Region 4 CAC Meeting Minutes September 30, 2009 Region 4 Headquarters Great Falls MT

FWP Staff – Gary Bertellotti, Fred Schultz, Mike Martin, and Woody Baxter

CAC Members – Joe Schaffer, Fred Davison, Doug Deffe', Robert Facklam, Dennis Hanson, and Judie Suden

Public/Guests – Chris Smith and Sue Daly (Helena HQ's); Bryan Thies, Cascade; Ron Litostansky, Greg Baker and Randy Knowles (Russell Country Sportsman)

General Topics for Discussion

Gary Bertellotti opened the meeting. Agenda was passed out to those that were present. He introduced Chris Smith and Sue Daly from the Helena HQ's. Chris and Sue were going to brief the CAC on "Future of FWP Funding"

Since we hadn't met since last spring, Gary began the meeting with a discussion of major bills that were passed at the last legislative session that affect FWP. The following bills were discussed:

SB164 – This bill affects property purchases. When we purchase a property we need to set aside 20% of the purchase price or \$300,000 for developing roads, taking care of weeds or other maintenance work that needs to be done.

HB74 – This bill authorized designated archery season for lions, bears

HB203 – When we trap big game, no matter what game animals, we must advertise and inform local landowners and the Feds as to where and when these animals will be transplanted.

HB222 – If a person is ticketed and fined he will not be able to purchase a license even if he is eligible unless he has paid his fine in full.

HB296 – This bill relates to cooperation between our wardens and tribal wardens

HB366 – This bill relates to reciprocal agreements between bordering states for waters that touch both states and management and licensing is involved. We have such an agreement now but some state's don't at this time.

SB202 – This law was passed to encompass feeding of all big game animals

SB401 – Deals with shooting preserves – 10 mile radius was eliminated

Also discussed the joint resolution that was approved that deals with recreation on lands other than hunting and fishing. Program based on merits of block management. Fred Davison was instrumental in getting the resolution promoted.

Gary than discussed the new organization set up for FWP. The new Director, Joe Maurier, wanted to see clearer lines of command and authority. Passed out the old and new organization charts. Regions now report directly to the new Fish & Wildlife Division Administrator, Dave Risley. Parks Division within the regions is no longer under supervision of Regional Supervisor but reports directly to Parks Division in Helena. This whole change in organization is financially neutral, no new monies allocated. One big difference though is that responsibilities on budgeting has changed. Regions will now control their own budgets. Regions will now control their own budgets for each division – fish, wildlife, com ed, admin and enforcement within funding types with the approval of the Chief of Fish and Wildlife.

Chris Smith, FWP Special Projects Administrator, gave a briefing on Future of FWP Funding.

Chris discussed how long term funding was done today. He explained that Fish and Wildlife (FW) is funded through four funding sources, which are the General license account, Earmarked license dollars (Block Management Program, The Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program and Access Montana), Pittman Roberts excise tax, and Wallup Breaux excise tax. He stressed that FW is a self-funded agency and receives no monies from the general fund. The Parks side is funded through vehicle registration, Parks earned revenue, Coal tax trust revenue, Bed tax, and motorboat fuel tax. The outlook for future funding is not looking very well. General license account is flat, earmarked accounts are flat and the Pittman Roberts and Wallup Breaux are "up and down". State Parks funding looks much the same—flat to decreasing. The vehicle registration fee is flat to decreasing, with more and more people opting out of the voluntary fee. Earned revenue is up, but the Coal tax revenue is down. Bed tax funds are flat, as is the Motorboat fuel tax.

At present expenses now exceed revenues. Programs are being sustained with vacancy savings. At the present Parks funds will be depleted in 2013.

We can't continue some programs with present funding. In the short term we need to control expenses; leverage funding, look for partners; and we need to plan to live within our means until 2013. Long term – We need to reevaluate our programs, what's important and which new programs we may need to add and we need to start discussions now before we reach a crisis.

We would like to get input from CAC's across the state. We need to share ideas as to what is important. Share ideas about being more efficient. And look at new funding alternatives.

Dennis H asked where the money comes from in managing wolves and grizzlies. Chris/Sue responded that presently money for wolf management comes from the Feds. But with wolves being delisted that could change. Some funds come from the Feds for managing grizzlies but the majority of funding come from the license accounts. Approximate costs for each program is – Wolves - \$600,000 annually and Grizzlies - \$700,000 annually.

Joe S. would like to see a more detailed breakdown of expenses and revenues so we as a council could better understand where we could help and make some suggestions.

CAC Member Discussion Items:

Discussed legislation involving HB190, stream access bill and fencing of land by county bridges. Handed out a list of current projects that have been accomplished or are being worked on throughout the state. So far the program has been very successful. In Region 4 we have accomplished two projects, one on the Dearborn River with the Dearborn Ranch and another one by the Loma Bridge. Both of these projects have been well received by the public and the landowner. As time goes on we will be contacting more landowners to gauge their interest in providing access to streams by county bridges.

Dennis Hanson brought up discussion on the fairness of surplus license sales – online purchases versus over the counter. He has discussed this with Helena and folks in his area were concerned as to availability of antelope licenses being gone before dealers even opened up their businesses. This year surplus licenses in the Chester area were limited so this sort of compounded the situation. Members made several suggestions as how to make the playing field level for these licenses sold on the internet versus being sold at agents over the counter. Bottom line for FWP is that these are surplus licenses and we want to sell them so we can better manage the antelope/deer populations.

Gary gave an update on the Marias River State Park/WMA. The road for access was finished early September on the northwest corner of the property. We also installed a restroom. Right now there is only one access road into the property but we are talking to other ranches about getting more access. We had a drawing for 60 access permits for deer hunting on the property. It was very popular – 940 plus folks put in for the drawing. We choose 10 hunters for each week – 30 for archery and 30 for the regular season. Due to public comment we decided to manage the deer hunting for a quality experience with limited access. Joe S. said that he had several comments from sportsman liking the process the way it is – limited access. Woody B., temporary Parks Manager for Region 4, added that we are looking at putting campsites along the river for floaters. At the moment we are evaluating good camp sites. We will be hiring a ranger within the next couple of weeks to help manage the site. At present it will be tough to manage with the limited access. Gary added that we have done a lot with weed management this past summer. This will be at least a three year effort. No grazing leases at this time. We are going to survey the property to fence and identify property lines. We have had grizzly

bears, moose and elk on the property. This is only our first year managing the property and it is a work in process at this time.

Gary updated the council on the archery permits in the Breaks. Most archers seemed to like what is happening – no overcrowding. HD 410-15 never triggered a 10% limit on non-residents. Did get some complaints on the 600 districts as non-residents were limited there.

Dennis H. stated that he had been hearing some complaints on not enough antelope doe tags in HD's 400/401 and too many doe tags in HD's 400/401. A short discussion occurred. We need to talk to biologist Gary Olson on the particulars.

Doug D. said he had several folks talk to him about the trophy sheep taken by an undercover officer. Captain Martin said he had to be careful as to what he could talk about as the case has not been to court as of yet. So he could not talk about the case itself. He gave an overview of when and how enforcement's undercover unit is utilized. Very interesting briefing.

NEXT MEETING: Gary/Fred will send out suggested dates in the near future. Looking at something after the general hunting season. Need to decide on a site also.