

PRIVATE LAND/PUBLIC WILDLIFE COUNCIL
Helena, MT
June 1—2, 2016

Day 1: Meeting convened at 1:00 p.m. at the Montana Association of Counties, Conference Room, 2715 Skyway Drive, Helena, MT.

Council Members Present: Sen. Duane Ankney, Ed Beall, Rep. Zach Brown, Ed Bukoskey, Cynthia Cohan, Lee Cornwell, Dusty Crary, Daniel Fiehrer, Bill Geer, Denley Loge, Joe Perry, Bob Ream, and Richard Stuker.

Absent: Larry Feight, Blake Henning, John Swanz, and Carl Zabrocki.

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Personnel Present: Jeff Hagener, Director; Alan Charles, Landowner/Sportsman Relations Bureau Chief; Hank Worsch, Licensing Bureau Chief; Becky Dockter, Chief Legal Council; Merissa Hayes and Nick Mulvaney, Wildlife Division Administrative Support.

I. Agenda Overview, Review of Council Operating Guidelines – Worsch

II. Trap line Reports from Council Members

III. One Montana “The Montana Way” Presentation/Council Discussion – Matt Bitz/Pat Flowers

Introduction by Matt Bitz of One Montana, mission statement, and ongoing projects. Pat Flowers gave a summary of the One Montana report, “The Montana Way,” which talks about connecting current landowners and new landowners to best practices, communities and each other. Pat interviewed landowners across the state, and, through the process, he identified seven categories of best practices from landowners: Community relations, purchase considerations, land management, livestock and range management, water management, wildlife management, and legacy management.

[Attachment A – The Montana Way Final Report](#)

IV. Work Session: Finalize Legislative Recommendations

****Action Item: Council adopted final recommendations for the following issues:

- #1: Landowner Elk Permit for Access (MCA 87-2-513)
- #2: Statutory Cap for Cooperator Payments (MCA 87-1-267)
- #3: Combined Come Home to Hunt & Native Nonresident License (MCA 87-2-526 and MCA 87-2-513)

[Attachment B – PL/PW FINAL Legislative Recommendations](#)

V. Public Comment

One person provided public comment about elk management issues.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Day 2: Meeting convened at 8:30 a.m. at the Holiday Inn Express, 3170 N Sanders Street, Helena, MT.

Council Members Present: Sen. Duane Ankney, Rep. Zach Brown, Ed Bukoskey, Cynthia Cohan, Lee Cornwell, Daniel Fiehrer, Bill Geer, Blake Henning, Denley Loge, Joe Perry, Richard Stuker, and Carl Zabrocki.

Absent: Ed Beall, Dusty Crary, Larry Feight, Bob Ream, and John Swanz.

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Personnel Present: Jeff Hagener, Director; Alan Charles, Landowner/Sportsman Relations Bureau Chief; Hank Worsch, Licensing Bureau Chief; Merissa Hayes and Nick Mulvaney, Wildlife Division Administrative Support.

I. Access Issues Facing the Department Informational – Director Hagener

Director Hagener discussed some of the many access issues facing the Department, using the following framework to help guide that discussion:

“HOW MUCH ACCESS OF WHAT TYPE IS NEEDED WHERE AND WHEN TO ACCOMPLISH WHAT?”

- a. Maximize number of acres providing free public hunting access;
- b. Maximize hunter satisfaction with access opportunities;
- c. Maximize landowner satisfaction with access opportunities;
- d. Achieve wildlife management objectives;
- e. Maximize access to public lands;
- f. Minimize number of hunters that do not hunt in Montana due to access limitations;
- g. Minimize number of problematic wildlife concentrations that result from access-related circumstances;

QUESTION: What is the biggest issue facing Montana right now regarding hunter access and wildlife management?

ANSWER: Getting hunters access to elk - typically on or across land owned by either traditional or nonresident/nontraditional landowners.

ISSUE: Block Management is not necessarily the tool to fix this problem. Something new is needed, designed more specifically to get at this issue, to offer something different in incentives to these landowners, to offer something specific to hunters (*i.e. access that facilitates effective harvest of elk*), and potentially results in shared access (*public and private*) on those lands where currently access is primarily private (*i.e. outfitted, fee hunting, tightly restricted*). NOTE: 1MT One Montana The Montana Way report refers to “public” and “private” hunting in this context.

II. Shoulder Season Performance Criteria Informational – Quentin Kujala

Quentin provided background information, the purpose of shoulder seasons, and the significance of the performance criteria that were adopted by the commission at the October 2015 meeting.

III. RMEF Volunteer Program Ideas Presentation/Council Discussion – Blake Henning

Blake introduced a new program to be developed with RMEF volunteers to help landowners manage hunting access on the ground during the hunting season (Landowner Ambassador Network.) The intent of the program is to enhance sportsmen/landowner relationships through a network of volunteers. The concept for the program came from a member-driven desire to increase access opportunities to hunt elk.

The group discussed several logistics in order to get the program off the ground, including operations, volunteer training, and equitability among hunters/sportsmen groups. Council members unanimously endorsed the idea for the program.

IV. Work Session: New Straw Dog Program Ideas

Council members brainstormed new ideas for ways to help improve hunter access. The results of this brainstorm session will be reviewed and prioritized at the next meeting.

V. Block Management Reports – Informational (Charles)

Alan updated members on the status of the Block Management enrollment process, noting that regions had identified approximately 65 potential new cooperators, but that properties had not yet been evaluated and ranked for potential enrollment. Alan also indicated that based upon initial assessment, there appeared to be adequate funds to enroll some or all of these new properties. He also provided Council members with the HB2 Report used to help with the Environmental Quality Council discussion about the Block Management budget.

VI. Long-term Issues for Consideration (Director Hagener)

Director identified the following two issues that he was requesting the Council consider working on in coming months as long-term issues in need of input, based upon two recent program audits:

- Block Management cooperator payment system and inconsistent implementation between regions.
- Public access eligibility requirement for game damage assistance and inconsistent implementation between regions.

V. Next Meeting Dates – August 15 -16 in Helena

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.