

CAC Meeting

Region 5 Citizen Advisory Council Meeting

February 28, 2017
1:30-4:15 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

Attending CAC Members: Jim Ballard, Chris Fleck, Lanie White, Steve Regele, Lee Deming, Bill Milton, Lee Brunckhorst, Josh McQuillan, Kayhan Ostovar, Susan Gilbertz

Attending Staff: Doug Habermann, Harold Guse, Ken Frazer, Barb Beck, Bob Gibson, Dianne Stiff, Ray Mulé, Ron Aasheim

Absent CAC Members: JW Westman, David Russell, Thomas Miller, Brady Norland

Topics

1:30 p.m.	Welcome/Introductions	Bob Gibson/Barb Beck
1:35 p.m.	Division Updates/Issues	Region 5 Managers
2:30 p.m.	Invasive Mussel Response/What to Expect this Summer	Harold Guse/Barb Beck
3:30 p.m.	Legislature Update	Ron Aasheim
4:00 p.m.	CAC Member Round Robin	Bob Gibson
4:15 p.m.	Housekeeping, Next Steps and Adjourn	Bob Gibson

Fisheries: Ken Frazer

- Soda Butte Creek Project – This was a cutthroat restoration project at Soda Butte Creek that flows through Cooke City, Silver Gate and into Yellowstone National Park. This joint project included both Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and Wyoming Game and Fish, two national forests including the wilderness area, Yellowstone National Park and private landowners. Jason Rhoten, fisheries biologist, ran a successful project.
- The Yellowstone River PKD (Proliferative Kidney Disease) whitefish kill incident happened last August. Sampling in our Region 5 waters included the Yellowstone River east of Laurel, the Bighorn, Stillwater and Boulder rivers with positive results of the parasite in fish in all those areas. We are finding this parasite in most all places in the state. It was thought this was a new infestation with the fish kill last summer, but now appears that it was there all along with conditions just right with low water and warm temperatures. We did not see any dead fish in our region. We will be monitoring again this year.
- Musselshell River – Since the 2011 flood, the Musselshell Water Coalition came together deciding that their goal is to rebuild the river system. Deadman's Basin diversion dam was rebuilt with fish passage added. Egge diversion dam was removed which opened 25 miles of river which has been closed since the turn of the century. It reconnected two major drainages which have northern redbelly finescale dace, which is a native species. Currently work is being done on a joint project along the river next to Roundup to open the floodplain. Several projects are being worked on together. Davis dam, the lowest big dam on the river, has a complete engineering plan to complete a fish passage with the possibility of taking the dam out completely. Mike Ruggles is trying to expand the native fish in the river including catfish, sauger and maybe ling.
- Field crews will be starting on the Yellowstone River soon. Ling trapping from Park City on the Yellowstone to the mouth of the Bighorn River begins next week.
- We are now looking at high flows in the Bighorn River with the third highest snowpack ever in the Bighorn drainage.
- We have been working with the Natural Resource Department (NRD) on identifying projects on the Yellowstone River for the oil spill settlement money received from Exxon. Of the \$12 million, \$9.5 million will come to the state of Montana.
- Quiet Water Petition – There has been a huge public response mostly against the petition. The Commission meeting on May 4 will include this petition.

Wildlife: Ray Mulé

- Land Project: On the Bighorn River, 425 acres became available next to Grant Marsh FAS. The environmental assessment and public hearing are complete, with the decision notice out soon. Hoping to get this to the Commission and approved, then it will go onto the Montana Board of Land Commissioners for final approval. Hopefully this will be completed by the end of April, if all goes well.
- We are also involved in the oil spill money working with NRD developing a list of projects for wildlife habitat that was damaged by the oil spill.
- Just finished an elk capture project near Red Lodge related to brucellosis. We have a statewide surveillance and research program that moves around to various areas of the state. We capture elk, test for brucellosis and radio collar them to learn more about where brucellosis is in Montana, and how that relates to elk movements in the designated surveillance areas that the Department of Livestock has implemented.
- Surveying Inventory – most of the winter elk surveys are just about done. We will soon begin our big wildlife spring surveys that include mule deer surveys on green up areas, and spring bird work with primarily sage grouse counts on leks, other bird surveys including pheasants and sharptails.

