

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Annual Meeting January 25-26, 2023
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Sawtooth Room
600 S Walnut
Boise, Idaho**

January 25

MISCELLANEOUS

Kathleen Trever, Deputy Attorney General noted that the Commission will need to amend the agenda to correct Idaho Code subsection in the executive session open meeting notice. Staff identified the typographical error in the notice and reposted the amended agenda less than 48 hours before the meeting.

23-01 Commissioner Davies moved and Commissioner Ebert seconded a motion to amend the agenda to reflect Idaho Code subsection to reflect IC 74-206 subsection (a) Hiring of a Director. Motion carries.

Executive Session

23-02 Commissioner Cameron moved and Commissioner Attebury seconded a motion to Commissioner Ebert moved and Commissioner Davies seconded a motion to hold an executive session pursuant to I.C. 74-206 (1)(a)(c)(f).

Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Dave Bobbitt, Don Ebert, Tim Murphy, Greg Cameron, Jordan Cheirrett, Derick Attebury and Ron Davies.

The Commission discussed matters concerning the hiring of a new director, potential property acquisition and litigation.

23-03 Commissioner Ebert moved and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion to come out of executive session with no action taken. Motion carries.

Discuss Items for Commission Meeting and Confirmation Hearings

Commissioners discussed items in preparation for the confirmation hearings for Tim Murphy and Jordan Cheirrett, today at the Senate Resources & Environment Committee meeting.

All Commissioners attended the confirmation hearing at the Senate Resources & Environment Committee meeting.

Public Hearing

Chairman Murphy called the meeting to order and reviewed the rules of conduct for the hearing and reported that all public comments would be reviewed by the commission at the Thursday business meeting.

The following individuals provided in person testimony: Cindy Su, Garrick Dutcher, Kendell Rader, Rusty Kramer, Bill London, Ella Driever, Jessica Rice, Bryan Laws, Justin Webb, Shaunna Crane, Annie Birch Wrigh, Michel Liao, Dane Crane, Donald Sickels, Kurt Baugher, Jackie Miller, Phil Lewer, Brent Miller, Christine Gertschen, Nathan Wright and Mark Rose. Written comments were received from Travis Bullock, Mile High Outfitters; Bruce Smith, Hannah Amick and Sash Truex (Appendix 56, Exhibit 01).

January 26

MISCELLANEOUS

Posting of the Colors and Pledge of Allegiance

Posting of the Colors and Pledge of Allegiance presented by Idaho Department of Fish and Game Honor Guard Meghan Roos and Nathan Stohosky.

Chairman Murphy called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. MST. Commissioners Bobbitt, Ebert, Cameron, Attebury, Cheirrett and Davies were present.

Review of Public Comment

Director Schriever and Commissioners discussed and reviewed the public comments. Comments included:

- A petition from Michel Liao, TREE Club & Timberline Highschool (Appendix 56, Exhibit 02). The Commission will address at the March 2023 meeting.
- Opportunity for youth hunters to use a crossbow in an archery only area.
- Waterfowl safety concerns with hunters shooting near residential homes along the Snake River near Buhl and a request from these landowners to meet with the Director. Craig White will follow up on this request to meet.
- A request to raise the vendor fee amounts for licenses.
- Lack of enforcement in Unit 41
- Wolf trapping proposals for foothold traps
- F4WM and reimbursements for wolf harvest.
- Advances in technology, drones and thermal imaging and concerns about Fair Chase.
- CWD comments, these will be addressed in agenda item 9 later in the meeting.
- Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation / Management of Sheep and Partnership
- Trappers Association thoughtful comments about Cory Mosby and the work that he does with the trappers.

- Comments supporting the Adoption of Management Plan for Fisher, Lynx, and Wolverine.
- Negative comments toward the Commission on lack of biodiversity in Idaho.

Consent Calendar

Minutes, August 31, 2022

Financial Report

Winter Feeding Committee Appointments

Consent calendar items were adopted without objection.

