

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Regular Meeting August 20, 2020
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
15950 North Gate Boulevard
Nampa, Idaho**

August 20

MISCELLANEOUS

Opening Comments / Agenda Changes

Chairman Corkill called the meeting to order at 9:15 and introduced Commissioners Ebert, Cameron, Murphy, Clezie and Attebury.

Agenda Changes

20-67 Commissioner Attebury moved and Commissioner Clezie seconded a motion to add a report at the end of the meeting on wolf mortality. Motion carries.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Consent Calendar

Consent Calendar Items:
Minutes March 27, April 2, 4, and 9, 2020
Consent calendar items were adopted without objection.

FISCAL

FY22 Budget Approval

Michael Pearson, Chief, Administration, provided an update and requested the Commission's approval for the state fiscal year 2022 Legislative Budget Request (Appendix 53, Exhibit 53). The 2022 budget request package is due to the Governor's office on August 28, 2020.

20-68 Commissioner Attebury moved and Commissioner Clezie seconded a motion to approve the State Fiscal Year 2022 budget request as presented. Motion carries

SEASON SETTING AND RULES

Season Setting: 2020 Sage-grouse Season

Ann Moser, Wildlife Staff Biologist presented the Department recommendations (Appendix 53, Exhibit 54).

Background: Greater sage-grouse were a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act from 2010 until October 2015, when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that listing sage-grouse as a threatened or endangered species was not warranted at that time.

The Department has been following the hunting season and bag-limit guidelines from the 2006 *Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho*. Season frameworks are evaluated by comparing the 1996-2000 lek count averages to the most recent (2018-2020) three-year running averages. Lek route data in each of 14 Reporting Zones is evaluated and compared to the guidelines.

Option	3-year running average of lek counts	Days	Daily Bag
Closed	Less than 100 males observed Lek counts are less than 50% of 1996-2000 average counts Adequate lek data are not gathered for the population	0	0
Restrictive	Lek counts are between 50% and 150% of the 1996-2000 average	7	1
Standard	Lek counts exceed 150% of the 1996-2000 average	23	2

The Commission sets sage-grouse hunting seasons in August, which allows managers time to evaluate lek data and determine whether wildfires or West Nile virus are affecting any sage-grouse populations in Idaho. Idaho's season-setting process allows for annual evaluations at the local level that considers circumstances that can change annually.

On May 27, 2015, Idaho Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter signed *EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 2015-04 ADOPTING IDAHO'S SAGE-GROUSE MANAGEMENT PLAN*, which directs all executive agencies, to the extent consistent with existing state law, for relevant permits and policies, adopt the Governor's Plan and all supporting documentation. Governor Otter's Plan recommended adaptive regulatory triggers to evaluate population and habitat changes and respond to land management decisions. These population and habitat triggers were also formalized within the 2015 and 2019 BLM and FS greater sage-grouse plan amendments.

Since the formalization of Governor Otter's plan and the federal plans in 2015, the Department has increased our lek survey efforts to assure that we have accurate and sufficient data to evaluate population triggers. The Department is taking into consideration population triggers in our season-setting process.

Trends of males on lek routes are the key parameter for selecting sage-grouse seasons. Statewide lek counts were up 2.5% from 2019 but down 53% from the high counts in 2016; however 2020 trends were variable among the Reporting Zones. Sage-grouse Reporting Zones 2, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 6, 7B, 7C, 8A, and 8B (see attached map) (Appendix 53, Exhibit 55) meet the restrictive season criteria. The population triggers analysis indicates caution in most areas north of the Snake River and in part of Owyhee County. Our preliminary recommendations are:

- The Department recommends the Restrictive 7-day season, 1 bird daily limit, for Zones 2, 3A, and 3B.

