



PRIVATE LAND/PUBLIC WILDLIFE COUNCIL
April 6, 2018
Helena, MT



Meeting convened at 8am at the Holiday Inn Express, 3170 N Sanders Street, Helena, MT.

Council Members Present: Bill Geer, Dr. Dan Fiehrer, Ed Beall, Lee Cornwell, Joe Perry, Cynthia Cohan, Sen. Duane Ankney, Rep. Denley Loge, Rep. Zach Brown.

Absent: Richard Stuker (left voicemail for group trapline), Ed Bukoskey, Carl Zabrocki, Dusty Crary

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Personnel Present: **Martha Williams**, Director; **Ken McDonald**, Wildlife Administrator; **Hank Warsech**, Legislative Liaison; **Jason Kool**, Access Bureau Chief; **John Vore**, Game Management Bureau Chief; **Nick Mulvaney**, Administrative Assistant

I. Agenda Overview – Warsech

Welcome/Introductions/Recap/Overview

II. Council Charge and Issues Facing the Department - Director Williams

Director Williams thanked the council members for their involvement in PLPW. She spoke the many issues facing the agency both internally and externally including grizzly bear expansion, AIS, public access, Department inclusion of all resource users and the growing elk populations. Director Williams wants the Department to be in an athletic stance ready to take on whatever may come its way while preserving the MT experience. She desires for the Department to run as efficiently and effectively with integrity and be able to sustain the long-term. She fully supports PLPWs efforts and looks forward to working with them in the future.

Trap Line Reports from Council Members

Cynthia Cohen

Ms. Cohen spoke to many hunters complaining about the regulations coming out late after the permit deadline. It was very difficult and confusing with changes, updates and hunters applying for permits before they had a chance to review the new regulations in hard copy.

Ms. Cohen also spoke to shoulder season issues with public lands including BLM/School Trust Lands and hunters looking for access.

Dr. Fiehrer

Dr. Dan Fiehrer spoke to shoulder seasons on public lands including Forest Service and State Lands- looking for access to these places for hunters.

Dr. Fiehrer spoke to expansion of grizzly bears and his desire to continue to see the focus for allowing a hunt in Montana.

Dr. Fiehrer also spoke to the inability to draw a limited 380 permit. He would like to see a better balance between landowner preference and those hunters who put in for the 380 permit through the regular drawing process. He suggested a situation whereby landowners would put in with the rest of the hunters and dissolve landowner preference for the 380 unit. He suggested the Department should better structure opportunity to draw permits for those districts where a permit has less than 2% odds of success. He also suggested the Department also look at making the “big 3” a once in a lifetime deal only.

Ed Beall

Mr. Ed Beall spoke to the many problems the public had with the regulations coming out late. Hunters didn't know what they were applying for because they hadn't seen the changes or known about options in districts. Mr. Beall said that there is no exception, but regulations must be out earlier.

Mr. Beall spoke to the “big 3” being a once in a lifetime option and would also propose to include the 380 bull elk permit included in the “once in a lifetime” or once in a long time. He also spoke to the confusion of unlimited B tags changing to permits in some districts and how those changes are and were difficult to understand for the some of the hunting public.

Mr. Beall spoke to the issues of inaccessible public lands and corner crossing. He likes the access programs FWP has but would still like to see an incentive for allowing corner crossing.

Mr. Beall spoke to the fact that he'd like the Department to work more in collaboration with ag groups to focus on habitat. He mentioned that the land is what makes a common thread in Montana. The land is unique and provides opportunity for better collaboration with ag groups, non-governmental organizations and FWP.

Mr. Beall is concerned about poor hunter behavior and impacts from hunters as the season now runs from 8/15-2/15. He is also very concerned about the history and generational shifts in landowners who used to allow access, but the new landowners or generations do not see public access as important.

Bill Geer

Mr. Bill Geer mentioned he had received a proposal from sportsmen for a age 70+ Elk Tag proposal resulting in an either sex elk (permit) tag for persons over 70 years of age. He mentioned with the aging and loss of hunters, this might be a way to keep hunters going longer.

Mr. Geer spoke to the evolution of shoulder seasons and would like to see some facts related to how and why the Department has adopted and changed shoulder seasons. He would like to see the best information we have to date as to if shoulder seasons are working.

Joe Perry

Mr. Joe Perry spoke to ensuring the Department continues to keep its promises on all things, but specifically regarding shoulder season evaluation and issues.