Parks: Doug Habermann

- Doug’s unique role is Parks manager for Regions 7, 6 and 5. He has had staff turnover in both Makoshika SP and Tongue River Reservoir SP. Currently he is busy with recruitment and hiring. Looking ahead the parks will be in their busy time of year and hiring seasonal staff.
- Parks in the legislature – HB 324 would revise the administration of recreational resource programs. Administratively this bill attaches the Parks Board to the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). It provides authority to the board to hire an executive director of State Parks and Recreation who would serve as secretary to the board. This bill passed the House and has been transmitted to the Senate. The other bill introduced is HB 454. This would revise the administration of recreational resource programs administratively attaching the State Parks and Recreation Board to the Dept. of Commerce and renaming FWP to the Department of Fish & Wildlife. This bill is in the first House committee and nontabled. The Governor’s position is that Parks would remain in the Department. Our new director, Martha Williams, is committed to supporting Parks and funding.
- State parks are operated on a year around basis, and there are several winter projects still going on. State parks is committed to providing high quality experiences to the annual 2.5 million visitors.
- Internal Working Group - The Cultural Crossroads Committee includes Pompey’s Pillar, Bighorn Battlefield, Bighorn Recreation Area, Rosebud Battlefield SP, Pictograph Caves SP and Chief Plenty Coups SP. National Parks Service provides grants to National Historic Landmarks which we are fortunate to have three in this region with a fourth one in Region 7, Medicine Rocks SP, that has been determined as eligible. The Fish and Wildlife Service does provide funding for improvements in places like Hell Creek SP.

Enforcement: Harold Guse

- Hunting season was slow this last fall with hunter numbers down at the check stations with the end of the season always picking up. Now throughout the winter recreation and trapping season, we’ve had a standard workload. We are fully staffed in Region 5 with 10 game wardens, two sergeants, one captain, and a regional investigator. With the invasive mussels being found in Montana there will be a change in priorities for Enforcement including everyone else in the department. We will need public support with the invasive mussels and will be working on public information.

Administration: Barb Beck

- The deer/elk permit drawing deadline is Wednesday, March 15, 2017.
- Martha Williams is our new FWP director. She worked for the department years ago as an attorney, then she went to Washington DC and worked for the Department of Interior as an attorney and most recently was teaching law at the University of Montana. She needs to be confirmed by the Legislature. Two priorities Director Williams has shared is to move forward with our Vision and Guide with one piece of that being working with partners which is her second emphasis area. Our CAC groups are considered partners of the department which is important to the new director. The two major items facing Director Williams currently is the Aquatic Invasive Species, and the future of the Parks division.
- If CAC members know of anyone interested in participating in our block management program, please encourage them to give us a call.
- We have two governing bodies the Parks Board and the Fish and Wildlife Commission. Our area commissioner is termed out and has asked to not be reappointed, so we have a vacancy.

Action items: Continued communication with CAC members.	Person responsible: Bob Gibson	Deadline: Ongoing
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Incident Command Center (ICC) Power Point Presentation – Harold Guse

- Tiber Reservoir and Canyon Ferry are the two reservoirs where we have positive indication of mussel infestation. No adult mussels were found, just veliger’s which are mussels in the larvae stage.
- The true impact of mussels is commercial industries (agriculture, power industries, city water systems, etc.).
- With the October sampling, positive indication of mussel veliger was again at Tiber Reservoir (confirmed), Canyon Ferry (confident there are mussels), the Milk River (maybe contaminated equipment with dead mussels) and the Missouri River at Toston (just up river from Canyon Ferry).
- There were 182 other watersheds sampled last year that did not have any positive samples. We are increasing from 620 to 1500 water samples plus an increase of 180 to over 200 waterbodies this year.
- With the governor’s executive order the Incident Command Team was recreated (ICC). Employees from all around the state have been participating on the ICC in Helena, to develop responsive long term plans.
- There are already some inspection stations that have started this year with that number to grow. The decontamination stations will be located at both Tiber and Canyon Ferry reservoirs.
- The administrative rule is now out for public comment.
- Proposed funding sources at this point – a tax on hydropower and the other tax would be an AIS decal which all motorboats would be required to purchase.
- Education of the public is crucial with CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY. The public, the agricultural community and hydropower all need to understand the impacts.

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Legislature Update	Ron Aasheim
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Ron went through the list of legislation that FWP has spent the most time on so far, this session.

