Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Coeur d' Alene Regional Office
July 26-27, 2023
Coeur d' Alene, Idaho

July 26

MISCELLANEOUS

Commission Field Tour Garfield Bay, Lee's Point and Clark Fork Delta Restoration work

Commissioners Dave Bobbitt, Don Ebert, Tim Murphy, Greg Cameron, Jordan Cheirrett, Derick Attebury, and Ron Davies participated on the tour.

Public Meeting

Chairman Don Ebert called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. PDT and reviewed the rule of conduct for the hearing and reported that all public comments would be reviewed by the Commission at the Thursday business meeting.

Commissioners Bobbitt, Ebert, Murphy, Cameron, Cheirrett, Attebury and Davies were present.

The following individuals provided in person testimony:
Calvin Nolan, Darcy Lamers, Chad Landrum, and Mike Schlegel.

July 27

MISCELLANEOUS

AGENDA CHANGES

Chairman Ebert noted that an updated goldsheet for agenda item 5. I. was added to the agenda and posted. A motion is necessary for this additional item.

23-49 Commissioner Bobbitt moved, and Commissioner Davies seconded a motion that the Commission amend the agenda as posted by staff prior to the start of the meeting. Motion carries.

Review of Public Comment

Director Fredericks provided a summary of the public comments. There were 10 members of the public in attendance with four people testifying.

Mike Schlegel from *Wild Sheep Foundation* appreciates the collaborative work with the Department for conservation of sheep relative to agenda item 5. E.

Darcy Lamers a local rancher from Boundary County commented on his support for the Departments oversight of grizzly bear depredations and conflict management in the community. He also urged the state to complete a conservation plan to demonstrate the Departments ability manage grizzly bears when they are delisted.

Calvin Nolan, Lake Ponderay Anglers Club, expressed concerns of inadvertent rainbow take in Lake Ponderay during walleye suppression efforts. His request was to be on the gill net boat during these efforts. Director Fredericks explained the Department's limited capacity to have the public on boats during these efforts and welcomed him to review the data collected.

Chad Landrum, an angler from Lake Ponderay, advocated for management of walleye on the lake. He spoke to the recreational and economic value of the walleye fishery and asked the Commission to reconsider the policy on walleye management.

There was one written comment from Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association regarding set-aside tags and outfitter allocation. They complimented staff on the presentation and information regarding outfitter allocation and changing the time of allocation to allow them to market those tags to clients by allocating them in July.

Consent Calendar

Financial Report

23-50 Commissioner Davies moved, and Commissioner Murphy seconded a motion to accept the items listed in the consent calendar. Motion carries.

Financial

FY25 Budget Approval

Jon Oswald, Financial Manager, presented the FY25 budget for approval (Appendix 56, Exhibit 37). The 2025 budget request package is due to the Governor's office on September 1, 2023. The Department is seeking approval to submit the request, though minor details are still in development. These minor details are expected to change the overall total by $3 million or less, or less than 2% of the total.

23-51 Commissioner Bobbitt moved, and Commissioner Attebury seconded a motion to approve the State Fiscal Year 2025 budget request as presented and allow the Department to modify the request as necessary for minor administrative items if they arise. Motion carries.

SEASON SETTING AND RULES

Sage-Grouse Season Setting

Michelle Kemner, Wildlife Staff Biologist, presented the final recommendations for the 2023 sage-grouse hunting seasons and bag limits, including bag and possession limits for take by falconry (Appendix 56, Exhibit 38). The sage-grouse tag system is designed to limit harvest to no more than a maximum of 10% of the estimated fall population in each of the 12 reporting zones. The Department used spring 2023 sage-grouse lek counts and other sage-grouse demographic data to estimate minimum fall populations for each reporting zone and then calculated proposed tag numbers for the 2023 season based on that estimate.

23-52 Commissioner Attebury moved, and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion that the Commission adopt staff recommendations for the 2023 sage-grouse hunting seasons and bag limits, including bag and possession limits for take by falconry. Motion carries.

