



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

**Region Three Citizens' Advisory Committee
FWP Headquarters – Bozeman
June 20, 2012**

CAC Attendees: Mike Dailey, Joe Cohenour, Sam Samson, Rick Arnold, Dan Crismore, Ken Sinay, LeRoy Mehring, Tom Helm, Katie Weaver, William Mealer, Robin Cunningham, David Gibson, Cale Christiansen

CAC Absent: Rick Grady, Barb Cestero, Ken Sinay, Cyndy Andrus

FWP Staff Present: Pat Flowers, Andrea Jones, Travis Horton, Sam Sheppard, Pat Clancy, Neil Anderson

Guests: Catherine Mazzone (KTVM-TV), Mark Pierson, David Barbison

Greetings

PF provided an orientation/overview of the CAC and the Department for new members using a Region 3 CAC/FWP reference binder. Then, PF gave an overview of the agenda and explained rules of decision making for the committee.

Introductions and roundtable – Pat Flowers

JC: PLPW looking for anyone with concerns about hunter access -- he will pass along. He's a member of the elk brucellosis working group. He talked about the bull poached on Super Bowl Sunday and congratulated Dave Loewen on a good job.

RA: Asked that Travis Horton speak about the future plans to fight Aquatic Nuisance Species and the whitefish program on the Madison, and address how we deal with people fishing above Lion's Bridge. He asked AJ to email other regions' CAC meeting notes.

LM: Concerned about Robb-Ledford WMA decision and looking forward to the elk update.

TH: Says he struggles with hunter access issues as a landowner.

DG: Wondering about interagency relationships and how they are coordinated.

Wildlife update

Wolves:

Season proposals

PF: We are in the process of establishing our third hunting season for wolves in Montana. The first was in 2009 - we offered a modest harvest. Then the wolf went back

under federal control. So, we've had not quite two years to manage wolves. We all have an interest in managing wolves well - all sides - but that doesn't happen overnight. Second season was last year - congress put a rider on an appropriations bill to have wolves delisted. Based on our experience from the first year, we raised the quota to 220 and harvested 166. So going forward we're proposing removing quotas for most of the state.

RA: Will you still keep track of harvest?

PF: Yes, there will still be mandatory reporting. Some of the specifics - all of Bitterroot are combined into one district. HDs near national parks will still have quotas. The commission could authorize season closures. Hunter orange not required after Nov. 25. Trapping would be allowed. We will recommend a change in the bag limit (increasing). The process: proposals accepted as tentative, then go out for month-long comment period and then the commission weighs comments and decides.

DG: Has anyone filed suit about any of the wolf proposals?

PF: Not yet.

DG: What about rules for trapping?

Sam Sheppard: Same general rules for all trapping in Montana.

Sam Samson: Why did they change 24 hour rule?

Sam Sheppard: It's just a suggestion now. Perhaps there was input from the trappers. All the enforcement captains will have the opportunity to weigh in.

WM: Open house on wolves was helpful. It seems like the trapping portion was well drawn out.

DC: Concerned about dogs running into these traps and required markings

PF: Encourages commenting.

RMEF donation

PF: RMEF donated 51K which goes to FWP and USDA Wildlife Services. Money not being taken from membership dollars, it will come from a special fund.

County coordination

PF: Met with Jefferson County commissioners. They are looking for clarification on what coordination means. Also met with Gallatin County twice and they may come up with a county predator plan.

KW: Who is initiating these coordination sessions?

PF: The counties. In the case of GC - they had an initial meeting and we were not aware of it. When learned about it - we asked to participate to provide facts and did so.

KW: What about a proactive approach?

Sam Samson: Why don't they just send a representative to FWP commission meetings?

Bison:

PF: *Explained membership of IBMP to new members.* We've been implementing the IBMP since 2000 and it guides how we manage bison that leave the park. We have two management challenges. There's the out migration in the dead of winter (usually more so on the north side, but this year, it was the west side – Horse Butte, Hebgen Basin). Despite the early green up, it's been a tough year with bison moving back and forth a bit, and not being able to use a helicopter due to a lawsuit has hampered things. Over the last year or so, the Citizens Working Group came to the 5 agencies and came out with a list of recommendations, (we pay for a facilitator). We thought they came out with good recommendations - a good spectrum of interests. Managers took those recommendations to heart and accepted a lot of them: Considering allowing bison year round in areas like the Horse Butte peninsula and upper Gallatin. Haven't started on the environmental review yet -- should happen within weeks.

RA: Will that include Taylor Fork? Are there cows up there?

PF: Yes to Taylor Fork. No cattle anymore, some horses. Some active grazing allotments in the Hebgen Basin.

Letter to Montana congressional delegation re: B. abortus

PF: This came out of a recommendation from the CWG. The listing of *Brucella abortus* as a select agent severely restricts research.

