

Idaho Fish and Game Commission Special Meeting - March 23-24, 2009

Fish and Game Headquarters, 600 South Walnut, Boise, ID

Note: Times on the agenda are approximate and subject to change.

MARCH 23

7:00 pm Public Hearing — Fish and Game Headquarters, 600 South Walnut, Boise, Idaho

MARCH 24

8:00 am 1. Opening Comments — Wayne Wright, Commission Chairman

8:05 am 2. Agenda Changes — Wayne Wright, Commission Chairman

8:10 am 3. Review of Public Comment — Wayne Wright, Commission Chairman

8:20 am 4. Director's Report — Cal Groen, Director

8:40 am 5. Commission Reports — Commissioners

9:35 am 6. Consent Calendar (Action)

- a. Minutes
- b. [Financial Report](#)
- c. Budget Modifications (4) Fisheries

9:40 am 7. [Wolf Update](#) — Jim Unsworth, Deputy Director

10:10 AM — BREAK

10:30 am 8. [Season Setting: Big Game Species](#) (Action) — Brad Compton, Wildlife Assistant Bureau Chief

11:20 am 9. [Legislative Update](#) — Sharon Kiefer, Assistant Director-Policy

11:40 am 10. Fee Increase Status Report — Cal Groen, Director

11:50 am 11. [Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation Report](#) — Gayle Valentine, Executive Director

12:00 — LUNCH

1:15 pm 12. [Grizzly Bear Recovery Update](#) — Christopher Servheen, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

1:45 pm 13. [Draft Pelican Management Plan](#) (Action) — Rex Sallabanks, Conservation Sciences Manager

2:15 pm 14. [Salmon Season - Spring Chinook](#) (Action) — Peter Hassemer, Anadromous Fish Manager

2:30 pm 15. [Update on Outfitting Upland Game and Waterfowl](#) — Virgil

Moore, Deputy Director

3:00 PM — BREAK

3:15 pm 16. [Hunter Education Awards](#) — Don Sturtevant, Hunter Education Technician

3:25 pm 17. [Benson Land Acquisition](#) (Action) — Gregg Servheen, Wildlife Program Coordinator

3:35 pm 18. Executive Session I.C. 67-2345 (1) (b) (c) (f)

ADJOURN

Individuals with disabilities may request meeting accommodations by contacting the Idaho Department of Fish and Game Director's office at (208) 334-5159 or through the Idaho Relay Service at 1-800-377-2529 (TDD).

Meeting Date: March 24, 2009

Agenda Item No. 11

**Agenda Item: Idaho Fish and Wildlife
Foundation Report**

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Gayle Valentine

Background: Commission has requested updates about the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation activities.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues: None

Public Involvement Process: None

Staff Recommendation: Present update as follows:

Justification: Requested by the Commission

1. The 2009 Online Trip Auction will end March 9, 2009. Bidding started February 27, 2009 at 9:00 am with some trips receiving unusually active bidding.
2. During the February 7, 2009 board meeting teleconference, the Foundation Board of Directors authorized completion of a land exchange with a private individual near King Hill in Elmore County, Idaho. The exchange provides more beneficial wildlife habitat to the Foundation and facilitates a homesite for the private individual.
3. In addition to the above motion, the Board of Directors authorized acceptance of a private land donation with mineral rights in Camas County, Idaho.
4. The Foundation has requested final project funding reports from applicants whose projects were funded in 2008. Reports are due May 2009.
5. The annual board meeting will be held near Sandpoint on April 24, 25, 2009. The agenda includes election of new officers and preliminary discussion of five-year strategic planning slated for December 2009.

Meeting Date: March 24, 2009

Agenda Item No. 12

Agenda Item: Grizzly Bear Recovery Update

Approved by: _____

Prepared by: Jim Unsworth

Background: Chris Servheen, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide an update on the Yellowstone grizzly bear and the Bitterroot Ecosystem Recovery plan.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Public Involvement Process:

Staff Recommendation:

Justification:

Information only.

Meeting Date: March 24, 2009

Agenda Item No. 13

Agenda Item: Draft Pelican Management Plan
(Action)

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Rex Sallabanks, Conservation Sciences Program Manager

Background:

Numbers of American white pelicans, including adult nesting birds, have increased dramatically in southern Idaho since 2002. The increase in nesting birds has been documented at Idaho's two primary nesting colonies located on islands in Blackfoot Reservoir and Lake Walcott (Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge). Increases in pelican populations are generally considered as positive contributions to pelican conservation goals in the Western population segment, but the increased number of pelicans has also resulted in documented predation impacts on native cutthroat trout subspecies and other important recreational fisheries. The Department believes there is a need to develop an approach to manage conflicts in Idaho between pelicans and fish populations that balance conservation and recreation interests for both. This brief presentation will provide an overview of the changes made to the draft plan since the January Commission meeting when the plan was remanded back to staff for additional clarification. Having made further revisions, the Wildlife Bureau again seeks approval from the Commission to solicit public review of the draft plan.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

The draft plan establishes management direction and provides objectives for pelican conservation. The plan contains both non-lethal (hazing birds, physical deterrents) and lethal (shooting birds, oiling eggs) management actions. Non-lethal methods could be implemented at any time. Because the American white pelican is federally protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, however, authorization from the USFWS will be required before lethal take beyond that already permitted could occur.