Commission Challenge Grants

Deputy Director, Amber Worthington presented the Commission Challenge Grants. The Commission authorized a Commission Community Challenge Grant (Challenge Grant) composed of 7 regional grant ($10,000 each) and 1 statewide grant ($30,000) to provide partnership opportunity to implement projects broadly supported by the local/statewide sportsman community and enhance fish and wildlife habitat, populations, or associated recreational opportunities.

The application period was March 1, 2023 through April 22, 2023. Grant money is awarded for project expenditure during FY24: July 1, 2023 through June 1, 2024.

The Department received 31 Regional proposals and four statewide project proposals. Regional and statewide committees met in May and June to review the applications and make recommendations for funding.

Final recommendations presented to the Commission for approval and announcement:

Panhandle Region

- Selkirk Conservation Alliance
  - Amount recommended: $5,000
  - Brief description: Priest Lake tributaries water quality monitoring
- Idaho Trails Association
  - Amount recommended: $5,000
  - Brief description: Trail maintenance, clearing and restoration in Units 7 and 9

Clearwater Region

- Great Burn Conservation Alliance
  - Amount recommended: $10,000

- Brief description: Kelly Creek restoration - noxious weed control

Southwest Region

- Payette River Walk Alliance
  - Amount recommended: $7,000
  - Brief description: Provide additional river access, riparian plantings, and bat boxes

- Foundations for Wildlife Management
  - Amount recommended: $2,000
  - Brief description: Reimburse hunters and trappers for expenses related to wolf harvest in Game Management Units specified by IDFG.

- Snake River Quail Forever
  - Amount recommended: $1,000
  - Purchase clay launchers (2) and 12V deep cycle marine batteries (2) for launchers

Magic Valley Region

- Idaho Trappers Association
  - Amount recommended: $4,000
  - Brief description: Purchase education materials to use at trapper education events

- National Wild Turkey Federation
  - Amount recommended: $3,000
  - Brief description: Purchase tree watering boxes

- Trout Unlimited
  - Amount recommended: $3,000
  - Brief description: Hire a firm for fish passage design work on the Big Wood River

Southeast Region

- National Wild Turkey Federation
  - Amount recommended: $8,000
  - Brief description: Purchase tree watering boxes, stakes, and trees

- East Idaho Houndsman Association
  - Amount recommended: $2,000
  - Brief Description: Purchase hunting equipment and starter kits for youth

Upper Snake Region

- Eastern Idaho Houndsman Association
  - Amount recommended: $6,000

- Brief description: Purchase hunting equipment and starter kits for youth

- South Fremont Archery Team
  - Amount recommended: $4,000
  - Brief description: Purchase archery targets, equipment, and supplies

Salmon Region

- Salmon Valley Stewardship
  - Amount recommended: $10,000
  - Brief description: Conduct monarch-milkweed monitoring

Statewide Applications:

- Foundation for Wildlife Management
  - Amount recommended: $24,750
  - Brief description: Reimburse hunters and trappers for expenses related to wolf harvest in Game Management Units specified by IDFG.

- Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation
  - Amount recommended: $5,250
  - Brief description: Fund sample prep work and testing of serum samples from bighorn sheep (60 from California bighorn and 130 from Rocky Mountain bighorn) to determine prevalence of *Toxoplasma gondii* antibodies

23-53 Commissioner Davies moved, and Commissioner Bobbitt seconded a motion to approve recommendations of the regional and statewide review committees and permit staff to announce the outcome of the FY 2024 Commission Community Challenge Grant process. Motion carries.

Administrative Rules: Adoption of Proposed and Temporary Rules

Deputy Director, Amber Worthington presented Administrative Rules.

Background:
Consistent with Executive Order 20-01 for Zero-Based Regulation, the Commission is reviewing four chapters of IDAPA rules this year:

- **13.01.06** - Rules Governing Classification and Protection of Wildlife
- **13.01.11** - Rules Governing Fish
- **13.01.12** - Rules Governing Commercial Fishing
- **13.01.15** - Rules Governing the Use of Dogs

In addition to ZBR rulemaking, the Commission authorized rulemaking for one proposal originating from Commission-directed rulemaking:

- **13.01.08, Section 406** - Rules Governing Taking of Big Game Animals: Special Weapons Season - Muzzleloader

Following opportunity for negotiated rulemaking, staff prepared proposed rule language for the Commission's consideration for the four ZBR chapters and the individual rule proposal.