SEASON SETTING AND RULES

Moose, Bighorn Sheep, and Mountain Goat Season Setting for 2023 and 2024

Hollie Miyasaki, Wildlife Staff Biologist provided a summary (Appendix 56, Exhibit 03) of the public comments received and presented the proposals for Moose, Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goat (Appendix 55, Exhibit 04).

Dates and tag numbers for moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat harvest seasons are established for a two-year period and are presented to the Commission for approval in January of each odd-numbered year. Regional staff scoped proposals for season changes and controlled hunt tag limits through the Department's website and in person regional meetings December 13 – 29, 2022. Following assessment of public input, regional staff submitted recommendations to the Wildlife Bureau and a final package of recommendations for the 2023-2024 hunting seasons for presentation to the Commission.

23-04 Commissioner Ebert moved and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion to adopt the Moose seasons and tag levels for the 2023 and 2024 seasons. Motion carries.

23-05 Commissioner Davies moved and Commissioner Attebury seconded a motion to adopt the Bighorn Sheep seasons and tag levels for the 2023 and 2024 seasons. Motion carries

23-06 Commissioner Attebury moved and Commissioner Ebert seconded a motion to adopt the Mountain Goat seasons and tag levels for the 2023 and 2024 seasons. Motion carries

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Adoption of Management Plan for Fisher, Lynx, and Wolverine

Cory Mosby, staff Biologist presented the plan.

Background:

Staff presented an overview of the draft *Management Plan for the Conservation of Fisher, Wolverine, and Canada Lynx* at the Commission's November 2022 meeting. This plan provides updated guidance and identifies management priorities for the conservation of this suite of species over the next six years (2023-2028).

Staff provided a review of public comments received on the draft plan, as well as improvements made in preparing the final draft in response to the input received.

The management plan for the conservation of fisher, wolverine, and Canada lynx will function as the action plan for conservation and management activities of these species in Idaho.

Public Involvement Process:

The draft plan was posted on the Department's website on December 13, 2022; comments were accepted through January 3, 2023 (21 days).

Public input summary:

- 21 unique submissions with 16 written comments
- 81% of respondents were Idaho residents
- When asked to indicate their satisfaction with the plan:
 - 67% (n=14) of respondents generally supported the plan
 - 24% (n=5) of respondents supported the plan with some concerns
 - 9% (n=2) of respondents did not support the plan

Upon review of the comments, several small changes were identified related to clarification of the fisher habitat selection, clarification of figures depicting wolverine range, observations, and occupancy, and technical edits. These changes have been made and are represented in the draft presented to the Commission for consideration.

23-07 Commissioner Ebert moved and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion that the Commission adopt the Management Plan for the Conservation of Fisher, Wolverine, and Canada Lynx (2023-2028). Motion carries.

LEGISLATION

Update on Legislation and Rulemaking

Deputy Director Worthington reported that the Department does not have any agency sponsored legislation. SB 1021 PRIEST LAKE – Amends existing law to prohibit certain outlet control structures was printed and referred to the Senate Resources & Environment Committee. The first legislative conference call is scheduled for February 2 at 9:00 MST.

Fee and non-fee rules are currently “pending” and awaiting approval of the 2023 Legislature scheduled for next week in the House Resources and Conservation Committee.

Staff are preparing for year three of Governor Little's Zero-Based Regulation Rulemaking process. This will continue the process of a comprehensive review, simplification and associated negotiated rulemaking of Chapters 6, 8, 11, 12, 15 IDAPA 13. There will be a 2-year process starting with Chapter 8, muzzleloader bullets. This is the first step to address comments from the public regarding the current rule on allowable bullets for muzzleloaders.

Muzzleloader Bullets

Toby Boudreau, Deer and Elk Coordinator, presented a review of muzzleloader bullets currently available to muzzleloader hunters and a discussion of their ballistics (Appendix 56, Exhibit 05).

