



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region Three Citizen's Advisory Committee FWP Headquarters – Bozeman September 12, 2012

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

CAC Absent: Rick Grady, Tom Helm

FWP Staff Present: Pat Flowers, Joan Buhl, Tamara Tollett, Jerry Walker, Travis Horton, Neil Anderson, Howard Burt, Chad Murphy, Arnold Dood, Stephanie Adams

Guests: Joe Gutkoski, Richard Lessner, Mason Auger

Greetings, Introductions, Roundtable – Pat Flowers

PF reviewed the agenda and touched on 'new topics' list to chart course for future meetings.

KW: Explore natural resources and economic resources

DC: Wolf hunting on the Blacktail WMA in winter. WMA is closed. Consider walk-in hunting. Mule deer doe tags—against increasing tags.

LM: FWP failed to include Butte for a meeting on the statewide fisheries plan. (*Meeting scheduled on October 4 at the Butte Plaza Inn*)

KS: Alternative economic development associated with natural resources. This is my seventeenth year guiding in Cinnabar Basin.

JC: Wolf hunting season, once explained in support of season.

BC: Hearing concerns over wolf trapping season.

RC: River etiquette, new handout is fabulous--sophisticated way of getting the message across. The Madison and the Missouri, water is low and it's hot. The Madison and the Missouri had great water levels and everybody went.

CA: Tourism advisory council committee meeting in October. On Monday, city commission will discuss thinning of trees near the city water supply.

Joe Gutkowski: Working on legislation to preserve instream flows and prevent dewatering of streams – there are 4,430 some miles of important fisheries.

Parks Update: Jerry Walker

No general fund dollars or license fees go to state parks. Vehicle registration fees (opt-in) funds support Montana state parks. 80% paying fee; 18-20% opt out. There is no way to determine why people opt out.

DC: We live near Nevada and Virginia City and I had no idea that we needed to pay a fee to be in those towns. This is new to me.

JW: I don't ever talk about this program without including all three of these places--FAS, State Parks, and Nevada and Virginia City.

PF: Just to clarify, you don't need to opt in to drive into FAS? JW: Technically you do.

Updates: Pat Flowers

Bison: Over the last month we have been in trial, and we are not done yet. The issue is to increase tolerance of bison on the north side of the Park. Decision will be made at the end of the year.

The other issue is scoping of year round habitat for bison on the west side of the Park.

Wolf trapping: Education for wolf trapping, it's been a struggle to schedule, and get training staff together. We are expecting 300-400 people to go through the class.

KS: Is there any possibility of adding more classes? I wanted to join.

PF: We want to have a fixed set of dates; if you miss the dates then you have to wait until next year. We may try to up the capacity to classes.

Another subject, counties from Region Three are consulting and coordinating on big game management and wolf management. It's a bit more limited than before. We have our first meeting in Whitehall with Jefferson County. I think it's helpful that the counties want to get involved.

Enforcement: A look at recent investigations and wildlife forensics – Chad Murphy, Regional Investigator

Became a regional investigator in 2005. Main role is to assist field wardens with large scale investigations. Currently there are six investigators in the state. Highlights of some of the major investigations:

Cinnabar Basin: Numerous suspects from numerous states, fines and restitution = \$120,000, and loss of privileges for life.

Jorgensen-Lar Case: 18 defendants, Swap hunts, youths involved, \$59,000 in fines and restitution, loss of privileges life: 951 case hours.

Operation Lone Star: No licenses or transfer of licenses, previous landowner, fines and restitution \$24,000, loss of restitution: 10 years.

Slavinsky case: Spotlighting, only taking heads, teaching son, 5 years DOC, loss of privileges for life. 579 case hours.

DUBY- operation/ EBAY Feathers: started in Alaska, serial wildlife killer; he shot it and he wrote about it, it didn't matter; state and federal, AK, MT, WA, Life Privileges, \$41,350 in fines and restitution. 362 case hours.

Operation Sunny View: Dick and Matt Weiner, Leased MT Ranch in the Shields, hunt w/o licenses, license transfers, illegal outfitting, state and federal, \$98,975 fines and restitution, loss of hunting privileges for life in the World, 385 case hours.

Why people poach?

Greed and Ego

Bragging rights

For the trophy (antlers and hide)

Money changing hands

#2 in the world only to illegal drug industry

In six years, over a half million dollars in fines and restitution have been collected.

