

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Special Meeting – March 28-30, 2011
Red Lion Hotel Boise Downtowner
1800 Fairview Avenue
Boise, Idaho**

March 28

MISCELLANEOUS

Chairman Wright called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and asked for a motion to go into executive session.

Executive Session

11-29 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion to go into executive session pursuant to Idaho Code 67-2345(1)(a)(c)(f) to discuss land acquisitions, pending litigation and the hiring of a new director. Roll Call Vote: **McDermott: aye; Trevey: aye; Barowsky: aye; Wheeler: aye; Wright aye; Power: aye. Vote tally: 6 ayes.**

Commissioner Budge joined the executive session already in progress. The Commission came out of executive session with no action taken.

Public Meeting

Chairman Wright called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He introduced Commissioners Tony McDermott, Robert Barowsky, Randy Budge, Cameron Wheeler, Gary Power and Commission Secretary Cal Groen. Staff introductions followed.

Grant Simonds, Executive Director, Idaho Outfitters & Guides Association, stated that in view of this economic crisis, we request that the Department and Commission revisit allocation which came into being at the same time as the present AB elk management program of the late 1990's. Neither allocation nor the current elk plan anticipated long term unmanaged and uncontrolled wolf populations, or the present ongoing recession. IOGA request that the current capped elk management zone numbers including allocated controlled deer and elk hunts remain at current levels notwithstanding any proposed increase in opportunity.

Mike Gann referenced several technical articles available regarding wolf impact on elk herds. Mr. Gann would like to know the wolf impact related to deer herds.

Tyler Strickland spoke regarding the decline in lion hunter numbers. Lion harvest is down 48%.

John Connors stated that he would recommend having regulated hunting of wolves based on science.

Crystal White, representing self, asked what wolf management plans are being discussed for the future and how can the public be a part of the decision process.

Dave Kangas, spoke regarding the selection process for a new director. Mr. Kangas would like for the Commission to consider someone from out of state.

Paul Shaffer spoke regarding wolf management. Mr. Shaffer feels that wolves are not the primary cause of elk numbers being down.

J.R. Phillips would like for the Commission to consider an option for youth hunters to purchase nonresident tags. He reports habitat damage in Unit 45 due to 4-wheeler activity.

Richard Meiers spoke regarding chukar hunting. Changing the bag limit from 8 to 6 does not affect the population. Mr. Meiers suggests using hunters versus flight surveys.

Doug Schleis reported that HB 247 is contrary to the North American Model. SB 1085 involves wildlife and this a threat to big game herds.

Larry Szurgot would like for the Commission to change the bag limit for chukars back to 8.

Butch Suor, Mr. Suor would like to declare wolves recovered congressionally.

Stephen Kren stated that he would like to see a proposal that would allow residents to purchase 2 of the unused nonresident deer tags.

Burk Mantel would like to see the chukar limit at 6. Mr Mantel suggests giving the public a chance to scope HB 247, he would like to see the bill killed.

Karl DeHart requested that the Commission return the partridge and quail seasons to the dates and limits that have been in place since 1986 (Appendix 44, Exhibit 31). He is against changing the numbers from 8 to 6 and feels it reduces opportunity.

Dave Kangas had questions regarding the status of the game herds. He is confused with the message that IDFG puts out on the website.

Jason Pyron, Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation, reported that HB 247 as amended currently reduces non profit retainment to 5% from 25%. This is unfavorable for IWSF. The bill currently allocates funding for Access Yes and Wildlife habitat; reducing funds for trophy species management.

Herb Meyer, spoke regarding chukar and stated that chukar limits do not make a difference. Mr. Meyer suggests that the Department take a good look at HB 247 as there may be problems with it.

Jim Justice submitted written comment regarding the elk-sheep-wolf relationship north of McCall.

Wolf Update

Deputy Director Jim Unsworth provided a brief update on the status of wolves in Idaho.

