

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
May 18-19, 2022
McCall, Idaho**

May 18

MISCELLANEOUS

Commission Field Tour Pavette Lake

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

Public Hearing

Chairman Cameron 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: Frank Schwartz, Phil Davis, Pete Fitzsimmons, Annie Wright, Michael Liao, Cindy Su, Sasha Truax, Suzanne Stone, Justin Webb, Scott Nicholson, Mike Schlegel, Dr. Karen Balch, Christine Gertschen, and Trevor Walsh. Written comment from Eric Clewis, Defenders of Wildlife.

May 19

MISCELLANEOUS

Review of Public Comment

Director Schriever and Commissioners discussed and reviewed the public comments.

Comments included:

- Hunt structure in Unit 13 relative to bear, deer, elk and cougar and timing of seasons. Recent changes with not being able to harvest a white-tail deer with a regular deer tag. The next season setting is in March 2023 and staff will look at this.
- Positive comments from Mike Schegel representing Idaho Wildlife Sheep Foundation.
- Compliments on Bear Management in the Cambridge/ Weiser area.
- 54 form letters received asking the Commission to recommend that WDCB funds are directed to non-lethal conflict reduction tools and techniques that reduce livestock losses to wolves and maintain stable wolf populations.
- Concern that the wolf population estimates are not correct because of the cameras motion.
- Concern that wolf harvest is unregulated.
- Cost of Wildlife Services, it is important to look at annual cost.

- Comments from students at Timberline High School on wolf management.

Consent Calendar

Consent calendar items (Minutes January 26-27 and February 3, 2022) were adopted without objection.

FISCAL

FY23 Shooting Range Grant Funding Recommendations / Destination Shooting Range Update

Adam Park, Chief, Communications, presented.

Background: The Range Grant Citizen Advisory Committee received applications from 23 shooting ranges throughout Idaho for consideration in the FY2023 grant cycle.

The Pittman-Robertson (PR) funding available for FY23 is \$455,000. Fines and forfeiture funding for FY23 is estimated to be approximately \$40,000, making the total estimated funds available for FY23 approximately \$495,000. Up to \$120,000 can be collected in the fine and forfeiture funds for range grants.

The committee recommended funding for 14 of the 23 ranges that applied for grants, for a total of \$476,757.21. Table 1 (Appendix 55, Exhibit 13) is the Director's full list of recommendations to the Commission for the FY23 Range Grant cycle.

As you will see, the recommended projects come from across Idaho, with six regions receiving at least one recommendation. The recommendations from IDFG staff evaluation of the range grant applications were generally similar to the Committee's recommendations. The Committee provided valuable perspective and expertise throughout the recommendation process.

Mr. Park provided a brief update to the Commission on a potential "destination" shooting range that is under consideration. The range would be a premier range in a location that currently does not have a range. Some of the features for the range are a rifle range with multiple distances, archery, long distance range and R.V. capabilities for competition events. Staff will continue to update the Commission, work with regional staff and potential funding partners.

22-31 Commissioner Ebert moved and Commissioner Murphy seconded a motion to approve the Director's Range Grant Funding Recommendations in Table 1 (see Exhibit 13) and the Director retains discretion for assigning the grant funding source. I also move that the Commission thank the Range Grant Citizen Advisory Committee for their valuable assistance to the Director for the approved recommendations. Motion carries.

Commission Direction for the Wolf Depredation Control Board Funds

Tricia Hebdon, Asst. Wildlife Chief, presented.

The Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board is responsible for administering the wolf control fund established in Idaho Code 22-5305. Legislation created the Board in 2014, largely in response to the loss of federal funding for wolf depredation control. The Board does not have management authority for wolves, but is responsible for allocating funding of wolf depredation control actions authorized by the Fish and Game Commission and Department. The Commission and Department maintain authority for management and control of wolves.

Idaho Code 22-5306 directs the annual transfer of \$300,000 of fish and game license funds to the Wolf Depredation Control Board for response to, and control of, wolf depredations. The Board also receives an appropriation from the state general fund (\$392,000 for FY23) and from assessments collected by the state livestock brand inspector and the Idaho sheep and goat health board.

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.

Staff recommends directing the expenditure of up to \$300,000 of fish and game funds for 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.

Expenditure of fish and game funds would include up to \$100,000 for Department-directed control and related actions for the protection of ungulates in units/zones with predation management plans or where management objectives for ungulates are not otherwise being achieved. Expenditure of fish and game funds would also include providing up to \$200,000 via Department cooperative agreement for nonprofit organization reimbursement of hunters and trappers for expenses incurred during the harvest of wolves in units/zones with predation management plans or where management objectives for ungulates are not otherwise being achieved, and in units where wolf depredations on livestock or other domestic animals are chronic.