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission and Department staff have recently received comments from the hunting public regarding types of muzzleloader bullets readily available for purchase compared to those legal for use in muzzleloader-only hunts in Idaho. The Commission last adopted changes to the definition of legal muzzleloader bullets in 2006. The current rule allows only for the use of a patched round ball or conical non-jacketed projectile comprised wholly of lead or lead alloy.

IDAPA 13.01.08.406 defines the legal equipment requirements for the use of muzzleloaders in muzzleloader-only big game hunts.

The Commission and Department have received comments from the public regarding the current rule on allowable bullets for muzzleloaders.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Big Game Movements & Migration Action Plan to Release for Public Input

Jacob Gray, Natural Resources Program Coordinator, presented the plan (Appendix 56, Exhibit 06).

The Department coordinates with a diversity of partners, including private landowners, state and federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations, to implement voluntary management to conserve big game habitats across the State including migration routes and seasonal ranges. For decades, the Department has invested significant research and monitoring resources to obtain data necessary to inform big game management and assist these partners with conserving big game habitat.

Since 2018, the Department's management and studies of big game migration routes and seasonal habitats have been augmented through the Department of Interior's (DOI) Secretarial Order No. 3362 (SO3362). SO3362 directs DOI agencies to assist western tribes, private landowners, state fish and wildlife agencies, and state highway departments with conserving and managing priority big game winter ranges and migration routes.

SO3362 assistance includes grant funding opportunities for voluntary habitat conservation and data collection and analysis based on state-specified conservation priorities as documented in state-prepared action plans. To access SO3362 funding, the Department prepared Version 1 (2018) of the "Idaho Action Plan for Implementing the Department of the Interior Secretarial Order 3362: Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors" (Action Plan). Idaho's Action Plan established a framework for conserving priority big game migration routes and winter ranges within five Priority Areas as informed by Commission approved species management plans.

The Department established the Big Game Movements & Migration (M&M) Program to implement the Action Plan. Updated in 2019 (Version 2), 2020 (Version 3), and 2022 (Version 4), Action Plan revisions occur as needed based on annual reviews to address new priorities, provide new information, and document completed projects. To date, Idaho has received approximately \$2.6 million in SO3362 related funding to address big game conservation priorities within Priority Areas as guided by the Action Plan. Conservation priorities include habitat management, population monitoring, and technical assistance. Priority Areas consider the presence of key big game populations, corresponding migration routes, and winter ranges, potential habitat and population risks, and opportunities for voluntary conservation efforts.

SEASON SETTING AND RULES

Deer & Elk Status Update and Big Game Season Setting Preview

Toby Boudreau, Deer and Elk Coordinator presented an overview of the status of deer and elk populations (Appendix 56, Exhibit 07).

Included in the overview:

- Final harvest estimates from 2021,
- Results of aerial surveys from winter 2022,
- Overwinter fawn survival from 2022,
- Fall check station results,
- December 2022 aerial composition survey data,
- Review of deer and elk surveys planned for this winter,
- Deer and elk survival monitoring,
- Update on the status of the elk plan process.

Rick Ward, State Wildlife Manager, provided a preview of the upcoming big game season setting process and discussed public outreach plans and timelines leading up to the March Commission meeting.

REPORTS

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Update

Rick Ward, State Wildlife Manager provided the update on CWD (Appendix 56, Exhibit 08).

Background:

IDFG has been monitoring for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in deer and elk since 1997 and has sampled approximately 22,000 animals over the last 25 years. CWD was first detected in the state in Unit 14 in late 2021 and the Commission designated Units 14 and 15 as a CWD management zone at that time. That designation remains in effect.

In March 2022 meeting, the Commission adopted modifications to the 2022 hunting seasons in Unit 14 and implemented a mandatory check requirement for all deer, elk, and moose harvested in Units 14 and 15 for the 2022 hunting season.

In addition to the mandatory sampling of all harvested deer, elk, and moose from Units 14 and 15, the *2021 Strategy for Chronic Wasting Disease* prescribes surveillance that includes sampling animals from portions of the state annually and rotating focused sampling among other areas of the state.

