



**Meeting Report
Wolf-Ungulate Stakeholder Subgroup
September 10, 2014**

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Wildlife Branch Conference Room
1812 9th Street,
Sacramento, CA 95811



California Department of Fish and Wildlife

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1.0 Introduction

On September 10, 2014 the Wolf-Ungulate Interactions Subgroup (WUIS) of the California Wolf Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) reconvened in Sacramento. This was the fifth meeting for the WUIS, having been formed during the August 29, 2013 general SWG meeting to assist the Department with developing a consensus-driven framework of management strategies for addressing potential wolf impacts on California's native ungulate populations.

2.0 Meeting Objectives and Mechanics

The meeting was held in the Dept. of Fish and Wildlife's Wildlife Branch conference room in Sacramento.

Meeting objectives were:

1. Determine points of agreement on Wolf-Ungulate Strategy
2. Confirm Wolf-Ungulate schedule moving forward

The meeting was attended in person by the meeting facilitator, six stakeholders, and five CDFW staff. In addition, one stakeholder attended via conference line. Appendix A provides a list of participants, their affiliations, and their contact information.

3.0 Meeting Outputs

Updates/Housekeeping

- Mr. Jerry Springer will provide this group's update at the next full SWG meeting
- No comments were provided on the June 18 meeting report
- Scheduling of next Wolf-Ungulate Subgroup meeting will be deferred until the end of today's meeting, depending upon how much progress is made
- The most recent draft of the wolf-ungulate chapter is currently being reviewed by Dr. Loft. He will send his edits and comments back to staff for revisions when finished

Review/discuss draft Wolf-Ungulate Strategy

This topic began with discussion of the intent of the strategy document. Dr. Loft explained that he viewed it as a table of items that identify the range of possible strategies based on current law and regulations which guide the Department. It is not a list of what will be done but rather what could be done given appropriate authority.

Comments and questions from stakeholders are listed below. Department responses follow in italics.

General Comments

- The elements in this document are not shown within the proposed phases as they are in the conservation subgroup's strategies.
- There are additional options we wish to see listed here; the Deer Association wants to see how you will prevent deer decreases due to wolves.
 - *The final plan will contain what the Department puts forth; the Director ultimately decides that, not this group; it is this group's job to make recommendations based on the best possible science.*
- What is the meaning of the "Implement" column?
 - *Because some of these strategies have been discussed previously they can be "checked off" as agreed upon.*
- How does this table correlate with the plan?
 - *This table lays out possible management strategies for us to discuss, and decide on for incorporation in the plan; there will be such strategies in the Wolf-Ungulate, Wolf-Livestock, and Wolf Conservation chapters, and their implementation will be discussed in the implementation section of the plan.*
- There should be a pre-phase 1 column.
 - *It's implied because Element 1 says "in advance of a wolf population" but it could be clearer*

Element A

- Rather than emphasizing counties in Element A we could use a biological approach and collect data at the herd level instead. Focus on habitats that are most representative so information can be applied to similar areas. Research should also be prioritized with Rocky Mountain elk first, Roosevelt elk second, and tule elk third.
- We can gather data from whatever geographic areas we agree on for the plan and make any necessary adjustments as wolves move in.
 - *Agreed that where they show up will be the focus area, but it's a guess as to where that will be so we may not get the important pre-wolf data*
 - *What we need to ask is 'what are our big concerns?' I think it's the elk populations; they may be the first to be impacted.*
 - *We also have major information needs for deer so we can prioritize the locations of greatest concern for both species, and then prioritize activities within those areas. One area of need is in oak woodlands.*

