



**PRIVATE LAND/PUBLIC WILDLIFE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

December 1, 2020

Helena, MT



**PRIVATE LAND/
PUBLIC WILDLIFE COUNCIL**

The meeting convened remotely at 8:30 AM via Zoom.

Council Members Present: Richard Stuker, Ed Beall, Ed Bukoskey, Cindy Cohan, Lee Cornwell, Dr. Daniel Fiehrer, Rep. Denley Loge, Carl Zabrocki, Dale Tribby.

Council Members Absent: Sen. Duane Ankney

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Personnel Present: Kammi McClain, Admin Support; Jason Kool, Access Bureau Chief; Hank Worsech, Legislative Liaison; Dustin Ramoie, FAS coordinator

Landowner Panel: Dale Becker, Jeff Reed, Paul MacKenzie, Erik Kalsta, Leo Barthelmess, Bart Morris, Druska Kinkie, Shawn Johnson, facilitator

I. Welcome & Agenda Overview

Jason Kool began the meeting by thanking the migration members for helping to put this together. He then asked the PLPW council to introduce themselves.

II. FWP Presentation – Wildlife Movement and Migration Strategy

Justin Gude gave a presentation giving an overview on FWP's Wildlife Movement and Migration Strategy. He described the collaring work and research that has been happening in Montana over the years. He also discussed the work done in the response to the secretarial order that identified five focus areas for study. Those five focus areas are not the only areas in which this research is being conducted; research about wildlife migration and movement is happening in many areas throughout the state.

III. Wildlife and Transportation

The next presentation was from members of the Montana Wildlife & Transportation Steering Committee. (MFWP, Montanans for Safe Wildlife Passage, Montana Department of Transportation). The steering committee was developed as a result of the Wildlife and Transportation summit. The summit was held to begin the development of strategies to address wildlife vehicle conflicts and wildlife movement across state highways. Kylie Paul discussed some of the work the steering committee was doing. The steering committee developed a work plan with action items. Tom Martin then discussed one of the on the ground projects in Thompson Falls including exclusionary fencing to keep bighorn sheep off of the road. He also talked about some of the work with private landowners including encouraging them to use wildlife friendly fencing.

IV. Governor's Grizzly Bear Advisory Council Presentation

Cole Mannix offered an update on the Governor's Grizzly Bear Advisory Council. The eighteen-member council finished its recommendations in August of 2020. The group was originally created by Governor

Bullock in July of 2019 to develop recommendations on key issues and challenges related to conservation and management of grizzly bears in MT, particularly those on which there is significant social disagreement. The group developed a vision statement along with recommendations.

V. Landowner Panel

During the landowner panel, each landowner introduced themselves, offered their perspective and expressed their concerns. A desire to engage in the conservation was expressed by landowners because wildlife not only impact their operations, but private lands and landowners are key for the conservation of all wildlife. The landowners explained the financial impact the wildlife can have on their business. There is a big concern about brucellosis spreading during calving season from elk to their cattle. There was also a brief discussion of the brucellosis work plan that the commission approves every year and the tools it put into place for brucellosis mitigation. Another related issue is when working lands try to improve habitat, they can attract more elk to the area increasing their brucellosis transmission risk. The landowners also discussed the economic impact and losses caused by the animals grazing their lands.

Multiple panel members also mentioned the destruction of fences by wildlife moving through their properties. Concerns about weeds were also discussed. Paul McKenzie from FH Stoltz lumber talked about timberland management and the role those lands have in migration and conservation. He also mentioned the sale of 660,000 acres of Weyerhaeuser land that was sold to Southern Pine Plantations and how no one really knows what is going to happen with that land. Dale Becker gave a presentation about his experience with the Confederated Salish Kootenai tribes. He talked about day to day issues, jurisdiction issues they face, and the work they do cooperating with landowners.

