

SUPPORTING WORKING LANDS AND WILDLIFE WITH THE FOUR C's

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM THE CONFLICT
REDUCTION CONSORTIUM



Across the western US, iconic wildlife like elk, deer, grizzly bears, and wolves share lands with humans, and their livestock. This comes with inevitable conflicts – elk damage fences and eat hay; grizzly bears and wolves depredate and stress livestock – and responding to these conflicts requires additional time from land stewards. We envision landscapes where people, livestock, and wildlife all thrive, where effective and practical management practices work in concert with constructive state and federal policy to reduce conflicts, and where economic solutions support resilient, biodiverse working lands. The clearest path to this vision is the 4C's framework we propose below, supported by the federal actions we recommend.

The 4C's – compensation, conflict prevention, control (lethal) and collaboration – comprise a systems-based conflict reduction framework that supports conservation and provides opportunities to address the social, ecological, and economic situations unique to each region, community, and operation within a landscape



Photo credit: Erica Peterman

shared by people and wildlife. This framework allows the social and financial burden associated with ecological conflicts within shared landscapes to be balanced.

To reach our vision, we recognize that there will be localized places within a dynamic working-wild landscape that are primarily occupied by humans, wildlife, or both. This localized spatial and/or temporal separation avoids ecological traps that increase wildlife mortality, leading to more permeable habitats that allow for wildlife movements within and across connected landscapes. We recommend the 4C's conflict reduction framework be utilized broadly across working-wild landscapes and be of particular priority where conservation efforts contribute to increased wildlife-livestock interactions. Implementation of the 4C's within an adaptive management system provides the flexibility needed to maintain or improve functional landscapes by promoting integration of resource management concerns, including range, forest and riparian health and habitat connectivity.

KEY DEFINITIONS

COMPENSATION - Payments that partially or fully cover losses caused by wildlife damaging property and reward land stewards for providing whole and healthy rangelands that provide important ecosystem services.

CONFLICT PREVENTION - Any of several non-lethal practices that endeavor to remove or limit access to anthropogenic attractants, establish human presence, and/or monitor and manage livestock in areas. These practices, such as range riding, carcass management, electric fencing, and deterrent devices, benefit wildlife and agricultural operations.

CONTROL - Lethal removal of individuals or groups of wildlife to reduce damage to humans/livestock/property and/or reach population objectives.

COLLABORATION - Engagement by diverse interested parties when developing wildlife policies and land management plans, including those that will be directly impacted, often landowners and land managers, early in meaningful decision-making processes. True collaboration facilitates respectful conversations, shared learning, constructive debate, and results in mutually beneficial solutions.

Scope: This document addresses wildlife-agriculture conflicts and their impacts on the economic viability of working lands. It does not address related access and hunting issues other than to indicate that hunting is an important tool to address population size.

COMPENSATION



Engaging in the 4C's conflict reduction framework takes additional producer labor, time, and infrastructure. Given that wildlife is a public resource and the American public, as a whole, values the presence of diverse wildlife across the West, including large carnivores, funding sources for compensation should reflect the fact that these species are a public resource. Landowners face costs associated with production losses, whether livestock or forage. In addition, landowners bear hidden costs to manage resources and time needed to engage in the 4C's framework and provide habitat for wildlife. Compensation for production losses, as well as time to implement wildlife conflict reduction and steward quality habitat, is needed to support biodiversity on working landscapes and their economic viability. Federal funding for compensation should reflect the extent and geographic scope of public support for wildlife conservation and recognize the value of private lands in maintaining biodiversity. Recommendations below would expand federal, state, and private funding sources to supplement existing state efforts to support compensation for depredations and distribute the costs of providing habitat for wildlife.

LIVESTOCK LOSS COMPENSATION

Compensation for verified losses typically comes from states. Compensation is not currently available in most states for missing livestock likely killed by predators and stress-related production losses (e.g., decreased weaning weights and pregnancy rates).

