

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission
March 21-22, 2012
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Trophy Room
600 South Walnut
Boise, Idaho**

March 21

Public Hearing

Chairman McDermott called the public meeting to order at 7:00 pm, followed by introduction of the Commissioners, Director, and IDFG staff in attendance. The Chairman made opening remarks regarding the purpose of Fish and Game, and the conduct of the public meeting. Staff were available after the meeting to answer questions.

The following individuals testified: Scott Allan, Steve Bentjen, Dr. Catherine Elston, Herb Meyr, Jack Oyler, Pat Shadoan, Mike Gann, Cindy Thorngren, Tom Demorest, Sarah Coberly, Ron Marquart, Sandy Carter, Janet Maxwell, Edwina Allen, Kate Swanson, Marlene Fritz, Sandra Holland, Suzanne Stone, Ken Cole, Elisabeth McFarland, Larry Shaw, Evelyn Smith, Dr. Karen Balch DVM, Lynne Lamprecht, Anne Olden, Diane M. Jones, Trish Woodruff, Rosalie Bell, Rick Kartes, Richard Metzger, David Miller, Richard Wisebear, Bruce Nave, Ann Stites Hausrath, Bret Haverstick, Lawrence R. Shaw, Pat Byrne and Ralph Winestock.

Written comment was received from Jim Hagedorn, Angela Branch, Michael Zeimantz, Peggy Mondada, Buddy Newton, Richard Cox, Colette Duvall, Daniel Branagan, and Deirdre Cochran.

Testimony topics included wolves, wolf hunting and trapping, economic impact of wolves, mule deer, sage grouse, and looking at a broader funding base.

The public meeting ended at 9:10 p.m.

March 22

MISCELLANEOUS

Opening Comments

Chairman McDermott called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. with all Commissioners present.

The Commission and the Department honored retiring Chairman Bert Stevenson, Resources and Conservation Committee, thanking him for his work and dedication to the State of Idaho. Chairman Stevenson served 10 years as Chairman of the Committee and 16 years serving in the Legislature.

In honor of Chairman Stevenson's retirement, former Commissioners John Watts, Jeff Siddoway, Fred Wood, Marcus Gibbs, and Cameron Wheeler and Bonnie Butler, Governor's office were in attendance.

Review of Public Comment

Public comments from the March 21 hearing was reviewed and discussed by the Commission.

Consent Calendar

The consent calendar included the following item:

- Financial Report

12-30 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion to approve the consent calendar as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

RULES

Season Setting: Spring Season Chinook Salmon Fisheries

Ed Schriever, Chief, Fisheries presented the Department recommendations and reviewed the Chinook salmon fishery objectives (Appendix 45, Exhibit 31). This agenda item concerns the setting of Chinook salmon fishing seasons targeting adult anadromous Chinook salmon in 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 2011. For all proposed fishing areas, staff is forecasting that a sufficient number of hatchery salmon will return to the Snake River in 2012 to allow sport fisheries that target the non-tribal harvestable share when hatchery production and brood stock targets are considered.

12-31 Commissioner Trevey moved and Commissioner Barowsky seconded a motion to accept the staff recommendation for the 2012 fishing seasons for the Chinook salmon in the Snake River, Lower Salmon River, Little Salmon River, Mainstem Clearwater River, North Fork Clearwater River, South Fork Clearwater River and Lochsa River. The motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS

Results of 2011 Angler Opinion Survey

Jeff Dillon, State Fishery Manager provided a report on the results of the 2011 Angler Opinion Survey (Appendix 45, Exhibit 32).

Mr. Dillon reported that the Fisheries Bureau conducts a statewide angler opinion survey every five to six years to assess angler preferences and satisfaction with Department fisheries programs, and to gauge public support for changes in management direction. This information

contributes to updating the Statewide Fisheries Management Plan for 2013-2018. The Plan provides a broad framework for implementing ongoing conservation and sportfish management actions. Additionally, the survey includes questions on specific management issues which may develop into rule change proposals and be carried through the rulemaking process.

The angler opinion survey is one of several public input venues provided as Fisheries Bureau staff revise the Statewide Fish Management Plan and develop new fishing rule proposals. Survey emphasis was on a random mail sampling, with 16,000 names drawn from the license database. Additional non-random input was received by posting an identical survey on the Department website and announcing the survey in two statewide press releases. Over 5,600 responses were gathered with the random mail survey, and another 1,200 responses from the non-random web survey. Other input on the Fish Management Plan and 2013-2014 fishing rules is being gathered at public scoping meetings in each region around the state.

Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation Update

Deputy Director Kiefer presented the IFWF report to the Commission.

- The Foundation completed the sale and transfer of title to the Spirit Lake property in northern Idaho.
- The Foundation has launched its new Website www.IFWF.org. A new feature of the site is that the public can make online donations for general support or to support specific projects.
- As part of its marketing of the Wildlife license plates, the Foundation is the title sponsor of the upcoming “Mutual of Omaha’s Wild Kingdom” that will be held at the Morrison Center on the campus of Boise State University on April 28. There are special ticket prices on a limited basis for employees of the Department of Fish and Game.
- The Foundation will hold its annual meeting in Boise on April 28, 2012.
- The Foundation continues to work internally to clarify its service capabilities and relationship with the Department. This review includes looking at the 2006 MOU between the Foundation, Department and the Commission and the Foundation’s capacities for greater self-sufficiency, fundraising, and other avenues that further define its partnership with IDFG and the Commission. MOU to be addressed at the Board’s April meeting.

LEGISLATION

Legislative Update

Deputy Director Kiefer updated the Commission about legislative activity since the last Commission legislative call and provided preliminary assessment of Department action needed to implement new legislation (Appendix 45, Exhibit 33).

A copy of the Mentored Hunt Authorization Survey (Appendix 45, Exhibit 34) was provided to the Commission. The survey was a volunteer survey on the Department Website. This survey will assist in rule making to implement the Mentored Hunt Program.

Deputy Director Kiefer's recommendation is that the Commission discontinue noticed Legislative conference calls.

12-32 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion to terminate the legislative conference calls for the rest of the session. The motion carried unanimously.

LANDS

Land Acquisitions

Gregg Servheen, Wildlife Program Coordinator presented the Ginter Acquisition (Pack River) and James Conservation Easement to the Commission.

Ginter Acquisition (Pack River)

Background: This is a proposal to acquire 26.24 acres adjacent to the Rapid Lightning Creek Habitat Segment of the Pend Oreille Wildlife Management Area. The subject property is located in Bonner County, east of the Pack River and approximately 10 miles north of Highway 200 where the Rapid Lightning road intersects Ginter Lane. Access is provided to the Department and the public via an easement roadway that lies along the eastern border of the subject property. This access easement has been challenged in the past and so acquisition of the property would secure the access.

Most of the property has been hayed and grazed in the past and a small portion of wetland habitat lies to the south of the parcel. Protection of this parcel would add a small portion of wetland to the Rapid Lightning Creek parcel and would also provide a protective buffer to the wetlands.

There is also a house and barn on the property. The house is on a solid foundation and would be salvaged prior to being demolished. The barn would also be dismantled and salvaged, with the funds from the salvage paying for the demolition of the structures and general clean-up of the home site.

The property was appraised at \$325,000. IDFG pays a fee in lieu of taxes (FILT) for all fee-title properties. The FILT for properties acquired in Bonner County is estimated at approximately \$3.66 per acre, for a total of approximately \$96.00 for the subject property.

This was a proposal presented to the Commission during Executive Session on January 27, 2011.

James Conservation Easement

Background: The Department would hold a 17.7 acre conservation easement fronting the North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River for the purpose of protecting a portion of a cold water spring that provides cold water refuge to westslope cutthroat trout. The Avista Corporation will acquire the conservation easement as partial mitigation for their Post Falls dam. The conservation easement was appraised at a value of \$161,000. The terms of the easement will allow the James family to continue to live and enjoy their property while providing permanent protection of the wildlife habitat surrounding the cold water spring. Protection of the property may also raise awareness among other streamside landowners of the benefits and opportunities associated with conservation easements.

The property currently consists of a mixture of large canopy riparian vegetation (e.g., cottonwood, cedar and aspen) and riparian shrub-scrub (e.g., willow, dogwood, and alder). There is a home and two outbuildings located on the property. The easement allows the James family to continue to live and enjoy their property, but the vegetation and area around the cold water spring cannot be altered. The easement restricts subdivision and development of the property. Public access is not part of the easement, but the owners have agreed to allow educational tours of the easement area. The landowner remains responsible for the property taxes. Avista will hold a covenant for access and diligence.

