

CAC Meeting

Region 5 Citizen Advisory Council Meeting

March 2, 2015
5:30 PM to 9:30 PM
Fish, Wildlife & Parks
2300 Lake Elmo Drive
Billings, MT 59105

Meeting called by: Bob Gibson

Type of meeting: CAC Council Meeting

Location: Region 5 Headquarters

Facilitator: Bob Gibson

Attendees: Gary Schaaf, JW Westman, Lee Brunkhorst, Barb Beck, Tom Miller, Bill Milton, Brady Norland, Doug Dreeszen, Doug Haacke, Mike Whittington, Gary Hammond, Doug Habermann, Ken Frazer, Ray Mulé, Harold Guse, Bob Gibson, Dianne Stiff, Megan O'Reilly

Absent: Lee Deming, Chris Fleck

Guests: Doug Haacke, Doug Dreeszen, Mike Whittington, John Gibson

Topics

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| 5:30-6:15 p.m. | Welcome, Dinner, Introductions | Bob Gibson |
| 6:15-7:00 p.m. | Region 5 "Trap Line" | CAC Members |
| 7:00-8:30 p.m. | Legislative Update | Ron Aasheim |
| 8:30-9:00 p.m. | Elk Brucellosis Study | Bob Gibson/Ray Mulé |
| 9:00-9:15 p.m. | Post Season Mule Deer Surveys | Ray Mulé |
| 9:15-9:30 p.m. | Housekeeping and Adjourn | Bob Gibson |

Lee Brunkhorst - Hunters Against Hunger Program: In Big Timber they have gotten about 1400 lbs. of ground venison and elk which really worked well for the Food Bank. This program is great, and hoping that it grows a little more. Nonresident Native Licensing Program: Also positive feedback; Lee knows of two sportsmen personally who have gotten to participate in this program, who would not have gotten to come back to hunt in Montana otherwise. He hopes this program will continue too.

Bill Milton – Bill has been spending a lot of time facilitating a large group up on the CMR. He shared information on landscape models. Within the CMR working group there has mostly been a lot of trust building over the last five years. They most recently decided to form a sage grouse working group to facilitate the resources within central Montana, working on how these resources can be applied.

Thomas Miller – Nonresident Native Licensing Program: This was used by his own family plus there are other folks who are excited about the possibility of being able to come back to Montana not having to pay out \$996.00 to hunt. Thomas shared that there are good folks out there worried about their livelihood as landowners, plus worried about the habitat and the fact that they are getting surrounded by rich landowners like the Wilks Brothers. Locals cannot compete financially. Thomas shared that he drew his Smith River permit and is excited about that. He agrees with the bear proof containers on the Smith.

Barb Beck – First to reiterate from the last meeting about the local biologist knowing where all the aggressive critters are located and then not telling the locals. Barb talked to Shawn Stewart about this and had a good conversation, even though this hasn't been yet solved. Barb shared information regarding a citizen science project in Wyoming where local folks can actually log in and report what they have seen and where, and Shawn is somewhat interested in that. There may be some grant money available to get this off the ground in Red Lodge as a pilot project. One thing not positive was the ticketing of the guy that didn't tag his elk quickly enough. The way that has played out has been harmful in Helena. The Parks plan is a great document. It is available online through the Parks website: <http://stateparks.mt.gov/about-us/strategicPlan.html>.

JW Westman – A lot of people JW has been talking to really like the concept of the HHP, hunting heritage partnership act, and would like to carry it to the next level and see where it goes. JW's constituents are upset with SB 245 which is the late season cow elk hunts. It sounds good but the historical perspective on that idea has either been lost or it has been purposely shoved off to the side, because we had late season cow elk hunts, and they weren't deemed all that successful.

Gary Schaaf – Gary has been working with his brother in California helping him with his nonresident native licenses. He appreciates the discussion and complimented how beneficial this meeting has been discussing legislation.

Brady Norland – From acquaintances out of state he has had people ask him about nonresident license fees going up, which the answer is no they are not.

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| Action items: Future Topics - 2015 Legislature Outcome; Access; River Recreation Management; Pheasant Habitat Projects; Landscape Models | Person responsible: Bob Gibson | Deadline: Next Meeting |
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Bills that MT FWP has been tracking and of the most interest:

HB 140 – This is a \$3.00 increase to fish and an \$8.00 increase to hunt. In addition, it changes the senior discount from 62 years to 67 years of age and it is a 50% discount. This bill would generate \$5.7 million per year for MT FWP. (Referred to Senate Committee.)

