

# Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) to Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)

## Report on Outreach and Education August 2022

### Overview and guiding recommendations

This report summarizes feedback from the Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) regarding outreach and education, including 1) consensus recommendations described on this page and 2) a compilation of suggestions for specific audiences and messages offered by each sector of the SAG.

**The SAG offers, by consensus, the following priority recommendations regarding the value and need for outreach and education:**

1. Targeted outreach and education are an essential component of a successful restoration and management program that can increase trust, transparency, and awareness.
2. Substantially increase funding for education and outreach; effective outreach and education requires robust agency capacity, dedicated funding, and resources.

**The following consensus recommendations should also guide outreach and education related to wolf management:**

- Outreach and education should occur proactively, continuously, and reactively.
- General as well as audience-specific messages and mechanisms are needed; diverse audiences use and/or prefer different communications approaches and formats, including bilingual messaging.
- Include messaging about what is in the plan; agency actions and how the plan is being implemented; goals and expectations; and positive and negative impacts of wolves at various scales.
- Identify trusted messengers; consider where trust in the agency is strong or weak as a potential lever or barrier to effective communication.
- Common messaging should be amplified through partnerships; there is power in diverse stakeholders communicating similar messages to their sectors.
- Messaging can help build awareness and empathy for different perspectives; highlight how different stakeholders are working together across different points of view; and illustrate impacts with personal stories.
- Social science research can help inform outreach and education strategies and messages; the effectiveness of communications tools and messaging should be monitored to inform and adapt them for greater success.
- Outreach and communication should highlight opportunities for a variety of interests/stakeholders to support funding of the wolf plan.
- Balance information on wolves with other wildlife messaging; wolves are a member of the suite of native species in Colorado.
- Counter misinformation and misperceptions with best available science.

## Key messages by audience

The SAG has discussed a variety of potential audiences for outreach and education. The following sections synthesize feedback on key messaging topics, by target sector. They are offered as a compilation of feedback from SAG discussion and *do not necessarily reflect SAG consensus on all points*.

Messages suggested for the agriculture, sportsperson, and wolf advocacy sectors reflect the compilation of feedback from breakouts of each of those sectors, respectively; they are not necessarily a reflection of SAG consensus nor consensus of the broader constituencies of each sector beyond those that participated in each of the SAG sector discussions. Messages suggested for outdoor recreationists, local and municipal decision makers, and the general public are a compilation of messages suggested by all SAG members; once again, they do not necessarily reflect consensus on all points.

### Agricultural community *(messages suggested by SAG agriculture members)*

Key messages to provide to the agricultural community:

- Describe what the management plan says and relevant issues for livestock producers. Specifically, describe options available for compensation, conflict minimization, and use of nonlethal or lethal tools; the resources that are available and how to access them; and the reporting and investigation process.
- Producers are valued; ranching and open space benefits and ecosystem services are valued.
- Impacts will be local; impacts to specific producers can be significant while statewide impacts are small.

Key messages the agricultural community would like to get across:

- Ranching supports wildlife by providing connections and habitat across public and private lands; private lands are necessary for wildlife habitat, especially animals' winter range.
- Livestock producers do not hate wolves.
- Livestock producers want to keep livestock alive, healthy, happy, and safe; producers do not want to see livestock suffer.
- Livestock compensation does not cover all costs to producers; stress and mental health issues are real and significant; the agricultural community would like to understand what financial support others are willing to provide to support wolf restoration.

### Sportspersons and outfitters *(messages suggested by SAG sportspersons/outfitters members)*

Key messages to provide to sportspersons and outfitters:

- There is a plan to manage wolves and the species' reintroduction.
- Impacts will be local, not statewide.
- There is a strategy to stabilize and maintain ungulate populations and to grow populations where possible, with consideration of all impacts, including to wolves.

Key messages the sportsperson and outfitter sector would like to get across:

- Sportspeople are the key component of financial support and physical support for science-based wildlife management.
- Over time, wolves should be managed like all wildlife.

