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Parks and Wildlife Commission Meeting Recap: Final public comments on Draft Wolf Restoration and Management Plan and Commission guidance to Colorado Parks and Wildlife staff



DENVER - At its Feb. 22 meeting in Denver, the Parks and Wildlife Commission heard public comments and provided guidance to CPW staff regarding the final revisions to CPW's [Draft Wolf Restoration and Management Plan](#). [A recording of the meeting can be viewed on CPW's YouTube channel](#).

The public provided comments on the Draft Wolf Restoration and Management Plan after it was released on December 9 at in-person and virtual meetings, as well as through the website engagecpw.org.

CPW received about 4,000 comments online and heard from 232 people throughout the state at its [five public meetings throughout Colorado in January and February](#).

“We are so grateful for the comments from so many people since the public involvement process began back in April of 2021, and to those who have commented on the draft plan itself over the past two months,” said CPW Acting Director Heather Disney Dugan. “Your comments will make for a

better, more informed plan.”

Consensus statements from the Commission at the Feb. 22 meeting included:

Wolf-livestock depredation compensation

- The Commission supported revising the draft plan to raise the cap on livestock compensation, as well as guard and herding animal compensation, to \$15,000 per animal.
- The Commission supported revising the draft plan to exclude veterinary expenses from the compensation cap for livestock, as well as guard and herding animals, up to \$15,000 or the fair market value of the livestock at issue, whichever is lower. This means claimants can get paid for injury and death to livestock and related veterinary expenses, up to a potential maximum of \$30,000 per animal.
- The Commission supported revising the draft plan to require claimants pursuing an itemized claim to provide documents or self-certify the use of vaccines and pregnancy checks in lieu of producing “Records for the current year that demonstrate vaccination status.”
- The Commission supported revising the draft plan to include a two-tiered compensation ratio (1.25:1 or 1:1) for missing yearlings depending on whether the claimant uses conflict minimization practices. This means if conflict minimization practices are implemented, a livestock owner that has had a confirmed cattle depredation by wolves may claim up to 1.25 missing yearlings for each confirmed cattle depredation (a 1.25:1 ratio). If conflict minimization techniques are not implemented, a livestock owner that has had a confirmed cattle depredation by wolves may claim up to 1 missing yearling for each confirmed cattle depredation (a 1:1 ratio).
- The Commission supported the draft plan, as written, insofar as it conditions 7:1 ratio claims on the claimant’s use of conflict minimization practices. This means that if conflict minimization

practices are implemented, up to 7 missing calves and sheep may be claimed for each confirmed cattle or sheep depredation (a 7:1 ratio).

Chapter 6 of CPW's draft plan provides more detail and examples specific to compensation and conflict minimization.

Wolf reintroduction and management

- The Commission supported Chapter 3 (Reintroduction Implementation) of the draft plan, as written, provided the Technical Working Group recommendations are incorporated by reference into the plan and that wolves injured in transport, if any, will be sent to a rehabilitation facility where feasible and appropriate in lieu of euthanasia.
- The Commission supported Chapter 4 (Recovery of Wolves in Colorado) of the draft plan, as written, concerning the population thresholds for the conclusion of Phases 1 and 2.
- The Commission supported Chapter 4 (Recovery of Wolves in Colorado) of the draft plan, provided the plan removes "Phase 4" and adds the following statement on long-term management of wolves:

At some point in the future, the long-term management of wolves in Colorado may need to be considered further than what is outlined in this plan. These discussions would only occur after wolves have successfully been recovered and removed from the State Threatened and Endangered list. The long-term management of wolves should be impact- and science-based, with consideration of biological and social science as well as economic and legal considerations.

CPW will defer consideration of and development of specifics for long-term management until the beginning of Phase 3 at the earliest, when better information about wolves and their distribution in Colorado is available. Future management will be guided by the best available biological and social science data provided by CPW. This plan takes no position as to whether the

Parks and Wildlife Commission has the statutory authority to reclassify wolves as a game species or take other appropriate management actions.

- The Commission supported Chapter 5 (Wolf Management), as written.
- The plan will not contain a geographical distribution component as a prerequisite to gray wolves moving from Phase 1 (endangered) to Phase 2 (threatened). See § 33-1-102(44), CRS (“Threatened species” means any species or subspecies of wildlife which, as determined by the commission, is not in immediate jeopardy of extinction but is vulnerable because it exists in such small numbers or is so extremely restricted throughout all or a significant portion of its range that it may become endangered.”)
- To transition from Phase 2 to Phase 3, the plan will be amended to require a count of 150 wolves for two successive years or 200 wolves at any time and will add a geographical distribution component through a finding that the species “is present in a significant portion of its range.”
- The plan will be amended to require Division staff to conduct a population viability analysis as a prerequisite to gray wolves moving from Phase 2 (threatened) to Phase 3 (nongame).
- Following the conclusion of the initial release, CPW staff will provide updates on the plan at least annually to the Commission on the plan’s progress, but staff can be asked to provide an update at any time interval as there are new developments. A more formal review of progress on the plan will be scheduled for five years after the initial release.

Final edits are being made to the draft plan now based on the Commission’s guidance. The final Plan, and associated regulations, will be adopted via a two-step approval process at the Commission meetings on April 6 in Steamboat Springs and on May 3 - 4 in Glenwood Springs.

Visit [CPW’s Stay Informed page](#) and sign up for the Wolf Reintroduction eNews to stay up to date with CPW’s Wolf Restoration efforts.

