

Idaho Fish and Game Commission Special Meeting - August 16, 2010

Upper Snake Regional Office, 4279 Commerce Circle, Idaho Falls, ID

Note: Times on the agenda are approximate and subject to change.

AUGUST 16

10:30 a.m. 1. Executive Session I.C. 67-2345(1) (f)(c)

11:30 A.M. — LUNCH

12:30 p.m. 2. Opening Comments — Wayne Wright, Commission Chairman

12:35 p.m. 3. Agenda Changes — Wayne Wright, Commission Chairman

12:40 p.m. 4. Consent Calendar (Action Requested by Department)

- a. Minutes
- b. [Budget Adjustment WGA DSS](#)

12:45 p.m. 5. [Season Setting: Migratory Game Birds](#) ; [Season Setting: Sage-grouse](#)
(Action Requested by Department) — Jeff Knetter, Upland Game &
Waterfowl Staff Biologist

1:00 p.m. 6. [Rules: Trapping](#) (Action Requested by Department) — Jon Rachael, State
Wildlife Manager

1:20 p.m. 7. Wolf Management Update

- a. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Strategy in Response to Relisting of
Wolves — Robin Thorson, Regional Director
- b. Status of IDFG 10(j) Proposal — Jim Unsworth, Deputy Director —
Jeff Gould, Chief, Wildlife
- c. Commission Direction (Action Requested by Department)

2:20 P.M. — BREAK

3:00 p.m. 8. [Communication Strategies](#) — Mike Keckler, Chief, Communications

3:15 p.m. 9. [Rule Clarification Wild Turkey IDAPA 13.01.09.100.a](#) (Action Requested
by Department) — Sharon Kiefer, Assistant Director, Policy

3:30 p.m. 10. [Legislative Update](#) — Sharon Kiefer, Assistant Director-Policy

3:40 p.m. 11. [Issue Bighorn Sheep Management Plan for Public Comment](#) — Hollie
Miyasaki, Regional Wildlife Biologist

4:00 p.m. 12. [Williams Stream Restoration Acquisition](#) (Action Requested by
Department) — Gregg Servheen, Wildlife Program Coordinator

4:10 p.m. 13. Season Setting: Modification of Fishery Boundaries for Fall Chinook
(Action Requested by Department) — Ed Schriever, Chief, Fisheries

4:20 p.m. 14. Executive Session I.C. 67-2345(1) (f)(c)

RECESS

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Meeting Date: August 16, 2010

Agenda Item No. 4.b.

Agenda Item: Consent Calendar, Budget Adjustment
WGA DSS

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Gregg Servheen, Gary Vecellio

Background:

These budget modifications are intended to receive spending authority for monies received from the Western Governors Association (WGA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) program.

In the WGA's 2008 report, Wildlife Corridors Initiative, it was recommended that each state create a Decision Support System (DSS). Each DSS would be used to compile information on fish and wildlife; assure data quality; and make the data, models and analyses available at scales useful for purposes of analyzing proposed energy, land use, and transportation projects as well as conservation actions and to make such info available via the internet. The Department participates with two interstate DSS pilot projects; the Columbia Plateau and the Idaho-Montana Divide. This budget provides FY11 spending authority; the Commission approved the FY10 spending authority in May.

The LCC program is designed as a management-science partnership used to inform integrated resource management actions across landscapes. LCC funding was provided to support the Department's efforts with the WGA DSS pilot projects .

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

Department spending authority and technical assistance.

Public Involvement Process:

Project will incorporate public involvement and a collaborative approach in developing the DSS.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends addition of the requested spending authority.

Justification:

These budget modifications will allow Department staff to begin development of a decision support system with funding provided by the WGA and USFWS LCC to benefit fish and wildfire habitat protection and IDFG technical assistance program.

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Agenda Item No. 5

Agenda Item: Season Setting - Migratory Game Birds **Bureau Chief Approval:** _____
(Action)

Prepared by: Jeffrey M. Knetter

Background:

Most of the waterfowl harvested in Idaho are produced in Canada. Habitat conditions in these breeding areas were characterized as average in 2010. The pond index increased 5% from 6.4 million in 2009 to 6.7 million in 2010. The estimated mallard abundance decreased 1% from 2009 levels to 8.4 million in 2010.

