

Notes from Wolf Compensation Workshop, Visalia, Oct 4, 2023

Summary

- 8 individuals in Tulare Pack; male, female, and six pups.
- Lots of information available on website.
- <https://wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/mammals/gray-wolf>
- California has the most comprehensive Wolf Compensation Program.
- Three prongs – 1) Direct loss of livestock; 2) Non-lethal Deterrents; and 3) Pay for Presence.
- \$3 Million allocated; must be spent by June 30, 2026.
- Assistance is available to fill out the applications
- CCA update: against listing of the wolves since first wolf arrived. Worked with CDFW on the wolf compensation program.
- Taylor Hagata, Lassen County Rancher with wolves in the area – no losses to wolves that he currently knows about.
- Julie Finzel – described non-lethal deterrent options.

Full Notes

Bob Stafford and Dr. Jason Lombardi, CDFW:

- 8 individuals currently in the Tulare pack. Trying to collar an animal soon. Had to delay when deer season started.
- The pack is descended from the Shasta pack and a few other known individuals in CA.
- 7 packs in CA total. Siskiyou, Plumas, Tehama, etc. These are the ones we are aware of - there may be more.
- Current focus of research is predator interaction with other predators.
- Conservation plan and a lot of this information is on the CDFW website.
- <https://wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/mammals/gray-wolf>

Victoria Monroe, CDFW:

- Currently in phase 2 of the Wolf plan because of the 7 breeding pairs known. (Phase 3 will begin when there are 8 documented breeding pairs for 2 consecutive years).
(Part 1) <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=135026&inline>
(Part 2) <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=135027&inline>
- There is an online sighting report form. They help CDFW to keep accurate records of presence. Reports are kept on file.
<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Gray-Wolf/Sighting-Report>
- CA is the only state with the three-pronged compensation program.
<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Gray-Wolf/Grants>
- CDFW offers technical assistance for applying. First applications are processed first. Some lag, trying to expedite. Invoice is processed as a voucher by the state comptroller's office. CDFW doesn't have the equipment to print checks directly. If previous payments are unknown, put "see CDFW" and Vicki can look it up for your application form.

Prong 1

- Prong 1 compensates for direct loss of livestock (livestock mortality due to confirmed or probable wolf predation).
<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=213090&inline>
- Predation includes evidence of injury or fatality caused by a wolf. So far mostly cows have been submitted, but also llama, donkey, etc.
- *Reduce disturbance of the kill site by people, dogs, and other livestock as much as possible.*
- “Probable kill” can include tangential evidence e.g GPS collar data indicating a wolf was present at the kill site.

Prong 2

- Prong 2 supports the use of non-lethal deterrents. Receipts for tangible goods can be reimbursed through prong 2. Even time for deploying and checking cameras can be paid back when documented. Husbandry/ herd management work includes purchase of trail cameras, cell payments for data, protecting the cameras, etc.
<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Mammals/Gray-Wolf/Grants#592541286-nonlethal-deterrents-prong-2>
- Some carcass management activities can be repaid as well, such as rental of equipment to cover a carcass, staff time to haul carcass away, etc.
- Having 5-7 protection dogs has been a consistent strong number but it varies depending on your location/ risk, and number of Livestock, etc
- To calculate labor costs: Rate = \$/hr, quantity is # hours
- Look at how much time is specifically related to wolf risk, in cases where you already have night herders, etc. How much of their time is now about wolves?
- Standard rate for ranch hands is low relative to wages in CA! Rancher can include supporting documentation of a contract or other data documenting the actual cost of a ranch hand.
- Eligibility for Prong 2 is anyone in wolf territory, which now includes Tulare County.

Prong 3

- Prong 3 compensates livestock producers for the presence of wolves near their livestock, addressing potential indirect losses due to wolf presence. Pay for presence: 3.5% of fair market value for calf, 3% for cow (inside core pack territory).
- Eligibility for Prong 3 is only based on known presence as of FY 2021. Core territory

More Information on Wolf Pilot Compensation Program; Filling out the Application

- *Name has to match full legal name, like tax records.*
- Having a nickname or something incomplete will cause the full process to restart.
- Address is where the check will be mailed to compensate you.
- SSN/FEIN is required. The documents are encrypted for privacy and confidentiality between CA government offices.
- Once a rancher is in the system, they never have to fill out the “vendor” info again, unless it changes (such as a new mailing address).

\$3mill was allocated, \$1mill has been spent so far and they don't anticipate running out before the funding ends. The goal is to get every applicant paid. Anyone with confirmed or probable

depreddation, as confirmed by CDFW or USDA APHIS Wildlife Services, is eligible. Doesn't have to be in territory of known packs.

Q and A Session

Q: will there be a renewal of the funds? There's some chatter that the funds will run out soon.

- Not running out soon, CDFW still has more than half of the funds available. Only have until June 30 2026 to spend them however. Encourage people to apply and raise awareness of its availability! Reach out to elected officials that this kind of program is super important. These funds are from a CA legislative act in 2021. The department can't automatically renew the funds by itself.

Q: For pay for presence, is core territory defined?

- Collar data, when available. Also wolf sighting reports, trail camera images, other data points to determine known range and calculate a core within that area. Contact Vicki/Jason to have a Teams session with them to dive into the details more.