Public Involvement Process:

To date, there has been no public involvement in developing the draft plan. We are seeking Commission approval for a 30-day public review period. Following this public comment period, the Wildlife Bureau will analyze and summarize results for the Commission for future action on the management plan for pelicans.

Staff Recommendation:

The Wildlife Bureau seeks Commission approval for a 30-day public comment period on the draft plan.

Justification:

The Commission sets policy and provides direction, considers input from the public, and has the authority to adopt, amend, or reject Department-recommended plans. In order for the Commission to consider adopting this document as an official Department species management plan, public review and input is necessary.

Meeting Date: March 23 or 24, 2009

Agenda Item No. 14

Agenda Item: Rules, Clearwater River, Snake River, Lower Salmon River and Little Salmon River Chinook Salmon Fisheries

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Peter Hassemer, Anadromous Fish Manager

Background:

This agenda item concerns the setting of fishing seasons targeting spring Chinook salmon on the Snake River, Lower Salmon River, Little Salmon River, Mainstem Clearwater River, North Fork Clearwater River, South Fork Clearwater River and Lochsa River. Chinook salmon fisheries were conducted on these waters in 1997 and 2000 through 2008. For all proposed fishing areas, staff is forecasting that a sufficient number of hatchery salmon will return to allow sport fisheries that target the non-tribal harvestable share when hatchery production and brood stock targets are considered.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

Idaho Statute 36-104(b)2 gives the Commission the authority to make a rule or proclamation establishing seasons and methods for the taking of fish. Fishing Rules are provided in IDAPA 13.01.11

Public Involvement Process:

The public involvement process was on-going at the time this gold sheet was prepared. Findings from the public involvement process will be reported to the Commission during their meeting.

Staff Recommendation:

Approve the proposed 2009 fishing rules for Chinook salmon seasons on the Snake River, Lower Salmon River, Little Salmon River, Mainstem Clearwater River, North Fork Clearwater River, South Fork Clearwater River and Lochsa River.

NOTE: At the time of preparation of this gold sheet, Regional and Bureau fisheries staff were in the process of updating salmon return forecasts and scoping fishery options. The specific fishery proposals that were not completed are not included here but will be delivered to the Commission during the week prior to the March Commission meeting.

Justification:

Title 36 of Idaho State Code gives the Commission the authority to set rules to preserve, protect, or manage fish and wildlife in Idaho. The proposed fisheries are to address biological issues, mitigation hatchery programs, and angler desires.

Meeting Date: March 24, 2009

Agenda Item No. 15

Agenda Item: Update on Outfitting for Upland Game & Waterfowl

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Jeff Gould, Wildlife Chief; Virgil Moore, Deputy Director

Background:

There has been a moratorium on outfitted upland game and waterfowl hunting since 1989 due to concerns over public access. Exceptions have included minor activities such as forest grouse, chukar, and gray partridge hunting while engaged in other major guided activities. In 2002, an additional exception was made to allow outfitting for turkey hunting on private land owned by the licensed outfitter. Expansion onto public land had been discussed but not recommended since 2002.

In June 2008, the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association (IOGA) proposed that outfitters currently licensed for turkeys on their private lands/ground also be licensed for additional leased land. Doing so could make some of those lands available to the public because the outfitter is facilitating use on those lands that might otherwise be closed to the general public. IOGA's perspective on outfitted turkey hunting is that it is a public access issue because there are people who do not know how to hunt turkeys, and who do not have the proper equipment to do so. They choose to use an outfitter because outfitters have the capability of providing this public service.

This type of expansion captures the concerns that were expressed by a majority of Idaho turkey hunters surveyed by IDFG in 2002. The Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board (IOGLB) tabled the matter and indicated they will not make a decision regarding outfitted turkey licensing until after the matter is fully discussed with the IDFG. Since that meeting, a few members of IOGLB and IDFG have met to discuss the development of broader policy changes that may help resolve future issues primarily on private land.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

IOGLB would like to develop policy that addresses outfitting on private lands. Policy will improve the evaluation of license applications and substantiate the need for such services which together will serve to develop a clear record of decision. IOGLB is consulting with IDFG on policy development.

Public Involvement Process:

Additional discussions are needed before a timeline and scoping process can be recommended to the Idaho Outfitter and Guides License Board and the Idaho Fish and Game Commission.