Policy Issues:

Idaho's waterfowl season is set within a framework established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on July 29, 2010 after meeting with all state fish and wildlife agencies. The 2010-11 frameworks for Idaho are 107 days for both ducks and dark geese between September 25, 2010 and January 30, 2011. The light goose framework extends to March 10.

Public Involvement Process:

A statewide press release was issued on these proposed seasons. Each region held an open house. The Idaho Chapter of Ducks Unlimited and the Idaho Waterfowl Association were sent these season proposals by e-mail and they forwarded them to their membership. A notice asking for input was posted on the Department's website.

Justification:

A process called Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) determines the general duck season framework. This process was adopted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1996 and is used to evaluate duck habitat and populations annually and select the optimal season framework for U.S. duck seasons. Special harvest strategies are used for some of the less common ducks. Goose seasons are determined by flyway management plans for each goose population. Spring goose pair counts are the key parameter for selecting Canada goose seasons. Data collected in 2010 show that breeding habitat conditions and populations are at levels that can support a 107-day season for all waterfowl, except scaup (86 days). The maximum hunting days and bags allowed by framework can be taken with no long-term impacts on Idaho's waterfowl resource. Opening the season one week earlier in northern and eastern Idaho allows more hunting opportunity in the generally higher and colder climates of northern and eastern Idaho.

The Federal framework for light geese (snow and Ross's) was expanded in 2008-09 to March 10 for interior states within the Pacific Flyway. Idaho implemented a season in 2010 and it was well received.

Action Requested:

Set the 2010-11 waterfowl seasons as recommended.

Staff Recommendation:

The Department's recommendation is to take the maximum allowed hunt days and bags allowed by federal framework. The proposed daily duck bag limit would be 7 ducks; but not more than 2 female mallards, 2 redheads, 3 scaup, 2 pintails, and 1 canvasback. A 107-day fall season is proposed for Canada and greater white-fronted geese with a 4-goose daily limit. A two-part season is proposed for snow and Ross's geese in the

Southwest, Magic Valley, and portions of the Southeast and Upper Snake regions, with a 10-goose daily limit.

- **Youth Hunt (Statewide)**
 - September 25-26
 - Licensed youth aged 15 and under

- **Ducks, Coots & Snipe**
 - Area 1: October 2 to January 14
 - Scaup: October 23 to January 14
 - Area 2: October 9 to January 21
 - Scaup: October 30 to January 2

- **Dark Geese (Canada & white-fronted)**
 - Area 1: October 2 to January 14
 - Area 2: October 9 to January 21

- **Light Geese (Blue, Ross's & Snow)**
 - Area 1: October 2 to January 14
 - Area 2: October 29 to January 21 and February 19 to March 10
 - Area 3: October 22 to January 14 and February 19 to March 10

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Agenda Item No. 5

Agenda Item: Season Setting – Sage-grouse

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

(Action)

Prepared by: Jeffrey M. Knetter

Background:

Sage grouse seasons are set in August to allow managers to evaluate lek data and determine whether West Nile Virus outbreaks or significant wildfire events are affecting any sage-grouse populations in Idaho.

Policy Issues:

In 2010, the Department will continue to use the sage-grouse season-setting protocol established in the 2006 Idaho Sage-grouse Plan. The Plan protocol calls for comparison of 1996-2000 lek count averages (the beginning of intensified surveys) to the most recent (2008-2010) three-year running averages, as well as minimum population and data criteria in determining season frameworks.

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

Public Involvement Process:

Sage grouse local working groups worked with wildlife managers to provide regional recommendations. A statewide press release was issued on these proposed seasons. Each region held an open house. A notice asking for input was posted on the Department's website.

Justification:

Many stakeholders were involved in creating the 2006 Idaho Sage-grouse Plan. Lek counts are the key parameter for selecting sage-grouse seasons. Data collected in 2010 indicated that the three-year average of males at leks were generally lower. Therefore, the Southwest, Magic Valley, Upper Snake, and Salmon Regions would fall in the restrictive season category; 7 days, 1-bird bag (09/18-09/24). The Curlew Grasslands and the Big Desert are in the standard season category; 23 days, 2-bird bag (09/18-10/10).