Staff also prepared a temporary rule regarding outfitter tag allocation set-aside to be effective upon adoption by the Commission. The changes to the temporary rule will remove the set-aside limit from rule and create a provision to allow the Commission to set the set-aside limit by proclamation. A proposed rule with the same language is up for the Commission's consideration also and upon approval will progress through the rulemaking process to be heard and approved by the legislature in Session 2024 with the other proposed rules shown above.

Idaho Code 36-104 grants authority to the Commission to set seasons and promulgate IDAPA rules. Idaho Code 67, Chapter 52 (Idaho Administrative Procedure Act) governs the process for considering, adopting, and implementing IDAPA rules. Idaho Code 67-5220 provides for negotiated rulemaking, and Idaho Code 67-5221 provides for adoption of proposed rules for additional public notice and comment.

23-54 Commissioner Murphy moved and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion for the Commission to adopt the temporary rule as presented, with the Governor's finding pursuant to Idaho Code Section 67-5226 that adoption of a temporary rule is appropriate to confer a benefit on Idaho citizens, and to adopt the proposed rules as presented, with the authority for the Department to make non-substantive edits in the proofreading process that do not alter the sense, meaning or effect of the rules. Motion carries.

Release of Bighorn Sheep Auction and Lottery Tags for Auction and Lottery

Hollie Miyasaki, Wildlife Staff Biologist presented staff recommendations to release bighorn sheep tags for auction and lottery.

Idaho Code 36-408(5)(a) dictates that one special bighorn sheep (BHS) tag shall be auctioned off by an incorporated nonprofit wildlife conservation organization selected by the Commission each year. The Commission is also authorized to issue one special BHS tag to be issued by lottery by the Department or a nonprofit wildlife conservation organization selected by the Commission (Idaho Code 36-408(5)(b)). At Commission direction, the Bureau of Wildlife staff developed guidelines for selection of organizations competing for opportunity to offer wildlife auction and lottery tags. When there are multiple bidders, Wildlife Bureau staff review and score all applications for the auction and lottery tags to assist in selecting which conservation groups receive these special wildlife tags to market through lottery or auction. Only two organizations have applied to offer the BHS auction tag and BHS lottery tags in recent years; *Wild Sheep Foundation* has been selected to receive the auction tag and the opportunity to market the lottery tag has been granted to the *Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation.*

Auction tag -- The auction tag sells for the highest price during odd-numbered years when the tag may be used in Hunt Area 11 in Hells Canyon. The auction tag sold for high values of

$320,000 in 2023, $310,000 in 2021, $180,000 in 2005 and $175,000 in 2019. The winning bid for the tag was $165,000 in 2020 and 2022 and $105,000 in 2018, when the tag could not be used in Hunt Area 11. Since 1988, the auction tag has generated $3,399,500 in gross proceeds for bighorn sheep research and management.

Proceeds received from the auction tag are currently used to identify causes for, and solutions to, disease in BHS. The funds may be used to match other funding sources resulting in a substantial multiplier effect. Auction tag sales proceeds have:

- Funded field investigations that led to the discovery of a bacterium that predisposes BHS to pneumonia. This allows tracking of transmission from domestic sheep to BHS and among BHS populations and provides a target for developing treatments or management strategies for diseased populations. This information can also be used to match population health profiles for translocations.
- Provided funding to collect the data now used nationally by federal land management agencies as the basis of a model to quantitatively assess risk of contact between BHS and domestic sheep to make informed decisions about managing grazing allotments.
- Funded development and implementation of population monitoring protocols. This includes ground composition surveys using radio-collared animals and model development to correct for visibility bias in helicopter surveys. This allows managers to better estimate BHS numbers and population trend for season-setting and other management actions.
- Provided funding for the *Movi*-free farm flock project. This project involves working with small domestic sheep and goat producers to clear *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (aka *Movi*) from their domestic sheep and goats. *Movi* plays an important role in pneumonia related die-offs of BHS.
- Enabled research and testing of BHS throughout Hells Canyon with targeted removals that helped clear *Movi* from Idaho's Hells Canyon PMU for the first time in over two decades. This population is now healthy and increasing.
- Provided funding for the statewide BHS action plan including the purchase of radio collars, flights, and capture costs.

