

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Special Meeting – February 20, 2020
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Legislative Conference Call
600 S Walnut
Boise, ID**

Present: Director Schriever, Deputy Directors Paul Kline and Scott Reinecker; Owen Moroney, Kathleen Trever, Mary Boyer, Jon Rachael, Greg Wooten, Sharon Kiefer, Martha Wackenhut, Daryl Meints, Roger Phillips, Brian Pearson and Katie Oelrich.

Public present: Garrick Dutcher, Living with Wolves, Thomas Plane, Idaho Press; Troy Opple, BSU Radio; Suzanne Stone, Wood River Wolf Project; Ken Cole, Western Watersheds; Heather Meyer, Heidi Briggs, and Darlene, Wolves of Idaho.

Participating via phone: Toby Boudreau, Chip Corsi, J.J. Teare, Brad Compton, Craig White, Dan Garren, Jim White, Tom Curet, Greg Schoby and Rusty Kramer, Idaho Trappers Association, Region 4 office.

A special meeting of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission was held by telephone conference. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jerry Meyers, with Commissioners Brad Corkill, Tim Murphy, Greg Cameron, Lane Clezie, and Derick Attebury participating.

LEGISLATION

Deputy Director Paul Kline provided the legislative updates.

Update on Fish and Game Legislative Presentations (JFAC, Bills, other) and Budget

Deputy Director Kline reviewed the status for Department sponsored bills
HB330 is waiting to be heard on the Senate floor.

SB1237 was held in House Resources & Conservation Committee (HRC) on February 13. New legislation will be needed to address. The Department is working with the Idaho Sportsmen Alliance (ISA) to draft new legislation to address concerns heard in (HRC).

Two new RS's one to address the Upland Game and Swan Tags. Both will be heard in the Ways and Means Committee next Tuesday.

The Department Budget will be heard in JFAC on February 21.

New Bill for Discussion /Update on Pending legislation/ Action for Policy

Deputy Director Kline reviewed the bill tracking tables for the both Senate and the House (Appendix 53, Exhibit 22).

20-18 Commissioner Corkill moved and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion to conditionally support two anticipated bills (one for swan tags and one for Upland Game Bird permits to support pheasant stocking expansion), at the Director's discretion upon his determination that either or both bills are consistent with the intent of the Commission-sponsored legislation (Senate Bill 1237, for swan tags and Upland Game Bird permits). Motion carries.

HB514 provided an analysis for HB 514 (Appendix 53, Exhibit 23). Staff will continue to monitor HB514.

SEASON SETTING AND RULES

Jon Rachael, State Wildlife Manager, presented the wolf hunting and trapping proposals (Appendix 53, Exhibit 24).

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission has authority to establish harvest seasons (including season dates, bag limits, size, sex, and harvestable species) via proclamation rather than through IDAPA rulemaking. The Commission considers proposed changes for season setting and publishes proclamations biennially in March of odd-numbered years for big game species, including wolves.

The Commission set the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 hunting and trapping seasons for wolves at their March 2019 meeting. Although the Department focusses efforts on the season-setting process on a biennial cycle, the Commission has the authority to consider proposals and make adjustments annually.

At the January 2020 Commission meeting, the Department presented a new statewide wolf population estimate based on an improved model incorporating remote camera surveys and other monitoring efforts. The estimate indicates Idaho's wolf population remains robust through fluctuations of births and mortality over the year—an estimated peak of 1,541 wolves in summer 2019 after the annual birth cycle.

Since the federal government lifted Endangered Species Act protections for wolves in 2011, the Fish and Game Commission has expanded wolf seasons in a stepwise manner in response to increases in depredations on livestock and predation on other big game species. The Commission has systematically expanded wolf hunting and trapping seasons over the years since delisting, and the 2019 wolf population estimate is still well above federal recovery criteria of 150 wolves and 15 breeding pairs statewide. With current hunting and trapping seasons and agency control actions, wolf predation on livestock and other domestic animals remains persistent in certain areas and would occur if the wolf population expanded in southern Idaho. Wolf predation also continues to have a negative effect on elk populations in some backcountry areas.

At their January 2020 meeting, the Commission discussed several proposals to modify the current 2019-2020 and the upcoming 2020-2021 wolf hunting and trapping seasons and directed the Department to solicit input from the public on those proposals.

