

REGION 7
CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Notes
January 16, 2008

FWP ATTENDANCE: Bryce Christensen, Mike Moore, John Ensign, Dwayne Andrews, Ginger Omland, and John Little.

CAC ATTENDANCE: Rob Reukauf, Art Hayes, Julie Jordan, Greg Mohr, Jim Schaefer, Chris Pileski, Fulton Castleberry, Scott Studiner, Warren Broeder, Mark Forman, and Todd Steadman

ABSENT: Mary Zeiss Stange

Bryce welcomed everyone and asked the CAC members to give a brief background and introduce themselves. Two new members were introduced.

Bryce credited the CAC for some accomplishments in the past year. One was the potential of a new FAS to the Yellowstone River by the Terry, MT bridge. This effort was initiated by Rob R. Another was a FAS in the Ashland area on the Tongue River that Scott S. initiated. Another was the CAC recommendation on the FT Peck Hatchery funding issue.

Dwayne summarized the contents of each packet which was given to the CAC members.

TENTATIVE WILDLIFE PROPOSALS – John Ensign, FWP Wildlife Manager

Lots to cover and proposals that have generated a lot of intense interest. For the sake of time and getting your views aired I will first describe all the proposals – then try to answer questions and take comments. Jot down questions/comments. Follow “Dear Interested Person” letter focusing on Region 7.

- 1) Hunting season dates - fixed or traditional (pg2)
- 2) Quotas – set every other year (like season setting) quota ranges set every other yr or annual
- 3) Missouri Breaks archery – change from unlimited to limited permits (pg3-4)
- 4) Custer Forest archery - change from unlimited general archery to limited archery by permit
- 5) ES elk permit waiting period for districts where odds are <10% (pg4)
- 6) 900 archery antelope - change from gen. unlimited licenses to limited archery licenses (pg8)
- 7) Mountain Lion – go back to combining fall and winter season (pg9)

- 8) Institute pheasant youth season (pg9)
- 9) Institute wolf season (pg10)
- 1) Hunting season dates -
 - Big game = 5 weeks backdated from the Sunday after Thanksgiving vs 10/25-11/30
 - 5 out 7 years mid week opener/close vs traditional Sunday
 - Some dates already fixed - upland bird start, spring black bear, winter lion
 - +) more consistency planning trips; may reduce opening day crowding
 -) kids out of school; mid week time off from work
- 2) Quotas - set annually after surveys or set quotas within a commission approved range based on previous quotas. Approved every other year. Should a catastrophic event occur - still adjust quotas
 - +) speed up process of issuing permits – permits issued earlier

Preface 3 archery proposals – been hearing rumblings about these for several years has been building – came to a crescendo. Proposals are meant to address ongoing, multifaceted, SOCIAL issues that keep coming up to which there has been no acceptable solution. THE QUESTION Do these proposals present a potential viable solution, are they worth taking a gamble and trying or if not what would? First centered Missouri Breaks Elk archery where loudest, longest and most focused – expanded into other elk districts where ES rifle permits are limited and ES archery permits are unlimited and the 900 antelope archery license again where rifle is limited and archery unlimited – where similar issues are emerging or anticipated

- Crowding – Breaks (CNF)
- Equity of opportunity – rifle vs archery – permit vs unlimited
- Bull harvest rates rifle vs archery – some areas where archery exceeds rifle - concerns about effects on age structure
- Resident vs nonresident participation and harvest - quotas – 10% limit on NR, Some unlimited districts exceed 30% NR – Areas where NR bull harvest exceeds R harvest
- Unlimited nature of permits/license confers an annual “guaranteed” status - which some feel results in increased exclusive use – leasing – which reduces management effectiveness / ability and erodes public opportunity. Diminishes public’s access to public’s wildlife
- If proposal is implemented in Breaks and not in other limited rifle areas concern of a shift of hunters to other general areas – compounding problems in these areas.