Lottery tag -- The lottery tag generated $315,870 in 2022, $184,420 in 2020 and $91,191 in 2018 when the tag was valid in Hunt Area 11. During odd-numbered years when the tag was not valid in Hunt Area 11, lottery proceeds were $172,993 in 2021 and $107,093 in 2019. The lottery drawing will be held on the last Friday in July and is scheduled for July 28, 2023. Since 1992, the sale of tickets for the lottery tag drawing has generated $2,103,355 in net proceeds.

Lottery-generated funds are used to support the Department's Wildlife Health and Forensic Lab program, including:

- Disease testing and health assessments for all live BHS that Department staff handle and cause of death determination for all BHS found dead.

- Collection and archiving of statewide BHS disease and health data, including data analysis, interpretation, and support for research and management activities.

- Veterinary and health support for capture operations throughout the state, including creation of capture kits for disease sampling and health assessments.

- Support of collaborative efforts between the Department, research universities, and other entities like the USGS Wildlife Health Center to work on BHS-specific disease issues.

- BHS DNA collection and cataloging of hunter harvest and health assessment samples for population genetics and forensics casework. This has included assisting management and research efforts in providing genetic protocols, procedures, and cataloged genetic samples to research institutions for population level genetic analysis on Idaho's core native BHS herds.

- Funding to support staff to manage the Wildlife Health Forensic Laboratory, as well as collaborative and multi-jurisdictional, inter-agency efforts that involve BHS in Idaho. These efforts have included the Governor's BHS task force, as well as working with our partners at ISDA and other groups throughout Idaho.

23-55 Commissioner Attebury moved, and Commissioner Davies seconded a motion that the Commission award the 2024 bighorn sheep auction tag to the *Wild Sheep Foundation* and the 2024 bighorn sheep lottery tag to the *Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation*. Motion carries.

Discount Order for Bighorn Sheep Lottery Tag Application

Hollie Miyasaki, Wildlife Staff Biologist, presented.

Idaho Code Section 36-408(5)(b) authorizes the Commission to issue one (1) special bighorn sheep tag each year, with the tag to be issued by the Department to an eligible person as determined by lottery drawing. Under Section 36-408 the bighorn sheep "lottery tag" may be marketed by the Department or a nonprofit organization dedicated to wildlife conservation selected by the Commission.

Commission rule, IDAPA 13.01.04.800, clarifies that "tickets" for the bighorn sheep lottery tag are nontransferable controlled hunt applications. Agreements with the nonprofit organization selected for marketing the Bighorn Sheep Lottery Tag have identified discounted prices, including additional discounts for multiple purchases. The published brochures (season proclamation and summary of rules) for Moose/Bighorn Sheep/Mountain Goat have reflected these agreed-upon prices. The Commission has determined that a discount order pursuant to its authority under Idaho Code Section 36-415, is an appropriate procedural mechanism for memorializing the ticket/application prices for the Bighorn Sheep Lottery Tag.

Fees for all "Bighorn Sheep Lottery Tag" Special Controlled Hunt Applications for the July 2024 drawings are proposed to be consistent with those in the 2023 drawing as follows:

One (1) Ticket/Application - $20.00
Six (6) Tickets/Applications - $100.00

Fourteen (14) Tickets/Applications - $166.75
Twenty-Five (25) Tickets/Applications - $250.00

23-56 Commissioner Davies moved, and Commissioner Cheirrett seconded a motion that the Commission adopt discounted fees for all "Bighorn Sheep Lottery Tag" Special Controlled Hunt applications for the July 2024 drawing. Motion carries.