Annual CWD-sampling areas for white-tailed deer include Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 4A, 5, 6, 7, 8, 8A, 9, 10, 10A, 11, 11A, 12, and 13. Annual CWD-sampling areas for mule deer and elk include Units 21, 21A, 29, 30, 30A, 37, 37A, 51, 58, 59A, 59, 60, 60A, 61, 62, 62A, 63A, 64, 65, 66, 66A, 67, 69, 71, 72, and 76 (see map on page 2). The CWD sampling period begins July 1 each year and samples are collected over the 12-month sampling period, but most samples are collected from hunter-harvested animals in October and November.

Focused sampling areas rotate throughout southern Idaho on a three-year rotation. The 2022 focused sampling area includes Units 54, 55, 56, 57, 70, 73A, 73, 74, 75, 76, and 77, as well as some targeted sampling in 11, 11A, 13, 18, and 23 near the border of GMU 14.

2022 Wolf Abundance Estimate

Shane Roberts, Wildlife Research Manager, presented an overview of the methods used and the newly produced summer 2022 statewide wolf abundance estimate of 1337 (Appendix 56, Exhibit 09).

Background:

The Department has used a statewide remote camera array to estimate wolf occupancy (distribution) and abundance (total number) since 2019. The camera-based abundance estimation method was first developed in Idaho through collaboration with the University of Montana for use on ungulates but has since been adapted for estimation of other species, including wolves. During spring 2022, regional staff deployed 747 cameras statewide for wolf monitoring. These cameras captured over 10 million pictures during the June-September deployment. We used specialized image recognition software to identify which pictures contained animals (as opposed to grass or twigs blowing in the wind), and then trained staff categorized the pictures that contained animals to species. The resulting data was used in a space-to-event model to estimate average wolf density within portions of the state categorized into three levels of wolf occupancy (low, medium, high). Those density estimates, combined with information on wolf habitat, were then used to estimate abundance of wolves across the entire state. These methods resulted in statewide estimates between 1,543 and 1,556 wolves during the summers of 2019, 2020, and 2021, suggesting a stable wolf population over those years.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Draft Wolf Management Plan to Release for Public Review and Input

Jon Rachael, Chief, Wildlife presented an overview of the draft plan (Appendix 56, Exhibit 10).

Consistent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2009 delisting decision, the Department is committed to maintaining a viable, self-sustaining wolf population that is well-distributed in suitable habitat. The Department is also committed to managing the population at a level that minimizes conflicts with both livestock and ungulate populations, while remaining connected with wolf populations in Montana, Wyoming, Oregon, Washington, and Canada. Over the last decade, the Fish and Game Commission has expanded wolf harvest seasons incrementally in response to continued depredations on livestock and impacts to big game species. The Department continues to focus wolf management actions to deliberately address resolution of wolf conflicts with livestock and negative impacts on big game populations, while ensuring a self-sustaining wolf population.

Department staff have assessed available wolf data and literature and have developed a draft management plan (draft Plan) that is intended to set direction and guide the management activities through 2028. Management direction in the draft Plan is based on biological data, a need to resolve wolf depredations on livestock and negative impacts on big game populations, previous policy direction from the Commission, and direction in the 2002 *Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan*. This draft Plan provides needed updates and incorporates knowledge gained from nearly 3 decades of wolf monitoring and management about how wolves use Idaho's landscape, interact with native ungulates and livestock, and react to different levels and types of harvest.

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission administers state wildlife policy through the Department (Idaho Code 36-104). Wolves are classified and managed as big game animals (IDAPA 13.01.06.100). Species management plans are the guiding documents to manage wildlife and are a direct reflection of the Department Strategic Plan. The *Idaho Gray Wolf Management Plan 2023 - 2028* will function as the action plan for wolves over the next 6 years.

The Commission and Department receive comments from the public related to wolves and wolf management year-round, via email and phone calls, including at open houses, public meetings, and hearings, and online. The Department also receives comments and solicits input from the public on season-setting proposals.

