

**Region 6 Citizens Advisory Council****DATE: Thursday May 20, 2021****TIME: 10:00-4:00****PLACE: Fort Peck Multi-Species Fish Hatchery**

Region 6 CAC members present- Lars Anderson, Scott Azure, Ken Forbregd, Ron Garwood, Miles Hutton, Jay Crandell, Brian Olson, Pam Wilson, Don Kaveshan, Fred Perry, Tyler Tarum, Aaron Wittmer

Region 6 CAC members not present- Tami Burke, Perri Jacobs

FWP Helena Staff- Ron Jendro

FWP Regional Staff- Steve Dalbey, LaWana Grewe, Heath Headley, Marc Kloker, Jared Krebs, Mark Sullivan, Scott Thompson, Todd Tryan, Drew Henry

Guests- Darlyne Dascher, Dave Wilson

Marc Kloker:

- Welcomed group and opened meeting with an overview of the agenda and introductions of CAC members and FWP employees.

Mark Sullivan:

- We have a new Governor. We have four new Commissioners. Lesley Robinson, representing Region 6, is one of them and she is also the Chair of the Fish & Wildlife Commission.
- The new FWP Director, Hank Worsech, wants the CAC to be used in new ways.
- Another change is I will be retiring the end of June after 34 years with FWP.
- R6 is fully staffed, and we have very little turnover. We have gained positions in recent years. Even with a smaller staff we oversee a very large amount of land. The benefit to accomplishing our duties is that we work as a team.
- One of the Regional Supervisor's duties is to build capacity.
 - Bids for the Glasgow Headquarter upgrade and new shop were \$1 million over budget due to huge increase in building costs. However, we now have purchased land next to our office and have vetted designs so can move forward in the future when prices come down.
 - HB 5 gave \$2.26 million spending authority for a new Havre office.
- Landowner relationships are generally very good in R6. More landowners in our access programs in R6 than ever before and Block Management is still enrolling new properties.
- We have very good tribal relationships as well. We meet twice a year with both Fort Peck and Fort Belknap to share information and discuss joint projects.
- The future direction of the CAC is to have more responsibility. We reviewed the term dates and anyone on their second term will have one year remaining to serve. This affected eight members. Six members were starting their first year and they will serve two years. This will set up a staggered pattern for upcoming years. Member can opt to continue to serve. Term limits were not set.

Ron Jendro: Legislative Update

- There were 50 bills in this year's legislative session that affected FWP. Here are a few that had local attention.
 - o HB 5 awards \$2.26 mil for a Havre office, \$7.6 mil to upkeep Hatcheries statewide
 - o HB242 Muzzleloader Heritage Hunting season will be a 9-day season effective this year from Dec. 11 – 19.
 - o HB353 replaces license for game animals unfit for consumption, including CWD, in the current or next year's season.
 - o HB678 provides a voluntary donation to Search & Rescue
 - o HB637 was a cleanup bill for FWP. Ron clarified some of the questions related to this bill.
 - o SB60 requires trapper education if the person has not trapped in the last 3 seasons. Added a new bobcat season.
 - o SB61 Free fishing weekend for all on Mothers' Day
 - o SB327 defines 'suitable for food' on migratory birds (only breasts required to be taken)

Action Item: Marc Kloker will email hyperlink of the bills to all CAC members. (This was completed the next day.)

Todd Tryan: Enforcement Update

- Building capacity - All warden positions in Region 6 are filled.
- Seasonal work is picking up - Water based recreation & having a lot of AIS drive-bys, Calls routed through 1-800-TIP-MONT.

Steve Dalbey: Fisheries Update

- Paddlefish season is underway for the Upper Missouri. Flows are low, weather systems rolling through can help trigger movement. So far 134 fish have been harvested. There is no longer a quota. Anglers can fish May 1 thru June 15.
- Fresno Management Plan
 - There wasn't a management plan for Fresno. Now have a 9-member advisor board that has worked with FWP to draft management objectives for important species. CAC will review it before it goes to the Commission.
- Army Corps of Engineers proposal for a spring pulse from Ft Peck for Pallid Sturgeon
 - Less than 100 wild fish remain in the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers upstream of Lake Sakakawea. These wild fish are more than 70 years old and because no natural reproduction has occurred since Garrison Dam was put in in 1955. There are thousands of hatchery fish that represent the genetics of the remaining wild fish well.
 - Due to the placement of Garrison Dam and Fort Peck Dam they are boxed in. Their babies can't drift far enough to mature. They hit a dead zone that lacks oxygen and they die.
 - There is a 600-page Draft EIS from the ACOE. The comment period for the EIS ends May 25, 2021. It plans to mimic flows from 2018 if water is available. This is

a balance for landowners who irrigate out of the river and optimal flows to trigger spawning. When the process is vetted it can happen whenever hydrolic parameters are there and water levels in Fort Peck and snowpack in the upper basin are high. When natural flows are mimicked all fish benefit.