- Use the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) as a source of compensation for missing livestock to complement state livestock loss compensation programs and the Wolf Livestock Demonstration Project Grant. Reimburse losses based on fair market value from regional markets without any deductions including those for sequestration.
- Explore Risk Management Agency (RMA) insurance programs to reduce the impacts of stress-related production losses. An alternative to RMA to cover production losses could be habitat leasing prioritized for areas with high densities of predators.
- Secure federal appropriation of \$15 million annually for conflict reduction and depredation compensation grants to states authorized by the America's Conservation Enhancement Act.
- Innovate solutions to reduce the cost of livestock depredation investigations that verify losses for compensation.

HABITAT STEWARDSHIP COMPENSATION

Habitat or conservation leasing provides producers with equitable support for the added costs of providing for the public's wildlife.

- Develop and promote conservation leasing on private lands who provide habitat in highly biodiverse landscapes. Leases could be fully federally funded and administered, but ideally would leverage federal, state, and private dollars and be administered by trusted community-based organizations.
- If delivered in annual payments or through an escrow account to offset ranch expenses, this could also help protect rangelands from conversion or development for the duration of the lease.
- A conservation lease would also serve to compensate in part for the additional time needed to engage in the 4C's, including collaboration.
- Provide a system for layering conservation practices that recognizes the public values provided through private lands stewardship, protects against land conversion for the duration of the lease, and supports ongoing use of conflict prevention practices while also allowing for participation in programs like EQIP.

CONFLICT PREVENTION



COORDINATE AGENCY ROLES

Support is needed for conflict prevention efforts, new and ongoing, that are necessary to adapt to the evolving challenges posed by wildlife-agriculture conflict on working lands. To effectively provide broad access to conflict prevention practices through technical, financial, and operational assistance, multiple coordinated entities, including state wildlife agencies, USDA-Wildlife Services, NRCS, Extension, NGOs, and landowner groups, must be involved.

- Expand technical, financial, and operational assistance for conflict prevention practices through NRCS, USDA-Wildlife Services, Extension and NGOs.
 - Provide technical and financial assistance for landowner-implemented conflict prevention through NRCS programs.
 - Create efficiencies in delivering technical and financial assistance for conflict prevention by contracting to cost-share with community-based organizations. (See collaboration below for more about community-based organizations.)
 - Increase funding for USDA-Wildlife Services to provide technical and operational assistance for agency-implemented conflict prevention.
- Familiarize USDA staff with the suite of conflict prevention programs available throughout USDA to provide coordinated access.

SUPPORT LANDOWNER IMPLEMENTATION

Non-lethal conflict prevention practices need to be adaptively applied. Landowner and manager knowledge is critical to determine where and how tools are likely to be most effective. Opportunities for adoption and innovation that afford land stewards the time needed to test, refine, and adapt practices will lead to effective conflict reduction.

- Incentivize landowner adoption of conflict prevention practices by expanding NRCS Conservation Practice Standards to encompass livestock-predator conflict prevention.
- Develop long-term programmatic options for funding producer-implemented livestock-predator conflict prevention including but not limited to the existing Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) or new programs.

FACILITATE FLEXIBILITY WITH ACCOUNTABILITY IN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The 4C's conflict reduction framework needs to be considered in the context of the resource base including stock husbandry, range condition and wildlife population dynamics. Grazing planning and management should allow flexibility with retained accountability to avoid wildlife conflicts while maintaining rangeland/forest health.

- Integrate principles of flexibility with retained accountability into updated U.S. Forest Service grazing regulations to create additional opportunities to reduce livestock-wildlife conflicts.
- Elevate and transfer the success of collaborative public-private partnerships that provide flexibility with retained accountability in planning and managing federal allotments.
 - Fund partner positions through NFWF to administer collaborative public-private partnership pilots on FS allotments that provide flexibility with retained accountability in planning and managing grazing.
- Refine and expand joint cooperative monitoring pilot agreements on federal grazing allotments.
- Encourage and fund engagement by FS range and biologist staff in collaborative efforts that address conflict prevention (e.g., state working groups, etc.).



CONTROL



STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION OF LETHAL CONTROL

Lethal control is a critical tool that supports conflict prevention and when used strategically does not undermine it. Effective solutions to reduce wildlife conflict on working lands require investment in all 4C's.

