

CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Notes

June 7, 2006

Attendance: Bryce Christensen, Mike Moore, Dwayne Andrews, Ginger Omland, John Ensign, John Little, Steve Atwood, Warren Broeder, Mary Zeiss Stange, Julie Jordan, Mark Forman, Arthur Hayes III, Todd Steadman, Greg Mohr, Rob Reukauf, and Jim Schaefer.

John Wilkinson, Chris Pileski, Larry Woolston, and Brad Schmitz were absent.

Bryce Christensen, Regional Supervisor, began the meeting by welcoming everyone and reviewing the agenda. He then introduced Tom Burch, Region 6 CAC member.

Tom Burch, R-6 CAC Member

Tom gave a brief autobiography of himself before beginning an excellent presentation of the Fort Peck Fish Hatchery funding issue involving the Warm Water Fish stamp.

House Bill 20, passed in 1999, authorizing a Warm Water Sport Fish surcharge and a multi-species hatchery for Montana, to be located at Fort Peck. Since 1999, with the input and cooperation of many groups and individuals, federal authorization was passed to build a \$20 million dollar Fort Peck Hatchery. As a part of House Bill 20, the only dollars that could be spent for operations and maintenance (O&M) at this facility would be from the sales of a new Warmwater Stamp.

Since sales began, the average of \$225,000 annually has been raised. However, with operations and maintenance costs, the question is how to generate \$300,000 in additional annual funding to fully operate Fort Peck Hatchery into the future.

R-6 CAC subcommittee have received recommendations from groups and individuals who have wanted to retain the warm water stamp and/or increase the fee in fishing licenses. Tom presented the R-6 CAC recommendations which are as follows:

- Direct FWP to initiate legislation to revise HB20/SB298 to allow revenue from fishing license sales to augment funding of the Fort Peck Hatchery;
- Require all (resident and non-resident) anglers fishing in the Eastern and Central Fishing Districts and designated waters in the Western Fishing District to have a Warmwater Stamp;
- Direct revenue from the Warmwater Stamp to operations and maintenance costs at the state's warmwater hatcheries.

Tom stressed the importance of changing legislation.

The meeting was then opened for discussion to the Region 7 CAC members regarding this issue.

Todd S. asked what would be involved to have legislation changed.

Rob R. thought it would be a good idea to raise the fishing license fee for everyone and forget the warm water stamp since cold water fisheries are funded by license fees.

Greg M. asked if anyone had been to see the hatchery at Ft. Peck because he was amazed that such a great place was not in operation.

Mike Moore, R-7 Enforcement, commented that the warm water stamp has been a "nightmare" for enforcement. He also questioned the language regarding not being able to raise trout at the hatchery.

Rob R. suggested that the warm water fish hatchery be run in the most efficient manner possible without species restrictions.

Todd S. gave the example of the upland bird stamp which is good statewide. He contended that the majority of people would not mind paying a small increase in license fees and it would also be a progressive issue to bring more money to the state.

It was the general consensus of R-7 CAC that the whole thing was being made too difficult and the simple thing to do would be to raise fishing license fees statewide.

Greg M. made a motion that the R-7 CAC's stance on the hatchery issue would be to dispense of the warm water stamp and add a fee, for example, \$5.00 to all fishing licenses. Rob R. seconded the motion. Art H. asked if anyone disagreed and they did not.

Region 7 CAC will make this recommendation and present it to Fish, Wildlife, and Parks.

John Little, Regional Parks Manager - River Access

John Little gave a great presentation on river access in Region 7. He stated that of the combined 500 river miles, there are only 17 FWP managed access points. Fifteen on the Yellowstone and two on the Tongue. The goal for river access is to have one fishing access site every 10 to 15 river miles. He related that \$1 of each resident fishing license and \$5 of each nonresident fishing license sold go to the department's FAS program. The cost of development of these sites is quite substantial because of maintenance such as roads, boat ramps, latrines, signs, etc. There are also obstacles in obtaining these sites such as riverbanks, diversion dams and railroads which create quite a large additional expense. Ideally, the best sites are those that are located immediately below a hardened point such as a highway or railroad bridge, no further than a half mile from a county or state road, have low gradient banks and a similar river bottom profile with a well cemented bottom.

Rob R. suggested the old Terry Bridge north of Terry be looked at for a fishing access site.

Todd S. wondered about FAS on Ft. Keogh to which John replied that it was difficult because of needing to get the combination from Ft. Keogh.