22-32 Commission Bobbitt moved and Commissioner Ebert seconded a motion that the Commission adopt staff recommendation for direction to the Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board to expend up to \$300,000 in management units/zones for the protection of ungulates and to address chronic livestock depredation. Motion carries.

Commission Direction for Animal Damage Control Board Funds

Tricia Hebdon presented.

Idaho law directs the annual transfer of \$100,000 of Department funds to the State Animal Damage Control Board for control of predatory animals and birds. Idaho law authorizes the Commission to direct how these funds are to be used.

Typically, the Commission has directed \$50,000 to support USDA Wildlife Services activities identified in the 2006 MOU between the Department and the Animal Damage Control Board for general control of predatory animals.

The Commission has typically directed the remaining \$50,000 for specific wildlife management activities, such as intensive coyote removal in conjunction with the Mule Deer Initiative, feral hog control in the Bruneau Valley, or activities under Idaho's American White Pelican Management Plan.

Idaho Code 36-112 directs the annual transfer of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) from the fish and game fund to the animal damage control fund. 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 36-112 maintains this control by requiring the Animal Damage Control Board to follow Commission direction for funding depredation control activities using these funds.

Staff recommends directing the expenditure of \$50,000 for general predatory wildlife control consistent with the Animal Damage Control Board MOU. Staff further recommends the remaining \$50,000 be divided, with \$25,000 for Department-authorized depredation control of black bears, mountain lions, and wolves, and \$25,000 for Department-directed activities implementing Idaho's American White Pelican Management Plan.

22-33 Commissioner Attebury moved and Commissioner Murphy seconded a motion that they adopt staff recommendation to direct \$50,000 for general predatory wildlife control consistent with the Animal Damage Control Board MOU; \$25,000 for Department-authorized depredation control of black bears, mountain lions, and wolves; and \$25,000 for Department-directed activities implementing Idaho's American White Pelican Management Plan. Motion carries.

MANAGEMENT PLANS

Bighorn Sheep Plan for Commission Adoption

Hollie Miyasaki, Staff Biologist, presented.

The intent of the revision to the Bighorn Sheep Management Plan is to provide guidance for the Department and their partners to implement management actions that will aid in protection and management of bighorn sheep populations in Idaho and guide harvest season recommendations. This plan will provide guidance for annual action plans for bighorn sheep management in Idaho. Major issues that could affect bighorn sheep are identified, as well as overall direction for bighorn sheep management during the next 6 years (2022-2027). This plan will guide the Department in annual work plan development and program prioritization and will provide guidance on development of regulatory recommendations.

Consistent with the Commission's direction at its January 2022 meeting, the Department solicited input on the draft Bighorn Sheep Management Plan from the public, interested groups, tribes, and other state and federal agencies. The draft Bighorn Sheep Management Plan was posted on the Department's website on February 3, 2022 and the Department accepted comments on the website through February 25, 2022 (23 days).

Public input summary:

- 81 unique submissions with 74% (n=60) of people providing additional written comments.
- 84% (n=68) of the respondents identified themselves as Idaho residents.
- When asked to indicate their level of support for the plan:
 - 57% (n=46) of respondents generally supported the plan
 - 38% (n=31) of respondents supported the plan with some concerns
 - 5% (n=4) of respondents did not support the plan

Ms. Miyasaki, provided a summary of major changes and improvements made after the public comment period in preparing the final draft response in the input received (Appendix 55, Exhibit 14).

22-34 Commissioner Clezie moved and Commissioner Ebert seconded a motion to adopt the Idaho Bighorn Sheep Management Plan (2022-2027). Motion carries.

Furbearer Plan for Commission Adoption

Cory Mosby, Staff Biologist, presented. The intent of the revision to the Furbearer Management Plan is to provide guidance for the Department and their partners to implement management actions that will aid in protection and management of furbearer populations in Idaho and guide harvest season recommendations.

This plan provides updated guidance and identifies priorities for the management and conservation of this suite of species over the next 6 years. Consistent with the Commission's direction at its March 2022 meeting, the Department solicited input on the draft Furbearer Management Plan.

