

CAC Meeting

Region 5 Citizen Advisory Council Meeting

July 13, 2017
1:30-4:30 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

Attending CAC Members: Jim Ballard, Lee Brunckhorst, Lee Deming, Josh McQuillan, Thomas Miller, Steve Regele, J.W. Westman, Lanie White

Attending Staff: Barb Beck, Bob Gibson, Jim Hansen, Ken Frazer, Doug Habermann, Harold Guse, Ray Mulé, Skyler Mitchell, Pam Kaiser, John Vore (Helena) Hank Worsech (Helena)

Absent CAC Members: Chris Fleck, Susan Gilbertz, Bill Milton, Brady Norland, Kayhan Ostovar, David Russell

Topics

1:30 p.m.	Welcome/Introductions New Director Message/Guidance	Barb Beck/Bob Gibson
1:45 p.m.	Legislative Recap	Hank Worsech
2:15 p.m.	Key Issues Updates-AIS, CWD Study, Pipeline Spill Mitigation	Bob Gibson/FWP Staff
2:45 p.m.	CAC Member Round Robin	CAC Members
3:15 p.m.	Grizzly Bear Delisting	John Vore
4:00 p.m.	Managers' Reports	R5 Program Managers
4:30 p.m.	Housekeeping, Wrap-up and Adjourn	Gibson

Welcome and Introductions

Barb Beck/Bob Gibson

Message from the Director: Thank you to CAC members for serving on the R5 council. The Department is working to fulfill direction from the Legislature. In addition, we are using the Vision and Guide to provide transparency, accountability and work effectively with private and public partners. Hope to meet you all at a future CAC meeting.

Legislative Recap – Hank Worsech

Thirty-two bills were passed relating to FWP. The legislature chose to fund the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) program with a combination of an AIS prevention pass paid by anglers, a tax on hydropower facilities, and federal funds. The current AIS funding is valid for two years, resident cost for the prevention pass is \$2.00, non-resident cost is \$15.00 per year. Want to revisit the cost of nonresident youth fishing licenses next session as there is no price break.

It is important to work ahead of the session to communicate with legislators in advance.

HB 2, state government funding bill, directs 30% of field warden time to biological duties and deducts this time from enforcement duties. The department will be working with county enforcement to address needs. This is a big shift for the Department and Enforcement Division.

Two pieces of legislation affecting State Parks failed. One was to move State Parks to the Dept. of Commerce, the other would have Parks remain administratively attached to FWP, but the Parks Administrator would have reported to the Parks Board rather than the Director of FWP.

FWP is now working to ensure our written regulations match any recent changes in state law.

Hank told the council that written statements can be sent to the legislative secretary if people don't want to present in person.

Hank Worsech is the contact person for legislative concerns. (406) 444-2663, hworsech@mt.gov.

Key Issues Update - Bob Gibson & FWP Staff

AIS – Barb Beck

Tom Wolff is the AIS Bureau Chief. Region 5 has a check station at the rest station north of Hardin on I-94. The National Park Service has a check station at Fort Smith. FWP has a total of 35 stations. Our focus is prevention. FWP's memorandum of understanding with Wyoming for AIS boat inspections is working well. The Department has completed 23,000 inspections, found nine mussel infected boats and issued 40 citations for noncompliance (not stopping at check stations). There is a map of check stations on the FWP website. Highway patrol has been assisting with noncompliance. MDT assists with signage. Our fish health lab is one of the premier labs in the nation. So far, this season we've submitted 330 plankton samples. So far, there have been no positive test results with analysis ongoing.

Yellowstone River Pipeline Spill – Ken Frazer

The settlement from Exxon is \$12 million. Both the oil and the clean-up efforts had effects on terrestrial and riparian habitat and cottonwood regeneration. There are several injury categories such as terrestrial and riparian habitat, large woody debris, and recreation. A seven-person committee appointed by local elected officials and the Governor is prioritizing projects related to the loss of

recreation opportunities from the spill. These projects will be eligible for some of the funds. USFWS is overseeing white pelican nest area protection funding. FWP would like to find property suitable for fishing access between Reed Point and the mouth of the Bighorn River to purchase with these settlement funds. Funding can be combined if property acquisition provides multiple use.

Timeframe – hoping to have some projects completed this year with total completion in five years. The board is pulling together all ideas they can. The recreation board meetings are public.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) – Ray Mule’, John Vore

Only CWD in Montana found was several years ago on a game farm near Philipsburg. Montana is surrounded by areas that have CWD and it is moving closer to our borders. FWP Region 5 (Billings), 6 (Glasgow), and 7 (Miles City) are rotating intense surveillance. We will have additional check stations and testing. Testing involves taking the lymph nodes primarily from deer.

A response plan is being developed. We will be ready when we get a positive CWD test. Information will be coming out soon. There will be an article in the Sept./Oct. issue of MT Outdoors. Research has not shown transfer of CWD to livestock or other primates. Primary targets of CWD are whitetail and mule deer, elk, caribou and moose. Animals can be infected for 18 months before symptoms appear. SB 173 prohibits use or sale of certain urine as cover scent. This is a step to help prevent spread of CWD.

CAC Member Round Robin – CAC Members

J W Westman – The collected data on the elk shoulder seasons needs to be made public. Tentative season setting input, brucellosis and CWD are items of public interest. Concern is increasing about public access to the Crazy Mountains. There is a new potential funding source for non-game species, the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act. Since federal, not sure how this will impact us if approved.

