

Region 4 CAC Meeting Minutes January 11, 2011 Region 4 Headquarters Great Falls MT

FWP Staff – Gary Bertellotti, Fred Schultz, Matt Marcinek, Graham Taylor, Mike Martin and George Liknes

CAC Members – Doug Deffe', Karl Gies, Dennis Hanson, Lisa Flowers, Mike Labriola, Bryan Thies, Charles Boccock and Judie Suden

Public/Guests – Ron Moody, FWP Commissioner; Don Pfau, Lewistown

Gary opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda. Asked if there were any additions to the agenda and some folks wanted an update on I-161 Initiative.

CAC Member Discussion Items:

Went around the room for CAC discussion items and comments.

Dennis Hanson: Folks in his area were interested in the bust in the Malta area that was in the Great Falls Tribune. He questioned the amount of fines and years of loss of privileges. Didn't seem to amount to much. Mike Martin, Warden Captain, did some research on the case as it was not a Region 4 case but rather it occurred in Region 6. He mentioned that fines and loss of privileges is really up to the judge. In this case most plead guilty and cooperated right off the bat. Mike discussed different scenarios in cases like this so that folks had a better understanding how these cases like this normally pan out.

I worked with Gary Olson, Biologist in Conrad, on resigning Brinkman Game Preserve. We spent nearly a day and a half putting up signs so the preserve had more defined boundaries. Had problems in this area with trespass on neighboring ranch and folks shooting bucks on the preserve where only doe hunting is allowed. Previous signs were more permanent, metal, whereas we put up lamented paper signs, probably won't last as long. With the new signs there seemed to be better compliance. Would like to make some changes to the boundaries due to fencing whereas some boundaries now just run across open ground or coulees but that would take an act of the legislature to institute such changes.

Mike Labriola: I went on a guided hunt this year for elk and got a totally different view of the outfitting industry. Feel that outfitters do have their place in the hunting scene. Had several discussions around the kitchen table with the outfitters and other hunters on lack of seeing a lot of elk that opening week. Discussion topics were the youth hunt, two days before the opening of elk season which was on a Saturday this year and wolves. Everyone seemed to be in favor of the youth hunt but really wondered, being so close to the opener of the general season, what real affect it had on the game and their movements.

Bryan Thies: Inquired if there were any damage hunts in HD 447. None planned at this time or being planned. A few folks approached me that had cow tags in HD 447 and said they had an access issue during the general season.

Asked about the Dugas and Riverdale Ranch Conservation Easements. Dugas is off right now due to lack of funds. Riverdale Ranch, Moline and Coffee Creek easements are now completed.

Had a question about bison being put on game ranges. What sort of fence would keep bison on the range yet let elk and deer run free? Also had a discussion on game damage rules.

Lisa Flowers: Asked about weed management on the Marias State Park/WMA. Graham Taylor briefed on what has happened, weed-wise, to date. Had 20 releases of bugs to control weeds. Spot sprayed all travel corridors and aurally sprayed 300 acres. Considering using domestic sheep to control Leafy Spurge and Knapweed. Treatments are all documented and GPS'd. Have to remember that previous owner had no weed control at all for the past 50 years. Department always is questioned why and what we do weed-wise. Lisa suggested that FWP put out more educational publicity as to how we handle weeds on our properties as a lot of folks feel we don't do enough.

Judie Suden: Worked with an outfitter this past fall and witnessed both sides of the fence as far as I-161 was concerned.

Asked about the proposal of limiting putting in for special permits in some high use permit areas. Commissioner Moody said it is being considered at the January 13 Commission Meeting but he feels it is iffy if it will advance. Looking at elk drawing odds where chances of drawing a permit are 10% or less per year.

Mentioned that there are a lot of grizzly bear concerns and encounters on the Front.

Karl Gies: I-161 – Talked to several folks in the Lewistown area and a lot them don't know what they voted for. There is a Fergus County Legislator that is putting together a bill to rescind I-161 vote. Folks are concerned about stream access in the Lewistown area when it comes to stream and bridge access. Feeling is we may lose access. Major concern in Lewistown area is access more so for hunting rather than fishing.

Attended the PL/PW meeting held in Lewistown a while back. Interesting discussion on harboring wildlife. Meeting was well attended.

Charles Bocoek: Is there an updated wolf location map available. A new one should be coming out soon.

Was curious as to where we are planning to move bison – bison in the quarantine area and Turner Ranch.

Concerned about Bighorn Sheep by Holter Lake – Sleeping Giant side of the lake. Curious if they had a disease as he is not seeing a lot of them. Probably was some disease in the herd about three years ago.

Was concerned about a new bill being proposed for trapping falcons. Sounds like non-residents will be able to trap also.

Asked about pine beetle damaged trees that could cause fire hazards. What will fire retardant due to creeks/land? It is a concern and is being considered in fighting fires.

Water quantity in Ft Peck Reservoir is great. Discussed Ft Peck Hatchery budget. With a possible 5% budget cut hatchery will definitely be affected.

Doug Deffe’: He is getting complaints from some ranchers in the Little Belts about the number of mountain lions they are encountering. Wanted to know how quotas were set. Quotas are normally set on historical trends and feedback we get from landowners, hunters and the hunter survey.