- Governor Otter ordered the Department to no longer work on wolf management since October 18.
- The Department has continued to monitor wolves in the Lolo and Sawtooth zones to help with the 10j proposals for proposed control actions in those zones to benefit elk.
- Reports 10 of the 14 plaintiffs have worked with the FWS to come up with a settlement agreement and have asked Judge Molloy if he would take back his decision.
- This action would open the door for a wolf hunting season using the 2009 rule.
- There is Federal legislation that has been tagged on to the Continuing Resolution and if approved it would allow for a wolf hunting season in Montana and Idaho.
- Interior Secretary Salazar has been meeting with the state of Wyoming. The FWS has indicated that there might be a solution or an agreeable management plan.
- The 30 day comment period was up March 14 for the 10j proposal for the Lolo zone. The Department is waiting to receive approval from the FWS to control wolves in the Lolo zone.

Chairman Wright stated that this is the last public meeting for Cal Groen and on behalf of the Commission it has been a great ride and the Commission appreciates the work Cal has done for the Department. Chairman Wright describes Cal Groen with one word “integrity” and that is a legacy that Cal Groen will leave with this Department.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

March 29

MISCELLANEOUS

Opening Comments

Chairman Wright called the meeting to order, thanked staff for the meeting accommodations, and noted that there were no agenda changes.

Review of Public Comment

The Commission addressed comments relating to Grant Simonds comments regarding outfitter allocation and difficult economic times and the request to freeze the outfitter allocation numbers. Staff will address in their agenda item presentation. J. R. Phillips concerns regarding shed hunting and habitat destruction. Two speakers spoke about using nonresident left over tags for youth tags and providing more opportunity. A license simplification task force will work on suggestions to address these proposals. Director Groen noted that when the Commission changed the bag limit for chukars it was for biological reasons; there were not a lot of chukars. But since

that time the chukar population has rebound. The Department is no longer doing chukar flight surveys anymore due to the risk involved. There may be an opportunity to use hunters to gain this information. Other comments were regarding HB 247 and it will be addressed in the legislative update. The Commission continues to oppose.

Chairman Wright stated the Commission had previously talked about putting together a task force and putting together a workshop for the next meeting to address off road vehicles. Chairman asked Commissioner Budge to comment.

Commissioner Budge stated that in talking with Representative Stevenson and other legislators it appears that they intended to establish a legislative task force. Commissioner Budge suggested that it would be helpful to hold a workshop at the May meeting and identify what the Department and Commission perceives as problems that need to be worked on.

Commissioner Trevey referenced the comment about the website and Commission positions on various pieces of legislation missing. The Department website is under construction and that is the reason it was not included for the 2011 legislative season.

Commissioner Budge reported that he spoke with constituents who commented on the chukar season after the meeting. He stated that we may need to address the geographically remote area in the Middle Fork and look at an earlier start date.

Commissioner McDermott thanked staff for addressing the comment on the Lolo zone and feels the Department and Commission are doing a better job responding to the questions following the comment period at the public hearings.

Consent Calendar

The consent calendar included the following items:

- Minutes, January 20, 2011
- Financial Report Ending January 31, 2011

11-30 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion to accept the consent calendar as presented. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Agenda Changes

Agenda item number 10 Legislative Update will be presented before agenda item number 5 Season Setting: Big Game Species.

LEGISLATION

Legislative Update

Sharon Kiefer, Assistant Director-Policy, updated the Commission about legislative activity since the last Commission legislative call and provided preliminary assessment of Department action needed to implement new legislation (Appendix 44, Exhibit 32).

SB 1197 relating to commercial tanneries records.

This bill makes some technical clarification to the reporting requirements for tanneries. The Department has considered the technical details to be useful and important clarification.

11-31 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner Wheeler seconded a motion to support SB 1197. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Ms. Kiefer reviewed the new amendments to HB 247aa - Special big Game Auction Tags (see exhibit).

Commission discussion followed on the amendments to HB 247aa. Commissioner Trevey stated that he appreciates the efforts regarding HB 247aa and some of the improvements are well done. However, Commissioner Trevey feels rushed along with his constituents.

Commissioner Trevey is unconvinced that he would support changing the Commission position based on the following principals:

- North American Model
- Hunting sheep during rut season
- Concern for Unit 11 being the area to be selected, currently there are 2 tags in this unit
- There is great potential that the Department would have to eliminate 1 or 2 tags thus hurting the average sportsman

Chairman Wright states that currently the Commission has a position to oppose HB 247 the position stands.

