

MINUTES
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Commission Conference Call Meeting
1420 East 6th Avenue – Helena Headquarters
Helena, MT 59620

April 23, 2008

Commission Member Present: Steve Doherty, Chairman; Vic Workman; Dan Vermillion; Willie Doll.

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Staff Present: Larry Peterman; Rebecca Jakes Dockter; Tom Palmer; Regena Peterson; Jessica Snyder.

Region 4 Staff Present: Gary Bertellotti; Roger Semlar; Mike Martin.

Media Present: Susan Gallagher, Associated Press.

Topics of Discussion:

- 1. Opening – Call to Order**
- 2. Smith River Emergency Closure / Transfer of Authority**

Chairman Doherty called the conference call meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Peterman explained that a situation has developed on the Smith River. It has iced over again due to the severe weather that occurred over the weekend and on Monday. Four rafting groups were already on the river. Two made it out – it took them two extra days – but the status of the other two groups is unknown. A group of rafters is presently at Camp Baker insisting that they are going to launch onto the Smith River. FWP has told them they cannot launch due to dangerous conditions. The Region is going to fly over the river to determine exactly what the conditions of the river are.

FWP is asking that the Commission grant the FWP Director the authority to close the river, if necessary, once the flight has been conducted and conditions of the river are known. Once conditions on the river improve, the Director would reopen it to recreation again. Weather conditions are deteriorating, and the water flows are low. Currently the river is at 143 cfs, which is below canoe floating. Rafts are rated for 250cfs.

Bertellotti stated that a party of three rafts got on the Smith yesterday and their status is unknown as well. They have not reached the midway mark as of this time. He added that he just got word the flight is in progress at this time.

Vermillion recommended closing the river to floating, but allow wade fishing at Camp Baker.

Doherty emphasized that conditions are hazardous on the Smith and the water flow is very low. He does not want first responders risking their lives.

Bertellotti stated that access to the river is so very difficult that rescue efforts would be hazardous, and a timely response might be impossible.

Action: Vermillion moved and Doll seconded the motion to delegate authority to the FWP Director to initiate emergency closure of the Smith River to floating, if warranted, due to adverse conditions creating public safety hazards. Motion carried.

The conference call meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Steve Doherty, Chairman

Larry Peterman, Acting Director