Element B

- There are items listed here that are within your purview and should be moved to Element C like the PLM and SHARE programs and reducing some kinds of ungulate mortality; if Director Bonham met with the directors of California BLM and USFS it would add incentive to get some habitat work done.
- Items 4 and 5 should be removed
 - *These are split by what we have regulatory authority over under the commission and what we have trustee authority over under the constitution. We make recommendations but there is no mandate that they must actually be implemented. We may change this based on your recommendations, but understand why we listed them the way we did.*
- Could the element read “What actions outside of CDFW authority and/or in conjunction or cooperation with others can be implemented?”
 - *Should we say regulatory authority?*
 - *Why don't we just be more direct and give it a positive rather than a negative spin: What actions can other entities implement to enhance ungulate populations, or what actions can we recommend to others?*
- Cooperation with other agencies should be its own element rather than burying it within B-1

Element C

- If wolves are determined to have an impact on ungulates, can we suggest reducing predation from other predators, and where would that fit in this table?
 - *It's feasible for us to propose increased regional bear or coyote harvest but it will require data to support that they are actually impacting the ungulate populations*
- Reducing hunter harvest should not be the only way to reduce non-wolf mortality of ungulates. There is also the suggestion to reduce predation by other carnivores.
- This entire section could be reworded to discuss the objectives as established in the deer and elk plans.
 - *The question posed in C is lacking context; we need to clarify what the problem is in how we phrase the question. Why do we need to reduce non-wolf mortality of ungulates?*
- With respect to the items listed, 1, 2, and 3 are fine, 4 should be reworded, and 5 does not make sense as a reason to reduce hunter harvest.
 - *Items 5 and 6 should not be bulleted with the others; they are on a different hierarchical level*
- Please reiterate Element C

- *In the context of mortality by wolves on ungulates, what are actions the Commission can take to reduce total mortality on ungulates?*
- Will reducing hunter harvest have any effect on reducing total mortality on ungulates?
 - *There is a difference between harvest and opportunity. There are ways to affect harvest rate without affecting opportunity such as modifying the season.*
- The way this is written people might think that reducing hunter harvest is the only option for impacting the ungulate populations. Elements C and F should be combined, then all options are on the table.
 - *Suggest we restructure this document to reflect the phased approach, to reword the element, to clarify the geographic extent of the effects we're discussing, and to include other actions that are within the Department's authority.*
 - *There are other options that can be added like harvest of bears or other predators that may be impacting the ungulate populations.*
- For clarification, if there is a CESA listed animal, which the wolf is, and there is an issue with impacts to an ungulate population, would using lethal control on the wolf be a consideration on an equal footing with reducing hunter harvest? It seems that an endangered species would trump people's desire to hunt.
 - *Recognize that our current hunting levels have a minimal effect on ungulate populations. But assuming wolves are federally delisted and the state has management authority, we are still trying to determine under what conditions we would be able to implement various actions for management of impacts to other species.*
- Consider increasing law enforcement activity to reduce ungulate mortality because I think poaching is a big problem
 - *Your concern is noted; we should try to keep the emphasis here on funding for science though.*
- Oregon confers increased status to recently translocated elk herds to increase their success, and after wolves are delisted will consider use of lethal control of to minimize their impacts to these herds. Is that something we could include in our strategy?
 - *We do discuss wolf control in Elements F, G, and H but we are still getting clarification on what we are and are not allowed to do.*

Element D

- Why is this one marked as "No" under implementation?
 - *We included it because it was suggested by some members but at this time we don't consider it a feasible option.*

Element E

- Is it feasible to capture and relocate wolves?
 - *On the face it's doable. It may not be practical but we should consider it.*
- The “demonstrated impact” would have to be strong to consider that option.
 - *We do make it clear that anything we consider will have to be demonstrated by the data.*
- What constitutes “specific ungulate herds?”
 - *Good question. We will have to provide some sideboards or footnotes to define what we mean there.*
- This isn't practical; why move an animal that is having impacts on ungulates to another area? It may just come back. So many things make this impractical.
 - *We're talking about wolves doing what is natural to them, and they're a listed species. We would not be able to justify using lethal control in that situation so this would be a tool for us to reduce impacts to the ungulates. We should outline the specifics for when we would use this tool. The big problem will be in decided where to relocate them to.*