Action Requested:

Set the 2010 sage grouse seasons and bag limits as recommended.

Staff Recommendation:

The Department's recommendations are:

- Southwestern Owyhee County, 7-day season from September 18 through September 24, 1-bird daily bag limit and 2 in possession; **decrease to restrictive season.**
- Northwestern Owyhee County, seven-day season from September 18 through September 24, 1-bird daily bag limit and 2 in possession; **no change.**

- Eastern Owyhee County (area of Murphy Complex Fire); **closed – no change.**
- Magic Valley, 7-day season, from September 18 through September 24, 1-bird daily bag limit and 2 in possession; **no change.**
- Big Desert area west of Interstate 15 and south of highways 20 and 26, September 18 through September 24, 1-bird daily bag limit and 2 in possession; - **no change.**
- Curlew Grasslands in parts of Power, Oneida and Cassia counties, 7-day season, from September 18 through September 24, 1-bird daily bag limit and 2 in possession; **no change.**
- Southeastern part of the state, east of Interstate 15 and south of State Highway 26, **closed – no change.**
- Most of the Upper Snake Region, 7-day season from September 18 through September 24, 1-bird daily bag limit and 2 in possession; **decrease to restrictive season.**
- Lemhi and part of Custer counties, 7-day season from September 18 through September 24, 1-bird daily bag limit and 2 in possession; **no change.**
- Small populations in Gem, Adams, Washington, Ada and part of Elmore counties continue to be closed; **no change.**
- Western Twin Falls County; **decrease to closed.**

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Agenda Item No. 6

Agenda Item: Rules: Proposed Changes to the Trapping of Predatory and Unprotected Wildlife and the Taking of Furbearing Animals **(Action)**

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Jon Rachael and Craig White

Background:

The Department has received input from the Commission, public in general, and some trappers that trap placement along roads and trails and at trailheads, campgrounds, and picnic areas are raising public, livestock, and pet safety concerns. Prior to the Commission meeting in July, we worked with the Idaho Trappers Association (ITA) and the Upper Snake River Trappers Association of Idaho (USRT) to address these concerns by regulation. Both ITA and USRT felt that the rules presented by the Department at the July Commission meeting would eliminate trapping and snaring on a substantial number of miles of trails and roads that receive little or no public foot traffic. In addition, the trapper associations and some trappers feel that seasonal trapping closures around trailheads, campgrounds, and picnic areas would better address safety concerns but still allow trapping in these areas during the winter when human activity is supposedly lighter.

At the July meeting, the Commission asked Department staff to continue to work with the trappers and others. IDFG has received further input from ITA, USRT, and others and have adjusted proposed rules to better accommodate ITA and USRT concerns in regards to trail and road closures. However, there is not agreement that trapping at and around campgrounds, trailheads, and picnic areas should only be seasonally restricted.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

IDAPA 13.01.16 established the rules governing the trapping of predatory and unprotected wildlife and the taking of furbearing wildlife.

Public Involvement Process:

Prior to the July Commission meeting, staff solicited input from the Idaho Trappers Association (ITA), Upper Snake Rivers Trappers of Idaho (USRT), individual trappers, other resource users, and other members of the public. Since the July Commission meeting, staff has continued to work with the trappers association and others. In general there is agreement on the proposed rules except for year-round closure at campgrounds, trailheads, and picnic areas.

Justification:

Proposed rules will address public, pet, and livestock safety concerns by defining the type of trap sets and establish trap set placement standards.

Staff Recommendation:

The Department recommends adopting the following rules:

05. Sets.

- a. Ground Set.** Ground set is defined as any foothold trap, body-gripping trap, or snare originally set in or on the land (soil, rock, etc.). This includes any traps elevated up to a maximum of 36 inches above the natural ground level.

b. Water Set. Water set is defined as any trap or snare originally set in or on any body of water. This shall include traps on floats in the water and those that are set with a minimum of one-third of the trap submerged. The term water set applies to traps set on beaver dams, in bank holes and in the water at bank slides.

c. Other Sets. Other set is defined as any set not defined as a ground or water set, including without limitation, elevated sets originally set 36 inches or more above natural ground level.