HB 274 Relating to Wolves/Enforcement is in amending order.

SB 1085 Domestic Cervidae is in amending order. Commission is monitoring

Ms. Kiefer referenced Bill Tracking Tables (Appendix 44, Exhibit 32)

HB 251 The Department Budget Passed

RULES

Season Setting: Big Game Species

Jon Rachael, State Wildlife Game Manager, presented the deer, elk, pronghorn, black bear and mountain lion season recommendations for 2011/2012 (Appendix 44, Exhibit 33). Mr. Rachael reviewed the major proposed changes for 2011:

- Extend season 22 days for White-tailed deer in Panhandle to return to “normal season structure”
- Reduce antlerless deer hunting to address management objectives in poorly performing units and where winter mortality is expected to be high
- Increase antlerless deer harvest to address areas with chronic depredations
- Reduce or eliminate antlerless elk harvest in zones in decline or below objective, especially where wolf densities are moderate to high
 - Eliminate remaining antlerless harvest on Middle Fork A-tag.
 - 3rd / final year phase in to full implementation of Sawtooth zone A and B tags
- Increase antlerless elk harvest in areas with chronic depredation problems
- Minor adjustments of pronghorn seasons
- Increase fall controlled hunt tags for Black bears, and increase season length in eastern Idaho
- Minor correction to “dogs prohibited” seasons for mountain lions in Clearwater region to account for changes to deer and elk seasons in past year

Mr. Rachael distributed a copy of the winter population management objectives and status of elk in Idaho dated 3-29-11 (Appendix 44, Exhibit 34). An allocation team will be formed as part of the Elk Management Plan revision process to revisit the formula for allocation of elk tags to outfitters.

11-32 Commissioner Budge moved and Commissioner McDermott seconded a motion to accept the staff recommendations for the Big Game seasons and rules for 2011 and staff recommendations authorizing appropriate changes to the Land Owner Appreciation Program. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Commissioner Wheeler left the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

REPORTS

Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation Report

Ann Dehner, Foundation Development Coordinator, presented the IFWF report to the Commission.

The Foundation wishes to acknowledge the dedication and service of John Barker, who passed away in February. John was an active and long-standing member of the Foundation’s Board of Directors who worked to support the Department of Fish and Game and other partners in service to conservation and wildlife management in the state.

The Foundation is continuing its strategic planning process, with a retreat for its Board of Directors and staff scheduled to follow its annual board meeting in April. It is anticipated that the future direction for programs, projects, and operations of the Foundation will be identified and/or clarified through this process.

The Foundation issued an RFP, conducted interviews and has engaged a new auditor, Sanders and Associates, PLLC. The audit is currently underway and is anticipated to be completed within the next few weeks.

The Foundation has been in discussions and interviews with candidates to join the Foundation's Board of Directors. Candidates have been nominated to fill regional vacancies. The Foundation currently has 16 voting board members.

At its February meeting of the Board of Directors, the Foundation approved two requests from the Department to distribute funds from trust accounts: 1) \$50,000 from the Demsey Trust to support the construction of a property manager's residence on the Andrus WMA in Region 3; and 2) up to \$22,200 to repair and construct fencing on the Joseph Plains property in Region 2.

The Foundation is implementing its annual plan to promote the sales of the Idaho Wildlife license plates. The plan includes multi-media exposure, direct marketing, sponsorships and public relations activities throughout the state.

The Foundation continues to engage in inquiries regarding potential land acquisitions, conservation easements and partnership requests. Foundation staff continues to work in consultation with the Department regarding stewardship and management issues for such inquiries.

Surrogator Evaluation Program

Sal Palazzolo, Wildlife Program Coordinator, presented an update on the 2010 Pheasant Surrogator Evaluation program (Appendix 44, Exhibit 35). Sportsmen groups, landowners, conservation organizations, and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (Department) partnered to implement and evaluate the feasibility and success of raising pheasant chicks in Surrogators® as a tool to improve hunting opportunities.

The Evaluation is designed to enable sportsmen groups and landowners that desire to utilize Surrogators® to employ biological and technical expertise of the Department and to increase dialogue between sportsmen, landowners, and the Department.

