## Region 4 CAC Meeting Minutes December 3, 2008 Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Interpretive Center Ft Benton MT

FWP Staff – Gary Bertellotti, Fred Schultz, Mike Martin, George Liknes, Graham Taylor, Bruce Auchly, Roger Semler and Wendy Kamm

CAC Members – Joe Schaffer, Judie Suden, Mike Labriola, Jodie Butler, Fred Davison, Karl Gies, Doug Deffe', Robert Facklam and Charles Bocock

Public/Guests – Bryan Thies, Cascade; Don Pfau, Lewistown, Roger Norgard, Great Falls, William Geer, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and Connie Jacobs, Interpretive Center Director – Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Interpretive Center.

Gary opened the meeting and requested all attendees at the meeting introduce themselves as there were several guests. Then Gary introduced William Geer, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, who presented a briefing on the Montana Sportsmen User Value Mapping project. Mr. Geer explained how he had gone to numerous sportsmen groups around the state asking these club members to indicate on a map what their bread and butter hunting and fishing areas were. These are areas what the sportsmen value most and want retained in the face of development. Mr. Geer has visited 40 sportsmen clubs in 30 Montana cities. Then he developed a statewide map with all these areas that have been identified as prime hunting and fishing locations which provided a new baseline of information to the BLM, Forest Service and DNRC to guide them in dealing with oil and gas leasing to balance out wildlife and sportsmen needs.

## **General Topics for Discussion**

Roger Semler gave an update on the Smith River Management Plan. The draft plan/EA is very close to being released for public review. Looking at December 15 as to when it will be out for public comment and the comment period will end January 30, 2009. You will be able to comment in writing or email the comments to a special website. The primary issues are: Boat camp selection; Human waste disposal management; Floater opportunities – enhancing public use (now only 15% of folks that enter the drawing draw a permit); and River capacity and Social conditions on the river. Five public meetings are being set up in five different

locations around the state to hold these meetings. We are fine tuning these meetings now but locations and dates have been set up – Jan 12 – Helena; Jan 13 – Great Falls; Jan 14 - White Sulphur Springs; Jan 21 – Missoula; and Jan 22 – Billings. Information should be coming out soon finalizing these meetings as to what facilities will be used to hold the meetings.

- ➤ George Liknes gave a briefing on the 10-Year Upper Missouri River Reservoir Management Plan. This will include Canyon Ferry, Hauser and Holter reservoirs. Last management plan was implemented in 2000. The Fisheries Management Goal for the Management plan was that the three-reservoir system should be managed as a high-quality, cost-effective, multi-species fishery with high levels of angler satisfaction. Only walleye have met the management goals in all reservoirs. The relative abundance of rainbow trout and yellow perch are low. Things are much different in the reservoirs now than they were 10 years ago. Potential topics that may be covered include – live baits; forage introductions; rainbow trout stocking; 20 walleye limits in Canyon Ferry; walleye egg take; fishing tournaments; duration of plan; commercial fishing as a management tool to manage fish populations; northern pike in reservoir system, to name a few. We requested nominations for a citizens advisory committee. The nominations closed December 1. We will review those nominations and pick a committee next week. CAC members asked several questions about reservoirs concerning walleyes and their impact on trout, green algae occurrences, etc.
- ➤ The Parks budget out to 2013 was discussed. Main revenue for Parks is the \$4.00 fee when folks register their vehicles. More and more people are opting out of paying the \$4.00 fee. Parks revenues are stagnant and expenditures are rising. Fuel costs and FAS maintenance costs are two things that are causing funding concerns. Several solutions are being discussed – making car license (\$4.00 charge) mandatory; \$4.00 fee now is charged on vehicles under 1 ton and changing that to include vehicles over a ton like campers, self-contained vehicles; canceling capital projects. There are possible legislators that want to make the \$4.00 an opt-in rather than an opt-out fee, which could be costly as far as revenue goes. Discussed need for a license fee increase that would become effective in 2013 to meet costs for overall FWP funding. License fee revenue has been stable but the percentage of sportsmen to overall population of Montanans has decreased. FWP has been very conservative and has been cutting expenditures and has become as lean as possible to stretch FWP license account dollars out to keep us in the black until 2013. FWP has been fortunate not to lose any staff or major programs with the funding we have. Some of the cutbacks we are looking at are energy savings in our buildings, cutting capital expenditures. Legislative matters – normally FWP will bring a package of proposed bills to the session that could number into the teens or even 20 plus. This year FWP is bringing as little as three requests. FWP is also cutting most EPP requests for new expenditures and will concentrate on only covering inflationary costs for the next two years. FWP has no major capital projects at this time as a cost saving step also. Future fee increase proposals may be different than the historic increase that sustains the

agency for 10 or more years with a new increase. Possibilities may include in the future, biannual or other short period small incremental increases tied to a cost index that is more suited for long-term operations.

- ➤ Gary provided information on FWP's new Director Joe Maurier.
- For the surrounding states. Then we had a lengthy discussion on these access programs. Most states, including Montana, have limited tools and resources to manage elk, other big game animals and access to private and public lands. For example Idaho has a program called "Access Yes" but they only have budgets for this program ranging from \$500,000 to \$600,000 annually. What makes access programs successful hunters, landowners, outfitters and agencies working together. What is the rational behind most access programs? Colorado has a program "Ranching for Wildlife". This program has been in existence for 28 years. Agency and hunters in Colorado are not satisfied the way the program is set up today. Outfitters and landowners seem more satisfied. In Montana brucellosis has changed the attitude of both landowners and the agency as to how we can harvest more elk and get better access to these elk.

## **CAC Member Discussion Items:**

- ❖ CAC members wanted to know why we didn't extend the hunting season in Region 4. Graham Taylor explained Region 4's rationale of not having a season. Every year in the fourth week of the season the department has a meeting discussing the need for or for not extending the season. This is a yearly occurrence. In Region 4 we had several districts that could have used or needed an extension, HD's 417, 422, 411, 449, 452, 442, to name a few, but these districts are scattered plus access to the elk is not readily available. Most elk are on private property and hunters would have a hard time getting to them as most landowners didn't want an extended season. Also a lot has to do with the weather throughout the season and if it may or not be there for the extended season. Last year we harvested about 500 elk during the extended season. Question was – were these elk harvested where we needed to have them harvested? In Region 4 we don't have a problem with elk on public grounds but more so on private property. We also need to evaluate the cost of using personnel and operations for these extensions. It does cost money to cover these extensions. Also in Region 4 a lot of folks don't like to see more bulls killed in an extended season. It should be noted that our deer harvest was about normal and no extension was considered
- ❖ Was some discussion about wolves and how they are affecting our wildlife populations.
- Charles Bocock asked a question concerning cooperators who receive funding for bird enhancement on their property and than shut there property down via a lease to hunters or outfit it. What happens to the sportsmen dollars that were spent to

- enhance their property. Normally these are 10-15 year contracts with the department. If in fact they do lease or won't let the public hunt their property than they must reimburse the department for expenses we paid for improvements to their property.
- ❖ Deanna Robbins sent in a question about what transpired with the Archery Committee that was to review archery seasons and give some recommendations to the Commission on future seasons. The committee could not come to a consensus so the commission took no action on future seasons. So the seasons for 2009 are to commence as to how the commission initially approved them. May use the committee again for seasons beginning in 2010. It should be noted that only one hunting district exceeded the number of applicants that there were limited permit numbers for. So everyone should have gotten an archery permit that put in for one this past year.

**NEXT MEETING:** It was decided that we would meet in February but no date was chosen. We will send out an email in January to poll CAC members for a date and place to hold the meeting.