

Region 5 Citizen Advisory Council Meeting Agenda

03/10/2010 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: CAC Council Meeting

Location: Region 5 Headquarters

Facilitator: Bob Gibson

Attendees: Dan Aadland, David Charles, Douglas Dreeszen, Daniel Dutton, Doug Haacke, Greg Keller, Mike Whittington, Robert Willems, Gary Hammond, Bob Gibson,

Harold Guse, Ken Frazer, Doug Habermann

Absent: Jed Evjene, Shawn Todd, Dale Vermillion, Ray Mule', Dianne Stiff

Agenda Topics

5:30-6:30 p.m.	Welcome, Dinner & Conversation	Gary Hammond
6:30-7:15 p.m.	Issues of Concern	CAC Members
7:15-7:45 p.m.	Update on State Parks/FAS Improvement Plans	Doug Habermann
7:45-8:00 p.m.	Bighorn River Flow Status Update	Doug Haacke
8:00-8:15 p.m.	Initiatives – Fiscal Notes – Informational	Bob Gibson
8:15-8:45 p.m.	Biennial Hunting Seasons and Regulation Changes	Gary Hammond
8:45-9:00 p.m.	Public comment time	Bob Gibson
9:00-9:15 p.m.	Administrative housekeeping and adjourn	Bob Gibson

Welcome, Dinner & Conversation

Gary Hammond

Issues of Concern CAC Members

Discussion: **Doug Dreeszen** – Asked if motion tracking and camera devices are illegal on land you are hunting. This was brought to Doug's attention by a parent who recently went through hunter safety with his son. The game warden at their class indicated this is illegal. Harold Guse said that the wording has been clarified this year. Under motion tracking camera devices in the regulations the new wording is "it is illegal for a person to possess or use in the field an electronic or camera device whose purpose is to scout the location of game animals or relay the information on a game animals location or movement during any Commission adopted hunting season." This is a Commission regulation. People have been asking Doug about Initiative 161. Doug asked if anything has happened yet on the firewood caper out on the Yellowstone Wildlife Management area. Gary visited with Enforcement and they are looking into it.

Dan Dutton – On the Clarks Fork side the farmers are getting back into the fields some barley has been already planted. On the other side Red Lodge is still frozen. In our neighborhood we are contending with the coyotes now that the lambs are on the ground.

Bob Willems – The deer that weren't out during hunting season are there now in the Harlowton area. Not as great of success during the hunting season last fall. Most hunters were road hunters. Still have wolves running around the area. The chairman of a county central committee said that she dearly loved to hunt but she hadn't bought a hunting license for the last six or eight years because of the right to privacy. Would this be the social security number? Harold Guse said yes no doubt it is. There is a state statute that commands FWP to collect social security numbers for the Department of Child Support Services. The Montana Shooting Sports Association filed a law suit. They lost this law suit and then went to the Supreme Court. They just filed to have the Supreme Court look at it again. They were turned down because of the safeguards in the system as there wasn't an infringement on private information. The only step they have left is if they want to appeal it to the US Supreme Court.

Greg Keller – Hundreds of elk grazing on the south slopes because there is too much snow on the north side. There are a hundred or two hundred head of elk on our place where the bus drives by in the morning. There is road construction on the road to Ollie's Corner halfway to Columbus. The new outhouses on the new fishing access site, Jeffrey's Landing, are getting used well by the construction crews. Doug Habermann indicated they've talked to both the contractor and DOT because there wasn't previous permission granted by MFW, and they are storing equipment and materials in there. We've been assured that any damage to the site will be taken care of.

Dan Aadland – The reaction of the hunters around me to the wolf harvest was fear that the wilderness quotas would be cut down. A lot of hunters are not stockmen and though they may sympathize with us, the bigger worry is the elk that have been eaten by the wolves in this area north of the park. Signage on state lands – Dan road on horseback through some state land sections up near Luther. The gate says "walk-in only" even though you know that people with horses use that. It is a little intimidating in a way. It may be walk-in but it isn't spelling out if that has to be your feet or the horses'. The Forest Service uses signs with the slash through them. Encourage where horses are allowed some kind of similar sign to spell this out. Gary Hammond asked for a legal description of those state lands so we can meet with the Billings field office. Another one that affects horses as identified by the Back Country Horseman is the problem with the two different dates on the Wildlife Refuges for horn hunting. The biggest complaint Dan heard from hunters was harboring of elk on private ranches with patrolling the fence line and spooking elk back onto the private ranch. A question came from a supervisor for the Stillwater County Conservation District. He had heard in another meeting that there is interest in purchasing property around Big Lake in northern Stillwater County? Gary Hammond said the Department hasn't gone anywhere with it, but it is a proposal that has been talked about internally.

