



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region 3 Citizens' Advisory Committee Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks September 10, 2009

CAC Attendees: Gene Budeski, Joe Cohenour, Tom Milesnick, Sam Samson, Tom Henderson, LeRoy Mehring, David Gibson, Cyndy Andrus, Rick Arnold, Robin Cunningham, Ken Sinay, Amy McNamara

Absent: Rick Grady, Ross Lingle, Michael Leach

FWP Staff: Pat Flowers, Joan Buhl, Jerry Walker, Bruce Rich, Molly Wainwright, Chris Smith

Guests: Daniel Lorenzetti

Greetings, Introductions, Roundtable, and Public Comment-Pat Flowers

Roundtable:

Rick Arnold - PSA's on "Respect Our Rivers" are extraordinary—it's what we wanted—would like to see it continue with educational message

Tom Henderson – would like more information on ram that was taken by an undercover officer in a sting operation

Ken Sinay – Jefferson River—how do we address illegitimate development? WMA's – trespass during closed periods. Porcupine WMA is a prime site for wildlife viewing. Highway Dept. is stockpiling gravel, storing equipment, etc. Need signage and educational information at site

LeRoy Mehring – receiving phone calls on sheep/ram that was killed in the sting operation

Sam Samson – wildlife friendly fencing. Elkhorns—don't see any coordination among groups, agencies, and private entities – could FWP spearhead?

FWP Updates – Pat Flowers

FWP Leadership – Joe Maurier is FWP director. Deputy Director is Art Noonan (formerly appointed legislator and aid to former congressman Pat Williams). Dave Risley is the Fish & Wildlife Administrator. He previously worked for Ohio Fish & Wildlife in a similar position.

2009-2010 Wildlife Season Setting Process (every two years for public process) - Public wanted a voice early in this process before Commission adopted the tentatives. Each region held a public meeting for preliminary scoping effort. R3 held their meeting in Bozeman in August.

Comments:

-Butte was left out again

Pat – decided to just have one meeting at the regional office. Good response via the Internet. If you have any comments, please pass them on to us for consideration

Schedule:

December 10 - regulation proposals go to Commission

January – public meetings

February – Commission adoption

Tentatives establish season structure, dates. Quotas are set separately

Wolf Hunting – Selling licenses since August 31—was a line to get them. To date, we've sold 7400 licenses statewide.

Comments:

- If prices were brought down more nonresidents would buy tags. Lot more revenue would be brought in. Idaho has the same price for resident and nonresidents.

Pat: Haven't had a regulated wolf hunt in Montana. Need to be careful how you devalue wildlife through pricing. Judge Malloy decided not to allow injunction. We've decided to take a conservative approach and establish credibility and support for a hunt.

-Will wolves disperse when hunting starts?

Pat/Chris Smith: Wolves will be difficult to hunt. Trapping will be more successful.

Chris Smith – Most harvest will be incidental.

Encourage discussion – value wolf on landscape but include hunting as tool for management like other game species.

Discussion—Action on chronic under-funding of enforcement and maintenance at FWP fishing access sites - Daniel Lorenzetti

Pat: Concerns about trespass and FWP's response, fencing.

Daniel: Issue will grow if we don't attempt to address. Property backs up to Cobblestone FAS. Significant problems over the last ten years, i.e., cutting fences, trespass, firearms violations (automatic weapons), illegal camping at sites, vandalism, trash. Believe should be lawful access, but there's lots of unlawful access. Hear there's no money for signage, enforcement, etc. I think landowners, like ourselves who about fishing access sites, should file suit against the state forcing them to respond. Would like CAC committee to talk about it and make recommendation. We need to provide resources for enforcement and maintenance. Sheriff department will not respond to anything at FAS. We don't have enough game wardens.

Comments:

-FWP has contracted with Sheriff's department to respond to calls at FAS—small area and fixed time

-You pay taxes, county should be the leader

-Recommend the sheriff should have to tackle the issue. It will take awhile—conditioning

Daniel – education. Money has to be there to do the job.

