

05-28-2013 CAC Meeting
FWP, Public Meeting Room

Present: Wally Wilkinson, Paul Fielder, Alan Wood, Bernie Cassidy, Mike Shepard, Kent Laudon, Jim Vashro, Ryan Kreiner, Mark Deleray, Tony Anderson, Brent Mitchell, Jeff Hagener, John Fraley, Lee Anderson, Jim Williams, Mike Corkish, Jim Satterfield, Greg Foley, Rick Komenda, Dave Landstrom, Kari Gabriel, Jerry Smalley, and Martha Abbrescia.

Housekeeping: CAC Service Awards – Rick Komenda, Mike Shepard, Roger Diegle (absent), and Ron Hvizdak (absent) THANK YOU!

Will need 4 new committee members for Fall 2013.

Introduction of Director Jeff Hagener

Jeff thanks the CAC and commends them for being the first committee in the State.

FWP is probably the most visible agency in the state. Our constituents are very passionate about our wildlife and fisheries throughout the state.

Overview:

FWP Commission: Change in commissioners and currently the R1 area does not yet have a commissioner appointed by the governor. One word of advice given was to obtain a commissioner that is from west of the divide.

When Gov Bullock was elected last fall, several people came to me and asked if I'd consider coming back. The Governor understands the passion of the sportsmen and women. Governor Bullock put out a few directives to the department at the beginning

1. Fee Increase: be transparent in our budget and in the quest for a fee increase. We will need to get the word out by 2015 session. Gives example of Wyoming situation with the legislature denying their fee increase. Had to cut programs by approximately \$9M.
 - a. FWP gives up \$5M per year in discounted licenses.
 - b. Youth retention is another problem
 - c. Rather than going for large increase every ten years....suggests going with smaller steady increase.
2. Acquiring land: Over the last 4 years the department purchased over 80,000 acres of land. Governor Bullock wants a full review of the lands we currently have, and the maintenance of each. The Commission will be very much a part of looking at how the department acquires land. However, contrary to some popular belief, FWP does pay taxes on the land it owns.
3. Private Land, Public Wildlife Council: this council came up with what is known as Block management today. We're finding that the current program is not really

reaching out enough to the private land owners to give more incentive for land owners to enroll. When you go east of the mountains, many of the properties being purchased are 30K acres + and are looking at it as private hunting opportunities. The conflicts this creates with the surrounding neighbors when 5k head of elk come off these private hunting ranches causes havoc with surrounding ranchers. Instead of doing more fee title, we're probably looking at more conservation easements.

Several years ago, FWP started a quarantine program with Bison from Yellowstone to look for brucellosis. They were put on Ted Turner's ranch. One stipulation of Turner's was that 75% of the offspring along with the original 80+ bison belonged to Turner. There were lawsuits because several folks felt this was privatizing of wildlife. Second cohort of bison went to Ft. Peck. End result is that if we want to go anywhere with those bison, we have to go through a public process.

Wolves – proposing more liberal season for this year. The numbers that we see is that the wolf numbers have declined slightly. Feeling confident that we are moving the right direction with the wolf population to stabilize the incredible increase.

Issues:

- Lynx & wolverines possibly going to be listed due to incidental take perhaps while wolf trapping.
- Sage grouse: historic numbers have dwindled significantly. Burns in some areas are burning up a lot of sage grouse habitat.
- Governor is resurrecting Strategy Plans for many different species.
- Moose – moose study underway to study their habitat and why their numbers are declining
- Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) – becoming a real concern. Other states have year-round check stations. MT has only been concentrating efforts in the summer months. Many people travel with their boats to other parts of the country and other warmer waters. Interstate travel to warmer climates in the winter is helping transport these species.

Jeff's philosophy is that FWP Director's Office and others spend more time on the ground to work together to manage these resources.

Opens to Questions:

Grizzly bears – will I be able to hunt one before I'm too old? JH – maybe by about 5 years, however, these processes are very slow.

25% of Montanans hunt or fish ...seems kind of low. ...Also, there seems to be a large percentage that only buys some sort of license about every 3 years.

What are the prospects for the stream access law being upheld? – from the department's standpoint ...we feel pretty confident about the law and that it will be upheld. The primary problem has to do with bridges and the width of the easements.

Have you actually met with the Wilkes brothers? – not yet...just have spoken with them on the phone. (Gave examples of many ranches that are being bought & paying cash).

AIS – is the department getting any sort of committees together to discuss these issues? There are several ideas out there that maybe haven't been looked at. The program has new staff and FWP feels it will be much better in the future.

New Parks & Recreation Board: the FWP commission will become the Fish & Wildlife Commission and the new Parks & Recreation Board will deal with Parks issues. Brent Mitchell suggests that there be an F&W commissioner for each region and a Parks commissioner for each region. Thinks this would bring more diversified perspective. Jeff states that the setup is per statute.

What would the pros & cons of a 7 person commissioner would be? Cons – some people like to have the overlap of the commissioners in the area.

Sage grouse – the irony is there have been no reductions in limits on sage grouse to try to protect them while we still can? Biologists say that the population can easily sustain the harvest. Perception wise....it can't be accepted.

Would you rather see short letter or rambling form letter? - the individual letter that actually says something. Just signing a form letter really only counts as one comment.

What do you think will happen with wolverines? - Data shows that the population is in good shape, but what the Service is looking is the high elevation snowpack issue that is critical to wolverine den.

Brent – Talk about the recreationists not paying for their access. There are many groups that are ready to help.

Round Table –

Kari Gabriel: one suggestion to gain revenue from "recreationists" – is to change the name of the fee.....example: I don't fish or hunt, but there are plenty of other things that I do that I would pay for.

Rick Komenda: another mild winter, there should be a lot of fawns coming soon. Would hate to see us drop the ball and be over run with deer.

Greg Foley: Big issue on Flathead Lake with the netting that the Tribes want to do. What is the department's stance on Flathead Lake? - The Director's Office stands by the decision of the region.

Greg Foley – They are holding only one public meeting in Pablo? Not even one meeting on this end of the lake? They don't want people to attend their meetings. The issue is obviously skewed.

JS – we haven't given up on co-management but it will be a challenging process. The co-management plan expired a few years ago but we are still operating under it. And according to that plan, angling based management is called for; netting is not warranted.

Mark Deleray defines "secure" levels for everyone present.

Why is FWP not in the media talking about the stable bull trout? Why aren't we being pro-active in getting the message out? Maybe it would help FWP to put their stance out in the newspapers.

If I fail to put in for two years and lose my points....why do I lose my points that I paid for? How can we (Montana) make it so that people can keep their points, or just purchase points if they are not actually putting in? People in my situation are not even putting in anymore...what's the point?

Thank you Jeff for taking this position again for the sportsmen of this state.

A Few other Thoughts to Ponder:

- T Falls office needs to be on Main Street.
- Walleye in Noxon are a real interest in Sanders County.
- Delisting Grizzly in NCDE – would be nice if FWP would push towards the delisting of NCDE and the Yak Cabinet Recovery Zone.
- MT Trappers Association is really concerned about the Lynx lawsuit.

Next meeting will be in September. Have a Happy Summer!!!