JC: How many bison are left in quarantine?

PF: Now in soft release - not technically in quarantine. Some are at Turner's Green Mountain Ranch. The rest have gone to Ft. Peck.

WM: Are any left in Corwin Springs?

PF: Some in Brogan's facility as part of APHIS' contraceptive study.

Elk:

Brucellosis Working Group progress

PF: We created a CAC with a goal to come up with recommendations about elk given prevalence of brucellosis. Concern has gone up in recent years as we seeing higher rate of seroprevalence. Wanted to get all interests together before it becomes a crisis. They are winding down here.

JC: We're looking at the solutions at this point and trying to get response from livestock groups. Trying to find financial and socially responsible solutions. We have a tough road ahead with two meetings next week. Gives a brief history on brucellosis in the GYA. More of a livestock problem than an elk problem.

NA: Trying to learn more about brucellosis through ongoing research projects. In mid-90's, seroprevalance ranged from 1-2%, now around 11-12%. Perhaps it's better surveillance, but more likely moving across the landscape. *Refers to study-- explains study.* We're responding to cattle cases, to answer questions and respond to concerns if they want to trade cattle and satisfy needs of other state veterinarians. Our goal is to monitor five different areas throughout the state considered to be high-priority areas

like HD 325 (SE of Dillon) found 5 sero, 4 pregnant (got VITs). Tracking nine. Trying to determine, among other things, the risk posed to other animals by bacteria shed on the landscape. Try to track twice a week and pick up the effort as calving season gets closer.

DC: Requested a movement map of Neil for Ruby Valley Wildlife Group.

SS: Does brucellosis affect predators?

Can contract but wolves have shown that they are really a dead-end host.

RA: What about birds?

NA: Birds actually probably cut down on the risk because they clean up afterbirth.

JC: *Explains why this is so important to livestock producers and the testing required in the DSA - have to demonstrate to other state vets that risk of brucellosis is 0%. It's been fascinating to learn about. Chronic wasting disease should be a bigger concern seeing how fast it could move and with the Wyoming feed grounds.*

WM: An additional challenge is the lack of commercial slaughterhouses.

MD: We used to have to test 30-40 years ago when MT wasn't "brucellosis-free".

NA: A final report should be out shortly.

Bighorn sheep: Possible transplant to Bridger Mountains

PF: We have a Bighorn Sheep management plan that was adopted a few years ago. BS seem to be really prone to disease. We go through periodic die offs. They're really prone to contracting pneumonia from domestic sheep so we're really careful about choosing re-introduction sites. There has been a lot of interest in the Bridger Mountains, so it gets a lot of appeal because of the proximity to Bozeman. Our biologists do have some concerns about that area - existing mule deer and goat populations. As of now, we're going to move forward with an environmental review to assess risks and potential mitigation to decide whether to move forward with re-introduction. There are some domestic herds on the west side. For the most part, BS are not a risk to domestic herds it's the other way around. The only exception is where some sheep owners have some prized ewes and don't want any mixing.

LM: Wants an update on the Greenhorn sheep. Observed 12 below dam. Notice 17 recently above Tate's place. Most he's ever counted was 26 sheep at Tate's. There are a few nice rams and one real nice ram by the dam.

DC: That population by the dam is taking a hit due to mountain lions. As a houndsman, aware of three ewes killed by lions

SS: Herd by Anaconda better this winter than last winter -- has seen up to 75 as opposed to last year when he saw hardly any

PF: If we don't try any of these new areas and mitigation techniques, we're going to see less and less sheep.

WM: What about the northern Gallatin?

NA: You have to be careful about moving potential pathogens and you should know what is present in the herds and what is compatible. The effort now is to move sheep to

new areas or augment struggling herds. It hasn't worked in the Highlands because of naive sheep, etc. There is a lot we don't know.

SS: Is the Boulder Valley out?

PF: Yes. Several locations were considered, including Lewis and Clark Caverns.

TH: How many sheep do we lose in the Gallatin to highway deaths?

Travis: Not many. Although, we did have someone who used to bait sheep.

DC: We have a bigger problem with the railroad tracks at Thompson Falls

Fisheries update

Recap of first Madison River Citizens Advisory Committee meeting

Pat explained the interest-based process involved with the Madison River CAC. We've had two meetings and expect to have another five or six. We did add a member from West Yellowstone after hearing concerns about representation. Originally the Governor's office limited the committee to a group of 7 for mainly economic reasons. Ginny Tribe is the facilitator.

SS: Robin, how do you find the process?

RC: Like the interest based process because everyone's agenda is laid out at the beginning and you don't have to be on opposing sides all the time. Meeting three will be a big deal. The downside is the level of participation needed. Your name remains associated with the topic and decision for years to come.

KW: Is the end result a river plan?

PF: Yes.