- The Department recommends maintaining the closure in Zone 1 in Owyhee County, due to documented impacts from the 2015 Soda Fire. Eight-five males were observed on lek routes this year which meets the closed season criteria.
- We propose a 2-day season, 1 bird daily limit, for Zones 4A, 4B, 6, 7B, 7C, 7D, 8A, and 8B. Zone 7D met the closed season criteria. This small area has few leks and research has documented connectivity with the surrounding zones. The Department is therefore managing it at the larger scale. Furthermore, we recommend re-opening all of Zone 6 which has been closed since the 2018 Grassy Ridge Fire.
- Zone 5A qualifies for a closed season as <100 males were observed on leks in 6 of the last 7 years. The Commission closed Zone 5A in 2014 and the Department recommends continuing that closure.
- Zone 5 meets the closed season criteria due to lack of sufficient long-term data and low population numbers in most of the area.
- The West Central area (Washington and Adams counties) has a small sage-grouse population that has been closed to hunting since 1984.

20-69 Commissioner Cameron moved and Commissioner Murphy seconded a motion to adopt the staff recommendations for the 2020 sage-grouse hunting seasons as recommended. Motion carries.

SEASON SETTING AND RULES

Approval for the Expanded Pheasant Stocking Locations

Jeff Knetter, Upland Game and Migratory Game Bird Coordinator presented.

Upland game bird, upland game animal, and furbearer seasons and bag and possession limits are set on even-numbered years and cover a two-year period. The purpose of this agenda item is to adopt changes to the list of areas where pheasants are stocked (Appendix 53, Exhibit 56) and an Upland Game Bird Permit is required to hunt or possess (IDAPA 13, Title 01, Chapter 09)

The following is the list of areas, by region, where pheasant stocking is proposed to be expanded in 2020:

Panhandle

- Boundary-Smith Creek WMA
- Couer d'Alene River WMA – Strobel and Lane Marsh parcels

Clearwater Region

- Palouse Youth-only area – Access Yes!
- Peterson Loop area – Access Yes!

- Genesee area – Access Yes!

Southwest Region

- Roswell Marsh Wildlife Habitat Area north of Highway 18

Magic Valley Region

- Bureau of Reclamation Tract F27 – Rupert
- Bureau of Reclamation Tract F28 – Acequia

Southeast Region

- Portneuf WMA

Upper Snake Region

- Bureau of Land Management Lewisville Knolls parcel

Salmon Region

- Kirtley Creek area – Access Yes!
- Pahsimeroi River Wildlife Habitat Area

20-70 Commissioner Clezie moved and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion to adopt staff recommendations for the list of areas where pheasants are stocked and an Upland Game Bird Permit is required to hunt or possess pheasant during fall 2020 seasons. Motion carries

Modification to 2020 Fall Steelhead Season

Lance Hebdon, Anadromous Fishery Manager presented the proposed modifications (Appendix 53, Exhibit 57). The proposed modifications are to reduce the bag and possession limits to 2 and 6 fish in the Salmon, Little Salmon and Snake Rivers for the fall 2020 season. All standard rules apply. Mr. Hebdon stated that “we expect steelhead returns to the hatchery trap locations to meet broodstock needs in the Salmon and Snake rivers.”

20-71 Commissioner Ebert moved and Commissioner Murphy seconded a motion to adopt the staff recommendations to the 2020 Steelhead season modifications for the Salmon, Clearwater, and Snake Rivers. Motion carries

LANDS

Don Kemner, Wildlife Habitat Program presented the Land Acquisitions.

Lautrec fee-title Acquisition

This proposed fee title acquisition consists of a small parcel that is an in-holding to the Coeur d'Alene River Wildlife Management Area Grays Meadow segment located in Kootenai County. The acquisition is 1.758 acres owned by Lautrec LLC for \$6,203. The acquisition is essential to remediation and restoration plans for the west field of the Gray's Meadow property. The Gray's Meadow Project will convert monotypic agricultural land use into a remediated and restored

wetland complex of multiple habitats including permanent, semi-permanent and seasonal palustrine forested, shrub-scrub, emergent, and aquatic bed (deep water) wetlands.

These habitats provide import spring and fall transitional habitat for waterfowl migration. Additionally, waterfowl and shorebirds use this area for breeding, nesting, and brood rearing. It also provides seasonal habitats for white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, and moose. Amphibians such as frogs and toads are dependent on seasonal water flows and wetland habitats for breeding and rearing habitat.