HB 146 – Passed the House 51 to 49; that takes 33% of the nonresident combination license and puts it into the block management program versus the 25%. That amounts to a 1.5 million dollar shift from the general license account into the block management program. (Senate Committee hearing.)

HB 268 – Did not vote on and would have created a \$25.00 block management stamp. That would have resulted in about \$567,000 for block management. (Tabled.)

HB 269 – Would be a \$6.00 increase to the hunting access enhancement fee that generates about \$1 million and that would have increased the landowner compensation from \$12,000 to \$15,000. (Referred to Senate Committee.)

HB 144 – Would require upland game bird hunters to have permission to hunt on private property. That was just an oversight when legislation was passed a couple sessions ago. (Signed by Governor.)

HB 150 – Increases the penalties for shooting from a vehicle, shooting from a road and other inappropriate behavior. It increases the penalties and also increases the time of loss of privilege. (Passed the House.)

HB 176 – The crossbow bill was presented again and that was tabled in committee. That was different this year as that wasn't just for disabled individuals. As proposed it would have allowed crossbows in the general archery season regardless of your physical ability. (Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal.)

HB 212 – That would expand the definition of harvest or to take and it really gets into trapping and constitutional privilege. (Transmitted to Governor.)

HB 250 – Would allow suppressors for animals that are nongame species. MT FWP took no position and was informational. (Transmitted to Governor.)

HB 450 – Would allow suppressors for mountain lion and wolves. MT FWP took no position and was informational. (Passed Senate and returned to the First House with Second House amendments.)

SB 295 – Would allow suppressors during the general season. MT FWP took no position and was informational. (Returned to Senate with Amendments.)

HB 279 – Would revise the requirement for tagging game animals by requiring attaching the license or tag before the carcass or the hunter leaves the scene of the kill. (Transmitted to the Governor.)

HB 281 – It essentially would have prevented check stations in some interpretations. It suggested that ignorance was not a part of negligence, so if you didn't know the law, you weren't guilty. Deputies would need to accompany our wardens with a search warrant. (Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal.)

Several bills on access:

1. **HB 286** - Individuals would have had to confirm with County Commissioners and Attorney's that a road is not a designated road before they could close it or block it – Tabled in the House Committee.
2. **HB 304** - Revising statutes as far as encroachment on county roads and provides that a locked gate is considered to be an obstruction. It would have been a \$500.00 a day fine – Tabled in the House Committee.
3. **HB 352** – Would have prohibited outfitters from hunting on inaccessible state land – Tabled in the House Committee.

SB 46 – Now allows electronically purchase and signing of licenses. That means if you forget your license at home, you can show your license using your smart phone. (Signed by the Governor.)

SB 120 – Would have changed the game damage rules significantly. It would have eliminated the need to have public hunting to qualify for game damage compensation. (Tabled in Committee so missed the deadline for General Bill Transmittal.)

SB 245 – It reinforces the authority that the Commission already has with late antlerless elk seasons which is “we may have late seasons” and authorizes a \$10.00 hunting license for those late seasons. (Passed the Senate Committee.) Ron reassured Region 5 CAC members that this is not in any way an endorsement of going back to late or damage seasons that

would be considered late seasons outside the five week general season.

SB 153 – Would have required anyone and everyone to wear hunter orange unless they had the permission of the landowner not to wear it. (Tabled in Senate Committee.)

SB 154 – Require only individuals under 18 to wear hunter orange. (Tabled in the House Committee.)

SB 232 – Stream access bill that puts into statute the Galt decision. (House Committee Report – Bill Concurred.)

SB 247 – Would prohibit sage grouse hunting in Montana. (Tabled.)

SB 261 – Creates the Montana Greater Sage Grouse Stewardship Act which would be a \$10 million dollar trust fund (grant program). There would be an advisory committee that would work with locals that would enhance sage grouse habitat, connective areas, and conservation easements, but it does not allow for acquisition. It also has about \$1.5 million for operations that will go to the department of natural resources and conservation. Their intent is to hire people on contract to help administer and run this program. The grant program comes out of the general fund. (Passed.)

SB 334 - Revised the definitions of game animal to include game birds and furbearers and revise the definition of predatory animal. (Passed the Senate.)

