

Region 6 Citizens Advisory Counsel

DATE: Tuesday, June 9, 2015

TIME: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

PLACE: Fort Peck Fish Hatchery

Region 6 CAC members present: Henry Gordon, Jason Holt, Mark Peterson, Terry Stoppa, Eugene Lavey, Carla Hunsley, Mark Azure

Region 6 CAC members not present: Steve Harada, Damien Austin, Jim Carver, Deb Madison, Bob Waldron,

FWP members present: Mark Sullivan, Marc Kloker, Tom Flowers, Steve Dalbey, Scott Thompson, Todd Tryan, Chase Sanderson, Heath Headley

Guest Speaker(s): None

Guests attending the meeting: Representative Bridget Smith, Commissioners Richard Kerstein and Rick Stucker, Mule Deer Foundation President from Sidney-Blaine Rogers

Welcome by Tom Flowers and Marc Kloker; Introductions; Review of agenda;

Marc welcomed everyone, went over agenda, and introductions were given as a roundtable

Region 6 staff openings and changes, legislative update- Tom Flowers

Tom handed out legislative info.

Representative Smith said that the Fee increase went well. Had good support.

Steve Dalbey asked how the fee increase was resolved relative to timing and updating. Tom responded that it will be on a 4-year cycle

Rich Stucker had a question on bill 194 policy, etc of guideline on the carrying capacity. What are the responsibilities on that bill? We will find out, and send an email. Tom responded that Marc will follow up with an email on any questions that need answered.

Jason Holt asked about why we supported the tagging policy. Is this going to make it easier or harder? Todd Tryan responded that it shouldn't really make much of a difference, but it may clean up some messy situations.

AIS issues were brought up, and Blaine Rogers asked about if AIS is a problem in our area. Steve said yes, there are issues here, but not as bad as other states.

A discussion ensued on HB 557, which revised laws regarding legal fences. Several points of discussions about how the bill works and that it is not very clarified. Also, how does it work for bison? Later, Rick Stuker clarified the fencing bill, explaining that it is a mostly concerning the liability issues of livestock causing a problem, if they get through a fence and cause damage, wreck a car on a road, etc.

Question from Jason Holt on feral hogs, if we can't hunt them, what are we going to do about them? Mark Sullivan responded by saying that they aren't a game animal, so they're not covered by our hunting regulations, but they are not protected either, so they can be shot. Tom Flowers jumped in to clarify more.

Jason Holt had a question about vacancy savings in relation to the 4% cut. Tom responded that most positions do vacancy savings for a standard of 6 months. Tom says that our region is pretty well staffed, and that the current FTE cuts are not really affected by the cuts at this time.

Update on 2016-2019 fishing regulations and changes – Steve Dalbey

(Powerpoint Presentation)

Questions/answers:

Marc Kloker had a question on the proposed paddlefish lottery system of losing revenue and how does it affect catch-and-release. Steve said that is a possibility that revenue would decrease because less licenses are available, but it may even out with permit costs and/or less cost on the Department due to decreased management needs.

Blaine Rogers asked questions about dealers of minnows, and how they will be impacted. He also said that this will have to be a huge educational effort to get everyone up to speed.

Eugene followed up with a concern about not being able to use shiners anymore. He spoke that those are a popular species where he fishes. Steve responded that "shiner" is an often used "common name" for a variety of species. The actual shiner species are not really a concern as they are not a very desirable or sought after species.

Fort Peck reservoir operations – Heath Headley, Fort Peck Biologist

Heath gave an update on how the 2015 Walleye spawn egg-take effort went. Heath said that it was an early egg take this year, about three weeks ahead of last year. There were a number of nice, healthy, chunky fish. Roughly 64 million eggs were collected, and the fry will begin to be stocked soon.

Mark Peterson asked why were are not actively stocking Fresno as part of our efforts. Steve Dalbey answered that Fisheries Biologist Cody Nagel is seeing a good reproduction of wild walleye, and hatchery additions may upset that balance.

Carla Hunsley asked where the walleye fry are stocked, and Heath answered about the various locations in the reservoir and at times in other water bodies.

Terry Stoppa had a question on if walleye had been stocked lately in Bear Paw Lake and in Beaver Creek Lake and to what capacity.–Talk to Cody and respond

Heath discussed the current Fort Peck reservoir level conditions, indicating that the lake is pretty high, but it may be dropping down soon due to lack of snowpack in the mountains.

Heath also said that both Walleye and Pike are above long-term average and fishing had been very good.

Summary of cow elk collar study- Scott Thompson

(PowerPoint Presentation)

Questions/answers:

Mark Peterson asked about if any of the movement of elk is based on forage. Scott Thompson said that elk movement is mostly due to people in orange.

Rick Stuker had a question on what can we do about hunter success, and if there had been any ideas put forth to increase it and/or change.

Mark Peterson asked about the possibility of some type of lottery system to work with the landowners on allowing some hunting access. Maybe it would get hunters in there to get elk moving around a bit.

Steve Dalbey commented about the balance of increasing licenses and if success rate might change. And/or , if more tags may result in more pressure that will move elk.

Jason Holt thought that looking at public access on private land to public property might help increase numbers. However, he mentioned that many of the roads are not accessible to pickups but may be to four-wheelers. Jason further mentioned that they don't have Block Management, but they do allow hunting. They have seen hunting numbers going down. Scott Thompson answered that it's hard to fully see what is causing elk to move and/or use different areas until the data is examined more.

Blaine Rogers asked about landowners and if they complain and/or if they compensated if there is damaged. FWP response was that there is little we can do to help landowners that do not allow public hunting/access.