The proposals for changes to the current 2019-2020 and upcoming 2020 – 2021 wolf hunting and trapping seasons were posted on the Department’s website from January 27 through February 10 to inform the public and provide an opportunity to provide input.

The Department received input from 27,076 individuals on the proposals through the website, including 5,675 comments from Idaho residents (21%) and 21,401 from nonresidents (79%). There was little variation in the level of support or opposition among the 9 individual proposals from the online comments. In general, when all 27,076 commenters are considered, ~15-16% supported the proposals to expand the wolf hunting and trapping seasons and ~84-85% opposed. Among Idaho Resident commenters, ~55% supported each of the proposals to expand wolf hunting seasons and ~45% opposed. The 2 wolf trapping proposals received slightly less support than the wolf hunting proposals with 54% support vs. 46% opposed to the new proposed trapping seasons on public land in southern Idaho game management units; and 52% support vs. 48% opposed for the wolf trapping proposal to allow the use of snares on public land in game management unit 45.

In addition to proposals submitted through the Department’s website, several organizations submitted letters to the Department and Commission.

More details on public input received on the proposals are provided in Appendix 1. (see Exhibit 24).

Commission action is required to make changes to the 2019 – 2020 and 2020 – 2021 wolf hunting and trapping seasons. Public input on the proposals was solicited at Commission request.

Staff recommendation:

After evaluation of wolf population monitoring data, wolf harvest history under past and existing season structures, wolf conflicts with livestock, impacts of predation on other big game populations, input received from the public, and the expressed intention of the Commission to manage the wolf population at a lower level to reduce conflicts, staff recommends the Commission adopt the proposals to expand wolf hunting and trapping seasons as scoped and as presented in Appendix 2. (See Exhibit 24).

20-19 Commissioner Corkill moved and Commissioner Murphy seconded a motion to adopt the proposed modifications to the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 wolf hunting and trapping seasons as presented. Motion carries.

Adoption of Conditional Temporary Rules

Paul Kline, Deputy Director, stated in anticipation that the Legislature will adjourn this year similar to last year, not approving or rejecting any pending rules this legislative session. The Governor’s office is proceeding with Conditional Temporary Rulemaking. Agencies must submit a Notice of Adoption Temporary Rule form to Division of Financial Management by February 21 for both fee and non-fee rules. These rules are conditional and will only become effective at sine die if the pending rules are not otherwise approved or rejected by the Legislature. A motion is needed for the adoption of the conditional fee and non-fee temporary rules.

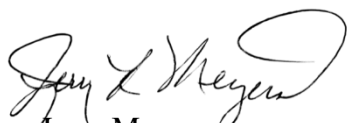
Fee Rule Motion

20-20 Commissioner Attebury moved and Commissioner Clezie seconded a motion for the Commission to conditionally adopt as temporary fee rules those rules presented by staff as Docket No. 13-0000-2000F, with these rules to take effect upon the date of adjournment, *sine die*, of the second regular session of the 65th Idaho State Legislature, only to the extent that the Legislature does not pass legislation rejecting or approving (such that the rules are effective through June 30, 2021) the pending fee rules submitted for legislative review in Docket No. 13-0000-1900F. This motion incorporates the required findings and concise statement of supporting reasons as provided in the publication notice and authorizes staff to make corrective edits to the rules or publication notice, to effect Commission intent or comply with Governor's Office formatting direction. Motion carries.


Non-Fee Rule Motion

20-21 Commissioner Attebury moved and Commissioner Corkill seconded a motion for the Commission to conditionally adopt as temporary rules those rules presented by staff as Docket No. 13-000-2000, with these rules to take effect upon the adjournment date, *sine die*, of the second regular session of the 65th Idaho State Legislature, only to the extent that the Legislature does not pass legislation rejecting or approving (such that the rules are effective through June 30, 2021) the pending rules submitted for legislative review in Docket Nos. 13-0000-1900, 13-0108-1903, 13-0108-1904, 13-0109-1902, 13-0110-1901, and 13-0117-1901. This motion incorporates the required findings and concise statement of supporting reasons as provided in the publication notice and authorizes staff to make corrective edits to the rules or publication notices to effect Commission intent or comply with Governor's Office formatting direction. Motion carries.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 a.m.



Jerry Meyers
Chairman



Ed Schriever
Secretary