With Commission concurrence, the *Draft Idaho Gray Wolf Management Plan 2023 – 2028* will be posted on the Department website for 30 days to provide opportunity for public review and comment. Comments from the public and partner agencies will be considered to make improvements in preparation of a final plan that will be presented to the Commission for adoption at a future meeting. Staff will summarize and review public input on the draft Plan with the Commission at that time.

REPORTS

2022 Outfitter Allocated Tag use Reports

Tara Reichert, Automated System Manager presented.

Background: Beginning with the 2021 season, outfitter tag sales have been administered through IDFG's licensing system, providing improved tracking and monitoring of outfitter tag use. Staff will present a statewide overview of the final 2022 general-hunt outfitter tag sales and use by tag type, including:

- Tags allocated to outfitters.
- Tags purchased by outfitters.
- Allocated tags returned to the nonresident pool.
- Non-outfitted tags converted to outfitted tags.
- Unused outfitter allocation.

Rules addressing implementation of caps and allocation of tags in capped general hunt zones and controlled hunts appear in IDAPA 13.01.04.505, Deer and Elk Tag Allocation.

Commission authority and options for allocating general season deer and elk tags to clients of licensed outfitters appear in Idaho Code 36-408 and IDAPA 13.01.04.505.

Department staff continue to work closely with IOGLB staff and Idaho Outfitters and Guide's Association (IOGA) leadership on outfitter use data and tag allocation. Public input was collected in conjunction with prior Commission meetings and during rulemaking and legislation related to nonresident limits and outfitter set-aside tag limits.

December 1 Tag Sales

Michael Pearson, Chief, Administration, provided an overview of the current process, and possible alternatives to the sale with their pros and cons.

As a convenience for Idaho hunters and anglers, the Department has traditionally sold future license year items starting on December 1 of each year for both residents and nonresidents. This date is not mentioned in rule or statute but is advertised to the public in Commission proclamation.

Sales on this date have become brisk over the past few years as nonresident interest in Idaho deer and elk tags have increased, most notably for capped zone tags. When the Commission approved limits on nonresident deer and elk tags by unit/zone for 2021, December 1 sales dramatically increased from selling out capped zones on that date to all tags being in high demand.

Nonresident Sales for the past three years are as follows:

	Revenue	Transactions	Items sold	Customers
Dec 1, 2020	\$9.3M	16,126	51,241	22,600
Dec 1, 2021	\$13.0M	28,447	85,000	65,000
Dec 1, 2022	\$14.8M	34,204	95,447	67,000

Breakdown by sales channel:

	Internet	Vendors	IDFG offices	Telesales
Dec 1, 2020	14,251 (88%)	1,001 (6%)	407 (3%)	467 (3%)
Dec 1, 2021	24,777 (87%)	2,205 (8%)	813 (3%)	652 (2%)
Dec 1, 2022	26,219 (77%)	5,053 (15%)	1,317 (4%)	1,615 (4%)

To meet the high demand and prevent the licensing system from crashing, a “waiting room” is used to stage internet customers and put them into a line prior to entering the sales website. Inflow of customers from this line is monitored and adjusted to ensure system performance.

With so many customers, many nonresidents have opted to not purchase online but instead physically travel to an Idaho vendor and purchase in person. The benefits of in person purchase is there is no “waiting room” like online, and it is easier to buy items for others in the customer’s hunting party. For the most recent sale, in person purchases have increased almost fivefold over 2020.

The nonresident sale in 2022 resulted in almost every available over-the-counter deer and elk sold out on December 1st for the 2023 license year.

Directors Report

Director Schriever provided a brief overview of items listed in Director’s report in the commission agenda packet.

Commissioner Reports

Commissioner reports stand as written (Appendix 56, Exhibit 11).

MISCELLANEOUS

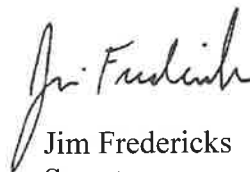
Planning for Next Meeting

The next meeting is the first legislative conference call scheduled for February 2.

Adjourn



Tim Murphy
Chairman



Jim Fredericks
Secretary