Result in significant negative social and economic affects

Put people out of business

Limit landowners’ ability to manage their land

Affect property values

Issue does not belong in this forum – belongs in PLPW

Affect local tax base

Will only result in a loss/disruption of opportunity and hunter participation

Will not open more gates and may result more closed land
Counter to efforts to reduce wildlife in areas where wildlife are over objective
Disproportionately affects NR- Breaks = Federal Public lands

Set of charts - Mo Breaks, CF EMU, 900 arch

3) Breaks proposal 820 = 75% 3 yr average of permits issued - Ave 27% to NR
Includes 3 yr ave archery hunters in HD 701
Proposal calls for 2nd or 3rd choice unlimited antlerless archery (4-20 annual harvest presently)

620s, 410, 417, 700 goes from 5160 to 3870 = 1290 reduction in permits HD630s = 300 permits

Permit levels as a portion of 2007 permits = 94% R – 29% NR

Breaks wild card - of the permits issued typically 45% are actually used of 1000 issued only 450 used – 2007 41% of R and 60% NR actually hunted. How many will put in 1st choice (2007 80R & 81NR OTC - 66R & 43NR 1st choice)

Bull Harvest ave 40% archery (55% in 2004) ave 53% NR (63% in 03)

Rifle success 45-70% - Res arch 5-14% success – NR arch 13-24% success (actl hunted)

4) Custer Forest proposal 440 = 90% of 3yr ave archery hunters- Ave 28% NR

Proposal calls for 2nd or 3rd choice unlimited antlerless archery (0 presently)

Reduction of 50

Permit levels as a portion of 2006 = 20% above R – 40% NR

Assume similar applicant levels in '08 as '06 – 65 excess permits for R – revert to NR = 109NR permits

CF wild card – unknown how many residents (NR) will apply

Bull Harvest ave 49% archery (52% in 2004) ave 53% NR (70% in 06)

Rifle success 34-52% - Res arch 3-6% success – NR arch 9-24% success

5) ES elk permit waiting period for districts where odds are 10% or less – 4 year wait

2007:

700 = 200 permits – 30 landowner-20 NR / 1484 1st choice = 10.1%

702-4 = 150 permits – 23 landowner – 7 NR / 1149 = 10.4%

6) Antelope 900 4500 = 91% of 3 yr ave licenses issued (4944) - ave 21% NR

License levels as a portion of 2007 = 94% R – 36% NR

Harvest archery = 4% of total antelope 6% buck and <2% doe

Proposal would reduce buck harvest by 500 (3%) and overall by 656 (2%)

Concern expressed that access is being lost for very little harvest

Only BG ES license that is available to both R & NR in unlimited/unrestricted fashion

The original intention of this license was to provide resident archery hunters with increased opportunity to archery hunt antelope:

1st allowing them to hunt virtually the entire state where antelope occur;

2nd providing an additional 2 weeks of archery hunting from August 15 to the beginning of general archery season in September.

The unlimited availability of these licenses has had the unintended result of decreasing opportunity by reducing access to private land. The license is now referred to as:

“Montana’s guaranteed nonresident antelope archery license”

“Outfitter-sponsored guaranteed antelope archery license”

“Montana’s guaranteed, self guided antelope archery hunt....access private land without the added costs associated with an outfitter or guide service”

“excellent archery antelope hunts....licenses are unlimited....My outfitters have a ranch that is about 70,000 acres and another that is 20,000 acres... exclusively archery hunting”

With the unlimited nature of the license, individuals or groups of individuals are assured that if they lease ground for their or their clients exclusive use that license(s) for use on that property have a guaranteed availability.

Still have the ability to archery hunt w/ regular ES – not early and district specific

- 7) Mountain Lion – go back to general season combining fall and winter season rather than having to validate for fall or winter (pg9)
Intent was to dampen a potential hunter shift when districts R1 & R2 went from general to permit
- 8) Institute pheasant youth season (pg9)
similar to youth (12-15 yr) waterfowl – weekend (10/4 &5) before general opener
- 8) Institute wolf season (pg10)
Contingent upon delisting
3 WMUs - Northern MT – SW MT- Southern MT
Hunting season 9/15 –11/30 - 75% of quota
Trapping season 12/-12/31 - 25% of quota – by permit MORATORIUM NO TRAPPING 1st yr

Est 400 wolves 85 packs 37 breeding pairs - have to have 10 BPs, 15 = buffer
130 wolf quota

Rob asked about outfitters and what their reactions are to the proposals. John replied that it is the same issues i.e. taking away the source of income for them, put them out of business etc. Rob stated that most of the funding for the block management program comes from nonresident hunters so why cut the numbers of outfitted nonresidents.

Todd S. said there could be a potential enforcement issue with the permit for unlimited antlerless archery elk permits in the breaks.

Art asked if under the proposal would you have to use that permit or could you still hunt in rest of state? John replied you could hunt the rest of the state.

Mike M. commented that some of the breaks archery is already on permit (HD 630, 631, 632) because of same issues so this is not new. John said in R6, it has worked very well.