Once the group had heard from the landowner panel, the discussion shifted towards potential action items and solutions. One such solution that was mentioned was the brucellosis mitigation fund in Wyoming that helps landowners who may get quarantined set off some of their costs and losses during that quarantine. The council also discussed a few possible solutions to generate revenue and funding to address landowner impacts and losses. They spoke about developing a recreational fee for non-consumptive users and tourists such as the national park visitors. Another suggestion that came from a public comment was to have a designated liaison between the landowners and the other agencies. That way landowners know their voices are being heard and that their concerns are being represented. A lot of discussion centered around how to educate the sportsman groups and get the landowners concerns and impacts into the awareness of the general public.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30.

PL/PW Hosts Landowner Panel on Wildlife Migration and Movement

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke issued Secretarial Order 3362. This order provides funding for research and habitat restoration projects for deer, elk and antelope within wildlife migration corridors across the West.

To continue the Montana discussion, PL/PW hosted a private landowner panel represented by farmers, ranchers, tribal and lumber company representatives at their meeting on December 1, 2020. The panel members discussed the variety opportunities and challenges presented through wildlife impacts on private lands.

The focus of the landowner panel was to discuss the question: *How does the state of Montana better support the working lands that support wildlife movement and migration?*

Panelists expressed common themes throughout the meeting: 1) Wildlife movement and migration depends on in-tact and economically viable working lands operations; 2) Landowners are essential stakeholders in Montana's wildlife future; 3) Most landowners care about sustainable wildlife populations and overall land health for a variety of reasons; 4) Whether or not a given operation provides public access, it can bear significant costs and risks while supporting wildlife in Montana; 5) There is a troubling trend for wildlife due to private lands fragmentation at increasing rates.

PL/PW intently listened to landowner panelists and will consider possible solutions to address the needs (identified below) by landowner panelists at future PL/PW meetings.

High Level Needs Identified by Landowner Panel

- Improved recognition and appreciation of working lands contributions. Needs to be a communications campaign between FWP & local collaboratives to promote the positive benefits of in-tact working lands.
- FWP should look beyond the access question when assisting landowners with wildlife problems or challenges.
- FWP staff should work to improve partnerships and communication with landowners at the local level. Some staff do very well here, but some need to drink more coffee with landowners.
- Increased funding is needed to help private landowners with public wildlife issues. This is ongoing and increasing, but there is no statewide venue/mechanism to work toward conservation finance solutions.
- Conservation finance (e.g. bed tax) that only drives more people to the landscape (fishing access sites, promoting MT) without compensating for the impacts to the land or landowners does not help.
- Locally led collaboratives (e.g. Ranchers Stewardship Alliance, Big Hole Watershed Committee, etc) and conservation districts can be very effective, but they often lack adequate funding to provide staffing support.

Specific Needs Identified by Landowner Panel

- Mitigate the risk of disease (brucellosis and CWD) to working lands operations.
- Mitigate and manage the economic and ecological costs that wild ungulates bring to soil and forage.
- Continually address range health from the perspective of noxious weed management– in particular with general recreationists.
- Mitigate and manage the economic and human safety risks that large carnivores (e.g., grizzly bears) bring to working lands. Funding for conflict prevention (implementation of practices & infrastructure), mitigation (including effective agency response) and adequate compensation are essential. Consider a multiplier for livestock-loss.
- Stronger landowner representation on the Fish and Game Commission is needed.
- Establish an elk compensation fund or “elk-rents”.
- Offer transferable tags to landowners who provide habitat.
- Engage MSU extension, FWP and landowners in private-public partnership to accelerate the pace of innovative solutions.



**PRIVATE LAND/PUBLIC WILDLIFE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
December 7, 2020
Helena, MT**



**PRIVATE LAND/
PUBLIC WILDLIFE COUNCIL**

The meeting convened remotely at 8:30 AM via Zoom.

Council Members Present: Richard Stuker, Ed Beall, Ed Bukoskey, Cindy Cohan, Lee Cornwell, Dr. Daniel Fiehrer, Rep. Denley Loge, Carl Zabrocki, Dale Tribby.