Q: 2026 is soon, but the wolves will be here forever. When current funding ends, what do we do? Are ranchers fending for themselves?

- Vicki says, in process of hiring a new wolf program policy coordinator who would bring in expertise on how to address the gray wolf which is a state and federally listed species. Anyone can also read wolf plan. Focus on appendix G, phase 2. Outlines what CDFW delineates as next steps, as the population is expected to continue to expand. Will take a lot of coordinated efforts over time to implement fish and game code regulations and other laws in the state. Contact Vicki with more specific questions any time.

Q: what is the goal of wolf program? How many wolves can Tulare County sustain? Once wolves are collared, can ranchers be informed?

- There is not necessarily a population threshold right now. Different numbers of animals won't trigger different management. In some other Counties, e.g. Lassen, there is more than 1 pack.
- Re: notification, there is a system that works through a county wolf liaison to provide wolf notifications in each season. With more data, will better understand summer vs winter territory. They were probably under the radar based on the high elevation forest they are in.

Kirk Wilbur, California Cattlemen's Association:

Shared CCA's activities regarding wolves. They can help fill out compensation applications. Years ago, CCA lobbied against listing as an endangered species in CA, but the Fish & Game Commission listed it anyway. CDFW's hands are tied in terms of how they can manage the species, as a result.

Taylor Hagata, Lassen County Rancher:

- OR-7 was near his family's property, who's been there since 1904.
- He says that now wolves are confirmed in Tulare County, we are likely to hear stories of people seeing wolves all the time... more of the reports than not are probably true!
- He recommends: Start putting up game cams, collect scat if you find it and send to CDFW to confirm presence asap. His family has cattle out on huge permits, so things like fladry aren't feasible on 50k acres. Range riders daily have been good, check the

area, look for signs of cattle being stressed, work with neighbors and keep each other in the loop.

- So far, Taylor hasn't lost any cows to wolves. Not moving the cows super frequently either. Most of the wolves were coming from Oregon and went through his family's valley - one female spent all winter there but she mostly moved along the highway and would eat roadkill. The cows calve out on the permit; hard to know if they come back without a calf if that's because the cow was open to begin with, aborted, lost calf to wolf kill, or something else.
- Range riders immediately tarp kills and contact CDFW. Call CDFW, it's their job to get out there and verify. Preserve the carcass to the best of your ability. The carcass/evidence can be completely destroyed in 24hr by scavengers.

Q and A Session:

Q: What can you legally do to keep wolves away?

- If there a person on site, you won't have wolves trying to get past you. Other scavengers are the issues- coyotes, bears...
- Any harassment of any type is illegal!
- The compensation program framework outlines acceptable deterrents. Protection dogs could result in accidental pursuit, can qualify for an exemption of the harassment/ Take rule (which includes harassment, pursuit, injury, death). Make sure dogs are properly trained. However, ranchers are super unlikely to find a wolf actively eating or harassing their livestock. Wolves don't like to be around people.
- Can you shoot a .22 into the air for hazing? **No**.

Q: Can a detective use rancher images as evidence for determining wolf as predator causing a kill?

- CDFW and/or wildlife services have to examine the carcass directly. Images can be supporting evidence, especially to provide evidence of wolves in the area, but pictures of a carcass aren't enough. Tarping and reducing site disturbance are most important until CDFW can get out there, usually within 24hr.

Q: Is a drone harassment?

- For listed (endangered/threatened) species, yes. Drones are considered harassment because they disturb natural behaviors.

Q: What about with drone footage from above, too far above to be harassment? Is that evidence?

- if utilizing the drone specifically to detect wolf presence it might be considered harassment. If drone is part of routine ag activity and happened to get an image of a wolf, then those images could be potentially useful (no guarantee on legal applications).
- Shooting blanks is considered hazing, considered Take. Prohibited. Can be used for coyotes...muddy waters! Contact CDFW directly to navigate specific scenarios.
- Fox lights and noisemakers are more okay.

Q: stats of breakdown of funds expended?

- Majority has been Prong 2, nonlethal deterrents. Specific data - larger percent of the Prong 2 funds were compensating for human labor, e.g. range riding and maintenance of deterrents. In a few business days there could be updates - contact Vicki at wolf program email for specific breakdown!
Wolfprogram@wildlife.ca.gov
- Funds have been available since Sep 23, 2021.

Julie Finzel, UC Cooperative Extension, Tulare County

Non-lethal deterrent options effective on smaller scale:

- Electric fence netting
- Turbo (electrified) fladry
- Fox Lights
- Carcass Management (removing attractants where possible)
- Game Cameras (prove presence)

Non-lethal deterrent options effective on larger scale:

- Livestock Guardian Dogs – can be bonded with cattle
- Range Riders (human presence causes wolves to alter behavior)

Other Information

The Gray Wolf in California is listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act and the California Endangered Species Act. Any harm or harassment to a Gray Wolf is prohibited by law. Potential penalties include:

Federal and California ESA

- Criminal misdemeanor with up to 1 year imprisonment and fines up to \$50,000.

It is important to keep in mind that any person who is charged with ‘take’ of an endangered species may be subject to civil lawsuits from private parties.

Disclaimer: While all efforts were made in good faith to report information accurately in this document, none of this information was reviewed by a lawyer or a representative from CDFW. It is important to contact CDFW directly with questions and concerns.