

Meeting

Region 5 Citizen Advisory Council Meeting

08/12/2008

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: Citizen Advisory Council Meeting
Facilitator: Bob Gibson
Note taker: Dianne Stiff

Attendees: Greg Keller, Doug Dreeszen, Mike Whittington, David Charles, Doug Haacke, Dan Aadland, Dale Vermillion, Harold Guse, Doug Habermann, Ray Mule', Dianne Stiff, Bob Gibson, Jim Darling,
Absent: Shawn Todd, Dan Dutton, Bob Willems

Agenda topics

5:30-6:00 p.m.	Welcome, Dinner & Conversation	Gary Hammond
6:00-6:45 p.m.	Issues of Concern	CAC Members
6:45-7:00 p.m.	Pictograph Caves State Park Update	Doug Habermann
7:00-7:15 p.m.	Region 5 New State Park, FAS WMA Project Update	Gary Hammond
7:15-7:30 p.m.	Break	
7:30-7:45 p.m.	Harboring Wildlife Issue Presentation/Discussion	Ray Mule', Harold Guse, Gary Hammond

Welcome, Dinner & Conversation Bob Gibson

Discussion: Bob went over the evening's agenda with Council members.

Discussion: Doug Haacke

- Gave an update on the Bighorn River. After two years of negotiating with Wyoming over the Bighorn River flows, we are showing nothing for our efforts. Even though senators Baucus and Tester are approachable, take our phone calls and do what we ask, nothing changes. Doug has called Shane Colton to begin legal proceedings. Doug asked members if they are interested in dropping Shane an e-mail, to let Doug know and he'll get them Shane's address. Doug has checked into the modified flood control operation (VAR Q) at Hungry Horse Dam, and is working to establish this type of model at Yellowtail so at least we would know where we stand when it comes to water levels.
- Is FWP aware of and going to be involved with the upcoming BLM scoping meetings regarding oil and gas drilling? - "Yes"
- Asked about the monitoring of stream flows on the West Rosebud. There was a small surge, but Jim Darling is hoping that with such tight operational restraints by PPL on Mystic Lake that maybe only one or two weekends would be involved with this annually.
- Congratulations on the land acquisitions. Would be nice to have positive comments hit the paper first rather than after these acquisitions...

Doug Dreeszen

- Doug is a member of the Montana Chapter Association of Wild Sheep, which is involved with and supports the Pryor Mountain bighorn sheep herd. This healthy herd allows for 3 tags to be available every year that sportsmen apply for. The Wyoming Game and Fish has a habitat program on the Yellowtail Wildlife Management Area wildlife. There are 2000 domestic goats being used for clean up which are only 3 ½ miles away from the bighorn sheep. With the Elk Horn bighorn sheep die off recently, we are concerned that we could have a huge die off in the Pryor Mountain herd. We never got anywhere with a meeting and letter to Wyoming, and will be holding another meeting to try to work out a solution. There is another private meat goat operation on private land located ½ mile into Wyoming on Gypsum Creek.
- Doug wondered about the decrease of antelope in our areas because of blue tongue disease and if their permits were cut down? Most of his contacts drew an antelope tag and didn't notice the change. Ray Mule' indicated that the quotas of either sex tags in some districts were cut in half, and the doe/fawn tags were cut out. They are finding that the blue tongue disease causes reproductive failure the next spring so the surveys were really low for fawns. Ray feels that the population should get back within 2 to 3 years.

Gregory Keller – Nothing.

Mike Whittington

- As a member of the Montana Wildlife Federation, he'd like to kept alert on the spreading of brucellosis from elk to cattle, as there seems to be a strong overreaction on these issues. Legislation will most likely be introduced.
- Been receiving wonderful feedback on the access acquisition that FWP has recently successfully made and in the process of making. Keep up the good work.
- The Billings Rod and Gun Club will be holding a legislative candidate forum for all legislative candidates on August 20, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. All of the public is invited to attend. This will allow candidates a chance to inform sportsmen on where they stand on issues with an emphasis on bridge access, how to strengthen the block management program, and access. The candidates were told ahead of time so they could send in a written statement if they cannot attend.

