

Meeting Date: January 23, 2020

Agenda Item No. 4B

Agenda Item: Winter Feeding Advisory Committee
Appointments (**Action**)

Bureau Chief Approval:

Prepared by: Jon Rachael

Background:

Regional Winter Feeding Advisory Committees (WFAC) were established by Senate Bill 1406 in 1994. Committees are charged with assisting the Department in implementing the Commission's Emergency Big Game Feeding Policy (attached). Committees exist in regions where emergency winter feeding occurred periodically in the past, including the Southwest, Magic Valley, Southeast, Upper Snake, and Salmon regions. A WFAC was first established in the Clearwater Region in January 2018 although winter feeding has not occurred in recent history. Emergency feeding has not occurred in the Salmon Region since 1998. No WFAC has been established in the Panhandle region. Committee members are appointed by unanimous vote of the Commission with appointments lasting 2 years. Statute does not establish term limits for members.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Idaho Code 36-123. WINTER FEEDING ADVISORY COMMITTEES.

(1) A winter feeding advisory committee shall be established for each district where winter feeding of antelope, elk, and deer normally occurs. Each committee shall consist of five (5) members. The members shall be appointed and removed for cause by unanimous vote of the Idaho fish and game commission. It is intended that the committees reflect the cross section of the major interest groups associated with each district. Each committee shall meet at such times as appropriate, but not less frequently than annually, on or before December 1, before the winter feeding season arrives, whichever is earlier.

(2) The term of office of a member shall be two (2) years, except a portion of the initial appointments may be for a term of one (1) year to provide staggered terms. Appointments to fill vacancies shall be for the balance of the unexpired term. The committees shall serve without compensation.

(3) Each winter feeding advisory committee established pursuant to subsection (1) of this section shall appoint a chairman. The chairmen of the committees shall meet at least annually to coordinate activities and promote consensus on issues of common interest among the winter feeding advisory committees. The chairmen may elect a leader from among the chairmen to call meetings and conduct and coordinate activities of the group.

(4) The department of fish and game shall provide staff assistance and support for the committees.

(5) The committees shall have the authority to:

(a) Act as an independent resource in each district to give advice and recommendations on the administration of winter feeding programs;

(b) Act as a liaison between the commission, the department, interest groups, and the public on winter feeding issues.

Public Involvement Process:

Nominees are selected by Regional Supervisors with input from various stakeholders, including Department staff, sportsmen organizations, and local publics.

Justification:

Commission action is required to appoint or reappoint Winter Feeding Advisory Committee members.

Staff Recommendation:

Reappoint expiring WFAC members or appoint replacements. Current committee members and a list of recommended reappointments and new appointments is provided.

Action Requested:

Suggested Motion: That the Commission adopt staff recommendations for the specified reappointments and replacements of the regional Winter Feeding Advisory Committee members.



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Emergency Big Game Feeding

POLICY NO.: W-1.0

Revision Date: April 2013

POLICY STATEMENT

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission recognizes that big game populations should be maintained under natural conditions and by naturally available forage. Winter forage is the major limiting factor that determines the basic size of the big game populations and it must be maintained if these animals are to prosper and propagate. The Department will work with appropriate land management agencies in an effort to maintain winter ranges in a condition suitable to meet big game management objectives, including the restoration of ranges damaged from such long-term impacts as disease, weed infestation, and/or overgrazing. These restorations could include temporary solutions for short-term impacts caused by fire and/or drought. In order to maintain these winter ranges, big game numbers must be controlled through adequate harvest. We, therefore, do not sanction any wide-spread supplemental winter feeding programs.

- A. Big game animals, especially elk, when concentrated by supplemental feeding, are very susceptible to infectious disease, which can be transmitted to livestock and to other big game animals. Every effort should be made to lessen this threat.
- B. We are aware that big game harvests and weather vary from year to year throughout the state. In most years, snow depths, temperatures, and animal body condition do not create adverse conditions for wintering animals. However, there are times when unusual weather patterns may create critical periods of stress when winter forage becomes limited, unavailable, or animals are forced into areas involving public safety. We recognize that we cannot manage game populations for these extreme weather conditions—nor should we.
- C. The Department is authorized to feed big game only if the following conditions exist:
 - 1. To prevent damage to private property or for public safety when other methods of preventing damage and providing safety measures are determined to be impractical, inappropriate, or ineffective and the amount of damage or cost of protection is expected to exceed the cost of feeding.
 - 2. To prevent excessive mortality of big game populations in drainages that would affect the recovery of the herd. Some mortality should be expected, especially from the young and old segments of the population.
- D. It is the responsibility of all field personnel to advise the Regional Supervisor of weather, animal conditions and numbers, and public input on situations that meet the feeding criteria outlined above. If the Regional Supervisor, in consultation with the regional winter feeding advisory committee, determines that the criteria has been met and that an emergency exists, he/she will inform the Wildlife Bureau of his/her decision and the Wildlife Bureau will notify the Directors Office, Enforcement Bureau and the Communications Bureau. The regional big game operational plan will then be implemented.