Outfitter Set Aside, Outfitter Initial Tag Use Numbers, and 2024 Non-resident General Season Tags

Rick Ward, State Wildlife Manager, presented the Outfitter Set Aside, Outfitter Initial Tag use numbers, and the 2024 non-resident general season tags (Appendix 56, Exhibit 39).

The number of deer tags and elk A/B tags set aside on a statewide basis for sale to persons that have entered into an agreement to use the services of a licensed outfitter are established by Commission proclamation (IDAPA 13.01.04.500 - pending temporary rule adoption under agenda item 5D). Outfitter set-aside tags come out of the total statewide nonresident deer and elk tag quotas (15,500 total deer tags and 12,815 elk tags).

Initial Tag Use Number is defined in IDAPA 13.01.04.506 as the higher tag use number of the Two-Year Verified Outfitter Use History for 2021-2022. The Initial Tag Use Number will form the base outfitter allocation for each general deer unit and uncapped elk A/B zone beginning with the 2024 hunting season and will remain the same for the zone, unit, or hunt area for subsequent consecutive years in which nonresident tag limits apply. In subsequent years, additional tags will be allocated for outfitted hunters in units/zones where the higher tag number from the Two-Year Verified Outfitter Use History exceeds the Initial Tag Use Number for the hunt area, subject to a maximum of fifty percent (50%) of the remaining nonresident tag limit.

Total nonresident limits for each general deer unit and uncapped elk A/B zone were set in August 2022. The number of deer/elk tags allocated by the Commission by unit/zone will be deducted from the corresponding total limit on non-resident participation, and the remaining number will be available for sale as non-allocated (over the counter) 2024 general hunt tags to non-residents beginning December 1, 2023.

23-57 Commissioner Attebury moved, and Commissioner Bobbitt seconded a motion that the Commission set aside 2,939 general elk tags and 1,732 general season deer tags from the 2024 statewide nonresident limits for sale to persons that have entered into an agreement to use the services of a licensed outfitter. Motion carries.

23-58 Commissioner Attebury moved, and Commissioner Bobbitt seconded a motion that the Commission adopt staff recommendations for Initial Tag Use Numbers for outfitter tag allocation and 2024 elk tag limits for nonresidents for elk zones that are unlimited for residents, as provided in Tables 1 and 2 of the handout. Motion carries.

23-59 Commissioner Attebury moved, and Commissioner Bobbitt seconded a motion that the Commission adopt staff recommendations for Initial Tag Use Numbers for outfitter tag allocation

and 2024 deer tag limits for nonresidents for general deer units, as provided in Tables 3 and 4 of the handout. Motion carries.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Big Game Movements and Migration Action Plan Version 5

Frank Edelmann, Technical Services Bureau Chief, presented (Appendix 56, 40) the Big Game Movements and Migration Action Plan Version 5. The *Action Plan* is intended to prioritize and guide efforts by the Department and its partners in conserving and managing big game winter ranges and migration routes within five priority areas across Idaho. Major issues that could affect big game winter ranges and migrations are identified, and overarching direction for conserving these habitats is provided.

The Department solicited input on the draft *Action Plan* from the public, interested groups, and other agencies. The draft *Action Plan* was posted on the Department's website from April 3 to April 24, 2023. The Department received responses from 57 unique respondents with 81% (n=46) providing written comments. All respondents indicated Idaho residency. Fifty-four respondents (95%) indicated a level of support for the draft *Action Plan*, one respondent was not supportive, and two did not respond.

23-60 Commissioner Bobbitt moved, and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion that the Commission adopt the 2023 Idaho Action Plan (V5.0) – Improving Big Game Winter Range and Migration Routes as presented by staff. Motion carries.