Steve Regele – MT Audubon is trying to work effectively with conservation organizations and agencies. Suggest nongame species topic for future CAC meeting agenda topic. Make a difference and write your congressman regarding America’s Wildlife Act. Several nongame articles in the recent MT Outdoors. Adaptation of other types of recreational access like camping, fishing and nonhunting activities into the block management program should be considered for the next legislature.

Jim Ballard – Agriculture doing amazing things for wildlife. Jim lives in the smallest, poorest county in Montana. There is a lot of hunting pressure and hunting traffic being near Billings. The county doesn’t have the resources to maintain roads that are torn up. Concerned over reduction in Enforcement capability from HB 2.

Lee Brunkhorst – People dislike the AIS \$2 prevention pass fee. Access to Forest Service is a contentious issue for landowners in his area. Hunters Against Hunger is well worth promoting.

Thomas Miller – High fishing pressure on the Bighorn River. Discussed public access to the Yellowstone River between Itch-Kep-Pe and Buffalo Mirage FAS. Despite what happened to the Quiet Waters petition, increased motorized use on rivers still a concern.

Lee Deming – Hearing same complaints about the Bighorn River. Pleased that Quiet Waters did not pass. People like the elk shoulder seasons. After people have the AIS \$2 fee explained, they seem to understand. The public needs to be informed about the reason for the fee.

Lanie White – Elk and access issue. Not a lot of people call their ranch for permission to recreate other than hunting. They don't ask for access to camp or hike.

Josh McQuillan – More issues at Cooney than in the past, with more use even during the week. Sheriff's Office is impacted when FWP Warden Mitchell, is off duty. With the higher usage regulation is a big issue. Concerns are use of alcohol, overcrowding, and parking in the grass. With the overall larger volume of recreation usage in his area, and deputies in Carbon County, they are still farther behind. Concerned about HB 2 P-R direction from Legislature.

Grizzly Delisting – John Vore

Conservation for grizzly bears is a success story with 700 to 1,000 grizzlies in the Greater Yellowstone Area. There are two methods of counting. The Chao2 method indicates 700 bears, but is shown to underestimate numbers by as much as 40%. There are six recovery zones and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is the only area where delisting is occurring. Studies show the area of expansion and population appears at carrying capacity.

Bears are monitored in 18 bear management units in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to avoid re-listing. Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho are the states involved in the delisted area. The states were required to develop a hunting season framework for delisting to occur. Official delisting occurs July 31, 2017. So far seven groups have filed a 60-day notice of intent to sue the Federal Government over the delisting decision.

The hunting season is a very small part of grizzly management. Few bears, if any, will be taken by hunting. There is not a hunting season proposed at this time. When mortality limits are not met by other means (vehicles, abatement, etc.) then the surplus number is divided between the 3 states for the allowable bear quota to be hunted.

Other elements:

- No harvest of a bear accompanied by another bear.
- Proposed hunting season dates have been designed to protect females.
- Cannot take a bear in its den.
- Limited quota of licenses by drawing equal to MT harvest allocation.
- Mandatory course for license holders.
- Seven-year wait if you draw a license and then are not successful in harvesting a bear.
- An individual is only allowed to harvest one grizzly in a lifetime.
- Hunters will have 12 hours to report, 2 days to check in a harvested bear.
- The season would close within 24 hours.

Managers' Reports – R5 Program Managers

Ken Frazer - Fisheries

- Mountain Lakes crews starting fish surveys. We have two interns assisting our staff with a minimum of 30 lakes to survey. We had a good take of golden trout eggs from Sylvan Lake with over 36,000 eggs harvested.
- The Bighorn River still flowing high at 9,500 cfs which will continue for one to two more weeks before flows decrease.
- Carbon County is donating a 1½ acre FAS site at Edgar on the Clarks Fork to FWP. This is now out for public review.

Ray Mule - Wildlife

- Antelope population surveys will be complete by the end of July.
- Grant Marsh Wildlife Management Area addition of 425 acres will be in FWP ownership by early September.
- Working with the Natural Resource Damage Program to identify oil spill mitigation projects.
- FWP will be hiring a bear conflict specialist in R5. Position will help with bear conflicts and provide education regarding grizzlies. Hope to have employee in place by early fall.
- Developing recommendations for 2018-19 big game seasons in August and September. Request for scoping available on the website. Commission meeting where tentative seasons will be proposed will occur in December followed by public meetings around the state. New regulations will be adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Commission in the spring.

Doug Habermann - Parks

- Hell Creek State Park is undergoing improvement projects for septic and water systems.
- Rosebud Battlefield establishing a grazing program.
- Trail grants have been awarded to communities.
- Holding educational programs at the parks.
- Have four new park managers and going through administrative changes in Helena.

Harold Guse

- P-R issue (redirects 30% of enforcement hours to biological assistance).
- Sgt. Todd Anderson is now in Miles City. Ben Gleason, Hardin area warden, has accepted a warden job in Bozeman.
- AIS is high priority, Enforcement has done a lot of work for this issue.

Bob Gibson

- Billings Hunter/Bowhunter and Aquatic Educations programs have “exploded”. Additional hunter/bowhunter instructors are needed along with contractors for aquatic education.

Housekeeping, Wrap-up and Adjourn – Bob Gibson

Bob Gibson will be sending out a Doodle Poll for the next meeting date.

August 10th Commission Meeting – John Vore will be giving an update on the past elk shoulder season. CAC members who are interested can either listen to the Commission meeting on their own computers or come to the Regional Office to watch it on video.