Statute of limitation is three years, if you are a resident. If you are a non-resident, the statute of limitation never runs out. Poaching will never go away, it's called job security.

Confiscated mounts are sometimes displayed at public places; sometimes they are sold at public auctions, sometimes they are not worth anything.

Pat: This was a great presentation, it shows us that if you see or hear something that isn't right then tell someone.

Fisheries Update: Travis Horton

Drought

-There were no fishing closures in Region Three this year.

-Good groundwater this year.

-Big Hole: People have been advised to fish during the hoot owl hours, and the agricultural folks are asked to be conservative. The Beaverhead River may run a bit low for the winter. The Beaverhead water temperature is probably a bit high and levels a bit low.

SS: I live on the Boulder. Who keeps track of the water rights? How does that work?

TH: the Senior water right holder is 1st in line; we are working on practices in the Big Hole that illustrate that you don't need 4" of standing water on the field. It's a lot of breaking tradition over time. DNRC goes in and calculates what is needed to water the acreage, and the water right. Once you get past the adjudication process, then you have ditch riders. They come along and say "ok, shut it off you are junior to so-and-so."

SS: How can you figure what traditional flows were, where is that normal flow come from?

TH: It's very complicated, like I said, and we have two full time staff working primarily on this.

Madison River CAC: the last meeting was spent defining desirable vs. acceptable conditions. Our next meeting is in two weeks to set recommendations.

KS: I hope there are members on the committee who are non-commercial, non-whitewater, non-fly fishing, etc. There are a lot of people who care about that resource.

RC: What I recognize, the commercial group is focused on Ennis up. I use the lower river all the time. I have expanded my thoughts on where is the group thinking.

KS: I never see anything about riparian habitat. I would love to do nature floats, but there are too many fishermen. People do want that solitude experience.

RC: The reason I go to the lower is for the solitude. We are baking a cake and it's not done yet, as with the MCAC. This is very different and much more positive. You will see.

TH: It's easy to get tunnel vision on one issue and forget that there are other user groups.

BM: The lower is not being utilized.

KS: It's still being treated the same.

BC: There are still those who are interested in floating for the nature, birds, etc

Statewide Fisheries Management Plan Draft – Travis Horton

FWP wants this plan to be transparent to the public. This draft plan is on our website (fwp.mt.gov and click on statewide fisheries management plan) where individuals can review and comment on the plan. Open houses are being held throughout the region. There is a lot of diversity across the state, with a lot of different water bodies. This is an opportunity to discuss and gather comments. The draft plan is a “road map” that would provide guidance to the public and decision makers for each of Montana’s river drainages. The plan presents information on topics ranging from wild fish management to hatchery fish stocking guidelines, among other programs. It focuses on services provided by FWP as well as the history of Montana fisheries, management issues and concerns and long-term goals and objectives for state fisheries programs. There are two sections of the plan 1) overview of the program and 2) management direction for drainages.

State wildlife lab tour – Neil Anderson

Wildlife Updates - Howard Burt

We have had one wolf trapping certification class. This is a class that you cannot take online; you have to take it in person. Right now there are 30 classes statewide. There is only one that takes place after the general season starts. We want to make sure we do this right and ethically. Management of wolf population, ethics, trapping, and actually take them outside and set the traps.

DG: Are there regulations on the size of trap?

HB: Yes, that is all discussed in here. That’s why we wanted to have local people teaching these classes so that they knew the area and could tell people where they should and should not go to trap.

DC: If I’m going to trap cats, I want to know if there are going to be wolf traps in the area. Do you think this could go online like with the other education classes?

HB: That was a concern of people who didn’t like trapping and other trappers. And it very well could go online. There’s going to be bumps . . .

HB: If you are going to trap wolves, you need a trapping license and attend a certification class. Limit is three wolves.

LM: What if you catch a radio collared wolf?

HB: You can harvest or release.

LM: How do you release?

HB: Call us.

LM: No snares?

HB: No only footholds for wolves. The chance of catching non-target species is higher with snares.

PF: In Idaho, they had a lot of non-target species caught in snares didn’t they?

HB: Maybe not a lot, but they did have some. There are some stops on the snares, and some releases for larger animals. But again, they are not legal in Montana.

KS: A lot of the classes are already filled?

HB: We’ve been trying to decide how to go about either having another class, or expanding a class. Billings is still open.

PF: What about wolf hunting on the Blacktail?