This was a proposal presented to the Commission during Executive Session on May 20, 2010.

12-33 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion to accept the staff recommendation for the Ginter acquisition and the James Conservation easement. The motion carried unanimously.

RULES

Salvage Rule Implementation

Deputy Director Kiefer gave a brief report on the Salvage Rule Implementation (Appendix 45, Exhibit 35). Deputy Director Kiefer noted that the Commission adopted a proposed rule in July, 2011 to provide for salvage and sale of certain wildlife killed by accidental motor-vehicle collision. The rule requires development of verbal notification and written report protocols. Staff has also been investigating electronic reporting. A report protocol is necessary to implement the rule per Commission intent.

Decrease Moose Hunt Tag Numbers in Unit 1

Jon Rachael, State Wildlife Manager presented a proposal to modify the 2012 moose hunting seasons in Unit 1 (Appendix 45, Exhibit 36). The Department is proposing a closure of the antlerless moose season in Controlled Hunt Area 1-1 (10 Permits), and a permit reduction for antlered moose in Hunt Area 1-4 (45 to 25 permits). Reasons for these changes include strong public concern about low moose numbers during public meetings on big game seasons and declining moose success rate.

12-34 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion to accept the staff recommendation to decrease moose hunting seasons in Unit 1. The motion carried unanimously.

Season Setting: Big Game

Jon Rachael, State Wildlife Game Manager, presented the deer, elk, pronghorn, black bear, mountain lion and gray wolf season recommendations for 2012 (Appendix 45, Exhibit 37).

DEER

- Expand muzzleloader opportunity in Panhandle 10 days to return to normal seasons.
- Adjust extra antlerless controlled hunt permits in Clearwater Region.
- Adjust antlerless hunt tag numbers in northern portion of Southwest Region.
- Add new deer hunt to Deer Flat NWR to address depredations on neighboring private land and convert antlerless youth hunt in Units 40/41 to youth extra-antlerless controlled hunt.
- Restructure antlerless hunts in Smoky-Bennett PMU and move rotating muzzleloader hunt in Magic Valley Region Units 47, 54, 55, and eastern half of unit 45.
- Reflect reductions made to controlled hunt tags in Upper Snake last May.
- Convert Unit 36A unlimited controlled buck hunt to 120 tags; add Unit 29 to CH Area 37 muzzleloader hunt.

ELK

- Eliminate general season antlerless elk hunts in the Panhandle. Create separate controlled either-sex hunts in Units 1, 2, 3, and 5.
- Reduce antlerless controlled hunt tags in McCall zone.
- Increase antlerless elk tags in Owyhee CH Area 40.
- Restructure Landowner Permission Hunts and antlerless hunts in Units 45, 49, 52A, 56, and 68 to address depredation concerns; convert Landowner Permission Hunts to Extra tag hunts.
- Reduce antlerless opportunity in Teton zone by shortening A-tag season.
- Create 3 new controlled hunts with 20 permits each to address depredation concerns in Unit 36B.

PRONGHORN

- Increase opportunity in Units 45 and 52.

- Convert Landowner Permission hunts to Extra tag hunts.
- Separate out Unit 68 from existing archery either-sex pronghorn hunts and create new unlimited controlled hunt.

BLACK BEAR

- Extend Unit 6 spring season to June 30.
- Extend spring season in Units 23, 24, and 25 by one week to close June 7.
- Shorten spring season in Units 29, 30, 30A, 36A, 37, and 37A by 2 weeks to close on June 15.

MOUNTAIN LION

- Increase season by 60 days in Unit 6 and 44 days in Units 7 and 9.

GRAY WOLF

- Incorporate wolf seasons into big game regulations booklet.
- Increase bag limit for hunting and trapping in Panhandle and Clearwater region wolf zones.
- Extend season on private land in Panhandle zone.
- Add trapping season in Units 19A and 25.
- Increase harvest limit in Southern Mountain zone from 25 to 30.
- Increase season length in Beaverhead and Island Park zones to close on January 31.

Mr. Rachael provided a wolf management update (Appendix 45, Exhibit 38). There were 10,481 wolf hunting tags sold for 2012 (as of March 19, 2012). Of that number 9,621 were resident tags; 860 nonresident tags. Through March 20, 2012 248 wolves have been taken by hunters.