Elements F, G, H

- Since we don't have the answers yet about whether and when lethal control will be an option, we can't really discuss these items

In summary, changes suggested by the group to incorporate in the strategy document included:

1. Restructure the table so that the proposed actions can be viewed within a phased approach, and include a pre-Phase 1 section
2. Assessment data should be collected with an emphasis on biological units (i.e. herds) rather than political units (i.e. counties)
3. Prioritize areas for conducting pre-Phase 1 data
4. Shift mention of the PLM and SHARE programs from Element B to Element C
5. Make cooperation with other agencies its own Element
6. Reduce impacts to ungulates from other predators
7. Restructure Element C so that bullets 5 and 6 are at the same hierarchical level as “Reduce hunter harvest...”
8. Reduce poaching of ungulates if detected as a problem
9. Recommend some level of special status for ungulate herds that experience population declines or range reductions
10. Remove Element D
11. Clarify what is meant by “demonstrated impact” and “specific ungulate herds” in Element E

12. Outline the specifics for when and how relocation of wolves impacting ungulates would be used by the Department in Element E, particularly how it will be decided where relocated wolves would be released.
13. Restructure the table into phases, and get clarification on what actions the Department can use before discussing Elements F, G, and H.

The meeting concluded with a decision to have a follow-up meeting, after staff incorporate members' suggestions to the strategies table. The date will be decided by the Department, and subgroup members will be notified.

Action Items

- Department staff will incorporate the latest round of internal edits and suggestions for the Wolf-Ungulate Interactions chapter and will send to the subgroup members as soon as possible
- Department staff will consider the subgroup members' suggested changes to the Wolf-Ungulate Strategies table and incorporate as appropriate

APPENDIX A. WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Name	Affiliation	Email
Stakeholders		
Marilyn Jasper	Sierra Club	marilyn.jasper@mlc.sierraclub.org
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California Department of Fish and Wildlife Staff		
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APPENDIX B – AGENDA

PROPOSED AGENDA

Wolf-Ungulate Subgroup
1-5 PM September 10, 2014
1812 9th St, Sacramento (Wildlife Branch)
Teleconference Line 877.860.3058, PC 758045#

Objectives:

- Determine points of agreement on Wolf-Ungulate Strategy
 - Confirm Wolf-Ungulate schedule moving forward
1. Introductions and Logistics (5 minutes)
 2. Updates/Housekeeping (15 minutes)
 - a. Identify Stakeholder member for update at next SWG meeting
 - b. Review, discuss, and revise June 18 meeting report
 - c. Discuss Wolf-Ungulate Subgroup Scheduling
 - d. Status of Wolf-Ungulate chapter
 3. Review/Discuss Wolf-Ungulate Strategy (1 hour)
 4. BREAK (10 minutes)
 5. Discuss Wolf-Ungulate Strategy-Continued (70 minutes)
 6. Public questions (10 minutes)
 7. Discuss Action Items and Next Steps (10 minutes)
 - Action Item Review
 1. Next Steps

APPENDIX C
WOLF-UNGULATE STRATEGIES FOR CALIFORNIA

	Element	Implement	CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
A	Collection of data on ungulates in northern CA in advance of a wolf population?	Yes	<p>Data collection to be initiated in northern California with an emphasis on counties adjacent to Oregon (Modoc, Siskiyou, and Del Norte) and continue after wolf colonization in order to detect wolf-related changes on ungulate populations where they establish and where they may likely establish with;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biologically measurable changes in ungulate population parameters including sex ratios (deer - fawn:doe and buck:doe ratios; elk - calf:cow and bull:cow ratios); survival; recruitment; and mortality. 2. Establish a cost-effective long-term population monitoring strategy for elk and deer of sufficient statistical power to evaluate predation effects on the populations. 3. Study mortality factors to assess the proportions and types of predation and other mortality. 4. Evaluate habitat condition and use by ungulates in combination with mortality factors to identify limiting factors. 5. Identify and map seasonal ranges and migration corridors. <p>Identify high and important ungulate use areas that could be used as focused management (study) areas. (Example: deer fawning or wintering areas, preferred range of limited elk populations, etc.). Develop more refined ungulate density estimates based on population monitoring and habitat modeling.</p>
B	CDFW monitoring and research shows that wolves are impacting California ungulate populations. What actions		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recommend actions on public¹, private and tribal lands that improve ungulate habitats such as: forage and water enhancements, restoring/enhancing meadow, aspen, and riparian habitats, management of forest openings and other early successional habitats, controlling noxious weeds, livestock grazing modification, controlling conflicts for forage and water from wild (feral) horses and burros,