Doug Haacke – The big topic has been the really bleak weather forecast that we've been looking at for the spring. Stream flow and inflow forecasts are on track to be the worst ever for this year coming up. Even as bad as it is here, it's really bad in other parts of the state. The Bitterroot basin is looking at less than 50% normal inflow forecast so they're really in trouble. We are certainly in trouble too. The outlook for the Bighorn River is not as bad as Rock Creek, Stillwater and Boulder. After visiting with Ken Frazer and Mike Ruggles earlier, we thought it may not be a bad idea to have a news article ready for next month right before irrigation starts. Maybe a paragraph in the Thursday edition of the Billings Gazette. We should not directly target the irrigators but target the anglers. Bob Gibson will produce and publish a news release. Dan asked that the local conservation districts be kept in the loop of this information too.

Mike Whittington – Sportsman perspectives on initiatives with the positions taken by the Montana Wildlife Federation. I160 – prohibiting trapping of all wild animals and bird on public lands in Montana subject to limited exception. The MT Wildlife Federation board after consideration and hearing both sides address the issue before the board came out clearly opposed to that initiative. I161 – for abolishing outfitter sponsored hunting licenses, replacing outfitter sponsor big game licenses with nonresident licenses increasing nonresident license fees and increasing funding for hunting access and habitat from those increased license fees. Again the board invited spokesmen from both pro and

con sides to address the issues. The board considered it and they are supporting that initiative and have endorsed it. Their recommendation is support from the sportsman perspective. With the increase in licenses fees, there would not be a cut back in block management funding. There are three resolutions dealing with I160 that are going to be submitted by various groups around the state. These resolutions will be presented for adoption by the Wildlife Federation at their annual meeting next month. Mike attended the MT Bowhunters annual banquet in Billings last Saturday. Brian Shinn, who is the TIPMONT license fraud coordinator, had the TIPMONT trailer there with the exhibit of wildlife trophies that have been confiscated from various legal actions involving TIPMONT. He's very knowledgeable. Mike asked Brian if he'd come to one of our CAC meetings to let everyone see the exhibit and give the group a presentation. Maybe this summer.

David Charles – Had people grumbling about the Department's position on lead. Some people thought lead shot is what ought to be used. Still hear that people are happy with the fishing access down toward Columbus on the Yellowstone and are looking forward to using it. Had somebody ask about dog parks. They were wondering if more dog parks might be added to MFWP. Doug Habermann said that we have the only dog park in the system right here at Lake Elmo SP. David said this individual has used this dog park and indicated that the fence is a little bit low for his dogs (huskies).

Action items: State Land signage; news release regarding stream flow forecasts; TIPMONT trailer/Brian Shinn for next meeting.

Person responsible: Gary Hammond; Bob Gibson

Deadline: June 8, 2010

Update on State Parks/Fishing Access Site Improvements Plans

Doug Habermann

Discussion: State Parks -

- Yellowstone River State Wildlife Management Area/State Park An environment assessment will be mailed out and publicized by the end of the week on the development plans of a 200 acre state park to be located on the east side of this site. The road will be upgraded and a campground with 35 camp sites will be built as close as possible to the Yellowstone River east of the irrigation pivots. There will be electrical hookups and water provided. There will be a spot for a campground host. This park will be open year around with management out of the Region 5 office. This should be a popular campground being close to Pompey's Pillar and available for hunters in the fall. Comments are welcome.
- Not actively pursuing any acquisitions with the exception of working with the Yellowstone River Parks Association. There is 68 acres at the mouth of 5-mile Creek that we've been negotiating for several years to acquire for a state park. We should know soon if this will move forward.
- Holmgren FAS No comments on the EA in terms of developing this site. We are moving forward negotiating with Montana Rail Link and Department of Transportation (MDOT). Rail Link will be constructing a new crossing. With current funding, once they are done we will be constructing a road into the site with a temporary parking lot and latrine. When we get additional funding down the road, we will then put in a permanent parking lot with a boat launch.
- Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone FAS Purchased from Bill Meinhardt about a year ago. This site is 170 acres located just south of Bridger. We are going to construct a temporary parking lot for 10 vehicles. We have signed it including a no shooting area along the Ridgeway Drive which is the northern boundary on the county road. We've been working with several landowners. It's on our list for capital projects for the next biennium and we'll see if we get funded. Completed an EA on farming 28 acres of irrigated land at this site, drilling barley into the existing stubble this month. Hopefully next year we'll seed that to permanent cover which will include food plots and nesting cover.
- Weymiller FAS This site has been signed, fenced and boundary marked. Funding has been asked for the next biennium. We are going to have a caretaker that will be part time during the summer down there to take care of the sites on the Clarks Fork.

• Jeffery's Landing – Will be working on recovery work with MDOT.

Action items: Improvement Plans	Person responsible:	Deadline:
	Doug Habermann	Ongoing
Bighorn River Flow Status Update	Doug Haacke	

Discussion: What is this year looking like?