Staff Recommendation:

Information only

Justification:

NA

Meeting Date: 03/24/2009

Agenda Item No. 16

Agenda Item: 16

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Colleen Cade

Background: Two Hunter Education Instructors have reached the top award level in the program.

“Continuing The Heritage” award is presented to instructors that have reached 3500 points.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

Public Involvement Process:

Staff Recommendation:

Justification:

Meeting Date: March 24, 2009

Agenda Item No. 17

Agenda Item: Region 6- Benson Land Acquisition

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Steve Elam and Gregg Servheen

Background:

This 1030.35 acre property borders Tex Creek WMA in the Upper Snake region, lies within critical mule deer and elk winter range, and currently has active sharp-tailed grouse leks. 670 acres are in CRP with an annual income of \$27,790. Acquisition cost is \$860,500 in license funds. PILT is estimated at \$898/year. O&M costs are estimated at \$3000 annually.

This property was previously presented to the Commission during Executive Session in November of 2008

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Land acquisition in accordance with Commission and Department land acquisition policy.

Public Involvement Process:

County commissioners will be notified and asked for their input. The public will be informed and contacted for their input regarding management of the property.

Staff Recommendation:

The Lands Committee recommends proceeding with the acquisition.

Meeting Date: March 24, 2009

Agenda Item No. 6b

Agenda Item: Financial Report

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Jim Lau, Chief, Bureau of Administration

Background:

Update the Commission on the Financial Status of the Department

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

None

Public Involvement Process:

None

Staff Recommendation:

None

Justification:

None

Meeting Date: March 24, 2009

Agenda Item No. 7

Agenda Item: Wolf Update

Approved by: _____

Prepared by: Jim Unsworth

Background:

In March 2008, Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolves were delisted and returned to state management authority. In July 2008, a federal judge issued an injunction against the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service decision to delist the Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolf, remanding wolf management back under federal regulations.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Current authorities for management of gray wolves in Idaho are provided through the Endangered Species Act and the 10(j) rule (revised in 2008) for nonessential-experimental gray wolf populations.

Public Involvement Process:

None.

Staff Recommendation:

None. This agenda item is to provide an update to the Commission on implementation of the Commissions wolf management directives.

Justification:

Information only.

Meeting Date: March 24, 2009

Agenda Item No. 8

Agenda Item: Season Setting: Big Game Species
(Action)

Approved by: _____

Prepared by: Brad Compton

Background:

Staff will present deer, elk, pronghorn, black bear, mountain lion, and gray wolf season recommendations for 2009/2010. A summary of recommended changes include:

DEER

- Reduce antlerless harvest in north Idaho to help rebuild white-tailed deer populations.
- Standardize general season closing date to October 24 in south-central and eastern Idaho.
- Provide additional youth opportunity.
- Adjust controlled hunt permit levels in response to population changes, and to address chronic depredation concerns.

ELK

- Reduce antlerless harvest in north Idaho to help rebuild populations.
- Implement caps on Sawtooth 'A' & 'B' tags, Diamond Creek 'A' tags, Smoky Mountain 'A' tags, Pioneer 'A' tags
- Adjust controlled hunt permit levels in response to population changes, and to address chronic depredation concerns.

PRONGHORN

- Implement restrictions on general archery pronghorn hunts to reduce hunter congestion concerns, achieve management objectives, and provide an equitable distribution of participation and harvest among user groups.

BLACK BEAR

- Increase hunting opportunity in Clearwater Region.

MOUNTAIN LION

- No changes proposed.

GRAY WOLF

- Establish hunting season dates. Notes: 1) harvest quotas would not be established until summer, and 2) regulated hunting would be contingent on wolves being removed from Endangered Species Act restrictions.

Policy issues:

Idaho Statute 36-104 authorizes the Commission to establish rules for the taking of wildlife consistent with state policy. Species management plans provide Commission direction for population and harvest management.

Public Involvement Process:

The recommendations have resulted from year-round public involvement, population and harvest monitoring, and have been scoped internally and with the public through regional meetings and the website.

Staff Recommendations:

Preliminary recommendations are attached. Final Department recommendations, after considering public input, will be provided during the presentation. Staff recommends Landowner Appreciation Program hunts and permit levels be consistent with, and proportionate to, Commission adopted changes in regular controlled hunts and permit levels.

Justification:

Commission action required to adopt 2009/2010 hunting seasons for mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, pronghorn, black bear, mountain lion, and gray wolf.

Meeting Date: March 24, 2009

Agenda Item No. 9

Agenda Item: Legislative Update

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Sharon W Kiefer

Background:

Staff will update the Commission on bills and legislative activity since the January meeting and the March 19 conference call.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

Informational.

Public Involvement Process:

None.

Staff Recommendation:

Continue implementation of the legislative process already adopted by the Commission.

Justification:

Legislative process requested by the Commission.