Private Land/Public Wildlife Council
Meeting Summary
Red Lion Colonial Inn, Helena
December 8-9, 2009

Council Members Present: Land Tawney, Chair; Dick Iversen; Kathy Hadley; Brett Todd; Rick Miller; Joe Cohenour; Jack Billingsley; Wagner Harmon; Chris King; Bob Ream; Senator Steve Gallus; Representative Jeff Welborn; **Absent:** Jack Rich; Lindsay Seidensticker; Mike Penfold;.

Tuesday, December 8, 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

I. Council Chair – Welcome/ Member Introductions

II. FWP – Welcome/Council Charge

Dave Risley, Administrator of Fish & Wildlife Division, welcomed Council members and identified issues within the Council's charge which are of particular interest to the Department. One of the issues identified was elk management and related issues of potential disease transmission, adequate hunting access, and elk seeking sanctuary on lands closed to hunting. Another issue is the need to explore alternative access strategies beyond the standard Block Management Program approach. A specific issue identified as one FWP hoped the Council might consider was what is commonly referred to as "House Bill 454 permits," a statutory program in which a landowner may receive a non-transferable elk permit in exchange for entering into a contractual public elk hunting access agreement with FWP. Dave noted that the current program has not proven very attractive or effective because of limitations in its statutory framework, but hoped that perhaps the Council might be able to review the program and offer recommendations for improvements that could make it a more useful tool. Other issues of interest to FWP include trying to find ways to improve hunter behavior and hunter/landowner relations, and trying to recruit and retain hunters.

III. Adoption of Operating Guidelines (Code of Conduct) and Consensus Process

Brian Kahn, facilitator, guided the council through a discussion that resulted in the Council adopting a "Code of Conduct" (attachment #1) and a defined process for consensus-based decision-making (attachment #2). As part of this discussion, Council members were asked to identify their vision for the future, and obstacles and opportunities related to that vision. Council members' responses to that request appear below:

These notes summarize each member's identified Vision, Obstacles and key Opportunity

1--Vision (V): Maximum production /opportunity tied to optimal incentives
Obstacles (O) Lack of incentives; resistance
Opportunity (OP) Pilot projects/experiments in local areas

2--V: Mutual respect: Landowners (L), Sportsmen (S), Outfitters (O), FWP
O: FWP actions, L closures, S attitudes
OP: Local dialogue to develop solutions

3—V: Best hunting and recreation in the 48 states – quality and opportunity, with protection of property rights and small businesses.

O: Lack of accountability for all elements of the system

OP: Enhance the quality (multifaceted) of Block Mgt. (Later comment: EQC oversight of FWP on rulemaking and other issues.)

4—V: Increased recreational access

O: Alternative economic opportunities that reduce access; attitudes of some landowners.

OP: Pilot efforts as per 1, above.

5—V: Increase Block Mgt acreage by 50%

O: Funding: Need to increase resident hunter contribution

OP: Educate legislature, Governor re hunter willingness

6 a—V: Shared understanding and respect

O: Rhetoric/misinformation, lack of constructive venues

OP: Use pilot efforts (1) as a tool to impact this

6 b—V: Shared access to private land which is outfitted

O: current Block Mgt rule; S, L, O attitudes

OP: Build on Flynn/Rich ideas to develop new proposals for consideration

7--V: FWP becomes pro-active facilitator between the interest groups

O: Currently, inadequate communication in this area

OP: Improved group relations arising from improved communications

8—V: Eliminate Harboring

O: Landowners who oppose hunting

OP: Landowner education by sportsmen and/or FWP, based on what works case-by-case

9—V:Increase quality and quantity of hunter opportunity

O: Commercialization of wildlife (in its multiple forms)

OP: Enhance quality/quantity of Block Mgt; education for S and L

10—V: High quality of the outdoor experience

O: Hunter density, defining quality, complexity of wildlife dynamics, hunter geographical restrictions

OP: Increased access funding; tax incentives; hunter appreciation work groups

11—V: Public perception of outfitters as service-based.

