

**Private Land/Public Wildlife Council  
Meeting Summary  
Yogo Inn, Lewistown  
February 1-2, 2010**

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

**Monday, February 1, 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

**I. Council Chair – Welcome/ Finalize Agenda**

**II. Trapline Reports:**

Council members reported on issues that had been identified in their efforts to solicit input from people on their traplines. Included in those issues were the following:

- *Many comments concerned issues related to the tentative season proposals being considered, including comments from some people that they liked the new process for soliciting public input earlier;*
- *Various comments involved quality of hunting experience and concerns that some regulations and some types of BMAs made it harder for people to connect directly with private landowners;*
- *Initiative 161 was mentioned and discussed by numerous people;*
- *Ranch appreciation workdays were a concept many landowners and hunters supported, though one comment indicated that such efforts should focus on properties not already receiving benefits through Block Management;*
- *Most comments indicated satisfaction and support for Block Management, with several comments supporting more resident funding for the program; some comments cited concerns about some BMAs being subjected to heavy hunter pressure or not holding good numbers of game animals or birds; other comments supported efforts to ensure BMAs have good habitat;*
- *Several comments from landowners and hunters cited continuing concerns about harboring or concentrations of wildlife that prevent effective management and pose potential health concerns for wildlife and/or livestock;*
- *Comments noted the existence of the Upland Game Bird Program Council and suggested potential good ideas might come from that group;*
- *Several comments related to concerns about drop in numbers of game animals in some areas, some due perhaps to increased numbers of predators, some due perhaps to hunting seasons being too liberal; other comments related to this issue noted concerns about loss of hunting opportunities and concerns about long-term effects on wildlife populations, hunter recruitment and retention, and corresponding effects on local economies;*
- *One comment related to the American Prairie Foundation presence in NE Montana and questions as to what the long-term goals and effects might be for this effort;*
- *One comment noted the effort in R6 to work with Hinsdale FFA members to help them produce and provide gate latches to landowners, citing support and appreciation for the effort;*

### **III. Identifying Issues for Future Work Efforts**

*(Staff Note: Most of the remainder of the afternoon, and part of the next morning, consisted of facilitated work sessions to address this topic. In an effort to most effectively summarize this work, these 2 sessions have been combined, with the results reported below.)* Brian Kahn, facilitator, guided the council through discussions that resulted in the Council identifying three general “topics” that will be worked on by members of the committees identified below:

The Council agreed that two general thoughts should be considered by all committee members as they worked on their assigned topics. These ideas included:

- Quality of the Experience
- Communication and Education

Topics and Committee assignments include the following:

**\*\*\*Landowner Program Review Committee:** This committee will review various FWP Landowner Incentive programs to determine whether or not there may be recommendations needed for improvements. As part of this effort, the committee may consider ideas for pilot projects and/or ways to encourage hunter recruitment and retention. Committee members include: Kathy Hadley, Chair; Joe Cohenour; Jack Billingsley; Bob Ream; Senator Steve Gallus;

**\*\*\*Management of Concentrated Wildlife Committee:** This committee will work on issues related to what was previously labeled “harboring” of wildlife. Council members decided that by adopting terminology that more accurately describes the issue and that does not have a connotation of illegality, people might be more willing to engage in effective dialogue and problem-solving efforts. As part of this effort, the committee agreed there was a need to encourage FWP to participate in outreach efforts. Committee members include: Land Tawney and Chris Hill as co-chairs; Lindsay Seidensticker; Mike Penfold; Wagner Harmon;

**\*\*\*Funding for Access Programs Committee:** This committee will assess current access program funding needs and mechanisms, and consider potential enhancements, if needed. Included in these considerations may be resident funding options, deer licenses currently split from the nonresident outfitter-sponsored B10 deer/elk licenses when elk-only licenses are created; landowner-sponsored licenses). Committee members include: Brett Todd, chair; Rick Miller; Jack Rich; Dick Iversen, Representative Jeff Welborn;

**IV. Public Comment Period:** The following members of the public provided comments to the Council:

- Jean Johnson – representing herself as a citizen and former executive director of Montana Outfitters & Guides Association – comments were directed toward I161 and concerns about how passage of I161 might affect Montana landowners, hunters, and outfitters;
- Steve Stuver, representing himself as a citizen – comments noted that upland bird hunting opportunities were sometimes difficult to find, with some landowners allowing

hunting for does and ducks, but not pheasants, since outdoor recreation was becoming worth a lot of money;