¹ These include but are not limited to potential cooperating land management agencies principally USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service.

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION WITH MEMBERS OF THE STAKEHOLDER WORKING GROUP

	<p>outside of CDFW authority can be implemented to enhance ungulate populations?</p>		<p>limiting OHV use, managing hunter harvest, and other strategies.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Conserve important lands as wildlife habitat through easements, acquisitions, encourage landowner agreements (such as Private Lands Wildlife Management (PLM) or SHARE hunting opportunity), and other appropriate methods. 3. Reduce other mortality factors such as road kill, fence entanglement, illegal harvest, etc. 4. Entities may choose to submit petitions to list a species as threatened or endangered. 5. Entities may choose to work through the legislature to seek a remedy to the impact of wolves on prey.
C	<p>What actions within Fish & Game Commission authority (as recommended by CDFW) can be implemented to reduce non-wolf mortality to ungulates?</p>		<p>Reduce hunter harvest if the following occur:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A 20% or more population reduction in deer or elk in a three year monitoring period. 2. Elk calf:cow ratios fall below 20 calves:100 cows. 3. Hunter success for deer or elk declines 10% over three years. 4. Allocated big game tags reduced below current levels in areas occupied by wolves. 5. Translocate elk within/to California to enhance populations? 6. As elk are considered to be at greater risk of population impact, consider petition to list as threatened or endangered in N. California if the population is significantly impacted.

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 Wolf-Ungulate Strategy
 Version 3.0 09022014

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D	Should non-lethal injurious harassment ² of wolves be allowed (e.g., rubber bullets, bean bag shells, and paintballs) when impacts to ungulates is demonstrated?	No	Under the following conditions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When wolves have been determined to be impacting ungulate populations. 2. Harassment only allowed in target areas. No harassment within known den or rendezvous sites. 3. CDFW personnel will oversee all wolf harassment operations.
E	Should relocation of wolves having demonstrated impact to specific ungulate herds, to another location in California, be an option?	Yes	Consider if wolf predation is significantly reducing, or likely to result in extirpation or significant reductions of elk or deer population in a geographic unit or area (such as a herd unit).
F	Should lethal take of wolves to protect ungulate populations be included as part of the strategy under Phase 1?		DFW is working on this evaluation.
G	Should lethal take be included as part of the strategy under Phase 2?		Requires eight successful breeding pairs by 2034. DFW is working on this evaluation.
H	Should lethal take be included as part of the strategy under Phase 3?	Yes	Under Phase 3 (with sufficient statutory authority) and subject to additional requirements of the wolf-livestock conflict and wolf conservation strategies, lethal take will be applied only to wolves in packs determined by CDFW to likely extirpate or

² Non-injurious harassment includes noise (e.g. shouting, airhorns, cracker shells, and discharging firearms), chasing wolves on foot or horseback, RAG boxes, and other methods that would be appropriate.

			significantly diminish designated populations of wild ungulates.
I	How should state agency efforts be funded? ³		Defer to funding subgroup

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³ Funding categories for consideration include:

- CDFW personnel costs
- CDFW operating expenses (e.g., office space and equipment, vehicles, field equipment, GPS collars, etc.) and ongoing costs (monitoring, research, helicopter contracts, etc.)