

**Private Land/Public Wildlife Council
Meeting Summary
Lewistown, Montana
December 14, 2010**

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

FWP staff in attendance: Quentin Kujala, Wildlife Management Bureau; Alan Charles, Coordinator of Landowner/Sportsman Relations. Also in attendance was Brian Kahn, facilitator;

Tuesday, 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

I. Council Chair – Welcome/ Finalize Agenda

II. General Discussion & Trapline Reports

(Staff Note: This portion of the meeting actually resulted in two discussions, as anticipated by the Chairman. One discussion involved standard trapline reports, and the other discussion focused on I-161. While those discussions were somewhat merged, I have reported them as two separate discussions, for the purposes of clarity).

Trapline Report Issues

- *Several people offered favorable comments about the 2010 Saturday opening day of the general big game season, and the youth/family hunting opportunities;*
- *Several members cited input regarding the PWC draft recommendation, indicating that trapline contacts were either confused, unhappy, or generally indifferent to the proposal;*
- *Several members reported that some of their contacts were unhappy with FWP about issues related to bison, including a proposed research study, possible relocation of bison from the quarantine facility or Ted Turner's ranch;*
- *People are unhappy about FWP land acquisitions, particularly Spotted Dog Ranch;*
- *FWP has made too many purchases of land and conservation easements; some people support a no net gain law limiting FWP ownership or control of land;*
- *One member reported that trespass to private land seemed much more prevalent during this past hunting season, with many hunters he had dealt with personally displaying an attitude of "it's my right to go there";*
- *One member reported that in northeast Montana, there were lots of people in the country, most of it related to oil drilling and production, but hunting activities seemed way down;*
- *Wolves were a big issue with many folks;*
- *One member reported on a successful hunt involving Come Home to Hunt license;*
- *One member reported on a positive improvement in the local area where in the past, there was only a single BMA, but now there are 5 adjacent landowners who have enrolled in the BMA, with the larger BMA better accommodating the use – one group that included a grandfather, 2 sons, and 5 grandkids;*
- *One member cited the long period of time during which hunting seasons are open, ranging from the early antelope season opening August 15th and extending on through*

the end of mountain lion seasons in January or February – just getting to be too much for landowners to deal with;

I-161 Discussion

- *Some members noted that local communities were often divided on I-161;*
- *Some people felt FWP was either behind I-161, or did not do enough to try to influence the election; one member cited what he felt was an inappropriate TV spot featuring an FWP staff person; (staff note: post-meeting attempts to identify any FWP-generated TV spots involving I-161 resulted in no findings of such an ad)*
- *Farmers and ranchers, including some who have never leased to an outfitter, feel like they have lost an option with the elimination of the outfitter-sponsored licenses;*
- *Many people who voted for I-161 never considered potential unintended consequences;*
- *Several members said that most people did not really understand what I-161 did, but that the way it was written, it simply seemed like a good thing; others said that the wording on the ballot was confusing and hard to understand;*
- *One member said that his impression was that for resident hunters, if they felt I-161 was bad for outfitters, then it must be good for hunters, and therefore they probably voted in favor of it passing;*
- *One member cited two real case scenarios of neighboring landowners and their perspectives toward issues related to I-161 and the PWC draft recommendations:*
 - *Landowner A – a bit of an entrepreneur – finally bought a place, but needed to supplement income to pay for the place – started outfitting, and could bring in numbers of hunters and income to help close the gap between income and mortgage payment – son came home to help out - but now with numbers of tags being reduced, and number of animals well over management objectives, feels I-161 will have a negative impact – further feels something like the PWC recommendation is another step toward forcing access;*
 - *Landowner B – landowner did not originally have an outfitter, but saw increasing game damage and felt FWP was trying to increase the number of elk – started outfitting – began seeing elk as a benefit rather than a liability;*
- *Some members felt there should be more information made available to offset or mitigate some of the results of I-161;*

*****ACTION ITEM: Working Group Appointed: A working group was established to explore ways to identify impacts and opportunities resulting from I-161, relative to outfitters, hunters, and landowners. Members appointed include Joe Cohenour, Brett Todd, Jack Billingsly, Ron Moody, Land Tawney, and Dick Iverson. (staff note: some of the issues discussed related to this group's work are captured below)**

