

**Meeting Date:** May 6, 2021

**Agenda Item No. 5C**

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

**Bureau Chief Approval:** TB

**Prepared by:** Martha Wackenhut

**Background:**

In 2014, the Idaho Legislature passed HB470 creating the Wolf Depredation Control Board responsible for administering the wolf control fund established by the same bill. Creation of the Board was 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.

Idaho statute annually transfers up to \$110,000 of Department funds to the Wolf Depredation Control Board for response to, and control of, wolf depredations. The actual amount of the transfer each year is based on matching the amount provided by the livestock industry, up to 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. It is anticipated the livestock industry will again come close to contributing the maximum allowed by law in FY21. Additionally, 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 FY21) 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:**

22-5304. Powers and Duties. (1) It is hereby made the duty of the board to administer the wolf control fund including setting the procedures and standards for payment from the fund. In carrying out these duties, the board may cooperate with federal, state, county, city and private agencies, organizations and individuals.

(2) The board has the authority to enter into agreements, including contracts, memoranda of understanding or memoranda of agreement with any federal agency, state agency, and political subdivision of the state of Idaho or agency of another state in order to implement the provisions of this act.

(3) The control of wolves under this chapter does not include the payment of compensation for damages. Control activities funded by the board shall be consistent with the provisions of section 36-1107(c), Idaho Code.

(4) The board may contract with the director of the Idaho state department of agriculture (ISDA) for legal and fiscal services as required under this act.

22-5306. Wolf Control Assessments -- use of funds -- fish and game fund transfer. In order to carry out the provisions of this chapter, the following shall occur:

(2) The wolf depredation control board shall use all funds in the wolf control fund, with the exception of moneys transferred from the fish and game fund as provided for in subsections (3), (4) and (5) of this section unless so directed by the fish and game commission pursuant to subsection (3) of this section, for all activities associated with legal lethal means of control and for the purposes of sections 22-5302 and 22-5304(4), Idaho Code.

(3) Beginning in fiscal year 2015, the state controller shall annually, as soon after July 1 of each year as practical, transfer one hundred ten thousand dollars (\$110,000) from the fish and game fund to the fish and game fund transfer subaccount of the wolf control fund. The fish and game commission, on or before July 1 of each year, is authorized to direct the wolf depredation control board as to the use of such funds and the wolf depredation control board shall comply with the direction of the commission.

**Public Involvement Process:**

Creation of the Wolf Depredation Control Board received substantial public involvement throughout the legislative public policy process. The Idaho Fish and Game Department and Commission routinely solicit and receive public input on wolf management issues.

**Justification:**

Commission direction on expenditure of Department funds is required.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff do not have a recommendation at this time, pending the outcome of legislation that may significantly affect potential recommendations. As of 4/22/2021, legislation (Senate Bill 1211) is pending to increase the amount of funds transferred from the fish and game fund to the WDCB-administered wolf control fund (fish and game subaccount). The legislation would increase the fish and game fund transfer from \$110,000 to \$300,000. The legislation has passed the Senate but is not law. Because of the significant difference in funding, and other potential changes that the pending legislation may create, staff believe it is prudent to wait to make recommendations until the Legislature determines that outcome.