HB 351 – Would require a peace officer to verify that a game animal death was the result of a vehicle collision and eliminate online permits for salvaging game animals. (Tabled, Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal.) Interesting statistics: In 2012, 6700 deer, 220 elk, 72 antelope and 28 moose were recorded as being killed on the highway.

SB 395 – Would create a \$5 apprentice hunting certificate for individuals 10 years of age or older. Individuals would not need to have passed a hunter education course, would need to be accompanied by a mentor at least 21 years of age. (Passed the House Committee.)

Commissioners: Matt Tourlotte has 2 more years for his term, Richard Stuker has 2 more years for his term, Gary Wolfe will need to be confirmed and the Governor is going to nominate Dan Vermillion again for Region 3, and nothing has been decided for the extreme northeast part of the state.

Gary Hammond: **Parks bills** –

1. **SB 191** – Would provide an exception from the Montana Procurement Act for contracts concerning State Parks, state recreational areas, state monuments and historic sites. Can specify 14 year concessionaire agreements. (Passed the House.)
2. **SB 264** – Would revise the distribution of sales and use taxed proceeds from accommodations and rental vehicles to create a grant program for heritage properties, state parks and tourism and provide rulemaking authority to FWP to administer a grant program. Another way to get some funding sources in Parks. (Passed the Senate.)
3. **HB 167** - Would increase the nonresident temporary use permit fee for off highway vehicles. (Passed the House.)
4. **HB 263** - Would remove Madison Buffalo Jump State Park from the list of primitive parks. (Tabled – Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal.)
5. **HB 300** - Would require a snowmobile trail pass. (Passed the House.)

For current status of legislation go the website at <http://leg.mt.gov/css/default.asp>.

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| Action items: 2015 Legislature Outcome | Person responsible: Bob Gibson | Deadline: Next Meeting |
| Elk Brucellosis Study/Post Season Mule Deer Surveys | Bob Gibson/Ray Mulé | |
| Elk Brucellosis Study: Bob had video footage of the recent elk trapping on the West Boulder River elk herd (west end of HD 560). They trapped elk using a net gun from a helicopter, collared them and tested them for brucellosis. This is a part of the southwestern Montana brucellosis surveillance area study. At the same time they were trapping elk just over the divide in the Paradise Valley just south of Livingston in HD 317. The purpose of this is to determine the extent of brucellosis in elk in Montana, and the prevalence of elk herds where it occurs. In this operation 63 cow elk were captured, which were all tested for brucellosis. We ended up with two positives. Those are the first positive brucellosis elk that we know of in Region 5. Part of this study is also to determine what factors might result in brucellosis spreading or increasing its prevalence in certain herds. One of the things we believe right now that is causing the spread of this disease is elk concentrating in large wintering areas. We are trying to work with landowners to get more hunters on the landscape, | | |

particularly earlier in the season to distribute the elk so they don't winter in these areas. Once they get into spring then there is an issue with livestock calving. Spreading of this disease occurs when the female elk that have brucellosis tend to abort. The material is then deposited on the landscape where cows are located. We believe the interaction between the cows and the material on the ground is how this disease spreads to livestock. Part of the study is to determine how we might manage the disease better and try to prevent that from happening. One way we know is by numbers. If you are over objective and got concentrations of elk, it's going to be a problem. On the Paradise Valley side they caught 30 elk and 50% of those elk were brucellosis positive. Region 5 is at 2%. We would like to stay low and are hoping with cooperation of landowners who we have been working with, the prevalence will be kept low, and we'll keep it from spreading east.

Post Season Mule Deer Surveys: We've completed our post season surveys. For several years in a row we have been down in the 20s, 30s and 40s, but now we are running region wide an average of about 60 fawns per 100 does. That is well above the long term average of 52 fawns per 100 does. We are hoping that we may have turned a corner this year, and we are going to see our mule deer numbers coming back some from where they have been. We will do our final counts in the spring (April), and will then know what kind of over winter survival we have, plus that is the time we can get total numbers. Our buck/doe ratios are down a little bit as we are averaging 17 bucks per 100 does. We expected that with the buck only seasons, and the production has been so poor for several years running. Elk surveys are not done yet, but should be done by the end of March. The antelope surveys are this summer. The whitetail deer surveys are done later too.

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| Action items: Informational | Person responsible: Ray Mulé | Deadline: Ongoing |
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| Housekeeping and Adjourn | Bob Gibson |
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Next Meeting Date – after the end of the legislature.