Proposed modifications to Staff Recommendations for Big Game Species:

- Southern Mountains change harvest limit for wolves from 30 to 40
- Keep the deer tags as unlimited in Hunt 1019 Unit 36A (also eliminates need for proposed outfitter allocation on page 24)
- Bear Unit 4 (2) Bear limit
- Bear Unit 6 (2) Bear limit
- Bear Shorten season April 15-June 15 Units 29, 30,30A, 36A, 37 37A
- Dog Training start June 16 end July 31 in Units 29, 30,30A, 36A, 37 37A

Mr. Rachael informed the Commission that the proposed modifications would affect the Landowner Appreciation Tag allocation.

12-35 Commissioner Power moved and Commissioner Barowsky seconded a motion to accept the staff recommendations for the big game seasons with the modifications suggested, and to include the appropriate adjustments to the Landowner appreciation tags. The motion carried unanimously.

MISCELLANEOUS

Hunter Education Instructor Award

The Continuing the Heritage Award was presented to Volunteer Instructor, Steve Masters, Nampa, Idaho for reaching the 3500 point level in the Idaho Hunter Education Program. Mr. Masters was certified and an instructor in September 2005.

Award Presentation to Landowner

Chairman McDermott and Director Moore presented Steve Campbell the 2011 Outstanding Volunteer Service Award for his work protecting and restoring native riparian habitat in the Little Salmon River watershed.

South Fork Snake River Partnership National Award

Rex Sallabanks, Wildlife Diversity Program Manager, presented the award to Steve Schmidt, Upper Snake Regional Supervisor.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game in association with the Bureau of Land Management, Teton Regional Land Trust, The Conservation Fund, and The Nature Conservancy received a national award recognizing the partnership for its exceptional conservation efforts along the South Fork of the Snake River. The State Wildlife Action Plan Partnership Award recognizes a state fish and wildlife agency and a partner agency or organization for outstanding collaboration in addressing conservation priorities in their state's Wildlife Action Plan. Idaho Fish and Game Regional Supervisor Steve Schmidt, IDFG's lead partner in this collaboration, credits the success of this partnership to the landowners who have chosen to preserve the scenic and habitat qualities of their property.

On February 29, in Washington, DC, The South Fork Snake River Partnership was honored at the Congressional Champions of Wildlife reception, held in conjunction with the Teaming with Wildlife Fly-in event. The annual fly-in event is the primary opportunity to inform Congress about the importance of federal funding for State Wildlife Action Plan implementation through the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program. Rex Sallabanks, Wildlife Diversity Program Manager represented the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

LANDS

State of Idaho Gas Leases on the Payette River Report

Tom Hemker, Wildlife Habitat Program Manager and Rebecca Rutan, Idaho Department of Lands presented an informational presentation outlining the leasing process and stipulations that would be included in these leases (Appendix 45, Exhibit 39).

The Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) has held several auctions to lease State land for drilling for natural gas and potential well development. There will be an auction of State land under the Payette River between Black Canyon Dam and the Snake River in 2012.

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission holds mineral rights associated with land along the Payette River. These mineral rights could be auctioned during the 2012 IDL auction. Commission direction on this issue is requested by the May Commission meeting.

REPORTS

LAP Program Update

Sharon Kiefer reported that during the 2012 Legislative session, there had been legislative bills and a Commission rule docket potentially modifying the current LAP program under discussion. The rule docket was rejected by the Legislature so the LAP program remains as it was in 2011. Ms. Kiefer distributed copies of the Idaho 2011 Landowner Appreciation Program (Appendix 45, Exhibit 40).

Sage-grouse Task Force Report

Director Moore reported that the Governor Otter issued an Executive Order establishing a 15-member Sage-Grouse Task Force. The purpose of the Task Force is to provide Governor Otter with recommendations by June 1, 2012 to ensure the species' long-term viability in Idaho and to prevent the need for the federal protection under the endangered Species Act.

Tom Perry, Counsel to the Governor and Director Moore are co-chairmen for the Task Force. The Governor's Office of Species Conservation and Idaho Department of Fish and Game are serving in advisory roles to the Task Force.

Winter Feeding / Depredation Program Update

Jeff Gould, Chief, Wildlife, presented an update to the Commission (Appendix 45, Exhibit 41).

