



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region 3 Citizens' Advisory Committee Gardiner, MT August 9, 2007

CAC Attendees: Leroy Mehring, Sam Samson, Amy McNamara, Michael Leach, Craig Sharpe, Ted Coffman, Meg Smith, Cynthia Andrus, Rick Arnold, Bob Gibson, Ed Peretti, Al Harmata

Absent: Tom Barnes, Joe Cohenour, Sandy Sallee, and Marina Smith

FWP Staff: Pat Flowers, Mel Frost, Sam Sheppard, Bruce Rich, Jerry Walker, Kurt Alt, Caroline Sime, Brian Giddings, Quentin Kujala, Kari Janikula, Joan Buhl, Winston Greeley

Guests: Bill Hoppe, Andy O'Hair, Bruce Malcolm, Lisa Upson, Laurie & Dan Lyman, Dan Vermillion, Dave Molebash, Jennifer Madgic, Bob Ebinger, JP Pomnichowski, Richard Kinkie, Druska Kinkie, Rachel Kinkie, Ariel Overstreet, Phil Anderson, Alan Redfield

Pat Flowers: Welcome, introductions, background of CAC

Additions to agenda:

- Stream rehab projects in region including spawning beds and grounds for certain species; westslope cutthroat trout habitat in upper Missouri River Basin; connection of main stems and headwaters for reintroduction of westslope cutthroat, stream access, river access and usage and potential limitations of usage, i.e. river etiquette and regs.
- List of issues and opportunities from Public Lands Association were handed out from R5.
- Ability to coordinate road closures with different groups that are vital to public access. Coordination of maintaining access – FWP weigh in on the closures (clearinghouse – FWP take role to maintain access)
- Bison killed in West Yellowstone (Buffalo Field Campaign)

Pat reviewed agenda and procedures of the meeting.

Public Comments:

- In the 50's, FWP wanted to transplant elk in area. Prominent ranch families said no, there is a serious problem with elk. 1990's wolves were opposed. We don't like them, but we have to live with them. Now faced with bison, we don't want them. Let the Park deal with them. We're suffering from these bison being out. Not helping the livestock issue. Opposed to bison--keep them in the Park. The more pressure put on us and us trying to make a living, the more you're going to see the open space disappear. The most prosperous thing you're going to see is houses.
- Understands both sides of wolf issues. Realizes the feelings of the people. Maybe there is a way to make money or marketability for these people (wolves). There needs to be people to people understanding – connection is missing. Maybe wolves can be used some way to benefit both. People will pay to hear wolves, see wolves, etc.

Season setting process and public interaction for initial wolf season development - Carolyn Sime and Quentin Kujala. Engage public via the CAC.

Carolyn Sime – Overview

- Development of public harvest strategies for gray wolves in Montana
- Wolf management plan and legal requirements developed by FWP in 2004
- Looking what we'll do after wolf is delisted and what FWP needs to consider
- Emphasis on population monitoring, research, outreach
- Maintain 10 breeding pairs
- Different ecologies and biology of wolves between Montana and YNP
- Adaptive Management – greater than 15 pairs

Quentin Kujala – Season setting considerations and development

- Wolf license created in 2007 legislature
- Population objectives and monitoring
- Management flexibility above 15 breeding pairs (number of wolves detected vs. number of breeding pairs)
- Timing of harvest
- Opportunity & harvest allocation
- Harvest monitoring
- Timelines (Commission and Public Interaction)
 - August-September – FWP introduces process to CAC and others
 - September – Commission work session – public input welcome
 - October-November informal discussions
 - December – proposal introduced with public comments, tentative adopted by Commission
 - January – public comments at meetings across state directed to adopted tentative
 - February – public comments, changes to tentative. Final adopted by Commission

- Spring 2008 harvest quotas proposed and adopted by Commission through established tentative/final process
- All contingent with delisting