-Do you think all trespass issues are tied to the fishing access sites?

Daniel – 75% is due to having a fishing access site as a neighbor

-County law/FWP law? Who should enforce?

-All state and county officers have the authority to issue citation for FWP violations

Daniel – need department to talk to Sheriff's Office. We don't call unless it's a serious issue

-What's the difference between criminal trespass and trespass? Are fines and punishments sufficient?

Daniel – people should lose their licenses.

-It's not just fishermen

Daniel: Perception by general public is that there's no warden around.

-You need to have this discussion with the Sheriff

-Do other landowners in the area have a lot of problems with trespass, etc.?

Daniel – FWP buying fishing access sites, but don't have enough money to maintain or for enforcement

-Can enforcement concentrate on area where there are violations. Can we use interns to go to these sites?

Pat: We have ex-officio that can take some law enforcement actions. They don't have the comprehensive law enforcement training. Don't want to put them in this position. Enforcement is concentrating in areas where they know there are hunters and fishermen

Daniel – Talk to the elected official—the Sheriff, or go to the Commissioners, go to the media.

-Are these repeat offenders. Do we have statistics on citations at FAS?

-Use remote cameras for a deterrent

-Security service

Daniel – Not just talking about violations, we're talking about noxious weed control.

Chris Smith: Criminal trespass/trespass – if you've committed an act of criminal trespass or vandalism you are now subject to loss of hunting/fishing privileges. Court has the ability to not only fine, but to revoke your licenses. It's discretionary.

Funding for maintenance – bill was passed that requires the department to put into a separate maintenance account 20% of purchase or cap if \$300,000. We also have the ability to transfer from general fund account to spend on maintenance

Current Funding Status and Provide for Long-term funding needs for the department – Chris Smith

Major funding sources background

- FWP is a self-funded agency. Occasionally we get some of the general fund money for things like Access Montana or the Parks program, but by and large FWP is funded by our own revenue sources

- We have to think about our long-term revenue forecast. What is going to happen with the income we have because that is what we have to live within and manage?

How is FWP funded today?

- Fish and Wildlife Program (funded separately from our state park programs)

Funded through general license account, earmarked license dollars, Pittman/Robertson, and Wallop Breaux

- State Parks Program

Voluntary light vehicle registration (established in 2003)

Parks' earned revenue

Coal Tax Trust revenue

Bed Tax

Motorboat fuel tax

What is the outlook?

- Fish and Wildlife Program

General License Account – flat or decreasing (depending on proposed initiative)

Earmarked Accounts – flat or decreasing

Pittman/Robertson – up and down

Wallop Breaux – up and down

- State Parks Program

Voluntary vehicle registration fees – flat or decreasing

Earned revenue – up
Coal Tax Trust revenue – down
Bed Tax – flat
Motorboat fuel tax – flat

Where are we now and what do we see coming down the road?

- In both the Fish & Wildlife and Parks programs expenditures now exceed revenue
- Current Fish, Wildlife and Parks programs being sustained with “savings”
- Parks fund balance will be depleted in 2013 (July)
- Fish and Wildlife programs have more time and options, but increasing demands (extend out to 2014)

What is FWP doing short-term?

- Controlling expenses
- Leveraging funds
- Planning to “live within our means” through FY 2013

What is FWP doing long-term?

- Re-evaluating programs to see what is important and what “new” is needed.
- Beginning discussions now – before we reach a “crisis.”

How can the CAC get involved?

