

Meeting Date: January 28-29, 2009

Agenda Item No. 8

Agenda Item: Nongame Funding

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Jeff Gould, Wildlife Bureau Chief

Background:

Idaho Fish and Game has always managed nongame wildlife to some degree, but formal funding began when legislation established the state's first income tax check-off on the 1981 tax form. The check-off allowed state residents to make a voluntary contribution to nongame wildlife programs, but it was not enough by itself to support nongame management.

In 1992, the Legislature authorized the wildlife specialty vehicle license plates with most of the revenue earmarked for nongame programs (IC 49-417). The bluebird plate became available in 1993, followed by the elk plate in 1998 and the cutthroat plate in 2003. About 94,000 plates have been sold with about 255,000 renewals in the 16 years the program has been in place.

Annual revenue from wildlife specialty plates and tax check-off to *Conservation Sciences* over the past few years has been close to \$1 million. This revenue was used to support basic functions and was leveraged by an additional \$1.6 million in federal and private grants (FY08).

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Wildlife Tax Check-Off IC 63-3067A(3)(a); Wildlife Specialty License Plate IC 49-417(2); Nongame Trust Account IC 36-111(d); Maintain a balanced budget for Conservation Sciences and continue to develop alternative funding mechanisms to ensure that those who benefit pay.

Public Involvement Process:

Survey statistics indicate that Idahoans are increasingly supportive of nongame wildlife conservation and 'watchable wildlife.' Approximately half a million Idahoans participate in wildlife watching activities on an annual basis.

Staff Recommendation:

Information only

Justification:

None