06. Public Trail. Public trail is defined as any trail designated by any city, county, state, or federal transportation or land management agency on the most current official map of the agency.

03. Trapping. No person trapping furbearing animals or predatory or unprotected wildlife shall:

- a. Place any ground, water, or other sets on, across, or within 5 feet of center line of any maintained public trail.
- b. Place any ground set on, across, or within any public highway (see note at bottom); except ground sets may be placed under bridges, and within and at culverts that are part of a public highway.
- c. Place any ground set incorporating snare, trap, or attached materials within 300 feet of any designated public campground, trailhead, or picnic areas.
- d. Place any ground set incorporating a foothold trap with an inside jaw spread greater than 9 inches.
- e. Place or set any snare without a break-away device.

Note: *"Public highway" means the traveled portion of, and the shoulders on each side of, any road maintained by any governmental entity for public travel, and includes all bridges, culverts, overpasses, fills, and other structures within the limits of the right-of-way of any such road (Idaho Code 36-202).*

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Agenda Item No. 8

Agenda Item: Communications Strategies

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Keckler

Background:

For the past year, the Communications Bureau has been working to develop a Strategic Plan for the bureau. The plan includes strategic communications components designed to help Fish and Game become more proactive and focused in its outreach efforts. The plan will be presented to the Commission in draft form.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

The Commission has given guidance for communication strategy development and requested information from staff.

Public Involvement Process:

None

Staff Recommendation:

The plan includes strategies for long-term and short-term communications planning. It also includes protocols on message development, response evaluations, and crisis communications.

Justification:

Strategy development requested by the Commission.

Meeting Date: August 16, 2010

Agenda Item No. 9

Agenda Item: Rule Clarification Wild Turkey IDAPA

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

13.01.09.100.a

Prepared by: Sharon W. Kiefer

Background: In May, 2007, staff presented a recommendation to the Commission to expand fall turkey hunting opportunity in designated Panhandle units with a goal to find an equilibrium where public hunting is sustainable and conflicts on private lands were reduced.

A component of the expanded opportunity was a recommendation for additional “special unit turkey tags” as follows:

- Purpose: Harvest more birds in units with abundant winter flock management needs.
- Proposed: **New “Unit” tag specific to Units 1, 2, 3 & 5** during Fall 2007
- Proposed: Purchase up to three Unit tags.
- Proposed: Price for Unit tag in 2007:
 - **\$5.00** per tag including vendor fee for Idaho residents.

The following are the recommendations reflected in the Commission minutes regarding the special unit tags; these recommendations were adopted by the commission in a unanimous vote:

- Department Recommendation: Extend fall season to December 15 in Units 1, 2 (except Farragut State Park and Farragut WMA), 3, 4, 4A, 5, and 6
- Department Recommendation: Create a fall general season turkey tag valid for units 1, 2, 3 and 5. Price of tag would be \$5.00, including the vendor fee for Idaho residents. Hunters would be able to purchase up to 3 of these tags.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

Issue: Creating a tag with a discounted fee available only to Idaho residents requires two components. The Commission can discount a tag fee pursuant to Idaho Code 36-415,(i.e. a rule is not required). However, a rule is required to restrict the special unit tag to Idaho residents. The current rule is not specific about restriction to Idaho residents and should be clarified if this restriction remains Commission intent.

Public Involvement Process: The Department has been restricting tag sales to residents since adoption of the tag by the Commission in May, 2007. There has not been additional public scoping.