Comments/questions/concerns on wolf season setting and development

- Nothing included on wolves preying on livestock.
- Does FWP have any intentions of managing wolf beyond 15 pairs? Are we going to keep it at 15 packs? Is 15 the target or is there a target?
- Would like to see a ceiling if it's not going to be the 15 breeding pairs. Set a number – concerned there is no top number for managing these wolves. We need to know the maximum number of wolves we are going to be dealing with.
- Management objective was given to us in 1994. Are we going to do the 15 pairs or are we going to go up?
- Elk herd numbers have consistently gone down in management objectives and wolf objectives gone up.
- Are we applying the same reasoning with wolves as we are for lions? Why can't we do this with wolves?
- Is 15 breeding pairs going to be the number.
- Can the limit go to infinity? Everything appeals to the federal government and not how it's going to pertain to us locally.
- Trying to get the public to buy in, but what's been presented is to appease federal government.
- All depends on delisting. What if they're not delisted? Is Montana prepared if this is tied up in litigation for the next 10 years?
- Wolves are increasing 20% a year. Cost to livestock producers, nonresident hunters, how are we going to get compensation?
- Trapping may be a part of wolf management and more effective on the landscape. Let a specific number of trappers use this method of take.
- Quotas would be more effective than permit system. Trapping could be very effective.
- Wolves totally different than lions.
- Will FWP reconsider their incremental approach to dealing with livestock depredation? Cost – we can use that money for other things. Not much room for a hunt – is it going to reduce livestock depredation?

Bison Management Issues Update (attachment) – Pat Flowers

- Review of bison management plan
- 22% harvest success in 2006
- Negotiations continue with Royal Teton Ranch to buy out their grazing rights and obtain an easement
- Update on quarantine feasibility study near Gardiner

Concerns:

- # of bison
- Same trap deadline in West Yellowstone and Gardiner

- Fencing the area – keep them on the west side of the county road
- 24 hour watch – swim across the river
- Feasibility – small amount of range you’re going to gain with RTR
- Increased risk of bison moving north – eliminate risk by taking cattle off the RTR
- Bison live in Eagle Creek yearlong – they eat with cows
- Need to operate under plan
- Effects of fencing on other species
- Human health issue – everyone can get brucellosis – it’s a human health issue – horses can get brucellosis. We need to manage numbers of bison moving north
- Elk and brucellosis
- Bison are an asset to economy of state. With RTR moving forward, will more hunting take place? Bison could be more elusive on that landscape. It would create more hunting opportunity.
- Why is the State of Montana in the business of population management of bison?
- The Park Service is not responsible. Start reduction inside Park. Get congressional delegations interested in this.
- Park Service is more aggressive getting bison out of this area than the West Side.
- In the plan on RTR, if you bypass private land and take away grazing rights, have you taken away property rights? Make sure private landowners are not impacted by what FWP does.
- Reduction of bison permits – don’t lose focus this is a depredation hunt and not just a sport hunt.

CAC Caucus:

Amy McNamara – need way to integrate the public in the dialogue. Some questions may not have been answered. Need to look again at the model. When we’re discussing a topic, members need to be able to ask questions first before it’s opened up for a broader and larger discussion. Make sure there’s exchange of questions and answers between members.

It’s valuable to hear the discussion.

Another way is to decide situational (hot topics), let Pat know if you want CAC forum first and then open up to the public.

Go to model all the time or play it by topic? Pat can make the judgment call.

Additional comments on bison/wolf

Bob Gibson: If CAC can make a recommendation to the Commission, recommend that the burden of responsibility of bison should be handled by the Park Service or make a recommendation that the State of Montana is withdrawing from the situation.

Ed Peretti: Date and season lengths not addressed in wolf discussion. Trapping and big game season wouldn’t work out together. If quotas are met in general season, trappers might not be happy.

Leroy Mehring: wolves are smart. Once they’re hunted, you won’t see them. Season lengths – first we have to get delisting, then get a hunt–get it established and then fine tune it from there. Adjust it accordingly for hunters and trappers after that.