- A fish passage side channel is scheduled to open on the Yellowstone River in 2022. We still want the Fort Peck flow option as there are uncertainties associated with each of these proposals.
- Three to five years to know if successful. It takes that long for recruitment. Our goal is to get the pallid sturgeon off the endangered species list.
- Introduced new fisheries biologist for Region 6, Jared Krebs. Jared is responsible for streams and ponds in the eastern portion of R6.
- Heath Headley shared that the walleye spawn was successful. 70 million eggs were gathered.

Marc Kloker: Com Ed- Hunter Ed & Bowhunter Ed

- Since COVID, there has been a very limited number of educational programs. No hunter/bowhunter ed classroom courses since March of 2020, no Aquatic Education activities, no school field trips, no in-class programs. Things are just starting to open up for some education activities in May of 2021.
- Hunter and bowhunter education have been free online (with no field day) since May of 2020. We saw double the number of people certifying for Hunter and Bowhunter Ed, with the majority of that being adult bowhunter education.
- Going forward there are 3 choices for hunter education:
 - Online for Montana residents (no field day required)
 - Online with an optional field day (still trying to work out the details)
 - Traditional classroom setting with a field day. Classes or field days can start June 1, 2021
- Per Ron Jendro's legislative update, Apprentice Hunters can now be certified before age ten. Then when their actual 10th birthday arrives be eligible to buy the necessary licenses.

Scott Thompson: Wildlife Update

- Priorities are 1) Habitat 2) Access 3) Species Management
 - o Items that on the June Commission meeting that may impact Region 6. After public comment it will go to final Commission in August.
 - Statewide proposal of Muzzleloader Season (traditional muzzleloaders only) using any unused license/permit valid during the general season. This season will be valid on the CMR as well. Hunters need to be aware of all overlapping seasons (elk shoulder, lion etc). Season dates for 2021 are Dec 11th - 19th. Fred Perry asked if a special stamp or anything is needed. Scott replied that no, it is just an extension of the season if the hunter holds the proper general season license.
 - Wolf season proposal (R6 is included in all seasons,):
 - Trapping season opening date of Dec. 1 rather than Dec 15.
 - Harvesting a bag limit on a single license and increase limit from 5 to 10.
 - Recommending eliminating quota districts 110-113-316
 - Allow snaring of wolves during trapping season

- Loop sizes / break-aways devices etc recommendations related to wolf snaring

Drew Henry, Wildlife biologist

- PALA: Public Access Land Agreements – Region 6 is leading in number of enrolled properties. Last year was the first year. Nine were enrolled. This year the total is 21. Representing Private Land Public Wildlife (PLPW) council, Lee Cornwell helps review the properties that are selected to participate.
- Aware there is an issue with DNRC roads. If not marked open, it is closed. Marc mentioned that often named roads are generally public roads.

CAC Round Table:

Aaron Wittmer:

- Hearing plenty of comments on HB637 regarding 3,000 additional NR licenses as the main complaint. People are not upset that they went through outfitters.
- Seeing increase of scouting by airplanes for elk and big horn sheep. Then reading about it on social media. Todd Tryan replied that a person cannot hunt the same calendar day as they are in the air (whether in a plane or drone).
- A wolf was killed in the Bear Paws this spring. Also, a black bear was killed as it was trying to get into a truck. Suggest that FWP look at a black bear hunting season in Region 6.

Ken Forbregd:

- Ribbon cutting ceremony May 15, 2021 at Ike's Fishing Pond & Walking Trail in Culbertson. So many people to thank - Andy Brummond, Bardell Magnum, Michelle McGree, multiple FWP staff, Lions Club and many more.
- Too many pheasant roosters on the roads.
- Culbertson also has 17 turkey buzzards that are freaking people out.

Brian Olson:

- Spent many days in March & April fishing. Quit counting 30" plus fish once I hit 20.
- Main concern is protecting the resource. Would like it if anglers were not allowed to cull out of their livewell. Consider One over 22" limit. Consider a 3-fish limit in April due to spawning. I can help draw a crowd if you want a town council meeting on this topic.
- Would like to see FWP charge a tournament fee and use the money for conservation. Ten percent with a cap of \$5000 would be reasonable. Get more people involved in the rules. We should put limits in place, and wants fish released somewhere close to the location where they were caught.
- Bait – large group of people would like to see bait ponds in the region.
- When FWP stocks walleye, try to do it when bird predation is lower.

Ron Garwood:

- Against free roaming bison. Very glad to thank Gov. Gianforte for stopping this.
- WTD seeing 70-80 on my property, plenty of MD and turkeys

- Flow test proposal is not good for irrigators, nothing against pallids. Felt it was not easy to comment on the EIS.
- Lower elk license/permit numbers in the 630 HDs might help w/elk distribution issues. Drew replied that licenses were reduced in the 630s, and the 698 cow permit and 699 shoulder season licenses are not valid in the 630s.
- I do have a book for sale *Ron's Rambling* that I am peddling.

Action Item: Marc Kloker will email link on how to comment on the pallid pulse EIS paper to Ron and all members. (This was completed the next day.)