LANDS

Kidd Land Exchange

Casey Pozzanghera, Natural Resource Program Coordinator-Lands and Mitigation presented information on the Kidd Property land exchange in the Southeast Region (Appendix 56, 41). The Montpelier WMA Kidd Land Exchange would approve the Department to exchange 1.8 acres of encroached upon land located on the south side of the WMA for a nearby 1.4-acre parcel located on the southwest boundary of the WMA. The 1.8-acre parcel was built upon by the neighboring landowner (Kidd). The transfer would transfer ownership to the Kidd family allowing them to keep their home and shop in its current location and would give the Department 1.4 acres that is adjacent to the WMA and of equal or greater habitat value.

23-61 Commissioner Cheirrett moved, and Commissioner Davies seconded a motion to approve the Montpelier WMA – Kidd land exchange. Motion carries.

Commission Direction for Wolf Depredation Control Board Funds FY24 Amended

Tricia Hebdon, Assistant Wildlife Bureau Chief, presented.

Idaho Code Title 22, Chapter 53 identifies the responsibilities of the Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board, related responsibilities of the Commission, and funding for the administration of

wolf depredation control. To maintain eligibility for Idaho's receipt of federal excise tax funds for wildlife conservation, fish management and restoration, and public shooting ranges (such as the Pittman-Robertson Act excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and hunting equipment), the Commission must maintain control of its license funds. Idaho Code 22-5306 maintains this control by authorizing the Commission to direct the Board's use of the Departments funds and requiring the Board to comply with Commission direction for funding wolf depredation control activities.

Idaho Code 22-5306 directs the annual transfer of $300,000 of Department license funds to the Board for response to, and control of, wolf depredations. The Board also receives an appropriation from the state general fund ($392,000 in FY23) and from assessments collected by the state livestock brand inspector and the Idaho Sheep and Goat Health Board. If the Department license funds are not fully expended in a calendar year, those funds grow and accumulate in the subaccount. At present, the Department subaccount excess funds are more than $100,000.

Previous Commission direction has been to use these funds to prioritize management and control of wolves where ungulate management objectives are not being achieved and in chronic livestock depredation areas.

23-62 Commissioner Attebury moved and Commissioner Cameron seconded a motion that the Commission adopt the staff recommendation to direct the Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board to expend $100,000 of unused Department funds held in the Wolf Depredation Control Board fish and game subaccount on the management and control of wolves for the protection of ungulates in management units/zones with predation management plans or where management objectives are not otherwise being achieved and in units where wolf depredations on livestock or other domestic animals are chronic. Motion carries.

REPORTS

Fall Chinook and Coho Forecasts Spring/Summer Chinook Season Updates

John Cassinelli, Anadromous Fisheries Program Manager, provided an update about the Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon fisheries and outlook for fall salmon and steelhead seasons (Appendix 56, 42).

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Release Draft White Sturgeon Management Plan for Public Review and Input

Joe Kozfkay, State Fisheries Manager presented the draft White sturgeon management plan (Appendix 56, 43). This plan is an update to the 2008 Snake River White Sturgeon Management Plan. The updated plan utilizes current information to guide and prioritize the efforts of the Department and partners in implementing conservation and management efforts for White Sturgeon found within the Snake River, Idaho. In addition, the plan describes major factors affecting Snake River White Sturgeon. This plan will guide the Department in annual work plan

development, program prioritization, and development of regulatory recommendations. This plan does not include Kootenai River White Sturgeon which are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act and managed under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Plan for the Kootenai River Distinct Population Segment of White Sturgeon.

Once the management plan is approved for release the Department will seek further input from the public, interested groups, and affected agencies. This input will be sought during August 2023 and a final plan will be developed with consideration of input. Staff will revise the draft based on input received with the intent to complete a final plan to present to the Commission for approval and adoption in November 2023.

Staff seeks Commission concurrence to release the Draft White Sturgeon Management Plan for public review and input.

Commission concurrence is to release the Draft White Sturgeon Management plan for public review and input.

Release Draft Mountain Lion Plan for Public Review and Input

Katie Oelrich, Wildlife Staff Biologist presented the drafted revision to the Idaho Mountain Lion Management Plan (Appendix 56, 44). The updated plan will set direction for mountain lion management activities through 2029. This management plan provides needed updates to current information and identifies major issues affecting mountain lion management. This plan will guide the Department in annual work plan development and program prioritization and provide guidance on the development of regulatory recommendations.