Dale Vermillion

- He has received comments about the Yellowstone Conservation District. The fisherman's point of view tends to be that YCD views the rivers as irrigation water. They do think that YCD is doing a very good job on the Yellowstone River.

- In Sweet Grass County there is a lot happening oil and gas leasing on state and BLM land and he'd like to find out what is happening. Jim Darling will get information to Dale.
- Mark Henckel had an article in the paper on felt soled wading boots. With the spread of didymo algae, the Aqua Stealth boots are the alternative for felt-soled algae spreaders. FWP may want to keep an eye on this one. Eileen Ryce is the contact for these concerns. Jim Darling indicated fisheries managers discussed this at their manager's meetings.

David Charles

- He's received positive comments on acquisition and from bowhunters. He's also heard of some concerns on the impact of brucellosis disease from elk.

Dan Aadland

- Dan has concerns about the Gallatin Forest Travel Plan proposing to open the Meyers Creek and Lodgepole Creek to motorcycles when we have built a decent elk population in that area. He's afraid the elk will end up on private land. The Gallatin will still take comments, and if anyone would like to comment, Dan can provide you with their e-mail address. The Custer Forest Travel Plan is now closed for comments.
- Question regarding block management? In a walk in only area can you use horses? Answer – is up to the landowner and could go either way.

A report from the Yellowstone Conservation District is that the council is very concerned about a bill that has been recently introduced by Senator Tester and Baucus that Trout Unlimited sponsors. The bill as written leaves out conservations districts as if they don't exist. Hoping to get the bill revised as it talks about forming new groups. Dan will send out the conservation districts e-mail address if anyone would like to comment and show their support for our local conservation districts.

Action items: Agenda ideas - Eileen Ryce, Aquatic Nuisance Species Coordinator – didymo algae; Gallatin Forest – travel plan.

Person responsible:
Gary Hammond

Deadline:
Future CAC Meetings

Pictograph Cave SP Update

Doug Habermann

Discussion: MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks are building a visitor center at the Pictograph Cave State Park site. FWP has finished a 95 % review on the building plans, and it should go out for bid tomorrow. A company called Tailor Studios is the interpretive planners for both Pictograph and Lewis and Clark Caverns. Tim Urbaniak, MSU-Billings, has 3-D of the cave showing 106 original pictographs that were on the cave walls. There is a natural seepage that goes into the cave system that covers up the pictographs. Tim was able to position 60 of the pictographs and has produced a wonderful poster of the site. Construction of the visitor center should begin in early October 2008. In addition to getting artifact information and photographs of artifacts from the University of Montana, Bureau of Land Management, and the Montana Historical Society for the interpretive part of the visitor center, the entire trail interpretation guide will be revised.

Action items: Spring 2009 CAC meeting to be held at the new visitor center.