Michael Leach: RTR – \$1.5 million from APHIS – has that been thrown out the window? If we don't have federal funding, it's not going to happen.

Ted Coffman: What are we getting for the \$1.5 million?

Pat Flowers: We are getting grazing rights for 30 years and getting the opportunity to let bison graze on the Forest Service going through the RTR. Does not include hunting rights. Hunting opportunity is actually north of their property.

CAC Topics

Pat Flowers: Pick a topic and focus on an outcome for accomplishment. For example, Region 5 is focusing on access and has seen some success.

Michael Leach: Work on trying to get conservation easement on Smith Ranch.

Ed Peretti: Invite Glenn Marx/Ron Marcoux to Boulder meeting to talk about conservation easements.

Rick Arnold: Continue work on access to streams, not access points; also maintaining laws. Need for more than just one group to be involved. Outcome: we need to come together on certain issues, discuss them, understand them and come to a consensus on our position.

Pat Flowers: We need to think about the process of doing this.

Ed Peretti: Everyone comes back with a list of access issues from their communities. Have Public Access group present how they're working on this. Discrepancies exist between counties, etc. Get involvement and some consistencies from county to county.

Craig Sharpe: Lots of other issues other than bridge access that we need to look at.

Bob Gibson: There are places that aren't easily accessible. There are places that should stay off limits.

Cyndi Andrus: Have a unified voice – interest from other regions, combine efforts.

Pat Flowers: Come back to next meeting and sort through issues and pick some key access problems that we could subcommittee out and work on (i.e. talking to commissioners, landowners, etc)

Sam Samson: Law already covers what we're asking. We need to talk to MACO and educate county commissioners and county attorneys on the laws. There needs to be a general trend on working toward this in the whole state. Define and clarify every road in the county in the next five years. This could be a start.

Pat Flowers: If this is a direction we want to head, come up with specific projects and work on it before next meeting or wait until the next meeting.

Sam Samson: Prescriptive easements can't be lead by a county they need to be lead by a citizen.

Cyndi Andrus: *Move to go back to our communities and look into all kinds of access issues and new access and bring back to the next meeting and discuss these issues. Hear what's going on and see what's common theme.*

Rick Arnold: *Seconded*

Leroy Mehring: Road issue bigger than stream issue. Road access, access sites, bridge access – identify issues in communities, then the group can narrow down what they want to look at.

Amendment: *Go through discussions, come to conclusion as a group--use CAC's power and opinion to influence other agencies/groups. Identify and give back to Pat.*

Pat Flowers: You may come back with some specific issues and then work on them together. Identify specific actionable items. Bring back specific issues/places.

Al Harmata: Once these issues are identified, what commitment do we have from FWP?

Pat Flowers: You have our commitment to carry your recommendation to the department. Research needs to be done by CAC members.

Vote: *motion carried.*

Rick Arnold: Overcrowding on rivers continues to get worse. Social conflict and rules and regulations have come about on the Big Hole. Wise for us to talk about overcrowding and things that go along with it. What's causing it? How can we eliminate it? Discuss it. What is the outcome if it continues? River etiquette needs to be a part of this. Needs to be expanded in the regs. Identify what etiquette truly is.

Social tolerance is what determines overcrowding.

Talk about this in the spring.

Want to pursue tools to educate on river etiquette.

Cyndi Andrus: The video, "Path to Eden," addresses some of the issues we talked about. Might be good to view this at one of the meetings. Spring meeting?

Fishing Regulation Process - Bruce Rich

2008 to 2011 period—every four years. Bruce will send out list of official tentatives sanctioned by the Commission. Public meetings will be held in August/September.

Commission will act on fishing regs in late October. Look for email from Bruce.

Pat Flowers: We could make recommendation on fishing regs and weigh in as a group and make a statement as a group.

Will have new biologist for the Big Hole area this fall in the area office in Butte. A tech will also be hired. Person will not cover Silver Bow Creek and upper Clark Fork.

Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting: Boulder – December 5, 2007