

Meeting Date: July 14, 2021

Agenda Item No. 5. A.

Agenda Item: Commission Direction for the Wolf Depredation Control Board Funds
(Action)

Bureau Chief Approval: TB

Prepared by: Martha Wackenhut

Background:

The Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board is responsible for administering the wolf control fund established in Idaho Code 22-5305. Legislation created the Board in 2014, largely in response to the loss of federal funding for wolf depredation control. The Board has no management authority for wolves, which is held by the Fish and Game Commission.

In 2021, [Senate Bill 1211](#), increased the annual transfer of Department funds to the Board to a total amount of \$300,000 (the annual transfer under Idaho Code 22-5406 was previously a maximum of \$110,000). The Department provided \$54,565, \$105,331, \$95,351, \$93,733, \$110,000, \$110,000 and \$110,000 in FY15, FY16, FY17, FY18, FY19, FY20 and FY21 respectively. The Board receives an appropriation from the general fund; \$392,000 for FY22.

Previous Commission direction has been to use the sportsmen funds for management and control of wolves for the protection of ungulates in areas with department-approved predation management plans and where ungulate management objectives are not being achieved. Additionally, in February 2021, the Commission gave amended direction to use funds (that IDFG anticipated would otherwise be unspent in FY2021) to increase the funding amount for the Foundation for Wildlife Management FY21 Commission Challenge grant. The grant helps fund a program to reimburse expenses hunters and trappers incur during the harvest of wolves in GMUs where increased wolf harvest will promote elk management objectives, as well as GMUs where landowner/wolf conflicts are occurring.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

Idaho Code Title 22, Chapter 53 identifies the responsibilities of the Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board, related responsibilities of the Commission, and funding for administration of wolf depredation control. To maintain eligibility for Idaho's receipt of federal excise tax funds for wildlife conservation, fish management and restoration, and public shooting ranges (such as the Pittman-Robertson Act excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and hunting equipment), the Fish and Game Commission must maintain control of its license funds. Idaho Code 22-5306 maintains this control by authorizing the Commission to direct the Board's use of fish game funds and requiring the Board to comply with Commission direction for funding wolf depredation control activities.

Senate Bill 1211 provides directions that, beginning in fiscal year 2022, the state controller shall annually, as soon after July 1 of each year as practical, transfer three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) from the fish and game fund to the fish and game fund transfer subaccount of the wolf control fund.

Public Involvement Process:

Public involvement on Senate Bill 1211 was via the legislative process. The Idaho Fish and Game Department and Commission routinely solicit and receive public input on wolf management issues. The Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board conducts its meetings under Idaho's Open Meeting Law.

Justification:

Idaho law requires Commission direction to the Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board for expenditure of Fish and Game license funds.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends directing the expenditure of up to \$300,000 of fish and game funds for management and control of wolves for the protection of ungulates in management units/zones with predation management plans or where management objectives are not otherwise being achieved, and in units where wolf depredations on livestock or other domestic animals are chronic.

Expenditure of fish and game funds would include up to \$100,000 for Department-directed control and related actions for the protection of ungulates in units/zones with predation management plans or where management objectives for ungulates are not otherwise being achieved. Expenditure of fish and game funds would also include providing up to \$200,000 via Department cooperative agreement for nonprofit organization reimbursement of hunters and trappers for expenses incurred during the harvest of wolves in units/zones with predation management plans or where management objectives for ungulates are not otherwise being achieved, and in units where wolf depredations on livestock or other domestic animals are chronic.

Staff will have a letter prepared for Commission Chair signature following Commission action.

Suggested Motion: I move the Commission adopt staff recommendation for direction to the Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board to expend up to \$300,000 in management units/ zones for the protection of ungulates and to address chronic livestock depredation.