Todd S. commented that from last night's meeting (WL Tentative Meeting in Miles City) there seemed to be a distinction being made between 410, the breaks, and the Custer Forest. This is not an outfitting issue cause it is on public land. Why blanket the proposal for all hunting districts in the breaks and Custer? They understand having that in Regions 4 and 6. He thought everyone would accept it.

Art and Scott thought Ashland folks were in support of the archery proposals because of the possible overcrowding.

Scott said Ashland has a 30% unemployment rate and a high poverty area so proposals that help support that community are acceptable.

Todd S. commented that looking at the Custer Forest proposal of 396 permits would be an increase in hunting pressure in short term.

Art thought people would be happy if the numbers would remain the same in Ashland and they would not like to see it become like the breaks.

Todd said last night there was a real focus to limit the nonresident when looking at real numbers, but in turn it may bring more western Montana hunters to the breaks and the forest.

Art thought it would actually help the rifle permits draw since they would have to apply for the archery.

Warren B. asked who was against this. Was it the outfitters or bowhunters association? John said it was kind of a mixed bag. Warren asked if the theory behind this is that it will reduce the pressure of elk on the landowners.

Art thought the theory behind it was to keep the elk on the forest creating less pressure.

Todd said visiting with bowhunters and sportsman, outfitters leasing private ground to archery elk and antelope will not exist if proposal passes. Therefore, the landowner will not be happy if land is not being leased by outfitter and will not open to general public for hunting but will in turn give a group of private people who already have tags an opportunity to lease private ground for top dollars.

Rob said from looking at charts, if he was outfitter or business owner, he would be upset because of the economic loss.

Scott said it is not an economic thing for Ashland. Bryce said it came up last night that it was economic issue for Broadus outside the Custer Forest.

Scott said that he tries to represent the citizens in his area which also includes over 4000 Northern Cheyenne.

John went over the 900 archery antelope proposals.

Art said the way the archery 900 tags are increasing every year it will have to be addressed at some point and was concerned that there may be more archery hunters than rifle hunters.

Todd S. said regarding the 900 antelope archery proposal, he doesn't believe any outfitter would be out of business or go broke and that nonresident hunts with outfitters would be much less than now.

Art asked about season changing dates. He didn't see any reason for it and asked why they wanted that.

John said it makes it more concrete and easier for everyone to figure out when that season is so nonresidents could plan vacation time. John said comments have been running 50-50 on the dates.

Chris said of all the seasons, archery season would be the only one shortened with the fixed dates proposal.

Fulton said that FWP might receive more comments on the youth pheasant hunt because of communities involved with establishing youth hunting opportunities.

John addressed the deer damage and deer damage hunts in Colstrip and that Ekalaka was also having a problem with deer damage in town. He said they were waiting to hear from Helena to review the plan for any damage hunts in the town of Ekalaka.

Fulton commented that an attempt on the deer damage in Ekalaka would be good PR for FWP.

Greg Mohr – FORT PECK HATCHERY FUNDING GROUP

Greg reported that the group narrowed their findings down to three issues and from those three issues, narrowed it down to two issues which will be put out to the CAC's and gather their input. From there it would go back to Helena and through the channels before the next legislative session.

The original three were:

1. Continue funding the operations with warm water stamp funds augmented with Wallop/Breaux funds, federal mitigation funding, and federal funding for pallid sturgeon or another source.
2. Raise the cost of warm water stamp from five dollars to ten dollars.
3. Drop the warm water stamp and replace with general license dollars. Remove the restrictions on species raised at the hatchery. This would include an increase in both resident and non-resident fees.

From there, we came up with two proposals that are going to be discussed/refined and brought out to the CAC's for comments.

1. Raise the cost of the warm water stamp from five dollars to eight dollars and continue funding the operations with the warm water stamp funds augmented with Wallop/Breaux and federal mitigation funding and federal funding and not removing restrictions on what may be raised at the hatchery.
2. Remove the warm water stamp statute from current law. The fishing license fee for residents and nonresidents would be raised between one and two dollars. The restrictions on species raised at the hatchery will be removed but raising warm water fish to meet stocking requests developed by the biologists will be the top priority of the facility. An advisory committee would be established that would participate in an advisory capacity to the biologists as they develop their stocking requests for fish produced at the hatchery.

Art asked Greg to give the two new CAC members a little background on the Fort Peck Hatchery funding issue.

Bryce asked of the two proposals going forward, would that group support either one?