- Mike Gettman, representing himself as perhaps “one of the shortest-term resident Montana sportsmen” – comments noted he was recently retired from a career in BLM and USFS, complimented Montana for having a PL/PW Council process, noted that hunter recruitment is largely tied to people having access to places to hunt;
- Dave Kozub, representing himself as an outfitter – comments cited concerns about FWP eliminating large numbers of hunters through season proposals in the Missouri Breaks area; also cited opinion that landowners who restrict access to allow opportunities for young hunters taking big bulls and big bucks might be good for hunter recruitment;
- Ron Moody, representing himself as an FWP Commissioner – noted that several years previously he had brought an idea similar to the Hunter-Landowner Stewardship Project to the Council for consideration, and cited appreciation and satisfaction that the idea had been implemented; also cited suggestion that a best practices manual might be developed that could offer ideas to help address issues related to hunters, landowners, and outfitters; encouraged Council members to be aware of regional Citizens Advisory Councils as another source of information and input; and suggested there was a need for more current information to evaluate the economics of public hunting;

## **Tuesday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8:00 am – 11:30 am**

### **I. Council discussions focused on topics to be considered by the 3 assigned committees:**

Council members spent most of the morning discussing their thoughts regarding the topics agreed upon for work by the 3 committees. As part of this effort, Alan provided a brief snapshot overview of various FWP Landowner Incentive Programs. Listed below are the programs discussed:

#### **FWP Landowner Incentive “Programs”**

- Habitat Montana – focuses on conservation easements, leases, and land acquisition designed to protect wildlife habitat;
- Hunting Access Enhancement Program – includes Block Management (private land), *Access Public Land* (Public Land), and Special Access Projects;
- Upland Bird Habitat Enhancement Program – provides cost-share assistance to landowners to help improve habitat for upland birds; require free public hunting access on enrolled properties;
- Game Damage – statutory authority to provide preventative assistance to landowners who allow public hunting access and suffer damage to crops or property from game animals;
- Livestock Loss Reimbursement Program – allows FWP to compensate landowners who allow free public hunting and who have livestock injured or killed as a direct result of allowing hunters to hunt on their property;
- House Bill 454 Program – allows FWP to issue an antlerless or either-sex elk permit to a landowner who enters into a contractual public elk hunting access agreement with FWP;
- Landowner Preference Elk Permits – allows FWP to issue up to 15% of the special elk permits in any elk hunting district to landowners who own at least 640 contiguous acres of elk-occupied habitat in the district; only one non-transferable permit per landowner;
- Landowner Preference Deer/Antelope Permits – allows FWP to issue up to 15% of the special deer or antelope permits in any deer or antelope hunting district to landowners

who own at least 160 contiguous acres of antelope or deer-occupied habitat in the district; only one non-transferable permit per landowner;

- Game Damage Supplemental License – allows FWP to issue antlerless game damage supplemental licenses, valid only on designated lands eligible for game damage assistance, with the landowner able to designate up to 75% of the residents who may receive a license in districts with limited permit quotas, or up to 100% of the residents who may receive a license in districts with unlimited license quotas; landowners may not charge a fee to hunters using the game damage supplemental licenses;

*(Staff Note: Inadvertently left off this list during discussion, but captured here for summary purposes, were two other programs relevant to this committee's work):*

- Private Land Fishing Access Program – allows FWP to negotiate agreements and provide benefits to landowners who provide public fishing access;
- Landowner/Wildlife Resource Program – allows FWP to provide information, technical assistance, and staff support to landowners for projects designed to reduce wildlife impacts, improve wildlife habitat, and help resolve human/wildlife conflicts;

## **II. Assignments:**

- Rick and Brett will work to develop a draft of information related to I161 that might, upon review and approval by Council members, be presented to the public via a press release.
- Land will work with committee chairs to identify committee focus and information needs; members were asked to funnel information requests through committee chairs, with those requests provided to Alan so that he can try to get them to appropriate staff in as efficient a manner as possible.

**III. Next Meeting(s):** The next two meetings will be scheduled for sometime in April and June. Land will work with staff and Council members, via a program called Doodle, to identify the specific dates for these meetings.

**Council Adjourned.**