## Wolf advocates *(messages suggested by SAG wolf advocacy members)*

Key messages to provide to wolf advocates:

- There will be impacts to individuals and communities from wolves.
- It is important to understand the concerns of impacted individuals and local communities.
- There will be compensation for livestock losses by law, but producers sometimes are unsatisfied with the programs as they feel they do not compensate for all losses, leading to decreased tolerance for wolves.
- Wildlife management takes effort and money.

Key messages wolf advocates would like to get across:

- There are positive impacts of wolves, including restoring biodiversity and wildlife diversity; tourism and economic benefits from wolf-based tourism; and contributing to healthier riparian systems (e.g., more songbirds).
- Wolves will not decimate ungulate populations or the livestock industry.
- (Particularly for the agricultural community) Most wolves do not kill livestock; some do.
- Wolves do not pose a significant threat to human safety.
- Wolves should *not* be managed like all other wildlife (e.g., advocates do not have a favorable view of management of bears and cougars).
- Even when they are distributed throughout western Colorado, wolves will be far less common than coyotes, black bears, or cougars.

## Outdoor recreationists *(The following messages are a compilation of messages suggested by all SAG members. The suggestions do not necessarily reflect consensus on all points.)*

Key messages to provide to outdoor recreationists:

- Historically, wolves do not attack people; wolves pose no significant personal danger to human safety.
- Wolves may approach you out of curiosity. Know what to do if approached.
- Your activity, presence, and pets have an impact on wildlife and habitat, including wolves.
- There will not be significant loss of recreation opportunity due to wolf reintroduction or their presence on the landscape.
- Be aware of wolves' impacts on lands used for recreation, including positive impacts such as the opportunity to wildlife watch and negative impacts such as potential closures due to denning sites.
- Recreation benefits from wildlife management; encourage recreationists to contribute directly to wildlife and wolf management and make options for contribution clear (i.e., emphasizing "donate now" opportunities on the CPW website).

Additional FAQ and best practice considerations for messaging to outdoor recreationists:

- What to do if you see a wolf.
- Leash your dog: it is safer on leash for wildlife and your dog.
- Wolves are wild animals: give them space and do not approach or feed them.
- It is illegal to chase or harass a federally endangered species.
- Don't handle wolf scat.
- Wolf pups likely aren't abandoned; leave wolf dens alone.

- How to report wolf sightings to local CPW offices.
- (For hunters) Lead bullet fragments left in carcasses [gut piles] can cause lead poisoning of scavengers; switching to copper bullets can help.
- Don't leave stock tied up in vulnerable areas.
- The difference between coyotes and wolves: e.g., tracks, scat (use pictures/graphics).
- Proper food storage practices.
- Include wolves in existing messaging for bears, cougars, etc.
- Provide information near wolf locations (i.e., at visitor centers and trailheads; use QR codes).

**Local and municipal decision makers** *(The following messages are a compilation of messages suggested by all SAG members; however, the suggestions do not necessarily reflect consensus on all points.)*

Key messages to provide to local and municipal decision makers:

- The benefits and costs to reintroduce and manage wolves in their area.
- General facts about wolf biology; the wolf reintroduction and management plan; plans for livestock compensation, ungulate management, and conflict mitigation.
- We are counting on decision makers for accurate messaging to the broader public.
- Wolf impacts tend to be more localized and may impact individual producers rather than entire regions; local decision makers can help messaging to have an appropriate scale.
- Facts about what resources are available to impacted constituents.

Additional considerations for messaging approaches to decision makers:

- Work with local leadership first; be proactive in their role in communicating with the broader public; emphasize the importance of local leadership in communication.
- Emphasize the importance of decision makers' partnership with CPW; leverage relationships between local CPW staff and leaders.
- Leverage existing groups (e.g., CCI, Club 20, Action 22) to hold workshops on wolf restoration and management.
- Use factsheets to make information accessible and easily digestible.
- Local leaders are an important source of information at the local scale and can communicate issues in their communities.