O: Perception and realities of privatization of wildlife

OP: Pilot projects, including outfitting on Block Mgt lands

12—V: Improved FWP management of their lands

O: Ongoing acquisition – ahead of confronting present problems

OP: a) enhance land management – weed, fences

b) improve co-operation with neighbors
c) engage sportsmen in work/mgt activities

IV. Trapline Reports:

Council members reported on issues that had been identified in their efforts to solicit input from people on their traplines. Land Tawney encouraged members to talk with people who are not only friends of Council members or people within the member's circle of "constituents," but also people from all interests, including legislators and local FWP staff members. Among the issues identified in trapline reports were the following:

- *Upland Bird Program Advisory Council and Upland Bird Program;*
- *Too many out-of-area hunters, (nonresidents and hunters from other parts of MT);*
- *Need for FWP to be accountable for decisions to landowners, hunters, outfitters;*
- *Question whether BMP payments are competitive with private sector lease payments;*
- *Hunters can't figure out what is going on with FWP easements versus acquisitions;*
- *Wolves and wolf management policies;*
- *Need for youth hunting opportunities;*
- *Outfitter-sponsored license and related citizen's initiative to do away with it;*
- *Ranch appreciation work days;*
- *Harboring issues – also the role wolves and lions might play in causing harboring;*
- *Wildlife/livestock potential disease transmission;*

V. Information Update: FWP Staff

The following items were discussed as information updates:

- Coming Home to Hunt Licenses – Hank Worsech, Chief of Licensing, explained the application process that will be used for this new license opportunity;
- Hunter-Landowner Stewardship Project – Alan Charles explained the status of this program, using a powerpoint presentation and noting that the program was now available on the FWP website;
- Block Management Program – Alan Charles provided general statistics for the 2009 enrollment, noting that the new license provisions had been implemented and welcomed by landowners, along with the increased payments for hunter days;
- New Access Management Areas PL/PW Recommendation – Alan Charles explained that FWP had not moved forward with that recommendation yet, focusing instead on the need for developing new program guidelines and processes for the public land access efforts;
- Board of Outfitter Rule PL/PW Recommendation – Alan Charles explained that the Board of Outfitters was taking action the next day on the Council's proposal that no person could hold a Montana Guide's License in the same year that the person possessed a nonresident outfitter-sponsored combination license;
- Citizen's Initiatives – Council members were provided copies of I-161 and the finalized fiscal note; subsequent discussion also focused on I-160, with Alan committing to providing Council members with copies of that document as well.

VI. Public Comment Period:
No one wished to comment.

Wednesday, December 9, 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

I. Facilitated Work Session:
Council members developed the following draft list of potential issues for future Council work. Chairman Tawney asked Council members to solicit input from people on their traplines and come to the next meeting prepared to finalize a list of issues for future work.

- Access Management Area Pilot Concepts – Quality concepts, mix of outfitted and non-outfitted hunting opportunities;
- Enhanced Funding for Access – (resident hunters, tax incentives, deer license when split off from outfitter-sponsored deer/elk license);
- Educational/Informational Outreach/Dialogue – landowner/outfitter/sportsperson forums, Hunter Appreciation Work Groups, Educational Materials;
- Harboring & Potential for Disease Transmission;
- FWP Land Management – Enhancement;
- FWP "pro-active" Facilitation/Outreach to Key interests;
- Outfitter-sponsored License;
- Initiative 160 (trapping)
- Initiative 161 (outfitter-sponsored license)
- Quality of hunting/outdoor experience;
- Review & Analysis of the effectiveness of FWP landowner incentives;
- Hunter Recruitment & Retention;

II. Discussion about HJR15:
Hope Stockwell, Research Analyst for Legislative Services Division, explained the study effort and solicited input from Council members regarding their ideas about the proposal.

III. Next Meeting: The next PL/PW Meeting will be held February 1-2 in Lewistown.

Council adjourned.