Person responsible:
Doug Habermann

Deadline:
Spring 2009

R-5 New State Park, FAS, WMA Project Update		Gary Hammond
<p>Discussion: On August 14, 2008, the decision notice will be posted on Holmgren FAS located 6 miles upstream from Columbus. This goes to the FWP Commission August 28 and the State Land Board on September 15. We finally made contact with Burlington Northern regarding the railroad crossing. We'll hopefully have this site acquisition, completed mid-September and then look at development. Melding of wildlife and parks was how the successful acquisition of the Circle R Ranch occurred. This site is officially called the Yellowstone Wildlife Management Area and Yellowstone River State Park. Opening will happen on September 1, 2008. Currently developing interim parking area and will be using \$200,000 to upgrade the road. Because of roadwork, the road all the way to the BLM property will not be opened right away. That will happen after completion of road upgrading. Will begin working on the state park planning process soon. Dust abatement has been completed, the signs are in process of being made, and developing maps. Riverside FAS now belongs the State of Montana. This site was placed to the top of the list for development, that is a parking area, and will be working with DOT to develop a good hard surface and turn out lane by 2013. Been talking to Joe Maurier about the Meinhardt property that is 170 acres on the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone. We'll need to know by the end of August. We are waiting for a resolution on the Twin Bridges legal ownership issues right below the railroad.</p>		
Action items: Holmgren FAS Acquisition, Yellowstone WMA, Yellowstone River SP, Riverside FAS, Meinhardt Property	Person responsible: Gary Hammond	Deadline: Ongoing
Hunter Education Issue		Bob Gibson
<p>Discussion: Anyone born after January 1, 1985, must have a hunter safety card. There are reciprocal agreements with several states, but Montana does not have a provisional card. In Montana you have to attend and pass a weeklong class, attend a hands-on field day and pass a standard Montana test. We will have an online option for everyone 18 and older that can take an online course this fall, pay \$20.00, pass the state test and then attend a hands-on field day. The online course happened this year for bowhunter education and was well received. There are still some kids that cannot pass the test. This could be caused by various reasons like they are unable to read or comprehend test questions, shyness or test anxiety or uncomfortable with the multiple choice, true/false format. The problem is we still have kids that cannot pass the test and need to take the field course. Other examples are down's syndrome, apraxia, and cerebral palsy. We had some cases of this last winter. Montana and other states define legally mentally disabled, but have no provision for them to hunt. Those born before January 1, 1985, don't need a card. There is a legislator here in town, representing two families who want to create a provisional certificate. This certificate would be used when an instructor could see that the student knows the subject matter and a responsible adult would accompany them.</p> <p>Questions and concerns – define responsible. So far the department is not taking a stand on this bill. What do you mean by a responsible adult or chaperone: Hunter Education? Hunting License? Permit? What is allowable help and what is their level of responsibility – legal? Does it have to be a parent or neighbor? Eagle Mount asked and this will need to be defined. Define accompanied – Enforceable? Minnesota does have provisional licenses.</p> <p>Mike Whittington – If the kids cannot take the test for whatever reason, then someone has to make the determination. Who will that be? The Hunter Education instructor?</p> <p>Doug Dreeszen – This is a public safety issue too.</p> <p>Ray Mule' - Are they capable of understanding the regulations? Are they at the level of understanding of whether they know what they are doing out there?</p> <p>David Charles – FWP has the authority to make the determination if the kid should get a license.</p>		
Action items: Following this piece of Legislation after drafted.	Person responsible: Bob Gibson	Deadline: 2009 Legislative Session

Harboring Wildlife Presentation/Discussion		Ray Mule', Harold Guse, Gary Hammond
<p>Discussion: Reviewed the history of the 5-week season, the game damage assistance state statute 87-1-225 and ARM Rule 12.9.802. Presented the elk population trends in Montana. Elk populations have tripled since the mid-1970's. A little over a third of the population is on private land, which are unavailable for public hunting. Ranching of wildlife is looming out there. Management of cows doesn't work without enough hunting pressure, and the bull elk leaving. Statement from the 5-week season:</p> <p>"Although FWP intends to manage elk within the framework of a 5 week season, where game damage criteria apply, all EMU's have the option of special early seasons, an extended general season, or special late seasons. However, seasons outside the 5 week general season framework are not intended to be solutions where outfitting, other paid hunting, or land totally closed to hunters or with severely restricted access compromises general public access during the general 5-week season."</p> <p>The pressure on public land is pushing the elk onto the private land where they stay. Minimal pressure on private land would get the elk distributed back onto the public land.</p> <p>Gary asked the CAC to keep their wheels turning and if they come up with any ideas to give FWP feedback.</p>		
Action items: CAC members are to give ideas to Gary Hammond.	Person responsible: Gary Hammond	Deadline: Ongoing
Wrap Up & Schedule Next Meeting		Gary Hammond
<p>Discussion: The Gallatin Travel Plan and Custer Travel Plan came up as possible topics for the next meeting. Pointed out that legislation should be the focus of the December meeting with the director's office attending. The next CAC meeting is on December 3, 2008, 5:30-9:30 p.m.</p>		
Action items: CAC members are to send any suggested topics into Gary Hammond.	Person responsible: Gary Hammond	Deadline: Ongoing