Meeting Notes

Region 5 Citizen Advisory Council Agenda

04/22/2008
5:30 PM to 9:30 PM
Fish, Wildlife & Parks
2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105

Meeting called by: Gary Hammond

Type of meeting: CAC Council Meeting

Facilitator: Gary Hammond

Note taker: Dianne Stiff

Attendees: Daniel Aadland, Douglas Dreeszen, Doug Haacke, Shawn Todd, Mike Whittington, Robert Willems, Greg Keller, Gary Hammond, Doug Habermann, Harold Guse, Dianne Stiff, Jim Darling, Bob Gibson, Ray Mule'

Absent: Dale Vermillion, Daniel Dutton, David Charles, Jed Evjene

Guest Attendees: John Polasky, Lane Larson, Taylor Brown, Alan Charles

Agenda Topics

5:30-6 p.m.	Welcome, Dinner & Conversation	Gary Hammond
6-6:30 p.m.	Issues of Concern	CAC Members
6:30-7:15 p.m.	R-5 & Statewide Acquisition Plans/Priorities	Joe Maurier
7:15-7:30 p.m.	Private Lands/Public Wildlife Access Program Update	Mike Penfold
7:30-8:15 p.m.	Communication Plan on 2008 Elk Archery Regs.	Bob Gibson
8:15-9:15 p.m.	Possible Solutions to Sportsman Access to Wildlife	Wildlife Manager
9:15-9:30 p.m.	Wrap Up & Schedule Next Meeting	Gary Hammond

Guest Presenters: Joe Maurier, Mike Penfold, Ron Aasheim

Welcome, Dinner & Conversation	Gary Hammond

Discussion: Bob Gibson, the new Information Officer for Region 5, was introduced to the council; the agenda was reviewed; and a seven minute DVD entitled "Montana" was shown.

Issues of Concern	CAC Members

Discussion:

Greg Keller – His ranch is overrun with elk and the herd is on the increase. As soon as the hunting season is over, the elk return from the adjoining property where hunting is not allowed. The last five days of the season were pretty good for hunters taking elk off his place.

Mike Whittington – Attended the Montana Wildlife Convention in Helena. There were 12 to 14 sportsmen's groups represented at this convention. The top four issues of 29 that were identified at the convention are 1. habitat threats from subdivision and energy development; 2. stream access at public road bridges; 3. landowner/sportsman relations; and 4. sportsmen's loss of access to public lands and wildlife.

Dan Aadland – He's received comments from hunters wondering why there are not more bison tags issued? Subdivision development on the floodplain in Stillwater County is a real problem.

Doug Dreeszen – Ray Mule', Shawn Stewart and Doug attended a meeting with the Wyoming Game and Fish who manage the Yellowtail Wildlife Habitat Management Area. They discussed the use of domestic goats for weed control being used in this management area. This area is close to the Pryor and Bighorn Mountains and may have an impact on the bighorn sheep population with the spread of disease. A letter will need to be written to someone at the Wyoming Game and Fish in Cheyenne.

Doug Haacke – He attended the conference call with the Bureau of Reclamation regarding flows on the Bighorn River. A big thank you to Jim Darling, Ken Frazer, Bob Gibson, Gary and others for all their hard work. In addition, Doug had several people approach him and want to extend their appreciation to FWP for doing such a good job with the recent hunting tentatives and changes there.

Bob Willems – He's satisfied with what FWP is trying to do and keep up the good work.

Shawn Todd – He talked to several people regarding the fish hatchery proposals, but found that there wasn't a "middle ground" in the Roundup area. Walleyes Unlimited members would like the warmwater stamp price raised while everyone else would just as soon pay for it on their fishing license.

Action items: Gary asked the CAC to look at some of the proposed solutions and take back out to constituents.

Person responsible: Gary Hammond

R-5 & Statewide Acquisition Plans/Priorities	Joe Maurier

Discussion:

State Parks Issues – The fee to free ($4.00 on license plates) for the first couple of years gave us a bump, but now is leveling out. Looking at how we can make improvements in our State Parks system. Locally in Region 5, there is a National Landmark, Pictograph Caves State Park. In the short-term, we are investing dollars into this wonderful site adding a visitor center. With all the school groups, there is a need for interpretation with displays, etc. This visitor center will be 2,600 square feet with 800 feet dedicated to classroom and 600 feet to interpretive displays. This facility will be open year around. We are looking at having this site open at least 5 days per week during off season, and open 7 days per week during the regular season. In the long-term we will be working with the local adjoining landowners as the site is only 23 acres and future land acquisition would be ideal for trail connections, use of other public land, etc. Doug Habermann said that 50% of the users are locals bringing visitors out to this site.