- *What kind of factual information is needed;*
- *What kind of changes can minimize negative impacts;*
- *What kind of proactive actions can capitalize on opportunities;*
- *How might having the FWP Commission change the deadlines for nonresident permit applications help?*
- *Need to know how much land is leased – not just leased by licensed outfitters;*
- *Perhaps some data of that kind could be gathered from hunters, agricultural statistics surveys, surveys completed by college students or interns, Department of Revenue;*

- *There is a difference between identifying how specific parcels of land are managed versus trend data with some definition of scope;*
- *One member stated that there are currently 14,500 NCHU “out there,” and that hunt clubs should be required to have NCHU (currently, hunt clubs, individuals leasing land, and other similar activities are not regulated by the state).*
- *Since the average age of hunters is increasing, MOGA might consider marketing hunts for older hunters seeking access;*

III. Public Comment Period

Four members of the public offered public comment. (*staff note: all members did not complete the sign-up sheet, so names may be misspelled*)

- *Bill Harris – Representative from Garfield County – D30 – lots of residents are leasing property, is a matter of supply and demand; number of bowhunters is steadily increasing; 1/3 of the state is public land, and hunters have 1/3 of the state to hunt; the more you cut the nonresident hunter out, the more land resident hunters will lease; predicts the rate of leasing doubles each year; discussed a bill draft that would give hunters 1st choice/only choice for elk – put in for area you want to hunt, draw, will make a better hunter; need to slow the system where you can hunt wherever you want to hunt; there’s an economic impact on small counties and towns when FWP makes arbitrary decisions; local guys can always find a place to hunt; discussed a second bill draft which would relate to I-161 – thinks most people who voted for I-161 didn’t know what it did, thought it was a resident license versus a nonresident license, is open to suggestions from PL/PW;*
- *Mark Robbins – from Roy – regarding PWC Proposal – noted that the proposal says it will create no new legal authority, but then mentions “new tools;” also noted that an earlier discussion involving an FWP Commission tentative rule that would change the permit deadlines would create several problems, including public confusion because it would take place outside standard biennial season setting timeline, with information being hard to find; (staff note: Council member FWP Commissioner Moody clarified that this rule would not take effect until 2012, addressing Mr. Robbins’ concerns); also stated that there was no need to change rules related to archery permits; need to look at why landowners are charging fees, and why hunters are willing to pay fees;*
- *Louis Harrel – so many issues with FWP; lived around Roy most of my life; family always got permits – has talked to 12 people from all around the area – all said we got permits of our own – when we get our permits filled, you can have access; access around here is changing – must be money; FWP says hunting licenses sales are going down – that’s because there is no place for hunters to hunt; where are all the elk? My 87-year-old father-in-law came to hunt – we found elk on private land in CMR – CMR staff we couldn’t hunt there; between the complexity of regulations and confusion about permits and boundaries, it’s getting worse and worse, and just not worth it;*
- *Carl Gueiss – from Lewistown – member of FWP R4 CAC – hunting access seems to be the main issue people are concerned about;*

IV. PWC Solutions Draft Recommendation: Council member spent considerable time discussing the public comments received on the draft recommendation, both through the formal public comment process and from contacts on their traplines. They also discussed the potential implications of the passage of I-161 and how that might affect reactions to the adoption of a final

recommendation regarding PWC Solutions. Most members felt that there was simply not enough support from affected constituents for the draft recommendation to merit adoption. Most members felt the issue was still important enough to continue to work on, and felt that it was important to get more input from FWP regarding the FWP comments on the draft recommendation. ****Action Item: Council decided to table further action on the PWC Solutions Draft Recommendation for the time being.**

IV. Other Items:

- Hunting Access Program Budget Solvency – consider sending letter to legislative budget committees regarding budget for Block Management
- FWP Commission Rule Change – consider sending letter to FWP supporting change in permit deadlines;
- Encourage FWP to explore additional ways to elicit information regarding hunting management of private lands, including when might be best to administer the next “Hunting Access on Private Lands in Montana” survey to determine how I-161 and related effects may have affected the baseline achieved during the initial 2008 survey;

V. Next meeting: The next Council meeting will be scheduled for late May or early June.

Council Adjourned.