Key messages decision makers would like to get across:

- We are here to support our constituencies.
- We have/need the resources to support you.

**General public** *(The following messages are a compilation of messages suggested by all SAG members; however, the suggestions do not necessarily reflect consensus on all points.)*

Key messages to provide to the general public:

- The plan, timing, and process of wolf reintroduction (e.g., 'We are bringing wolves to Colorado by the end of 2023.')
- Why wolves are being reintroduced when they are already here and why the state is spending money on restoration efforts.
- We don't have to choose among ranching, hunting, and restoration.
- This is a historic moment for Colorado.

- General facts about wolf biology (wolves are a native species and being restored to the state).
- Funding for wolf restoration is currently being allocated from the general fund.
- We need funding to protect animals and reduce conflict with livestock.
- CPW is the authority of correct information; the agency is made up of experts on this topic.
- Management is impact-based and adaptive.
- Impacts from wolves may be positive or negative.
- The wolf planning process actively engages a diverse set of stakeholders to inform a plan that acknowledges and strives to address a variety of concerns.
- Ungulate populations are impacted by a variety of factors.

Additional considerations for messaging approaches to the general public:

- Focus on the middle ground; highlight personal stories; showcase intersectionality of interests.
- Highlight systems and processes in place for wolf issues.
- Direct delivery: local television, radio, businesses, professional sports teams, op-eds, news articles.
- Address myths about safety with education.
- Humanize CPW; increase agency transparency with the public.
- Review images and graphics to ensure they are accurate to the real world (e.g., photos of livestock guard dogs, not burros; pictures of livestock on the range and not dairy cows).

## About the Stakeholder Advisory Group

The Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) offers a broad range of perspectives and experience to inform the social implications of wolf restoration and management strategies for the Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan. SAG members were selected by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) for diversity in demographics, backgrounds, geographic regions, perspectives, and knowledge in order to constitute a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive stakeholder voice in the planning process. The SAG is comprised of 17 voting members and 3 non-voting members. CPW is responsible for writing the Wolf Restoration and Management Plan. The Parks and Wildlife Commission (PWC) serves as the decision-making body responsible for approving the Wolf Restoration and Management Plan. The SAG serves in an advisory capacity to Colorado Parks and Wildlife, offering non-binding input into the development of plan content. The SAG is not a decision-making body and has no authority on wolf management policy, research, or operations.

The SAG strives to make decisions based on the consensus of all voting members, where possible. Where the SAG is able to achieve consensus, its input will receive priority consideration by CPW. Per the SAG charter, consensus is defined as general agreement that is shared by all the people in a group; it reflects a recommendation, option, or idea that all participants can support or abide by, or, at a minimum, to which they do not object. In other words, consensus is a recommendation, option, or idea that all can live with. Where consensus does not exist, a vote will be taken and the votes of individual members will be recorded along with a summary of the rationale for supportive and dissenting views.

### **Stakeholder Advisory Group Members:**

#### ***Voting Members***

- Matt Barnes
- Donald Broom
- Jenny Burbey
- Bob Chastain
- Renee Deal
- Adam Gall
- Dan Gates
- John Howard
- Francie Jacober
- Lenny Klingsmith
- Darlene Kobobel
- Tom Kourlis
- Brian Kurzel
- Hallie Mahowald
- Jonathan Proctor
- Gary Skiba
- Steve Whiteman

#### ***Ex Officio Members:***

- Dan Gibbs, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Natural Resources
- Les Owen, Division Director, Colorado Department of Agriculture (*designee of Kate Greenberg, Commissioner, Colorado Department of Agriculture*)
- Heather Dugan, Acting Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

*Stakeholder Advisory Group report developed with third party facilitation from Keystone Policy Center.*