KW: Will this be the case for all rivers?

PF: No, but will probably have to address the Yellowstone at some point.

WM: Guides are not used to doing paperwork.

SS: SRP reporting is not onerous at all. It's simply name, number of clients, the date, and the stretch of river being floated.

RC: The purpose of the SRP is that 'if you're going to use public ground for private income, you have to play by the rules'. Yes, at the guide level, it may seem onerous, but as Sam said, it's in line with your responsibility as an outfitter. Really it's very simple. No paperwork, no paycheck. It's the same as any business – you don't clock in, you don't get paid.

WCT Transplant to Ruby Creek in Gravelly Mountains – Pat Clancy

PC: this is part of a larger project to expand habitat in the western part of the state. Most habitat is mountain streams these days. One of the ways we're expanding habitat is to locate streams (tributaries to larger rivers with non-competing species). In 1997, we proposed this project, but haven't been able to get to it until now given the Cherry Creek project and some legal obstacles.

If we can remove rainbow trout from a waterfall, it'll be very good for WCT. We don't need to build a fish barrier – there's a natural barrier. We have a relatively small stream in which it won't be difficult to remove the rainbows. We'll start with electrofishing and move some, then Rotenone which will be applied as a liquid (only one part per million). Trout are especially susceptible to Rotenone. Comment period deadline was last week. Only had a few comments – organizations supported, but local landowners were opposed at first because they acted as stewards over the years for the rainbows, but were more amenable to the idea of electrofishing to move the fish.

LM: Concerned with use of Rotenone above the falls. How long it will take to dissipate below the falls? Are you going to have a barrier?

PC: We'll use a chemical to breakdown the Rotenone.

DG: What is the status of Leverich project?

TH: Still a few brook trout

RA: Any more work being done on McClure?

PC: There was a barrier built to prevent rainbows connecting with irrigation ditch.

PF: ANS and whitefish were brought up in roundtable.

TH: ANS program in the state for years. Whirling disease and zebra mussels are typically transported by people. Also, Eurasian Watermillfoil: It's been found from Drouillard FAS to Canyon Ferry and other areas like Toston Reservoir. There have been some changes when it comes to bait use – which really won't affect Region 3. 50 seasonal employees will be helping check for ANS this summer.

We don't have good data on Whitefish in this state.

RA: Has anyone ever been written a ticket for tossing whitefish onto the bank?

SS: Whitefish are native so that would be illegal, but doesn't know of any cases like this.

Sampson: What's their geographic distribution?

TH: They're everywhere.

Parks update

AJ: Summer event rundown: Friday Night Campfire Programs, Missouri Headwaters Summer Speaker Series, Bannack Days

Enforcement Program: FWP's approach, recent cases, TIP-MONT – *Sam Sheppard*

SS: Gave out warden activity region summary report. Explained how wardens are taught and how verbal warnings are usually enough to curtail bad activity. Different than other law enforcement because we deal with people with guns all the time. This takes a special kind of people skills.

Sam provided examples of several recent cases including a Madison County poaching case and an update on another poaching case which was featured in the Helena Independent Record today.

DG: What does it mean by training on this report?

SS: We give presentations, talks, but also attend workshops, have firearms training, etc.

TH: How is Tip-Mont funded? Mostly donations?

SS: Comes mostly from within – license dollars, but also some donations. We have a TIP-Mont coordinator (1.0 FTE) and some other help.

LM: Skyline Sportsmen has put up money for TIP-Mont in some cases – like the recent case of a mule deer doe poached near Deer Lodge.

WM: What can citizens help with?

SS: Perhaps changing the mentality about how serious wildlife crimes are. Poachers are stealing our resources. That's why we're being much more open about getting the word out in the paper, etc.

Respect Your Rivers: Update on finances, Granny Trout check-out

Rick Arnold provided overview of RYR and its history as well as Granny Trout.

Brochure created with concrete original goals and passed around.

Group watched the four public service advertisements.

RA: Montana Outdoor Science School (MOSS) is exploring the possibility of taking over Respect Your Rivers campaign because grant writing might be more feasible for them and mutually beneficial.

CAC considered as a group turning over the campaign.

An agreement would be overseen by PF as to the turnover.

The Granny Trout program would still be a local program and we can still have input as necessary.

PF: Suggests that Barb and Cyndy be kept in the loop and okay this transfer.

KW: Is Granny available to leave the county?

RA: Yes. And they've made arrangements for local high school to help perform as Granny Trout.

SS: Move to go through with plan.

Group: Motion carried.

Robb-Ledford WMA decision

Not going forward.

CAC Caucus

Requested a tour of the lab/library during the next meeting.

PF: Bring forward any legislative concerns.

LM: Chad Murphy to speak?

Public comment

None.

Meeting Adjourned

Next meeting: September 12

Final quarterly meeting: December 5