Action items: Bighorn River Flows

- The inflow forecast really looks bad. Knowing that is coming and still hoping for some reprieve down the line, MFWP is looking at negotiating dropping flows earlier to help preempt the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) of dropping the river down in coming months and then we'd be faced with fish loss.
- Currently the river is down to 2,000 cfs and that's as low as we'd like to see it go. Would like to maintain flows of 2,500 cfs to maintain an optimal fishery. With 2,000 cfs, as Ken Frazer would tell you, we still have half a side channel, and good fish populations with the last two years being good water years.
- BOR came out with an operating plan that shows releases of 2,000 cfs through the summer even if the forecast comes in as forecast. The chance that forecast will come in as forecast is less than 3%, but that also means that if it is wrong it could be worse. Sacrificing now will allow going into the fall with good lake storage. As soon as October 2 comes along we'll be sacrificing again for the next fall. MFWP is doing their part as even though the lake is at the second highest lake elevation ever recorded the lake is filling because of cut flows.
- Is Wyoming doing their part to help? Not particularly. The lake levels are very high with the lake only 10 feet from being full. That is expected to go down over the summer. MFWP has told them in no uncertain terms, that we won't accept any reductions of flows on the river below 2000 cfs without some significant storage evacuation and some further deterioration of the forecast. It's hard to believe that it could get any worse, because it's going to be a bad year.
- With such high flows during the last two years during May, June and the early half of July, there was a drop of revenue for the guides and outfitters as they lost 30-35% due to cancellations as people did not want to fish during high water. Fishing was actually fantastic. Currently this year doesn't look like high water so we should have a pretty good spring season for these folks that may help them recover a little bit as their businesses really were hurt last year.
- All the credit goes to the Region 5 office for not only using great science, but generally showing the passion for preserving the Bighorn River fishery. Spring fishing should be good with the lower water, but it does concentrate the fish making them a little easier to catch.
- Ken Frazer said that the one interesting point now is that we are at the exact same snow pack as we were in 2005. That year we had a wet spring and the reservoir went up close to 50 feet into the flood pool and 6700 cfs was going down the Bighorn River. Currently there is 10 feet before the reservoir is completely full. If we do get a wet spring there is going to be a real scramble. We'll see what happens.

Person responsible: Ken

Deadline:

	Frazer	Ongoing		
Initiatives – Fiscal Notes – Informational	ives – Fiscal Notes – Informational Bob Gibson			
Discussion: Bob passed out the state fiscal notes on I160 and I161. These fiscal notes show the impacts these initiatives would have on the state general fund both in revenue and expenditures. If enough signatures are obtained, these will be on the ballot this fall.				
• I160 - prohibiting trapping of all wild animals and bird on public lands in Montana subject to limited exception.				
• I161 - for abolishing outfitter sponsored hunting licenses.				
General discussion occurred amongst CAC members.				
Action items: Informational	Person responsible: Bob Gibson	Deadline: None		

Biennial Hunting Seasons and Regulation Changes

Gary Hammond

Discussion: Season Structure Changes – completed on February 11, 2010.

- Party applications party applications have been implemented for up to four persons for residents and nonresidents for deer and elk special permits and license applications.
- Beginning fall of 2010 there will be a Saturday opener for big game season. Closes the same on Sunday after Thanksgiving.
- Youth deer season 12 to 15 years of age third Thursday and Friday of October with an accompanied licensed adult to be with the youth.
- The elk archery permits are the same as the groupings we had two years ago with modified permit numbers and those numbers will be reduced by 10% next year.
- We will now have elk B licenses just like we have deer B licenses. The elk B licenses replace the antlerless elk permits that have been offered in specific hunting districts.
- Antelope general season opens the same date as pheasant season which is a Saturday instead of a Sunday. The antelope archery season will then close on the Friday before.
- There are two separately antelope licenses now. Specific to Region 5 now anyone can apply for an either-sex license and a doe/fawn license (antelope B license).
- Unlimited bighorn sheep hunting district 302 will be reopened with 2 either-sex licenses.
- Region 5 adjusted the sheep boundary on hunting district 500.
- There will be archery only season for fall black bear to begin with the general archery opener on the first Saturday in September.
- The fall firearm season for black bear will begin on September 15 in all areas.
- There will be archery only season for mountain lion to begin with the general archery opener on the first Saturday in September.
- In two years by the next biennial season setting process, internally the Department is to take a look at other states bonus point systems to make comparisons.

Action items: Informational	Person responsible: Gary Hammond	Deadline: None	
Housekeeping and Adjourn	Bob Gibson		
Action items: No public comment so next meeting date = June 8, 2010 Agenda Topics – update on wolf season; get your ideas into Bob.	Person responsible: CAC Members	Deadline: Mid-May	