Greg thought there would be a certain percentage that will never support it but he thought there would be enough support that they would have the consensus to get it done.

Jim S. asked who would be making the final decision on the two proposals?

Greg said it would be put out to all the CAC's in the state. Once there is a vote, it will be taken to the governor's office.

Bryce said we are up against the governor's vow of no tax increases and they consider that a tax increase.

Greg said a formal letter would be sent to the CAC's asking for which option they would want.

Art asked if anyone disagreed with option #2.

Greg's position was in support of dropping the warm water stamp and replacing it by raising the cost of the general license to both resident and nonresidents to make up the difference.

Bryce said that it seems the R-7 CAC has a pretty clear message regarding this issue and commended this group for taking the lead, in the state, on the warm water funding project for the hatchery.

ACCESS ISSUES

Art H. suggested that hunters come in and spend a day working on a block management ranch. Art said perhaps something could be added to the sign-in boxes at the block management sights for signing up to help out a day on a particular ranch. Mike suggested sportsmen could help put up stackyards for game damage.

Rob R. said Custer Rod and Gun Club gave away gate latches which created good public relations with ranchers.

Warren Broeder asked about the deer fence east of Miles City along both sides of the interstate between MC and Terry and what the ramps were for which are an escape route for any deer that may get trapped inside.

Todd and Art asked if there was going to be more of the deer fence constructed perhaps on secondary roads to which John responded that the money is targeted for Interstate and not secondary roads.

Todd asked if anyone knew how many deer were hit in Montana. Ginger checked on the number of deer hit on highways in southeastern Montana with MDOT in Helena. The following table was sent to us with the wild animal – vehicle collisions recorded by the enforcement agencies, recognizing that numerous animal – vehicle collisions do not get investigated:

| <u>Route</u> | <u>From To</u> | <u># of carcasses*</u> <u>2002 – 2006</u> | <u>#of wild animal-vehicle</u> <u>collisions 2002 – 2006</u> <u>(MHP database)</u> |
|---------------------|-----------------------|--|---|
| 1-94 | Hysham – Miles City | 287 | 136 |
| 1-94 | Miles City – Glendive | 120 | 224 |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|----|
| US-12 (P-2) Miles City – Baker | 149 | 20 |
| MT 59S (N-23) Miles City – Broadus | 50 | 28 |
| MT 59N (P-18) Miles City – Jordan | 05 | 12 |

*Incomplete database, as not all maintenance sections report carcasses picked up along the highways.

MDOT also enclosed maps showing animal-vehicle collisions across the state which were from 2006.

Art suggested changing to an earlier season for hunting regarding access as far as wildlife moving to different areas because of weather. He said in Eastern Montana there are more deer on the public ground earlier than there is during the rut. A later season in Eastern Montana would be great for access but in western Montana would be a disaster because of weather. Lots of discussion followed. Art would suggest moving the season up.

Todd brought up the issue of raising prices for outfitter-sponsored licenses. He said the bottom line is that overpricing tags will change clientele that will be coming to Montana and those clients will be clients that will be able to financially afford to buy up land in Montana.

Rob R. brought up the issue of spring turkey season not being under the Block Management program and ranchers not getting paid for all the hunters who want to hunt turkey in the spring. Rob thought that species should be added to the BM contract.

John answered the option is still out there for adding that to the program.

Scott asked if John had the number of turkey licenses sold. Ginger checked with licensing in Helena and as of December 7, 2007 there were 10,397 resident fall turkey sold and 12,645 resident spring turkey sold. Nonresidents purchased 679 fall turkey and 788 spring turkey licenses.

John said the turkey federation folks would like to develop some type of program similar to block management for spring turkey.

Fulton asked about lowering prices for nonresidents for deer population control.

Todd said even if we gave doe tags away, he isn't sure how many of those would actually fill their doe tags. He also thought that the CWD transportation laws into other states might be affecting the number of doe tags that nonresidents are actually purchasing and filling.

Bryce agreed with Fulton that residents will not kill as many doe as nonresidents and that maybe prices should be lowered for nonresidents.

Jim S. asked if there is a limit of number of outfitter licenses that can be sold in Montana.

Bryce said that cap was put on at about 550 licenses and it was his understanding that we have never reached that cap.

Todd gave a brief explanation of outfitter procedures, NCHU and obtaining licenses.

Bryce adjourned the meeting.

NEXT R-7 CAC MEETING WILL BE HELD WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2008