Public input summary:

- 59 unique submissions with 39 written comments.
- 93% of respondents were Idaho residents.
- When asked to indicate their satisfaction with the plan:
 - 58% (n=34) of respondents generally supported the plan
 - 34% (n=20) of respondents supported the plan with some concerns
 - 8% (n=5) of respondents did not support the plan

Upon review of comments, it was decided that no substantive changes to the draft plan were needed, and the final draft in consideration for adoption is unchanged from the draft presented during the March 2022 Commission meeting.

22-35 Commissioner Attebury moved and Commissioner Clezie seconded a motion that the Commission adopt the Idaho Furbearer Management Plan (2022-2027). Motion carries.

LANDS

Karnes Boat Ramp Acquisition

Sal Palazzolo, Wildlife Habitat Program Manager presented the Karnes and Strobel Marsh-Sawyer acquisitions.

This is an acquisition proposal for 0.93 acres in Washington County on the Snake River. The Karnes property already has an established concrete boat ramp with maintained county road access and parking. The landowner has allowed public access since the 1950s and hunters and anglers heavily use the area. This property will provide fishing access as well as hunting access for waterfowl/upland (islands). The acquisition will also include an access easement to the parcel across the remaining Karnes property.

This property was previously presented to the Commission during Executive Session in March 2021.

Acquisition cost of \$57,634 is provided by Sport Fish Restoration-Boating access and license funds.

Annual maintenance costs are estimated at \$1,000. Washington County is interested in partnering with the Department on maintenance.

FILT is estimated N/A as the acquisition is less than 10 acres.

22-36 Commissioner Davies moved and Commissioner Bobbitt seconded a motion that the Commission approve acquiring the 0.93 acre Karnes property. Motion carries.

Strobel Marsh-Sawyer Inholding Acquisition

This proposed acquisition of two parcels totals 4.75 acres of wetland habitat as edge/inholding properties on the Strobel Marsh segment of the Coeur d'Alene River WMA. Water level management of Strobel Marsh affects these two parcels. Although acquisition will expand the extent of publicly managed wetlands marginally, the real value in securing these properties is reducing future administrative burdens. The current owner is supportive of WMA operations and has allowed their land to be inundated by a handshake agreement. The parcels are on the market and future owners may be less supportive.

This property was previously presented to the Commission during Executive Session in November 2021.

Acquisition cost of \$4,000 is provided by HB 530 funds.

IDFG already manages the adjacent surrounding land so resources are already available and on-site to manage these small additions to the WMA. Annual maintenance costs are estimated at \$198.

FILT is estimated ~\$5.00 per year.

22-37 Commissioner Bobbitt moved and Commissioner Ebert seconded a motion that the Commission approve acquiring the 4.7 acre Sawyer property. Motion carries.

SEASON SETTING AND RULES

Rulemaking Update

Jim Fredericks, Deputy Director provided a summary of rulemaking the Commission has directed the Department to initiate.

- 13.01.04, Rules Governing Licensing (rule change to support outfitter tag allocation in general deer and elk hunts limited for non-residents only)
- 13.01.04, Rules Governing Licensing (rule change for exception from method of take restriction for big game hunting to allow attached electronic camera device for a sighted assistant to help a blind hunter line up on a target)

Governor's Zero Based Regulation Rulemaking

- The Commission provided direction to staff to initiate Negotiated Rulemaking for the second year of the effort on the following chapters: **13.01.02**-Rules Governing Mandatory Education and Mentored Hunting; **13.01.10**-Rules Governing the Importation, Possession, Release, Sale, or Salvage of Wildlife; **13.01.14**-Rules Governing Falconry; **13.01.18**-Rules Governing Feeding of Pronghorn, Elk, and Deer.

Staff will review the outcome of these negotiated rulemaking meetings and present the Commission with proposed rule recommendations at the July Quarterly meeting of the Commission.

REPORTS

Program Updates: Disabled Veteran Special Big Game Hunt, Special Needs Big Game Hunt, and Commission Challenge Grant

Deputy Director Fredericks provided program updates. The Fish and Game Commission is authorized to issue free permits or tags for specific programs and to prescribe by rule the manner and conditions for issuing such permits or tags.

Idaho Fish & Wildlife Foundation Report

Hilarie Engle, Foundation Development Coordinator, provided the update.

- In April the following officer election took place: Tad Johnson-Treasurer. The other officers remain in place: Mike Baldner-President, Jim Wrigley-Vice President, Bob Holman-Secretary and Mike Veile-Past President. Dan Deagle retired from the board at the April meeting.
- IFWF was awarded \$289,700 for Improving Big Game Migration across US-95 in the Panhandle Complex Priority Area (ID). The grant will improve habitat connectivity for big game species in north Idaho's Panhandle Complex Priority Area where a busy two-lane highway (US-95) transects the valley, impeding wildlife movement. Project will improve big game passage success rates across US-95 from an average of 162 to at least 500 crossings per year and reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions by repairing and extending 2.8 miles of wildlife funnel fencing along wildlife crossing infrastructure.

