



**Region 7 CAC – Summer Meeting & Field Tour
June 28, 2023**

Present: FWP - Brad Schmitz, Mike Backes, Todd Anderson, Brett Dorak, Brian Burky, Marla Prell, Erin O'Connor. CAC - George Luther, Bob Hagedorn, Ed Joiner, Ed Bukoskey, Glenn Heitz and Andy Wright. Guests – Sally Hagedorn and Teri Heitz

Brad began the meeting by welcoming everyone and discussing the agenda for the afternoon. We will be touring the Wildcat North and Wildcat South sites on the Yellowstone River, which Brian will present more information about.

Brad then briefly discussed CAC member terms and recent news for some of our members. Dale Kreiman has moved to Billings and therefore, is no longer in Region 7. Unfortunately, Bob Gilbert passed away the end of May as well. We will be looking to replace both of those individuals and have some folks who will be reaching the end of their current terms in the near future.

Brad also mentioned the upcoming regulation cycle. We will be hosting public meetings in Miles City and Glendive in early July as part of our biennial deer, elk and antelope regulation cycle. Marla will be putting out details for those meetings very soon. Region 7 doesn't really have much on the docket this time around except that we are proposing a moose season.

Roundtable Discussion

Ed Joiner – The Intake bypass channel seems to be working well for paddlefish. He has heard of more fish being caught outside of Intake than in the past.

George Luther – He is part of the T&Y Commission. As such, he visits with Mike often. Turkey and deer numbers around Colstrip looked good this spring. Since last fall, he's heard quite a bit about OHV use in the Breaks and people using those machines off-road and where they shouldn't. OHV use seems to be becoming a bigger issue, both in the Breaks and the Custer National Forest. He's noticed a growing trend in the "right to hunt" mentality and commercialization of wildlife.

Bob Hagedorn – His country has received some good moisture. Deer numbers have been down but seem to be coming back a bit. He has heard some unhappiness amongst some that mule deer B tags are being sold at all, and some dissatisfaction from landowners that mule deer bucks are still being killed during the rut.

Brett provided some feedback on mule deer numbers in our region. In the recently completed surveys, numbers are slightly down from last year, but this isn't overly alarming to us. Almost every trend area saw an increase in recruitment, which is good news. Some lower fawn survival around Baker was noted. Regionally, we are at 48% below long-term average. That said, we reduced mule deer B tags for this fall to 1000 which is the lowest end of our quota range and adds up to a 91% reduction over the last three years. Additionally, the Fish & Wildlife Commission approved to have General Deer licenses

when used for mule deer only be valid for antlered animals this fall. The general deer license is still valid for either-sex white-tailed deer.

Ed Bukoskey – Warden Logan Moore and Sergeant Casey Prell have done some great work in his area lately, in particular with a corner crossing trespass case from last fall. He thinks we need more lion harvest. Seems like pheasant and turkey numbers are up, which is nice to see.

Glenn Heitz – Fishing seems good this spring. He is thankful for all the recent moisture.

Andy Wright – Doesn't have any big items of discussion at the moment. Its been a good spring; he's looking forward to this fall.

Upcoming Season Setting Meetings:

Miles City will host its public meeting on July 6 and another meeting is schedule in Glendive on July 11.

Brett mentioned a few items of note in the upcoming season setting process. The first item is two potential mule deer management strategies for areas in Montana where crowding may be an issue (e.g., places where there are too many mule deer hunters based on public feedback). The first strategy would be to restrict hunters that apply for special mule deer permits from hunting antlered mule deer bucks on their general license in other hunting districts (e.g., if you apply for a special permit, you would NOT be able to hunt antlered mule deer in other hunting districts even if you did NOT draw the permit you applied for.) Currently, if you DRAW a special permit, you are not able to hunt antlered mule deer in other hunting districts but if you apply and do not draw, you may still hunt general areas). The second strategy would be to limit hunters to hunting mule deer on their general license in only ONE of FWP's seven administrative regions. There may be a cap placed on the number of mule deer hunters that could hunt in each administrative region of Montana.

Brett's second note was that Region 7 is proposing a moose season. This would be for two either-sex moose licenses valid anywhere in Region 7. We have had increased reports of moose sightings throughout the region and think the time is right to pursue our first moose season.

Brett also mentioned the Elk Management Plan, which is on the FWP website now. The associated EA will be out in early July and open to comment until July 31. This Plan will also be highlighted at the upcoming season setting meetings.

Wildcat & Wildcat South Site Visit:

The group traveled to Rosebud County to discuss the Lower Yellowstone River Project and look at two potential acquisitions – Wildcat North and Wildcat South. The first stop was at the bluff overlooking both properties. Brian and Brad described the details:

- The LYR project parameters were created by a citizen-based group and includes land acquisitions to improve river access, conserve habitat, and support recreation and economic development.
- Wildcat North – 328 acres, fund raising is ongoing with Pheasants Forever.
- Wildcat South – 1109 acres, recently purchased by the Montana Outdoor Legacy foundation with the intent to sell it to FWP in the coming years.

- These properties, when managed with the adjacent DNRC land would provide public access to about 2,400 acres.
- The Far West boat ramp and campground is adjacent on the north side of the river.
- Management would focus on public access for hunting, fishing and hiking; agricultural activity would be ongoing.

The group then toured Wildcat South. Brad and Brian discussed the ranch house, side channel plug and irrigation system. Several CAC members commented that FWP should get rid of the house and that perhaps someone would purchase and remove it. The irrigation system was discussed with the option of changing the point of diversion vs. allowing the side channel plug to remain with the current point of diversion being used.

The group discussed the quality habitat along the river and the potential agricultural opportunities for local producers.

Concluding the tour, Brad thanked all for attending and mentioned that we will be in touch about a winter meeting date and member terms.