Staff Recommendation: Clarify turkey tag rule as follows:

- 03. Wild Turkey.** No person shall hunt wild turkey without having in his or her possession the appropriate hunting license, tag, and controlled hunt permit. Persons obtaining and using tags, stamps, and permits must comply with the following requirements:
- a. There are three (3) turkey tags available each calendar year. These are the general tag, extra tag, and special unit tag. Only three (3) turkey tags of the following may be purchased each year; general and extra. In addition to the previously mentioned three (3) turkey tags, three (3) special unit tags may also be purchased. Special unit tags are only valid for resident hunters. A hunter may not obtain both a spring general and a spring controlled turkey tag during the spring

Justification: Current rule does not properly reflect Commission intent expressed in May, 2007.

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Agenda Item No. 10

Agenda Item: Legislative Update

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Sharon W. Kiefer

Background:

The Commission approved the special big game auction tag as a legislative idea in July and also requested draft legislation for the special big game auction tag for their review prior to submission for the legislative process. The draft legislation is attached.

Staff will also provide an update about the status of Governor Office approval for the Commission approved legislative ideas. Any approved ideas must be electronically submitted in legislative format, including a fiscal note and statement of purpose by September 17 for final approval by the Governor's Office.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

Informational.

Public Involvement Process:

None.

Staff Recommendation:

Continue to pursue the Commission approved legislative agenda for the 2011 session.

Justification:

As an executive agency, the Department must adhere to legislative approval procedures established by the Commission and the Governor's Office.

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Agenda Item No. 11

Agenda Item: Bighorn Sheep Management Plan
(Action)

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Hollie Miyasaki and Dale Toweill

Background:

Revision of the Idaho Bighorn Sheep Management Plan 1990-1995 began in 2008. Regional personnel from around the state formed a team to develop the new plan. Scoping letters were sent to other agencies, organizations, counties, and others; responses were used to help define management issues to address in the plan. Additional input from the Governor's Idaho Bighorn Sheep-Domestic Sheep Advisory Group was used as the Department developed this draft for Commission review.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

Species management plans represent Commission policy and provide guidance to the Department on implementing management actions and developing rule recommendations. This Statewide Bighorn Sheep Management Plan is specifically identified in Idaho Code 36-106(e)5(E), which requires IDFG to "... develop a state management plan to maintain a viable, self-sustaining population of bighorn sheep in Idaho"

Public Involvement Process:

Scoping letters to interested parties were mailed in 2008; results were used to help define management issues to address in the plan. Hunter opinions on key issues were sought via mail and on-line survey, also conducted in 2008. The Department received 750 responses to the mail survey and an additional 593 responses from the website.

In June 2010, the Governor's Idaho Bighorn Sheep-Domestic Sheep Advisory Group provided input to an early draft of this plan. The Advisory Group included representatives from the Idaho Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Woolgrowers, Wild Sheep Foundation, Idaho Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Council, Idaho Legislature, and interested citizens as well as IDFG.

The Department proposes soliciting comment in September, incorporating changes in October, and presenting the final version of the plan for adoption in November 2010.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends release of the draft "Idaho Bighorn Sheep Management Plan" for public comment.

Justification:

The previous bighorn sheep management plan was written for the planning period of 1991 -1995, so it is past due for revision. Idaho Code now requires the Department to develop a state management plan for bighorn sheep.

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Agenda Item No. 12

Agenda Item: Southeast Region - Williams Stream
Restoration

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Gregg Servheen and Steve Elam

Background:

This is an acquisition of 11 acres along the Portneuf River 2.5 miles west of Lava Hot spring in the Southeast Region. The Williams Stream restoration is a cooperative effort for public access and restoration work to improve fishery and wildlife habitat as well as water quality. IDFG is cooperating with Department of Environment Quality, U.S. Forest Service, Southeast Idaho Flyfishers, and the Caribou Conservancy on the acquisition and IDFG will hold title. The Williams parcel would provide access to 2,600 feet of Portneuf river frontage. This property was previously presented to the Commission during Executive Session in January 2010.

Total cost is \$29,655 and the IDFG portion is \$7,000 of fisheries fund. FILT is estimated at \$6 annually. O&M costs are estimated at \$5,000 initially and \$500 annually.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

Land acquisition in accordance with Commission land acquisition policy.

Public Involvement Process:

The Bannock County commissioners have been notified.

Staff Recommendation:

The Lands Committee recommends proceeding with the acquisition.