A Wolf Economy for Washington State?

Rancher perspectives on economic incentives for wolf damage to livestock

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Wolves were removed by 1930s

Reintroduced in the 1995

Recovered in some areas

... but again killed to protect the livestock industry.
Wolves in Washington State

[Map showing wolf packs in Washington State, with images of wolves.]
State Agencies and NGOs willing to off-set costs

“The ranchers’ plight is of great concern and must be dealt with in good faith and in recognition of economic reality.” - Tompkins (2002) in Welfare Ranching

Compensation programs

Technical and financial support for non-lethal measures
  e.g. Wood River Project, ID
  Blackfoot challenge, MT

Research to quantify impact of wolves on livestock
Attitudes and Costs Toward Wolves

Rural residents, Livestock producers
- Unfavourable & conflict

Urban residents
- Favorable & compassionate feelings

Killing wolf pack cost state $77,000
By Associated Press | Published: Nov 14, 2012 at 11:16 AM PDT | Last Updated: Nov 14, 2012
Objectives & Methods

Objectives

Talk with ranchers to explore probable economic incentives to prevent economic losses

To identify conditions under which ranchers would participate in which economic incentives

Methods

Key informant and focus group interviews (n=49)

Open ended questions about their views on various incentives for offsetting costs

Interviews lasted on average 49 minutes

Recorded and transcribed verbatim

Coded in themes (in Nvivo v.10.)

Surveys will follow
Common themes across all responses

All economic incentives were at first equated to compensation.

“Talking about the state compensation it's just a band aid, it's not solving any of the problems but just gives us a band aid because we're stuck with this problem, a tremendous problem for cattlemen.”

Burdensome paperwork

“I would prefer to take care of ranch issues than spend time...trying to get funds from the state, to prove there was in fact a wolf kill as opposed to a coyote kill as opposed to a cat kill...”

Loss of their independence

“I’d feel bribed... being paid to live with the wolves.”
Common themes across all responses

Each ranching operation is unique
“... that could work for some but not me.”

Privacy issues
“we get into ranching because [pause] it is our lifestyle. We like to be by ourselves not overcrowded by people.”

Independent rancher = Independent America
Economic incentives discussed

1. Predator-friendly beef (Through Certification)

2. Agri-tourism

3. Range-riders

4. Community services (e.g. college scholarships)

5. Annual check to implement risk-reduction measures
# Predator-friendly beef

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Negatives</th>
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<tr>
<td>Niche market</td>
<td>Not a popular certification</td>
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<td>“...that might work really well on the west side of the state.”</td>
<td>No time to find new markets</td>
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<td>Considered as a value addition</td>
<td>“We sold at a farmers market for a while, it takes a lot of time and with all the other farm work to do.”</td>
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<td>“...I think that trend will happen. People are starting to trust those supermarkets less and less, for food safety and nutrition..”</td>
<td>Cattlemen sell cows and not beef</td>
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<td>Lost of genetics – less quality herd</td>
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<td><strong>Agri-tourism</strong> e.g. Howl tours in Algonquin Park, Ontario</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Positives</strong></td>
<td><strong>Negatives</strong></td>
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<td>Would work in a National Park</td>
<td>Infrastructure and liability issues</td>
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<td>Sport-hunting of wolves a recreation</td>
<td>Catchy only when new</td>
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<td>“I think there would be money in selling wolf hunts... if we were given land-owner tags to go kill a wolf, I think there would be more money in that than people paying money to come see wolf-friendly range type.”</td>
<td>Violates rancher’s privacy</td>
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<td>Opportunity to enlighten urban people about the advantages of ranching</td>
<td>Ranchers not tour guides</td>
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<td>Positives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides constant attention to the herd</td>
<td>Cannot ride at night; wolves hunt at night</td>
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<td>Young and sick are helped and removed</td>
<td>Rough terrain (not like Montana)</td>
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<td>Learn more about one’s cows and about wolf behavior</td>
<td>Wolves will get habituated to the harmless range-rider.</td>
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<td>Strangers frighten cows</td>
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Community services

e.g. college scholarships, community tourism, wolf library

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<td>Could work for some</td>
<td>Ranchers don’t want handouts to live with wolves</td>
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<td>“I think there could be a plus there for the community, but to what degree, I don't know.”</td>
<td>“if I'm out two thousand dollars for a calf kill, I'd like to have that two thousand dollars, but on the other hand I'm kinda holding back saying, who's trying to control me?”</td>
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<td>Outreach tool for both rural and urban residents</td>
<td>Not enough money in the State</td>
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<td>“In the end, financial help is good and it's going to be important, but it's the understanding: people have got to understand where everybody's coming from.”</td>
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### Annual check for risk-reduction measures

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<td>Better than compensation for dead animals</td>
<td>Unnecessary Increased taxes</td>
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<td>“If you come to me with a check to offset my wolf costs, if it was to pay for dead animals I wouldn’t accept it, ...but if it is for additional riders or something like that, there is a chance I’d take it.”</td>
<td>“I’m not a fan of higher taxes, so those taxes gonna have to come from somewhere.”</td>
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<td>Could work if no strings are attached</td>
<td>Has to be done in perpetuity</td>
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<td>“No, I don’t like your money except if it were for some proactive deal like additional riders.”</td>
<td>“The fact that you want to offer it for two years until we get into a delisting and then throw it back in our face and come up with more political obstacles so that we cannot control it that is really unacceptable.”</td>
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<td>Will promote abuse of system and greed</td>
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Other suggestions from ranchers

Avail the rancher tools to protect their livestock

“Let me have the tools to deal with predators within my livelihood and not have to take money from anyone.”

Create a Wolf Trust Fund

Wolf insurance

County-level Tax or beef-surcharge for pro-wolf people only

Implement offsets through farm bureau or existing ag-related agency
Themes beyond economics

Feelings of helplessness with a possibility of a loss of a lifestyle

Distrust of State agencies managing wolves

‘Quasi’ science to favor wolves

“Are scientists in danger of sanctifying the wolf?”

Wolves being used by politicians to get public’s votes

Cultural divide - Rural WA vs Urban WA
Concluding Remarks

Ranchers’ appreciated being listened to

Consider feelings and perceptions
  • Promotes participation
  • Saves resources, time

Work at ranch-scale

There is opportunity to implement more than one offset option to a single operation
Concluding Remarks

Obvious dichotomy in what ranchers would prefer from what the state could provide.

Address extra themes that arose are important in making any economic measures work.

This study sets ground for quantitative work to enable generalizations of the observed patterns.
Thank you

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Questions?

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