DC: They can't cross the fence to harvest a wolf, and wolves are chasing elk. The closure is to protect elk.

BC: The folks concerned with trapping are those who are backcountry skiing with dogs and I'm one of them. So, if we can get the word out.

Elk Working Group – Joe Cohenour - SEE HANDOUT

Page 6 has our suggestions. Basically it comes down to spatial and temporal separations. They do know once the elk aborts the first year, they won't do it again. This is an ongoing study that is very important to us. They need to remove the cow from the herd after this--hunting.

Unfortunately, there is a stigma on hunting these cows. The point is to lower the interaction with livestock. This is a livestock problem vs. a wildlife problem. We've put our suggestions out there. I don't know where or what FWP is going to do with them or where this will go.

PF: The table shows 35% supported extreme mgmt. Are these people in support of extreme management? I'm just trying to understand the table.

JC: Each person ranked the list of things. Each person gave a percentage of weight for each thing.

PF: And then you dismissed 'extreme management'?

JC: Yes

PF: And I think that just that point is an important point.

JC: \$38,000 was spent on test and slaughter, it's not economically feasible.

PF: Another good point is that you've used local groups. The Madison Valley is not the Gallatin Valley, not the Beaverhead.

JC: Yes, that was my idea to tailor this whole thing, tailor the working groups

DC: Improve some of the range and winter habitat

LM: How do livestock people feel that we should deal harboring?

JC: All they were doing was test and slaughter, start talking to livestock producers.

LM: And what did they have to say?

JC: At first they said that landowner rights are strong and I agree, but then they said that there is a problem.

LM: What about these people who are intentionally harboring?

JC: Well, through the Commission, they can say that this land is open to hunting cows or not open at all.

PF: I think it's going to have to come from the internal community in order for it to go anywhere. This is the best road map, rather than statute.

PF: One of the things we are doing this year is cows only on private land. So, hopefully we are moving them to public.

LM: But that's with landowner cooperation.

BM: Nowhere do we allow unattended livestock on public land in Asia and Europe. I think this is a management of livestock distribution problem. Make some food plots, spatially, food sources near calving grounds.

BC: I don't think that calving happens in higher country.

JC: Most of the conflicts happen on the lower country.

BM: Well, there is no food in the higher country for the elk

CC: The elk calve on the private property, there is no food

JC: I've given them the information and I have asked for feedback from them, but Feb 15th is the golden date.

LM: Robb-Ledford the leases were due, are they settled? I think we should regard them as wildlife grazing instead of livestock.

Pat will send out committee members' names, phone numbers and addresses to CAC members.

Bison Scoping -Arnold Dood

We have received 2300 comments. The department will have to decide what we want to do—looking at all these areas and alternatives.

BM: Where do the bison come from? Even if they are quarantined for 5 years doesn't guarantee that they are Brucellosis free. I have a concern about our Brucellosis free status.

AD: You can buy them--Moise, Elk Island, CA, etc. A possibility is not a standard.

Respect your Rivers – Rick Arnold

Granny Trout and MOSS (Montana Outdoor Science School). They will bring the "Respect Your Rivers" message to public gatherings and to schools. Brick House is excited to be a part of this. We've written a number of grant requests, and hopefully we will have some proof that this program is worthwhile. We set up a booth and promoted MOSS and Respect your Rivers campaign at the Madison River Festival. MOSS is putting together a calendar of events. They are going to get Granny Trout out as much as possible to classrooms, etc. What I would like is to give a quarterly report to CAC, and to get feedback from you as to where we should be aiming this program.

PF: They might also check into Kaleidoscope. I also want to thank Rick, this is such a great program and I don't want to see it die. We will get you supplies, bumper stickers, t-shirts, etc. and hopefully have some cash in the ad fund. So, thanks.

Future Topics:

Robb-Ledford leases

Impacts of 161 –impacts to block management (perhaps get both sides to speak to this topic)

Ruby River access

Trout in the classroom

Gas and oil leases and how they affect fish and wildlife

Meeting with legislators

Walk-in access to the Blacktail WMA

Wall Creek grazing plan

Moose population study

What FWP is doing to build better habitat and connectivity for the Gallatin and Jefferson?

Public Comment:

Joe Gutkoski: Bison on public lands, so wolves have something to chew on. Pack of 20 wolves on Ted Turner's ranch. They have killed 50 of his bison.