Mr. Perry spoke to the problems experience due to regulations coming out after the permit deadline. It was confusing for hunters and hunters didn't feel like they were able to make an informed decision on permit applications due to not having the paper version available.

Mr. Perry spoke to the issue of continuing to gain access to land-locked or inaccessible public lands.

Mr. Perry also spoke to his belief that the legislature has a lack of respect for governor appointed councils. He believes that the legislature should not amend or mess with bills that are brought forward from councils like PLPW.

Mr. Perry spoke to the issues that result from landowner preference- including hard to draw licenses. He suggests some people are getting too many difficult to draw licenses too often.

Mr. Perry finally spoke to FWP following through on the commitment to produce an access pamphlet for all things access.

Rep. Denley Loge

Mr. Loge spoke to the concern he received from hunters regarding local biologists not listening to the what the public was saying regarding B licenses during their local season-setting meetings.

Mr. Loge spoke to the concerns he also received from members of the public regarding FWP land acquisitions and potential loss of county tax revenue. Mr. Loge received numerous complaints that FWP is the business of acquiring land and these lands should be taken out of FWP and given to other non-profits. Mr. Loge would also like to see FWP work better with the Federal agencies to improve the habitat and forest management on other DNRC and Federal lands.

Lee Cornwell

Mr. Lee Cornwell spoke to the problem of elk numbers continuing to increase. Mr. Cornwell suggested FWP should work better with those landowners who are causing the problem of harboring elk.

Mr. Corwell spoke to changing the non-resident landowner preference and license options. He knows of non-resident landowners who are unable to hunt their own land because of the limited non-resident options.

Sen. Ankney

Senator Ankney briefly discussed the legislative process and why bills that come from Fish, Wildlife and Parks have a steeper hill to climb in the legislature.

Senator Ankney spoke to his concern revolving around access to public lands and roads being shut down on Forest Service after a certain date. He spoke to the idea of getting some more access term agreements or access easements to private lands for hunting rather than FWP purchasing land as that is not a popular approach.

Senator Ankney also talked about trying to get more staff help on the ground for landowners to manage hunters. He suggested that if we expect more access we need to figure out how to get the hunter management services there as well. He briefly mentioned some ideas like a responsible person on site- or using college work study students. He spoke to the idea that farmers/ranchers don't have the time to manage hunters.

Rep. Zach Brown

Representative Brown spoke to the bills put together by PLPW and how the legislature works regarding amendments to bills.

Representative Brown also spoke about the elk populations and shoulder seasons where the elk left the Flying D and impacted many small landowners. He stated that as he travelled across the state to discuss drought, the elk population numbers kept coming into the discussion. He stated many landowners are saving pasture for their cows, but the elk come in and take it.

Representative Brown lastly spoke to the new Master Hunter Course and indicated that One Montana is staffing the group pilot project- but don't have the intention of owning the project forever. The MT Master hunter course seeks to provide knowledge and training for hunters to improve behavior in exchange for exclusive access opportunities.

III. 2017 Legislative Review and EQC update

Hank Worsch gave an update on the 2017 legislative session and bills that impacted FWP or landowners.

Joe Coleman, Legislative Services and Hank Worsch, FWP Legislative Liaison

Joe gave an update on what EQC is and their role in agency oversight in the interim. EQC consists of- 12 legislative members, 4 public members; **Sen. Vincent is Chair**EQC can sponsor own bills or agency bills owned by executive branch. Some of the current issues EQC is working on revolve around funding for AIS, fire assessment fees, bird dog training and labs at MSU.

IV. Chronic Wasting Disease in Montana

Presentation- **Jon Vore**- provided the latest on FWP communication efforts and CWD in MT
Provided in-depth details of action-plan, action-team, educational aspect, long-term management

V. FWP Hunter Access Program Updates

Presentation- **Jason Kool**- provided a welcome and thank you to PLPW members. Jason gave an introduction about himself and then provided a recap of FWP access programs and future access endeavors. Jason provided an update about the programs he and Nick work on.

VI. Topics and issues from PL/PW Members-

PLPW council members looked at their most important priorities to work on in the coming year. They also mentioned they'd like the landowner panel to come back and speak to issues and solutions. They also would like an update on the weed program supported by Pittman-Robertson dollars. Some initial brainstorming ideas are:

- Continuation of the topics identified from the December 2016 meeting
- Drawing odds for limited license/permit areas and species, such as the 380 permit
- Landowner preference
- Using EQC to sponsor or put forward legislation that did not make it through the 2017 legislative session.

VII. Opportunity for Public Comment

No Public Comment received

VIII. Adjourn