General Discussion Items:

Gary – I-161 – everything is in place to move on without outfitter set aside. No one, including outfitters, knows how this will pan out. Discussed outfitter set aside.

Matt Marcinek – Parks – Handed out “Economic Impact Survey. We had 1.9 million visitors to our parks last year, a 50% increase in park visitation since the last study was done in 2002. According to the report, total spending attributable to visitors was over \$289 million. Visitor satisfaction levels were rated high.

Smith River application period is open now – January 3 to February 15. Drawing will be conducted on February 22. This year we are offering a “Super Permit”. Cost is \$5 per chance and you can buy as many as you like. You can purchase tickets up to March 17. The winner can choose any day they wish to float. Still need to pay launch fees.

Opened Little Muddy Creek FAS. It has a new toilet and the railroad crossing easement was granted by BNSF. The lower portion of the site floods regularly, so all future development will be on the upper bench.

Region will be getting a new maintenance person to deal with weeds within the region, concentrated at FAS'.

Senate Bill 13 will address a change to registration of vehicles from opt out to opt in. This concerns the \$4 fee when you register your vehicles with the money going to the Parks program.

Senate Bill 43 will clean up the primitive parks act. Ackley Lake and Sluice Boxes State Parks will be removed from the present list and Tower Rock will be added.

Graham Taylor – Wildlife - Recently we completed three conservation easements within the Region – Coffee Creek (Pheasants Forever) \$375,000; Riverdale - \$1.26 million; and Moline - \$770,000. Still working on the Dugas easement but we need dollars to complete. Easements are done to maintain properties in the state they are in, working ranch, working farm, etc. We deal with subdivisions, public access. Easements are in perpetuity (stand forever). The document is recorded at the local court house. Easements come with a management plan. Easements are monitored by FWP on an annual basis. Money comes from Habitat Montana Program, Federal dollars and other conservation groups also contribute dollars.

George Liknes – Fisheries – Working on the Machler and Mountain Acres project to renaturalize/remeander a channelized section of Big Spring Creek on the north end of Lewistown. Cost of project is about one million dollars. Groups are in the fund raising mood right now and may have as much as \$520,000 toward the project so far. Hope to start construction in 2012 even if the project is done in phases.

Fishing regulations are on a four year cycle and 2011 is a year when changes for any reason are considered. We plan to seek public comment for issues and the Commission will consider tentative in August and finalize the regulations at their October meeting for the 2012 season. We anticipate continuing controversy surrounding the walleye limits on the Missouri River. For the 2011 season, the regulations from Holter Dam to Cascade Bridge will be no limit on walleyes and from Cascade Bridge to Black Eagle Dam the daily walleye limit will be 20

We have had meetings last May and in December with walleye folks concerning stocking walleye in Tiber Reservoir. The last time we stocked Tiber with walleye was in 1988; an EA will be required to disclose and assess if stocking is warranted. Stocking is not based on the size of the body of water, but on the productivity of the body of water. Based on its productivity, biological data suggests stocking Tiber Reservoir is not necessary. Any stocking is required to increase population levels in the planted water and not simply replace wild spawned fish. Stocking would be an experiment to see if stocking improves the walleye production in the reservoir. This year we will attempt to transfer 25,000 walleye fry that would have been stocked in Wadsworth Pond and Petrolia Reservoir and plant them in Tiber. Fish will be marked so we can determine survival and contribution to the fishery. We anticipate 50-100,000 transferred from the Lake Frances plant in 2012, and possibly surplus walleye in a future year.

Mike Martin – Enforcement – We are now fully staffed with wardens in Region 4. We added Travis Haworth in the Conrad area and we will be adding Kevin Anderson in the Lewistown Area. Kevin is attending the Law Enforcement Academy until April. We are three positions short statewide. Right now wardens are following up on hunting season cases, working on game damage and focusing on bobcat trapping.

Commissioner Ron Moody – The commission is considering and finalizing a standard opening time of our game ranges in the spring each year. All of them would most likely open at noon due to personal safety concerns.

Discussed how Habitat Montana Fund gets their funding. Residents purchase the Sportsman license and \$7.00 of each purchase goes to Habitat Montana. It costs \$7.00 more to purchase the Sportsman package rather than purchase the licenses separately. Seems to be a trend to purchase the licenses separately rather than the Sportsman license. Looking at doing a marketing campaign to encourage folks to buy the Sportsman package. It is for a good cause.

Gary – Big Spring Hatchery PCB news. We have hired a consultant to develop a plan by the end of April to demo and rebuilt it by 2012. There is a lot of trout produced by this hatchery and the whole hatchery system will be taking a big hit by Big Spring not producing fish.

Passed out a current list of bills being proposed this legislative session relating to FWP. House Bill 47 deals with offering a free fishing day. Multiple bills on large predators and management of bison.

Benton Lake National Refuge is in the planning process of a new 10 year plan. They are looking at de-watering the refuge 15 years out of the next 20 years. The comment period is still open. CMR Game Range is going through the same process but their comment period has already ended.

NEXT MEETING: Would like to hold our next meeting close to the end of the legislative session, sometime in mid to late March. Fred will survey members in February to see what date would work.

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