Mr. Gould reported that the Idaho Department of Fish and Game has periodically provided supplemental feed to deer and elk during emergency winter conditions dating back to the early 1940s. In 1984, the Idaho Legislature adopted legislation creating a dedicated funding source for winter feeding, winter range rehabilitation, and depredation prevention efforts for deer, elk, and pronghorn. Idaho Fish and Game Commission policy acknowledges wildlife populations should be maintained consistent with available habitat, but recognizes certain conditions may occur when emergency supplemental feeding is appropriate. Commission policy authorizes the Department to provide emergency supplemental feed to prevent private property damage, for public safety, or to prevent excessive mortality.

Idaho State Department of Agriculture rules prohibit the public feeding of big game animals in portions of eastern Idaho to manage brucellosis.

Two statutes and Commission policy guide implementation of emergency winter feeding for big game in Idaho. Idaho Code §36-111 (Appendix A) establishes a dedicated fund source for emergency winter feeding, winter range rehabilitation, and depredation prevention. Idaho Code §36-123 (Appendix B) establishes regional winter feeding advisory committees. Idaho Fish and Game Commission policy (Appendix C) provides guidance for implementing emergency winter feeding.

IDAPA 02.04.25 (<http://adminrules.idaho.gov/rules/current/02/0425.pdf>) prescribe public restrictions for feeding of big game animals in eastern Idaho.

Regional Winter Feeding Advisory Committees are established in regions where winter feeding normally occurs; including Southwest, Magic Valley, Southeast, Upper Snake, and Salmon. These committees provide input to the Department throughout winter regarding conditions and winter feeding needs. The committees were also instrumental in developing local area criteria defining when emergency conditions exist.

RULES

Briefing on Nonbiological Rule Changes

Jon Rachael, State Wildlife Manager provided a briefing on the proposed nonbiological rules for game animals (Appendix 45, Exhibit 42).

Annually or biennially, the Idaho Fish and Game Commission consider proposed changes for seasons and non-biological rules. Season brochures are published annually (e.g., Big Game, Waterfowl) or biennially (e.g., Moose, Bighorn Sheep, and Mountain Goat; Upland Game) and include limits, size, sex, and harvestable species. Nonbiological rules include all other rules adopted by the Commission. Examples of nonbiological rules include methods of take, tagging requirements, evidence-of-sex requirements, and controlled hunt eligibility requirements.

Nonbiological rules are officially published in the Idaho Administrative Code (<http://adm.idaho.gov/adminrules/agyindex.htm>) and included in with the season brochures.

Historically, nonbiological rule changes were adopted by the Commission throughout the year. To accommodate requirements of the Idaho Administrative Procedures Act, the Commission now considers nonbiological rule changes during late spring through summer. The Department will be proposing a number of changes to big game and upland game nonbiological rules at the July 2012 Commission meeting.

MANAGEMENT PLANS

Update on Elk Management Plan

Craig White, Wildlife Staff Biologist provided an update on the Elk Management Plan and Survey (Appendix 45, Exhibit 43).

The current Elk Management Plan was implemented in 1999, and established management direction, strategies, and guidelines for the elk program statewide. The Department is revising the current Elk Management Plan to address current and future needs and expectations. As part of that planning process the Department is surveying current elk hunter demographics, desires, expectations, and hunting experiences.

Species management plans provide guidance to the Department on implementing management actions and developing rule recommendations. During management plan development, staff assesses constituent preferences and biological needs, and sets management direction and goals.

The public will be surveyed in April-June 2012, and will be provided with additional opportunities to provide input throughout the process.

REPORTS

Director's Report

Mark Gamblin, Southeast Regional Supervisor gave a brief update on the Wildlife Summit scheduled for August 24-26, 2012.

Commission Reports

Commission reports stand as written (Appendix 45, Exhibit 44).

MISCELLANEOUS

Executive Session

12-36 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner Wright seconded a motion to hold an executive session pursuant of subsections (c) and (f) of Idaho Code Section 67-2345 to discuss lands and pending litigation. Roll call vote: Ayes: McDermott, Trevey, Barowsky, Wright, Anderson, Budge and Power. Nays (none).

The executive session ended at 6:30 p.m. with no action taken.

Randall C. Budge
Chairman

Virgil Moore
Secretary