Mike M. asked for a comparison from east to west in fishing access sites to which John said there were 304 FAS sites statewide, with Region 7 having 20 of those.

Dwayne Andrews, Regional Information Officer - Access Montana

Dwayne gave a very informative power point presentation on access issues.

Region 7 Issues are:

- Block Management steady but static
- Landowner culture is changing
- Ranches sold and access now denied
- Non-resident landowner recreational buyer.

Habitat Montana Program

- FWP program that provides funding for Conservation Easements
- HB 526 passed in 1987 earmarked license revenue to secure wildlife habitat through lease, conservation easement or fee title.
- Protects threatened habitats, example riparian, sagebrush/grassland
- Easement terms are in perpetuity
- Provides for public access to the property

Issues

- Fee hunting and outfitting
- Friends and family
- Analysis to determine if the region has an access problem for hunting
- Cooperative effort: FWP, DNRC and BLM

Dwayne also covered the Hay Draw project in Powder River and Carter counties. He gave the details and timeline for this project and the extensive on-the-ground efforts made by FWP, BLM and DNRC. The Knowlton Travel Management Project was explained as yet another way to address the access issue. Dwayne also explained Region 7 efforts in the Access Montana program and the signing of accessible State and BLM land. He supplemented this with maps displaying waypoints which gave sign locations. This is a cooperative effort between FWP, DNRC and BLM. Region 7 has developed two funding proposals for the Montana Fish & Wildlife Trust. It appears the Rooney easement will be funded and the Coulter Habitat and Recreation Easement will not.

Rob R. asked if there was any priority in access issues and Greg M. suggested that GPS coordinates be added to the maps.

Rob Reukauf (CAC) Presentation

Rob R. gave an interesting and excellent presentation which he had developed for the Citizen Advisory Council for the "Off-hunting Season Access." He contended that there were three types of people, other than hunters, to use the land. Those that would use the land for:

1. Cultural and historic experiences.
Old homesteader descendents.
Indian sites.
2. Wildlife viewing, hiking, horseback riding and camping and;

3. Varmint hunters and trappers.

He commented that the landowners residing in these areas would be the best to direct folks where to go since they have the best knowledge of the sites. He suggested a funding mechanism through the block management program to allow year round access. Compensation could be provided by a 5% payment of their block management payment as a starting point for year round access. FWP could keep a database of what landowner attractions there were and direct people to them.

Art H. suggested removing the Indian sites as an attraction because he lives by a reservation and is aware of the sensitivity associated with such.

Mary Z. commented that block management is a great program but that a lot of landowners liked it because it limited the amount of time outsiders spend on their land and wondered if year round access would be a problem.

Warren B. asked how you would advertise to let tourists know about attractions.

Rob R. suggested "Travel Montana," billboards, etc.

Jim S. has attended meetings on marketing recently and said cultural and historical experiences were among the top of the list.

Once again, Rob stressed that the first step is access and then to figure out how to market attractions. Bryce agreed that the key point is public access and that with public access, there is great value to a community. "You are not purchasing just access, but institutional wisdom," Rob said.

Todd S. remarked that the resources are there with opportunities abounding but the challenge is how to fund, without private profit, and for the benefit of Eastern Montana and to market attractions to bring people in from interstate.

At that point, Dwayne commended the CAC members stating that direction was beginning to take shape.

Public Comments

Keith H. agreed with Rob's comments on types of resources such as varmint hunters bringing in revenue. He would like FWP to publish a list of landowners who would like these people on their land. He suggested the list could be funded by advertisement from business owners who would also distribute these lists. He also said the parks in eastern Montana are a great asset and that some are not advertised as extensively as they could be.

Closing

Bryce thanked Keith for his comments and asked if there were any other issues or comments from anyone.

Todd S. said he would like to see landowner sponsor applications be completed on the ALS machines possibly by assigning the landowner ranch an ALS number or at least some way to simplify the process online.

Mary Z. asked about non-resident deer B tags and quotas. She said they are overrun with deer but yet nonresidents do not seem to be able to draw tags. John E. explained that the quotas would be set in July before the drawing.

CAC members felt that Helena needs to return unsuccessful applications to the hunter with an explanation of what they did wrong and not just the refund.

In closing, Bryce challenged the CAC members to continue to seek access solutions, ideas, and thoughts to present at the next meeting. He said other regions have composed subcommittees to work on certain issues.

The next meeting will be August 16, 2006 beginning at 4:00 p.m. Art suggested hunting access issues only be discussed at the next meeting.