Jay Crandell:

- Have never seen so many mule deer & birds.
- Happy that CRP program is pushing to get acres signed up again.
- Heard about a CWD test that takes a sample from the ear. Quicker results? Scott Thompson mentioned that he had heard about it but no real details yet.
- Would it be possible to mow a parking area in the UGB plots like they do for BM?
- Found trap with crawfish in it
- There are some problems with private & DNRC lands. People are just driving through private fields/roads to get to DNRC land. Would like to see DNRC more involved in enforcement of issue. On his Block Management, he went to walk-in hunting only and the problem went away.
- People had successful ice fishing on the Poplar River for walleye this winter

Action Item: Scott Thompson will work with wildlife staff and Jay to mow additional parking areas where there is overlap with Block Management and UGB projects.

Action Item: Todd will contact Matt Poole about FTE for enforcement or Amanda Caster- DNRC

Miles Hutton:

- Increase in hunter numbers. Behaviors worst I have seen in a while. NR think they can go wherever they want and don't seem to understand property boundaries and private/public land boundaries. I'm afraid they will go back and tell their friends how open it is to hunt up here.
- MD recovered well. Antelope numbers are great. sharptail & huns are up.
- Hunting district split of 611 to 670 and 600 was great!
- Starting to see a lot of ravens. Huge coyote numbers.
- Other commission rep for St. Mary's testified against National Heritage taking away private property rights without input.
- Legislative wise – No mentions of guaranteed licenses for outfitters

Don Kaveshan:

- Ethics – what happened? Disappointed in anglers & hunters that he has seen.
- Agrees with a slot limit for walleyes.
- Seeing pheasants in places they shouldn't be...like sagebrush.

Scott Azure:

- Dry winter, dry spring...quite a few fires.
- Seeing a large number of birds.
- Fishing has been slow on the Poplar.
- We do sell a tribal paddlefish license. There are two hot spots, one below Frazer and one below Wolf Point. \$10 for a paddlefish license, along with needing a tribal license.
- Seeing more moose every year, closer to Med Lake & Dagmar and along the river.

Lars Anderson:

- Seeing lots of pronghorn in south Phillips County
- Starting to see bison calves on the ground. We do offer 20 bison tags in a drawing around July 1st. We have four categories: local, state of Montana, Native American & worldwide. We have one to donate for a raffle. We book 3-day reservations per bison harvest at a time. Harvest success rate is 100%.

Fred Perry:

- Seeing a lot of deer & antelope. In the Milk River valley lots of WT & pheasants. Turkeys showing up Dodson to north of Malta and out to the Little Rockies too.
- Agrees with a slot limit or something for walleye
- Sagehens - seeing more than in the last 4-5 years. Seeing moose & MD too.
- No winter to speak of. The water is down at Nelson Reservoir and dropping

Tyer Tarum:

- Antelope are coming back better. Birds looking good.
- A few complaints out of stater's trespassing and cutting fences.
- Do phone/gps applications show landowner updates? This brought about a diverse discussion.

Shared information: Montana Cadastral is updated quarterly. Valley County is unique in that it has an electronic version of county roads. Mc Cone County says adjoining landowner owns to the center line of the road. Most of the roads in Roosevelt County don't have easements. Blaine County has been scanned for online, but so many changes.

Pam Wilson:

- I am an outdoor fanatic! I use Bear Paw Lake FAS as a teaching station. Mostly take out young students & high school students. I teach them to respect the land, catch & release fishing, canoeing, hiking, clean up after yourself
- My desire is to protect the land.

Perri Jacobs (absent) report submitted:

- Really sorry I am missing this in person meeting. I have missed seeing all of you.
- Thanks to Bret Dorak, Scott Thompson, Mark Sullivan and anyone else involved in getting us a deer damage hunt this winter. The hunters took 42 deer probably all within a one-mile radius of our house. It was a big help to save our hay pile. FYI – there are still plenty of deer.

- DROUGHT, but no grasshoppers yet. As we have turned cows out on our sparse grass the biggest issue is, they are getting stuck in reservoirs. We are patrolling them regularly to pull out cattle.
- Long Billed Curlews arrived about 2 weeks ago.
- Coyote numbers were low over the winter but increased as calving season arrived. We have at least one neighbor that is losing older calves to coyote predation. They personally hired Fish and Wildlife services to come out and hunt them with a helicopter.
- Antelope numbers are good.

Drew Henry addressed the tools we have for game damage. Fencing, stackyards and management hunts.

Guest - Darlyne Dascher:

- McCone Road issue- lots of gas tax roads without easements, difficult to research roads in the county and everybody backed away
- I have turkeys on my property – 3 toms and 5 hens
- Tremendous number of hunters and increase in harvest. I would like to see one hunter with multiple tags.
- Fair number of WT. Antelope have stayed around
- Mass migration of nonresidents in the area. Some are disrespectful hunters, but nice people.

Guest – Dave Wilson:

- These are across the board issues
- I want recreation for everybody. Get people to enjoy what we have to offer in Region 6.