- Share ideas on what’s important about FWP programs
- Share ideas about how FWP can be more efficient
- Share ideas about new revenue alternatives

CAC Comments/Suggestions:

- Supervise and organize volunteers - use volunteers for maintenance and weed control; use community
- Cleanup days
- Promote adopt a FAS
- Cabelas, YNP Foundation, sin tax sources of revenue
- Teaming With Wildlife Initiative provides for state wildlife grants
- Revenue source from violations/fines – more publicity on violations in the newspaper
- Comparison of Montana’s fees to other states. Look into what other states are doing
- Build constituency
- Pay to float for improving sites, parking fees
- Opt in on light vehicle registration – pay extra when you purchase a license
- Value systems are changing. Alternative sources need to be considered—it’s more than game management

CAC Caucus:

- ◆ Trophy Bighorn Ram taken by an undercover agent in the Missouri Breaks. Break major poaching rings. They’re put in a position to maintain their credibility/cover and are asked to do illegal things. Agents felt they had to do this. Had strong evidence against this individual. It will be tried in a criminal court. Consequences will be significant if individual is found guilty.
- ◆ Oversight of WMAs and management of WMAs—trespass on closed season. FWP doesn’t have personnel to have a resident manager at each WMA. It’s similar to enforcement at FASs.

- Post rules at WMAs on simple signs – people don't know what the rules are. Indicate that it's a WMA on the road (Ken will assist us in where to place them). Gallatin WMA is an ideal place for wildlife viewing (visual access, education). We should take advantage of it. Pat or Kurt will entertain this with DOT.

Gallatin is a WMA that we would like to trade out of with the Forest Service.

- ◆ Wildlife friendly fencing – there is a statute on the books that describes standards for fencing. It's a standard for assigning liability. It defines what constitutes a legal fence, i.e., for controlling livestock

LeRoy: Sam should get in touch with Jack Atcheson, Sr. or Jack Jones. Forest Service fences have to meet standards. It can't be a barrier fence. Forest Service and BLM have allowed Ted Turner put fences at the Snowcrest Ranch.

Recommend Sam talk to FWP biologists, Vanna or Jenny.

AWHIP program – wildlife friendly fences funding grants. FWP has recommended standards for fencing.

Respect Your Rivers Campaign (focus on ethics) – Cyndy Andrus

PSAs are now running. David Thompson got a letter from the Governor complimenting him on this project. PSAs will run through October and money has been set aside to do more next spring (web site - respectyourrivers.org).

Funds for this project are being run through the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Foundation.

Information has gone out to other CACs - this could be a statewide project.

Ideas to add to our goals for education:

- Add noxious weeds as a topic
- What did we conclude on advertising for our sponsors and being able to advertise? We need to continue to build on this
- Who owns the web site? Who registered the domain?
- Com Ed put up money for initial printing of bumper stickers and t-shirts
- If you have any connection with any business or corporation, contact them for donations/sponsor
- Movie theater preview opportunity
- Patagonia would be another sponsor. Contact Craig Mathews (Rick will call Craig Mathews)
- Ben Pierce will be writing a story for the paper
- **Continue the momentum! Discuss and follow-up at our future meetings (new ideas, contacts) – keep it on the front burner!**
- Possible donors, let Cyndy know
- This will be used as a model statewide. Present to other CACs, Regions 1, 2, 4
- Apply model to other principles. Work on changing human behavior, education
- Run loop of PSA at Outdoor Show booth
- Present at “Outfitters & Guides Regional Convention” to be held in Bozeman in April (Cyndy will check on dates)
- Rick would like to have 13 copies for Trout Unlimited Chapters and Council

Consensus-based decisions and ground rules – print it on the back of agenda for each meeting.

Potential topics for CAC

- Review Madison River recreational use permit
- PLPW – Any solutions, concerns, Joe would like to hear them
- Wolf-elk research

Send any topic/ ideas to Pat or Mel.

Cost Cutting Measures for CAC:

- Cost savings on food – please RSVP in the future.
- Meeting in Bozeman at FWP will cut room rental costs.
- Belgrade High School Culinary Department has a catering service. Joan will contact them to bid on catering our next meeting.

Legislative update at December meeting.

Next meeting December 2, 2009 from 1-7 p.m. at FWP in Bozeman.