Summary of deer surveys; 2015 hunting season & season-setting processes; sage grouse lek survey results – Scott Thompson

(PowerPoint presentation)

Mark Peterson asked when did FWP first do a “buck only season.” Scott Thompson will find out.

Jason Holt asked why the Milk River had such higher densities. Scott Thompson reasons that is a good habitat and limited access can increase very fast.

Mark Sullivan–sage grouse updates

(PowerPoint presentation)

Questions/answers:

Jason had a question to clarify the Adaptive Harvest Management data to see why the trends were different in different areas. FWP had various responses related to core area populations versus populations in marginal areas where there were more disturbances.

Terry Stoppa asked if we do survey on blue grouse in the region, as he sees them in the Bear Paws quite regularly. Mark Sullivan said that FWP currently does not do any surveys for blue grouse.

Mark Peterson asked about the increased number of ravens and wondered if those were causing problems to nesting grouse, etc. FWP had various responses. Jason Holt mentioned that seagulls were more of a problem on their place.

Jason Holt wondered about the problems with the potential movement of “farm happy” animals such as raccoons, skunks, fox, etc that may cause more potential problems for ground nesting birds.

Richard Kerstein asked about gray partridge surveys and also why there is such a large bag limit. Mark Sullivan responded that huns are difficult to get numbers on (no leks) and FWP keeps track of their numbers only by incidental sightings. Partridge have a liberal harvest due to their ability for very fast increases in population depending on many factors. Hunting has little overall effect on bird numbers.

Jason mentioned that quail had been moving up the river in and along the Bitterroot River in western Montana.

Information and Education update- Marc Kloker

(Powerpoint presentation)

No questions/answers

Law enforcement Update - Todd Tryan

Todd discussed the changes that have occurred in LE. Chase Sanderson is now a warden in McCone county, and Dirk Paulson is now our investigator. Now we'll need a new warden for the Chinook area.

AIS update- Steve Dalbey

Steve gave an update on the program and what it is all about and why we have it.

Roundtable discussion by CAC members

Jason Holt

A person had complained to Jason about the road to Duck Creek fishing access being in poor shape. Jason drove the road this morning and thought it was in pretty good shape.

Jason had a few comments on the county commissioner bison bill, such as “who has control of our future?” “Is this new species going to come out?”

Discussed that APF (APR) wants to have 2.2 mill acres; they are on both sides of Jason's family's land. APF wants bison. Jason wants county commissioners to say “we don't want bison here.”

He says there seems to be lots of deer around the railroad tracks according to his trip out east.

He noted spurge infestation at the FAS by Loma. Steve said that this is in region 4.

Jason wants the Application for new CAC to send on to people. CAC needs to have more women and more outfitters represented. They represent nonresidents. And Jason wants more “Marks” on the CAC if possible.

Mark Azure

Their wildlife survey data seems to mirror the data that we have shown for elk, deer, grouse, etc. Antelope numbers seem to be increasing (no tags?). No tags for sage grouse.

Comprehensive WM plan is in the works.

Mark made some comments on submarginal land outside of the reservation. There are some problems in those areas, hunters (poachers) caused a lot of turmoil. There are also jurisdiction and land issues between different agencies, and how do we address these issues? Trying to figure out boundaries, etc about where folks can hunt has been a problem as well. Currently they are developing a draft agreement with Mike Volesky, Andy Huff, etc, out of the governor's office.

Tom Flowers addressed the issues as well.

Henry Gordon- antelope numbers up, deer good, saw some sage hens.

Eugene Lavey- The Box Elder fishery seems to be an issue quite often.

Steve Dalbey responded in relation to Box Elder and some of its issues. May be a water quality problem.

Terry Stoppa- asked about an area south of Kremlin. Asked if the Bear Paw Lake hosts get paid, and how the time frame works. FWP answered that no, it is a volunteer position.

Mark Peterson- Asked about how it was going with getting a day use permit for BCCP if folks were just wanting to fish.

He wondered about lake trout in Fresno, and mentioned that an individual kept some.

Mark said that this Friday is a kids fishing day and that Saturday and Sunday is the Walleye tournament . There is an archery shoot south of Chinook, where people shoot at targets and shoot and score themselves. At the rookery out of Havre, the Havre-area walking trail group would like to add the Rookery to part of the areas walking trails...dogs could run loose and free. Mark will give us the contacts for the folks involved.

Kings bay- Mark is involved with wanting to develop campground sites on the north side of Kings Bay at Fresno. There is a problem with crossing private land, but Walleye's unlimited offered to be a mediator. There may be the possibility to plan a road in to some of these. There is also the intention of looking at swapping some land to get this to campground plan to work, but that decision would need to go to the senate, house, and ultimately the President to sign it. To build the road, he can find the ways to do the work for free...donated time, money, etc. Mark is asking for support from FWP down the road if possible. Tom Flowers suggests presenting to the Park Board with State Parks and that might be a good possibility...Community support is a big issue.

General Public-

Mule Deer Foundation- Looking to get together on a project to donate money or labor, started about 3 months ago in Sidney. October 19th they will have a banquet.

Representative Bridgit Smith- enjoys being here, and likes to come here after the session.

Rick Stuber- Mentioned that he always enjoys the meetings and what is going on, and now that he knows what is going on out in the field, he can bring that back to the Commission meetings with a better understanding of our Region.

Richard Kerstein- Mentioned that is helpful to hear from all of the CAC.

End of meeting, no date or location was set for the next meeting