Council Members Absent: Sen. Duane Ankney

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Personnel Present: Kammi McClain, Admin Support; Jason Kool, Access Bureau Chief; Hank Worsech, Legislative Liaison; Dustin Ramoie, FAS coordinator

I. Landowner Panel Debrief

The meeting began with a discussion of the previous week's meeting with the landowner panel. The PLPW council appreciated hearing the landowner perspective and felt it would help build a positive relationship with that community. The group also felt that the information presented during that panel would help inform decisions and work in the future.

There was a discussion about the need for an action plan or some other way in which they could assist landowners and help protect the migration corridors. One of the suggestions that came up was having a member of the PLPW sit in on some of the other citizen group meetings around the state to take ideas and information back to PLPW to identify possible avenues for assistance.

The PLPW council has primarily addressed access needs and issues, but they believe that by addressing some of these other wildlife impacts they might be able to secure more access.

The council also reviewed the summary of the landowner panel in their draft annual report to the legislature and governor. The council felt it was important information to include in that report.

They also discussed the need for education of the different user groups and how many of the users do not realize the economic impact to the landowners. They believe there is a need for the recreational sector to provide revenue and funding. The group also discussed the landowner panel's desire for more landowner representation on the Fish & Wildlife commission. There was some discussion that the legislature may bring a bill increasing the number of commissioners to seven, one from each region, and possibly increasing the number of landowners on the commission. The council wanted further detail about the possible legislation before deciding to endorse it or not.

II. Legislative Item Discussion

Next the PLPW council addressed the legislation that they wanted to work on for the upcoming session. The first item considered was the once in a lifetime draw for the harder to draw species: moose, sheep, goat and grizzly if a season is established. The group briefly discussed delaying this legislation to focus

on more pressing issues; however, the council ultimately unanimously voted to move the proposal forward without the age limit. Rep. Loge would carry this and other PL/PW bills.

Another bill discussed was one that allowed landowners with 160 acres with documented game damage to be eligible for landowner preference for an antlerless elk license or permit. The council had some concerns that the way the language was currently written did not allow for those licenses to be transferred to the landowner's relatives or employees. The group decided that a rewrite should take place to accommodate the transferability, but that they were otherwise supportive of this legislation unanimously. Sen. Ankney carried the legislation for PL/PW.

III. Public Access Land Agreements

The next item on the agenda was a discussion about Public Land Access Agreements. This discussion began with a look back at the previous agreement year and where some changes may be necessary to the payment scale going forward for new agreements. One suggestion was to identify a flat rate for smaller parcels, but still allow flexibility in the regions to pay above that flat rate in an area of high use. The timeline for PALA applications was also considered; FWP moved the application period to the beginning of the calendar year giving more time for the agreements to be finalized before the hunting season.

One other change to the workflow is to have a local PL/PW member be involved in the initial Regional discussion about each agreement. Then the proposed agreement would go through the regional approvals before coming to the whole PL/PW council for a recommendation. The group had some input on the evaluation form and requested that a short explanation follow a rating. Another topic that came up during discussions was the potential for an agreement to cause conflict with a neighboring landowner, so the group felt that potential conflicts needed to be considered before finalizing an agreement. The group also considered having a bonus for being enrolled in block management in addition to participating in the PALA program. Ultimately, the group decided that the two programs should be considered separately, but one does impact the other. Finally, the group also discussed adding an incentive bonus for long term contracts.

IV. BMA Cap Increase

The group ended the meeting with a discussion about an increase in the cap for Block Management payments. There are a number of Block Management cooperators who qualify for a larger payment based on hunter day impacts, but reach the payment cap of \$15,000. The group decided they were interested in possibly having a PL/PW supported bill to increase the payment cap to \$25,000. There were some concerns about being able to fund those increased payments, so Jason agreed to work with Rep. Loge and the Department to explore the options.

The meeting adjourned at 3 PM