Commission Liaison IOGLB Update

Alex Irby, Commission Liaison, provided an update (Appendix 44, Exhibit 36) to the Commission. Mr. Irby noted that the Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board (IOGLB) is very pleased with the outcome of the MOU between IOGLB and IDFG; and stated that it has improved the working relationship. Mr. Irby thanked Cal Groen and Virgil Moore for their efforts in establishing the MOU and for the work that is in progress regarding outfitting for waterfowl and turkey hunting. Thanks to the Department for providing and working with IOGLB on the license applications regularly, allowing access to IDFG database for back ground checks and the law enforcement cooperation.

License Restructuring

Craig Wiedmeier, License Operations Supervisor provided a report on the license restructuring. Mr. Wiedmeier reported that a team of Fish and Game staff has been formed to conceptualize new ways of issuing and packaging the items the Department sells. Meetings have been held with the team to discuss potential restructuring ideas. The team has also met with internal staff from around the state this month to gather additional ideas.

The team has contacted two outside organizations that have assisted other states through similar projects. Our plan is to contract with one of the organizations to help us through our project.

Wolf Update

Deputy Director Jim Unsworth referenced his report provided at the public meeting. He reported that the Department has been working with the FWS to secure funding to continue the research in the Lolo and Sawtooth zones. The Department was notified that they would receive \$300,000 to continue this research.

Deputy Attorney General Kathleen Trever reported that there is still consideration of legislation in Congress regarding wolves. There are stand alone bills in both the Senate and House related to the national or regional delisting of wolves. These are not moving at this point due to the process of going through the Senate and House Committees. The Legislation that has the most prospects for moving involves legislation in the Continuing Resolution discussion for funding of the federal government.

In regards to other legal developments there was a settlement reached between the FWS and some of the plaintiffs involved in both the legal challenges to the delisting rule and the 10j rule. There are several procedural steps involved for this settlement to take effect. In summary wolves are on the list and there is a potential for Congress to remove them from the list and then there is a separate process in the judicial world.

RULES

Season Setting: Spring Season Chinook Salmon Fisheries

Peter Hassemer, Anadromous Fish Manager presented the Department recommendations (Appendix 44, Exhibit 37). Mr. Hassemer noted that this agenda item concerns the setting of Chinook salmon fishing seasons targeting adult anadromous Chinook salmon in the Snake River, Lower Salmon River, Little Salmon River, Mainstem Clearwater River, North Fork Clearwater River, South Fork Clearwater River and Lochsa River. Chinook salmon fisheries were conducted on these waters in 1997 and 2000 through 2010. For all proposed fishing areas, staff is forecasting that a sufficient number of hatchery salmon will return to the Snake River in 2011 to allow sport fisheries that target the non-tribal harvestable share when hatchery production and brood stock targets are considered.

Staff recommendation is to approve the proposed 2011 fishing seasons for Chinook salmon in the Snake River, Lower Salmon River, Little Salmon River, Mainstem Clearwater River, North Fork Clearwater River, South Fork Clearwater River and Lochsa River.

11-33 Commissioner Trevey moved and Commissioner Barowsky seconded a motion to accept the staff recommendation. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

MISCELLANEOUS

Hunter Education Instructor Awards

Chairman Wright and Don Sturtevant presented the following individuals with the top award in the Idaho Hunter and Bowhunter Education program. Mr. Sturtevant stated that the seven instructors have conducted over 395 classes, certified 7,500 students and volunteered 7,700 man hours to the program.

- Ken Brown - Nampa
- Richard Clem - Kuna
- Rick Gabiola - Boise
- Merl Holaday – New Plymouth
- Al Jennings - Nampa
- Jim Parkhouse - Kuna
- Theresa Vogt - Emmett

MISCELLANEOUS

Director's Report

Director Groen captured the following topics in the Director's Report to the Commission:

- Referenced individual bureau reports in the agenda book, all were well done
- JFAC Budget Presentation, new approach this year focused on the Compass goals
 - Thanks to the Mike Keckler and Jim Lau for their preparation of JFAC presentation
- Director video messages are a good way to get information out to the public and staff
- Referenced Commission concerns at the January meeting regarding IPRB letters sent to registered snowmobile owners and off road vehicle owners
 - Advocacy type letters generating a negative appearance for the Department
 - Credited for road closures in a negative light
 - Director Groen met with Director Nancy Merrill good discussion
- Director Groen met with ATV groups
 - Will work together with IDFG, IDPR and ATV users for adequate travel plans and keep people on trails on a local level

- The Commission requests a workshop at the May meeting to address the existing OHV rule and the MOU that the IDFG has with the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management
- Take this information to IDFG participation in the Legislative Task Force that is being created

Commission Reports

Each Commissioner provided their Regional Report in written format (Appendix 44, Exhibit 38).

Commissioner Trevey reports that he has been busy with public meetings on big game and salmon issues and it has been a good opportunity to visit with constituents. A Kokanee salvage order allowed licensed anglers to collect Kokanee by rod and reel, hand, or dip net with no bag limits. Several projects are developing as a result of the Clearwater Basin collaborative. Reports that the elk aerial survey in 10A showed about 1,000 cow elk but no calves.

Commissioner McDermott reported that 20 cow elk were collared in the St. Joe country to allow the Department to assess movement and mortality rates for this key component of the elk herd. Management staff got over 500 responses back on requests for input on big game season setting. Fisheries management and research teamed up to host the 8th annual "State of the Lake" meeting in Sandpoint in mid February.

Randy Budge reported the region has been blessed with a great winter, but tough on the big game. There are 13 active feeding sites for deer. The light goose season this winter had light hunter participation. The region has done a good job at monitoring. Commissioner Budge is hearing positive responses at the public meetings regarding OHV. The Pelican Management is an ongoing process.

Commissioner Power stated that the region has completed 425 hours of helicopter surveys between January 10 and March 6. Referenced a shooting sporting clays event in collaboration with sheriff's office and the 4-H program. There were 21 kids signed up.

Commissioner Barowsky reported that 31 sheep including 1 ram were collared in the Owyhee front. The under pass on Highway 21 near Mores Creek is looking for funding to complete the fencing project. Officers Rob Brazie and Craig Mickelson assisted the Boise Police Athletic League and the National Wild Turkey Federation with a mentored youth pheasant hunt on the Seven Summits Hunting preserve. The event was well attended. Reports that about 35,000 snow geese used Fort Boise WMA as a migration stopover.

Commissioner Wright reported that the Department is working with Idaho Transportation Department and other entities to monitor big game highway mortality across the region. Regional staff held an awards dinner to honor local volunteer reservists. Magic Valley reservist donated 2,639 hours. Pepper is the new Wildlife K9 in the Magic Valley region and is part of a pilot program.

REPORT

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Information Report

Jack Blackwell presented a power point presentation to the Commission (Appendix 44, Exhibit 39). The mission of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is to ensure the future of elk, other wildlife and their habitat. The presentation covered the history of RMEF and the collaborative projects with the Department.

MISCELLANEOUS

Executive Session

11-34 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner McDermott seconded a motion to hold an executive session pursuant to Idaho Code 67-2345(1)(a) the hiring of a new director. Roll Call Vote: **McDermott: aye; Trevey: aye; Barowsky: aye; Wheeler: aye; Wright aye; Power: aye; Budge: aye. Vote tally: 7 ayes.**

The executive session ended at 3:50 p.m. with no official action taken.

March 30

MISCELLANEOUS

Hiring Of A New Director

11-35 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion to hold an executive session pursuant to Idaho Code 67-2345(1)(a) the hiring of a new director. Roll Call Vote: **McDermott: aye; Trevey: aye; Barowsky: aye; Wheeler: aye; Wright aye; Power: aye; Budge: aye. Vote tally: 7 ayes.**

11-36 Commissioner Budge moved and Commissioner Trevey seconded a motion to come out of executive session at 5:48 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

The Commission went into open session at 5:49 p.m.

11-37 Commissioner Wheeler moved and Commissioner McDermott seconded a motion to appoint Virgil Moore as Director. The motion carried in a unanimous vote

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Tony McDermott
Chairman

Virgil Moore
Secretary