This property was previously presented to the Commission during Executive Session in March 2020.

Acquisition cost of \$6,203 are provided by Avista mitigation for Post Falls dam.

IDFG already manages the adjacent surrounding land so resources are already available and on-site to manage these small additions to the WMA landbase. Annual maintenance costs are estimated \$115.

20-72 Commissioner Clezie moved and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion to approve acquiring the 1.7 acre Lautrec property. Motion carries.

Cronk fee-title Acquisition

This proposed fee title acquisition consists of a small parcel in-holdings to the Coeur d 'Alene River Wildlife Management Area Gray's Meadow segment located in Kootenai County. The acquisition is: 1.156 acres owned by Jay Cronk for \$9,401. The acquisition is essential to remediation and restoration plans for the west field of the Gray's Meadow property. The Gray's Meadow Project will convert monotypic agricultural land use into a remediated and restored wetland complex of multiple habitats including permanent, semi-permanent and seasonal palustrine forested, shrub-scrub, emergent, and aquatic bed (deep water) wetlands.

These habitats provide import spring and fall transitional habitat for waterfowl migration. Additionally, waterfowl and shorebirds use this area for breeding, nesting, and brood rearing. It also provides seasonal habitats for white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, and moose. Amphibians such as frogs and toads are dependent on seasonal water flows and wetland habitats for breeding and rearing habitat.

This property was previously presented to the Commission during Executive Session in March 2020.

Acquisition cost of \$9,401 are provided by Avista mitigation for Post Falls dam.

IDFG already manages the adjacent surrounding land so resources are already available and on-site to manage these small additions to the WMA landbase. Annual maintenance costs are estimated \$50.

20-73 Commissioner Cameron moved and Commissioner Clezie seconded a motion to approve acquiring the 1.1 acre Cronk property. Motion carries.

Tex Creek WMA fee-title Acquisition

This 15-acre tract is located within the Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area roughly 20 miles southeast of Idaho Falls. The parcel, Tex Creek WMA headquarters site, currently sits on Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) land. Plans to replace the aging living quarters with a high-quality bunkhouse led to an opportunity for IDFG to acquire the parcel in fee title from BOR.

IDFG's ownership of the Tex Creek headquarters site will greatly simplify ongoing operations and maintenance, as well as future improvements and upgrades. The acquisition will include a shooting range to be utilized by IDFG's enforcement staff for firearms qualifications and training.

Onsite improvements encompass a shooting range, wood shed, covered storage, multi- purpose shop and corral.

This property was previously presented to the Commission during Executive Session in May 2019.

The acquisition cost is \$75,000 (appraised value) of license funds.

FILT is estimated at \$63 per year. There would be no change in operating and maintenance costs as these expenses are included in the current WMA annual budget.

Staff recommendation: The Lands Committee recommends acquiring the 15-acre property.

20-74 Commissioner Attebury moved and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion that the Commission adopts staff recommendation and approves acquisition of the 15-acre Tex Creek property. Motion carries.

Commission Position on Recreation Trail Proposal by the US Army Corp of Engineers on the Boise River WMA

Frank Edelman, Natural Resources Policy Manager presented.

Background: The US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) is proposing to construct a new 15-mile long multiple use trail for bike and pedestrian traffic near Lucky Peak Reservoir. This proposed Lake View Recreation Trail would traverse USACE and Bureau of Land Management lands that the Department manages as part of the Charcoal Creek Segment of the Boise River Wildlife Management Area (BRWMA).

The BRWMA's purpose is to provide quality big game winter range and wildlife-related recreation. Approximately 5,000 to 7,000 mule deer and 1,200 elk winter on the BRWMA depending on winter severity; these migratory animals provide big game hunting opportunity

throughout the Boise River watershed. The Charcoal Creek Segment presently contains the highest quality winter range on BRWMA and supports high densities of mule deer.