- Provide long-term sustainable funding for a comprehensive, holistic program where lethal control and conflict prevention are integrated as an overall conflict reduction strategy.
 - In states where wildlife species that cause conflict on working lands are protected under the Endangered Species Act, provide additional funding to support the complementary roles of state and federal wildlife management agencies in wildlife conservation and management.
 - Compensate Wildlife Specialists commensurate with the responsibilities they hold in conducting lethal control.
- Support strategic implementation of lethal control. This does not mean all other conflict prevention tools were tried and failed, but that they were strategically evaluated.
- Monitor outcomes of lethal control as a tool in the context of all conflict reduction tools available.
- Classify determinations of USDA-led depredation investigations into 4 categories – confirmed, probable, possible, and unknown. This will facilitate information sharing on depredation impacts, for compensation, and to determine need for lethal control.

Previous page: Wildlife services employees install fladry on a ranch in Wyoming in 2016. Photo credit: Public Domain/USDA WS.

Current page: An elk herd gathers to protect themselves from a wolf in the working wild of the Madison Valley, Montana. Photo by Mike Haring.

COLLABORATION



ENABLE LOCALLY LED CONSERVATION IN FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Landowners seeking solutions often start by building relationships with agency personnel that have decision-making authority in wildlife-agriculture conflict. We must create social and political conditions (places and times) that provide for informal interactions that allow for “social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in a subject or area collaborate over an extended period of time to share ideas and strategies, determine solutions, and build innovations.”¹ Collaboration takes time, openness, and commitment to consistent participation. Investing in collaboration allows people to start with common interests and build trust to address both perceived and real dichotomies to move from “what is” to “what could be” mutually beneficial outcomes.

- Develop and expand structures that enable true bottom-up, collaborative governance by utilizing local priorities as a guide for distributing federal resources and informing policymaking.
- Encourage local agency staff to engage early with community-based organizations to assist in coordinating projects to facilitate more positive outcomes.
- Encourage innovation and flexibility among local agency staff (e.g., range conservationists & district conservationists) to find collaborative solutions with community-based organizations.

SUPPORT COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Community Based Organizations (CBO) create social and political conditions that recognize groups concerned with improving the quality of life for residents within local communities. Such organizations serve as project initiators and managers, thereby providing avenues for involvement with and access to locally led processes and activities. They include non-profit, non-government organizations with well-defined constituencies that include all or part of a particular community including landowners; for example, farm or woodlands groups or trade and professional associations.

- Develop more predictable, consistent, long-term, and accessible funding streams aimed at supporting the development, growth, and ongoing operation of community-based organizations.
 - Create a new program that supports CBOs at various stages of development facilitating conflict reduction activities.
 - Streamline access for CBOs to USDA programs.
 - Reduce or eliminate match requirements for any CBO administering conflict reduction activities to allow equitable access to USDA programs.

¹Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. 1991 Situated Learning, and <https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>



**WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, OFFER OUR SUPPORT
TO ENACT THE PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS.**

Center for Collaborative Conservation

Centennial Valley Association, Mont.

Greater Yellowstone Coalition

Heart of the Rockies

Madison Valley Ranchlands Group, Mont.

National Wildlife Federation

*Northeast Washington Wolf-Cattle
Collaborative*

*Rocky Mountain Front Ranchlands Group,
Mont.*

Ruby Valley Strategic Alliance, Mont.

Tom Miner Basin Association, Mont.

Western Landowners Alliance

Wood River Wolf Project, Idaho

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Lenny Kinglesmith, LK Ranch, Colo.

*Rae Nickerson, Utah State University**

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*Avery Shawler, University of California, Berkeley**

*Jay Shepherd, Northeast Washington Wolf-Cattle
Collaborative*

Nelson Shirley, Spur Lake Cattle Co.

Cat Urbigkit, Paradise Sheep Company, Wyo.

*Universities are mentioned only for identification purposes and not as an endorsement.

Previous page: A landowner identifies patterns of wolf-livestock conflict on his ranch in New Mexico to researchers and Western Landowners Alliance staff who will be working with him to understand how range riding on his property affects levels of conflict.

Current page: Photo courtesy of Unsplash