Currently a trail rerouting is being done; we're looking into the thousands of artifacts located at the University of Montana that are from Pictograph Caves; and meeting with the local Bureau of Land Management and Chamber of Commerce as to how we can partner with them. Currently a FEMA trailer is located out there for use as an office for one staff person. There is potential for a volunteer host, and looking into a volunteer program.

Timeline – Hoping construction of the visitor center ASAP with a target of opening, spring of 2009.

Access Montana – We've only had the $10 million dollars set aside for access by the governor from the general fund, for less than a year because of legislative session. Region 5 has been working the hardest to get potential properties on the list for purchase. There are 60 properties being looked at statewide and for every three, one may happen. Fishing access sites as well as state parks are being looked at with as much diversity as possible.

Sites being looked at in Region 5 include:

Meinhardt Property – Located on the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone, 172 acres and 2 miles from Bridger.

Weymiller's Property – Located near the Robinson Draw bridge, which is almost to Wyoming on the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone.

Holmgren Property – This is 100 acres on the Yellowstone River.

Riverside Inn Property - Located on the Stillwater River.

Harlowton – Property on the Musselshell River by the city. The city will participate with road maintenance.

Twin Bridges - Small piece of property on the Yellowstone River near Reedpoint.

Young's Point – This is 200 acres on the Yellowstone River (on hold).

Circle R – This is close to Billings, 4,000 acres with 5 miles on the Yellowstone River, and then access to 5,000 acres of public land (BLM & DNRC). Partnering with the Wildlife Division to purchase with Habitat Montana money, which is funded 100% by license dollars. This area would be a wildlife management area with the potential of a state park footprint with a small campground along the Yellowstone River. Ray Mule' just released the environmental assessment today, and there is a 21 day public review process. The timeline is crucial with this property, as the sellers want to turn this over by June.

Yellowstone River Parks Association Property – Sindelar, who owns the property donated to the YRPA, which is another huge piece along the Yellowstone River near Billings.

Other major projects being considered throughout the state:

The Charlie Lincoln property which covers 14 miles of the Marias River which is nine miles southwest of Shelby.

Turning the Alberton Gorge into a state park.

The North Shore of Flathead Lake.

The Rocky Mountain Front – looking at property on the North Fork of Teton.

Action items: New releases on public support of the $4.00 on resident license plates, and where the dollars are being spent in the state parks.

Person responsible: Bob Gibson

Private Lands/Public Wildlife Access Program	Mike Penfold

Discussion:

The Governor appoints the Private Lands Public Wildlife Council (PLPW). Mike Penfold is new to the

PLPW. This group of 15 members of men and women represent sportsmen, landowners and outfitters from across the state of Montana.

There are three subcommittees within the council. They are charged with working on issues facing block management with loss of acreage and quality of block management areas.

Mike is on the "block harboring" subcommittee. They are looking at places where animals are being gathered on adjoining properties, and cannot be controlled by hunting. Mike would like to hear from the CAC on ideas like a voluntary online education class that covers treatment of private property.

Alan Charles indicated that there would be a meeting in June of the full council and then early August in order to get the draft ideas out for public comment. All meeting summaries for the PLPW are posted on the FWP website. If anyone would like to be added to the interested persons list to receive the summaries by mail, contact Alan's staff at the Helena office at 406-444-2602.

Action items: Topic – "block harboring" on the agenda for a future CAC meeting.

Person responsible: Bob Gibson

Communication Plan - 2008 Elk Archery Regs.	Bob Gibson

Discussion:

With the major changes for people who are going archery hunting this fall, how do you communicate this information to folks so they will apply by June 2?

All items have been completed in the communications plan including news releases with explanation fact sheets that have been distributed to organizations, Montana newspapers and posted to the FWP website; a television outdoor report; newsletter to license providers; changes included on the cover of the hunting regulations on the 'what's new' section; postcard distribution to all 2007 licensed archers; license providers electronic alert reminder plus add to the online licensing site; posters distributed to license providers; posters and postcards delivered to archery shops. The only items that will need to be accomplished are information provided to hunter and bowhunter education instructors and radio PSA distribution for May.

The next step is to keep track of complaints/questions associated with the changes including feedback from game wardens in the field.

Ron Aasheim commented that 40% of our elk hunters in Montana are archery hunters. FWP owes it to the archery hunters in getting this information out to them. Really the only thing that cost money was mailing the postcards.

Possible Solutions to Sportsman Access to Wildlife	Gary Hammond

Discussion: There was a general discussion amongst the CAC members, staff members and guests with regards to this topic.

Action Item: CAC members are to go back to their communities and find out what their constituents suggest including ideas for solutions to the elk archery/access situation.

Person Responsible: Gary Hammond

Wrap Up & Schedule Next Meeting	Gary Hammond

Discussion: Our next meeting is scheduled for August 12, 2008.