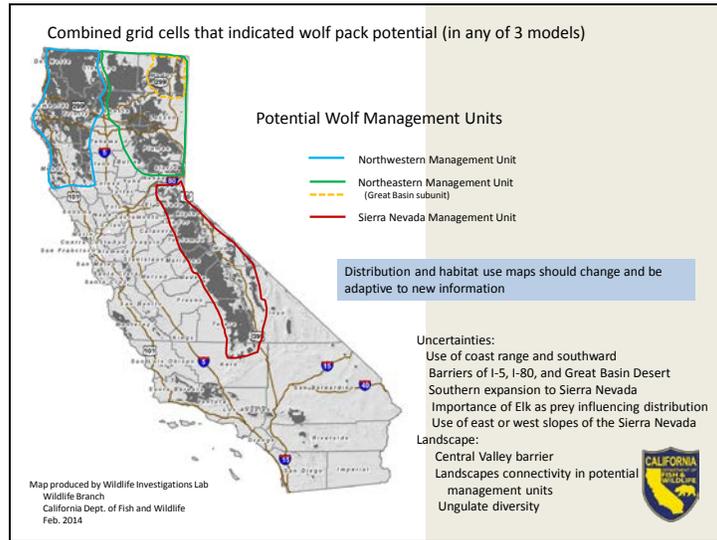
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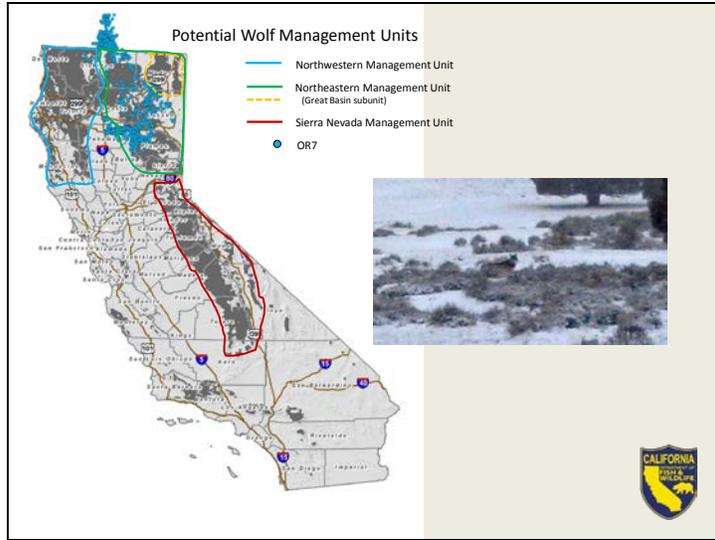
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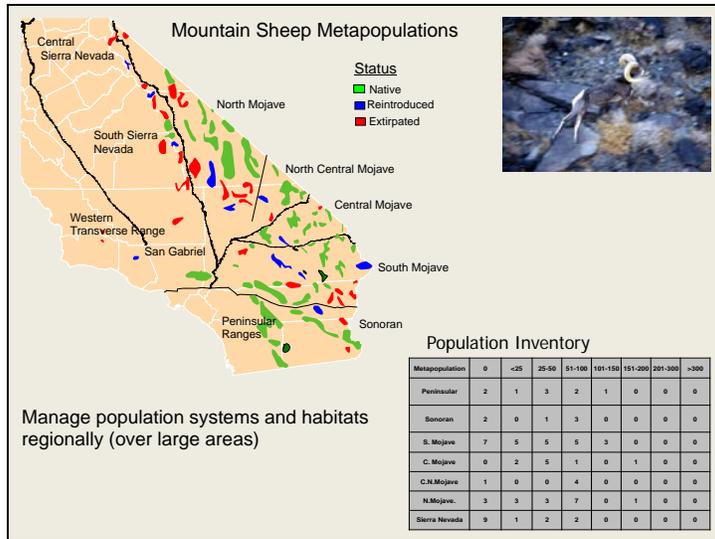
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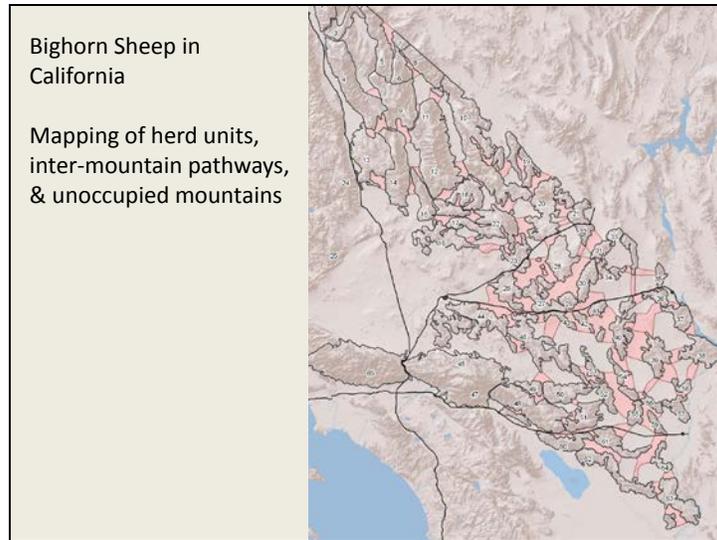
Slide 9



Slide 10



Slide 11



APPENDIX E. CALIFORNIA WOLF PLAN PROJECT SCHEDULE (2/11/14 VERSION)