- HB 97 (came out of PLPW):** Increases the maximum payment a landowner who participates in the Block Management Program may receive from \$12,000 to \$15,000 a year. In the Senate.
- HB 214 (FWP proposed legislation):** Would revise laws related to the production of fish at the Ft. Peck Hatchery, including eliminating the prohibition of FWP producing more than 750,000 cold water fish at the hatchery each year. The Senate returned it to the House.
- HB 324:** Would generally revise the administration of recreational resource programs. Administratively attaches the Parks Board to the department of FWP. Provides authority to the board to hire an executive director of State Parks and Recreation who would service a secretary to the board. In the Senate.
- HB 367:** Would create a voluntarily wolf management check off and provisions for use of funds collected. In the Senate.
- HB 434:** Would create a Montana Wildlife Habitat Improvement Act, among other things establishing a Wildlife Habitat Improvement Advisory Council and allowing the use of federal funds to combat weeds and restore wildlife habitat. House transmitted to the Senate.
- HB 454:** Would revise the administration of recreational resource programs administratively attaching the State Parks and Recreation Board to the Department of Commerce and renaming FWP to the Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. In the House.
- HB 568:** Would revise laws related to nonresident hunting. Included would be providing 10%, not up to 10% of all special permits to nonresidents and splitting the Missouri Breaks archery opportunities into two separate seasons for nonresidents, only one of which they could apply for. In the House.
- SB 50 (FWP proposed legislation):** Would allow electronic validation of electronic hunting licenses or tags for game animals and wild turkeys. Signed by the Governor.

SB 91: Would clarify what constitutes shooting from a vehicle for hunting purposes. House returned to the Senate.

SB 171: Would prohibit FWP from restricting the use of a general deer license as the result of holding an unlimited deer permit. In the House.

SB 218: Would revise the apprentice hunter program making eligible persons 18 years of age and older. Changes mentor requirements for individuals over 18 and prohibits an apprentice from obtaining a black bear, mountain lion or wolf license. In the House.

SB 236: Right to Hunt Initiative – Constitutional referendum to safeguard right to hunt, fish, and trap wildlife. In the Senate.

The legislative tracking summary is on the MFWP website <http://fwp.mt.gov/> and located on the main home page under “Popular”.

Action items: Continued communication with CAC members.	Person responsible: Bob Gibson	Deadline: Ongoing
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CAC Member Round Robin	Bob Gibson
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Lee Deming: Quiet Waters Initiative – overwhelmingly negative with the public in this area of the state, but his constituents in the western part of the state were for it; he has heard a lot of concern about land transfer from federal to state with the trend being against the transfer; shoulder seasons are widely popular with the people he has talked to.

Kayhan Ostovar: Student internships are a great segue for students to end up with full time employment with FWP. With the nonresident student package higher cost, students do not purchase licenses for Montana as it is just too expensive for them to participate.

Susan Gilbertz: MSU-Billings is putting in an arsenal on their campus as they did a poll of their students and found several dozen students were keeping firearms in their vehicles for hunting purposes. This will be in place next fall.

Steve Regele: He will contact Andy Brummond from FWP regarding water rights questions as he is on the board of directors for a local ditch company. It is disturbing the number of hunters and fishermen declining. He would like to look at a collaboration effort with NGO’s that may be interested in helping nonresident college students pay for their higher priced licenses.

Lanie White: One thing that is a big concern in her area is the elk over population and its impact on grazing, fencing and the brucellosis issue. Looking at the impact that could have on their operation. The people she has talked to are not that opposed to federal lands being transferred to the state for management. With the shoulder seasons, they had a lot of people but she didn’t know if that many elk were taken.

Chris Fleck: With the PKD incident last fall, he encourages the region and department to continue to tell the public the whole story, providing them information and continued education.

Jim Ballard: He thinks the shoulder seasons are on the right path, and it’s a good idea. Concerns with noxious weed control.

Josh McQuillan: Clarification on the ex-officio program by Harold. It was the Directors decision years ago that ex-officio’s cannot write citations.

Lee Brunkhorst: When the prices were raised on the nonresident students and nonresident natives, he wondered if the state lost a lot of people buying licenses. The shoulder season on the southeast corner of Crazyes got weathered out as elk are so mobile.

Bill Milton: Riverfront on the Musselshell, continued gratefulness with the partnership with FWP. Kayhan is trying to get funding to keep his students doing surveys on softshell turtles on the Musselshell, so the watershed coalition is starting to work more specifically on whether this is something to do long term and how would you fund it. With regards to the elk situation, there is a new working group in the Winnett/Musselshell area.

Action items: Future topics for CAC meetings – follow-up on legislation, elk, public land transfer sideboards, public relations.	Person responsible: Bob Gibson	Deadline: May 2017
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Wrap-up		Bob Gibson
Bob will conduct another Doodle Poll for the next meeting in May. Check out the Montana Mussel Response website: http://musselresponse.mt.gov/		
Action items: Meeting Poll; Agenda Items; Communication	Person responsible: Bob Gibson	Deadline: May 2017