Construction of the proposed trail and the resulting increase in recreation access and activity will likely cause significant adverse impacts to existing BRWMA conditions by (1) displacing big game from crucial winter range, and (2) threatening long-term range quality by increased risks of wildfire, soil erosion, and invasive species. USACE's trail proposal includes a winter seasonal trail closure and volunteer trail maintenance by the Southwest Idaho Mountain Bike Association.

However, USACE has not properly considered or mitigated significant impacts and alternatives for the proposed trail. The Department has experience with similar trail management in the Boise Front Segment. USACE documents do not appear to realistically assess the agencies' ability (including resource availability) to monitor and enforce the seasonal trail closure, prevent unauthorized pioneering of spur trails from the proposed trail, or mitigate new trail-imposed threats to winter range (*e.g.*, noxious weed control and post-wildlife restoration).

Staff recommends that the Commission send a letter to the USACE opposing the Lake View Recreation Trail.

20-75 Commissioner Murphy moved and Commissioner Clezie seconded a motion that the Commission adopt staff recommendation to submit a letter to the USACE opposing the proposed Lake View Recreation Trail. Motion carries.

MISCELLANEOUS

Commission Representation on Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board

20-76 Commissioner Clezie moved and Commissioner Murphy seconded a motion to appoint Brad Compton as the Commission representative to the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board. Motion carries.

REPORTS

Report on 2020 Swan Tag Sales

Toby Boudreau, Chief, Wildlife provided the report.

The Commission set the 2020-2021 migratory game bird seasons at their April 16 conference call meeting. The 2020-2021 seasons included Idaho's first hunting season for swans. The swan season runs October 19 – December 1, 2020 only in Benewah, Bonner, Boundary and Kootenai counties in the Panhandle Region. The Commission established a limit of 50 tags to be issued first-come, first-served.

Swan tags went on sale Saturday, August 1, at 10:00 AM MDT at license vendors, online, and by telephone. All 50 tags were sold within 2 minutes of going on sale and all were issued to Idaho residents. Twenty-two (22) tags were issued at vendor locations and 28 were issued online. Tags

were purchased by 25 residents of the Panhandle Region, 5 residents of the Clearwater Region, 11 residents of the Southwest Region, 3 from the Southeast Region, and 6 from the Upper Snake Region.

A swan hunter orientation course is available on the Department's website at <https://idfg.idaho.gov/hunt/swan/course> .

All hunters who harvest a swan must present the swan carcass to a conservation officer, regional office, or check station within 3 days of the date of kill for measurement and identification of species.

Brad Corkill suggests that the Commission continue this conversation and be aware of the process for rulemaking should the commission consider rulemaking to change this hunt to a controlled hunt.

Status of Request to USFWS for Approval of Elk Hunting on Camas NWR

Toby Boudreau, Chief, Wildlife, reported that this has been an ongoing effort to establish elk hunting opportunities on the Camas National Wildlife Refuge. The Camas Wildlife Refuge sits on 10,600 acres, located in Unit 63. The Department has been working with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) regarding implementation of Secretarial Order No. 3347. The Department will continue to work on potential ideas for access in coordination with the Service and hopes to bring these ideas to the Commission in March 2021.

Review and RE-Cap Wolves

Director Schriever provided a review and recap for wolf mortality in the fall and spring seasons 2004-2020 (Appendix 53, Exhibit 58).

MISCELLANEOUS

Planning for Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for November 19 & 20 in Lewiston.

Executive Session

20-77 Commissioner Attebury moved and Commissioner Clezie seconded a motion that the Commission go into executive session under Idaho Code 74-206 subsection (1) (d) for records exempt from disclosure and subsection (f) for litigation.

Roll Call Vote Ayes: Brad Corkill, Don Ebert, Tim Murphy, Greg Cameron, Lane Clezie and Derick Attebury.

The items covered in executive session were records exempt from disclosure and pending litigation.

20-78 Commissioner Clezie moved and Commissioner Attebury seconded a motion to come out of executive session and there was no action taken. Motion carries.

The meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m.



Brad Corkill
Chairman



Ed Schriever
Secretary