FISCAL

FY24 Budget Forecast and Change in Financial Report

Michael Pearson, Chief, Administration, provided an update on License Revenue, Operating Cash Balance, Resident License and Tag Sales and Non-resident and misc. License Tag Sales (Appendix 55, Exhibit 15) (format replacement for prior consent calendar format).

The Department has begun the planning process for preparation of the fiscal year 2024 budget request to be submitted to the Governor's Office by September 1st. Mr. Pearson updated the Commission on the current financial status of the Department and discussed revenue and expense expectations for the upcoming budget year.

The annual budget request is developed starting with the "base" amount of ongoing appropriation, which is then adjusted for routine cost increases (employee medical insurance, statewide costs allocated to IDFG, etc.).

The department then requests enhancements which can be ongoing or one-time for the upcoming year.

Current Timeline:

- May Commission meeting: Overview of Budget Development and initial estimates for revenue and general priorities
- May – July: Department staff compile and submit requests for additional appropriation to cover new projects with funding

- July Commission meeting: Discussion of budget request, including items for FY23 supplemental appropriation (if any) and FY24 line item enhancements. Request vote of Commission for budget request, with allowance for minor adjustments up to 10% of total.
- July - August: Refinement of budget estimates and supporting documentation
- September 1st, 2022: Deadline to submit request to Governor's office and Legislative Services Office.

SEASON SETTING AND RULES

Spring Chinook Run and Harvest Update

John Cassinelli, Anadromous Fisheries Manager, reviewed the Chinook Salmon season setting schedule and forecast (Appendix 55, Exhibit 16).

The current forecast is 90% of spring Chinook across Bonneville Dam and 65% across Lower Granite.

25-50% of summer Chinook across Bonneville and <5% across Lower Granite.

Mr. Cassinelli noted that the Commission will set summer Chinook seasons in June (estimating 75% of summer Chinook across Bonneville and 35% across Lower Granite).

REPORT

Research Overview on North Idaho Ungulate Monitoring Projects

Mark Hurley, Principal Wildlife Research Biologist, gave a presentation describing current Department efforts to increase our understanding of deer, elk, and moose populations in northern Idaho (Appendix 55, Exhibit 17).

For over 30 years the Department has primarily used helicopter-based aerial sightability surveys to estimate and monitor mule deer and elk populations across much of the state. Unpredictable and unsuitable winter weather patterns and heavily forested landscapes make aerial sightability surveys difficult and inefficient, and in some years impossible, in much of northern Idaho. Additionally, prior research and monitoring efforts in north Idaho have primarily focused on elk population abundance and dynamics, with less effort dedicated to the estimation and population dynamics of white-tailed deer and moose. New research and monitoring efforts are underway to: 1) continue development of new methods to estimate abundance of multiple species with remote camera arrays instead of helicopters; 2) better understand survival, cause-specific mortality, and movements of white-tailed deer and moose in north Idaho; and 3) predict and map seasonal movement patterns and habitat use of deer and elk in north Idaho. These projects are part of a larger overall effort to provide wildlife managers with information to predict outcomes of management actions in very complex systems with multiple predator and prey species.

MISCELLANEOUS

Election of Commission Chair and Vice Chair

22-38 Commissioner Attebury moved and Commissioner Bobbitt seconded a motion to nominate Tim Murphy for Chairman and Don Ebert as Vice Chairman. Motion carries.

REPORTS

Director's Report

Director Schriever referenced items from the Director's report in the Commission agenda book.

Presentations Awards

Director Schriever presented Idaho State Service awards to Chip Corsi, 43 of service and Scott Reinecker, 34 years of service. Both Mr. Corsi and Mr. Reinecker are retiring.

Commissioner Lane Clezie is finishing up his eight years as Commissioner for the Southeast Region.

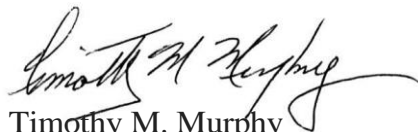
Commissioner Reports


Commissioner reports stand as written (Appendix 55, Exhibit 18).

Planning for Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for July 27-28 in Salmon Idaho. The gavel was passed to Tim Murphy, new Chairman of the Commission.

Adjourn


Timothy M. Murphy
Chairman


Ed Schriever
Secretary