Once the management plan is approved for release the Department will seek further input from the public, interested groups, and affected agencies. This input will be sought during August and September 2023 and a final plan will be developed with consideration of input. Staff will revise the draft based on input received with the intent to complete a final plan to present to the Commission for approval and adoption at a future meeting.

Staff seeks Commission concurrence to release the Draft Mountain Lion Management Plan for public review and input.

Commission concurrence is to release the Draft Mountain Lion Management plan for public review and input.

Update on Mountain Goat Mandatory Sex Identification Training and Testing

Hollie Miyasaki, Wildlife Staff Biologist presented the Mandatory Sex Identification Training and testing for Mountain Goats that was implemented in June 2023 (Appendix 56, 45). The Department implemented the training and testing with a goal of reducing the number of adult females taken in the harvest. The sex identification course includes educational materials to teach hunters about mountain goats and the best ways to identify the differences between male and

female mountain goats. The test is split into two parts; both must be passed with a minimum score of 80%. There is no limit on how many times a person may take the test to pass.

This year there are 41 tag holders. At this time 36 have passed the test, one test is currently in process and four have not started. Tags will not be mailed until the individual has passed the test.

Antlerless Harvest Management

Ryan Walrath, Southwest Region Wildlife Manager, presented the Department's Antlerless Harvest Management (Appendix 56, 46).

The Department manages deer and elk populations across Idaho to provide abundant and sustainable public hunting opportunities. Antlerless harvest is a management tool employed for many different reasons, including increasing population performance in areas where habitat is limited or increasing hunter opportunity in high performing herds. In other cases, it may be used to reduce populations for disease management purposes or in response to agriculture depredation issues.

Grays Meadow Habitat Restoration Project

David Leptich, Regional Wildlife Biologist, presented information on the Department's efforts to enhance wetland habitat at Gray's Meadow, its history, progress, and current issues.

The 1,025 acre Gray's Meadow segment of the Coeur d'Alene River WMA (originally called Black Lake Ranch) was purchased by IDFG in 2017 with the intent of remediating (i.e., clean up) and restoring wetland habitat on the property. The Gray's Meadow restoration site was historically a 700+ acre floodplain wetland. Over the last 140 years it has been highly modified by mine waste contamination, ditching and draining, agricultural conversion, flood plain isolation, and the hydrology altered by hydroelectric development. Ecological restoration of contaminated sites under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (aka CERCLA or Superfund) and other programs is typically conducted as a two-part process wherein remediation precedes ecological restoration. Although there may be some coordination of efforts, remediation and restoration are planned and executed largely independently. The Department trialed a new approach at Gray's Meadow and created a "unified design team". That team includes professionals with a broad range of expertise from both the remediation and restoration disciplines. This group collaboratively developed both conceptual designs and fully integrated and engineered remedial/restoration plans to clean-up contaminants and restore ecological integrity to the Gray's Meadow site. The group is currently in the process of implementing those plans as a single project.

REPORTS

CWD Update

Tricia Hebdon, Assistant Wildlife Bureau Chief, provided an update on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD).

CWD was first detected in the state in Unit 14 in late 2021. The Commission designated a temporary CWD management zone as Units 14 and 15 and Department staff increased CWD surveillance efforts in the area. A CWD Surveillance Area was identified as all of Units 14 and 15 and portions of Units 11A, 13, 18, and 23. Emergency CWD surveillance hunts were employed in those units in December 2021 to collect additional CWD samples. In total, five deer and one elk tested positive for CWD during the 2021-2022 sampling season, all in Unit 14.

At their 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. Samples collected from hunter-harvested deer and elk and deer and elk found dead in Unit 14 resulted in 15 deer testing positive for CWD over the course of the 2022 hunting season. No elk tested positive in 2022. All positive samples were within approximately six miles of lower Slate Creek in Unit 14.

With Commission direction, and in accordance with the *Idaho Department of Fish and Game 2021 Strategy for Chronic Wasting Disease*, Department staff collaborated with USDA Wildlife Services to implement a control action in the Slate Creek drainage and adjoining drainages beginning on February 13, 2023. The goal of this action was to reduce deer density in and around what the evidence to date suggests is the CWD focal area, thereby reducing the risk of spread. Operations concluded on March 30, 2023. In total, 555 animals were removed and 27 tested positive for CWD.

At their March 2023 meeting, the Commission adopted modest changes to the 2023 and 2024 hunting seasons in Unit 14 by splitting controlled mule deer and controlled white-tailed deer seasons into two seasons each. The mandatory check requirement for all deer, elk, and moose harvested in Units 14 and 15 remains in effect for the 2023 and 2024 hunting seasons.

For the CWD sampling period July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, Department staff collected and tested the following CWD samples:

Species	Number of Samples Collected
Mule Deer – Statewide	1,473
Mule Deer – CWD Management Zone	426
White-tailed Deer - Statewide	1,643
White-tailed Deer - CWD Management Zone	1,089
Elk - Statewide	615
Elk - CWD Management Zone	267

In total, 37 white-tailed deer and 6 mule deer tested positive for CWD during this sampling period. All CWD-positive deer were harvested by hunters during the regular hunting season or taken during the control action, except for one white-tailed deer that was found dead. All positives were in Unit 14 and within or adjacent to the Slate Creek drainage.

Antler Pickup Seasons

Rick Ward, State Wildlife Manager, presented on season restriction on the possession and transport of shed antlers or horns. The popularity of shed antler gathering has been growing among western states. An increasing number of western states have established seasons to regulate shed antler gathering, including Colorado, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming. When states implement season closures on antler pickup, there is evidence that at least some antler gatherers from those states move to adjacent states where there are no closures, compounding issues in those states.

During the 2023 legislative session, the Idaho Legislature approved SB 1143 (Idaho Code § 36-507), which allows the Commission to establish seasonal restrictions on the possession and transport of shed antlers or horns from deer, elk, moose, and pronghorn and antlers or horns from deer, elk, moose, bighorn sheep, and pronghorn that have died from natural causes. The Commission may restrict the acts of searching for, locating, or gathering antlers or horns under this statute.

With Commission consent, staff will develop and scope options for seasonal restrictions and present scoping results and recommendations to the Commission in November 2023.

Commission concurrence is to have staff develop and scope options for seasonal restrictions and present scoping results and recommendations at the November Commission meeting 2023.

Director's Report

Director Fredericks highlighted items from each bureau in the Director's report.

Commissioner Reports

Commissioner reports stand as written (Appendix 56, Exhibit 47).

MISCELLANEOUS

Planning for Next Meeting

The next meeting is November 15-16 in Lewiston.

Executive Session I. C. 74-206 (1) (c) (f)

23-63 Commissioner Bobbitt moved, and Commissioner Attebury seconded a motion that the Commission enter executive session under Idaho Code 74-206 subsections (1) (c) (f).
Roll Call Vote:

Staff presented information on potential land acquisition. Legal counsel discussed litigation matters.

23-64 Commissioner Bobbitt moved, and Commissioner Attebury seconded a motion that the Commission come out of executive session with the record to reflect no final action was taken.

Litigation Positions

Big Creek 4

23-65 Commissioner Attebury made a motion and Commissioner Davies seconded that, subject to additional direction by the Governor's Office, our legal counsel seek intervention as a defendant in the recently filed litigation challenging the status of the Big Creek 4 airstrips [Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness], on behalf of the Commission as a party or as a supportive agency should intervention be sought by the state of Idaho. Motion carries.

Grizzly Bear Delisting Petition

23-66 Commissioner Cheirrett made a motion and Commissioner Cameron seconded that, subject to additional direction by the Governor's Office, our legal counsel act to support litigation to challenge the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's denial of the State of Idaho's petition to delist grizzly bears in the lower-48 states, either on behalf of the Commission as a party or as a supportive agency should suit be brought by the state of Idaho or the office of the Governor. Motion carries.

Adjourn

Don Ebert
Chairman

Jim Fredericks
Secretary