



**Region 5 CAC Zoom Meeting
December 9, 2020**

Attending CAC Members:

CAC Members: Rusty Butler, Lee Deming, Doug Dreeszen, Chris Fleck, Susan Gilbertz, Bruce Hoiland, Kayhan Ostovar, Daniel Otis, Steve Regele, Lloyd Rue

Legislators: Senator Brad Molnar

R5 Employees: Barb Beck, Bob Gibson, Harold Guse, Mike Ruggles, Dianne Stiff, Ashley Taylor, Terri Walters, Megan O'Reilly, Ron Jendro, Dustin Temple, Eileen Ryce, Quentin Kujala, Greg Lemon, Jessica Plunkett, Deb O'Neill

Parks Board Members: Scott Brown, Angie Grove, Mary Moe

Welcome/ZOOM ground rules (microphone mute, video, etc.): Bob Gibson

CAC Purpose and Introduction of CAC Members: Bark Beck

Legislators introductions

FWP legislative proposals: Ron Jendro

LC365 Revise unlawful possession statute - current statutory language creates a loop hole for a person to intentionally shoot multiple animals and leave them lay; this changes to actual possession. In addition, can be charged with a felony.

LC366 Allow free fishing on Mother's Day – currently we have a free fishing on father's day weekend; this creates a free fishing weekend for mother's day

LC368 Revise come home to hunt license requirements –this gives the opportunity to return home to Montana to hunt and fish with resident family sponsors; the current law states the nonresidents either have proof they had previously purchased a resident hunting license or taken a Montana hunter safety course; will clean up the loop hole preventing nonresidents who have never lived in Montana or purchased a resident license before, from taking the online Montana hunter safety course.

LC369 Revise who qualifies to accompany nonresident youth combination license hunters – this will give a broader range of family members that can accompany youth while hunting using the nonresident youth combination (add step parents, siblings, step siblings, and legal guardian).

LC370 Remove occupation from hunting/fishing license application requirements – occupation is not needed by law enforcement, so one less thing for vendors to ask for.

LC367 Revised motorized trail program laws – this will clean up the language to simply make two separate winter trail passes; resident and nonresident.

The computer link for the 2021 legislature bill lookup page: [http://laws.leg.mt.gov/legprd/law0203w\\$.startup?P_SESS=20211](http://laws.leg.mt.gov/legprd/law0203w$.startup?P_SESS=20211)

FWP funding and budget: Dustin Temple

- Discussed the budget request as submitted by Governor Bullock. Governor elect Gianforte will review and revise all agency budgets, so this may change.
- Most of FWP's income is earned through license sales or other user fees. There is very little that comes from the state general fund.
- FWP needs the authority from the legislature to spend the funding acquired through the licensing account to make the budget work.

- Overall health of FWP:
 - General license account – unearmarked moneys from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. Last license fee increase was with HB 140 in 2015 legislative session. The license account remains healthy despite the impacts from the Covid pandemic.
 - State parks division – funded from a combination of four funds; a piece of the coal tax trust interest, motorboat fuel tax, and accommodation tax, plus the light motor vehicle fee (paid on vehicle registration if chose to not to opt out). The user fees make up a fourth of those four funds. These funding sources are declining.
- HB 2 Personal services and operations request
 - 4.39 FTE request agency wide – existing FTE to be added to the base; 2.5 FTE wolf specialists; 1.89 FTE Milltown SP.
 - Fisheries program increased operations request
 - Law Enforcement program operations request to offset increased law enforcement academy costs and for instructor compensation.
 - Wildlife program request – CWD package and grizzly bear management for both state and federal money
 - Administration program request – regional office operations increase for utilities and maintenance
- HB 5 Long range building program
 - Includes our capital improvements and grant programs
 - Maintenance package for the hatchery system
 - Habitat Montana – asking for spending authority for these earmarked funds
 - Maintenance package for state parks including some site-specific requests
 - Maintenance fund request for regional administrative facilities and area office facilities
 - Grant programs
 - Acquisition requests
 - Shooting range development

http://budget.mt.gov/Budgets/2023_Budget-Page

Q&A from CAC members

Doug Dreeszen –

- Paper licenses has caused a lot of frustration and wondered if would change next year?
 - Jessica Plunkett – the new online system in 2022, ExploreMT, plan on having an option for a digital carcass tag.

Kayhan Ostavar –

- Do you need a 595 elk b tag for the elk shoulder late season, or can you just use any unused elk tag?
 - Quentin Kujala – If you have the 595 then you can also use your unused general license if you have one. Surplus 595 is still available for purchase over the counter. This is new for the 2020 season.
- Even with Covid, Rocky Mtn. College was able to do their annual river cleanup. Now we've collected over a 100 lbs. of trash off the Yellowstone River within the Billings section. Read an article about the amount of trash that is being found downstream from bridges on the Missouri River and the concerns there.
 - Eileen Ryce – She has taken many calls regarding the Missouri. The areas that are the worst are downstream from the Toston bridge reconstruction and just south of Townsend. Finding it is garbage related to the actual construction work that is going on. Been passing those phone calls along to MDT who have been in conversation with the construction company with work on mitigation for trash prevention. Will pass trash concerns along regarding the new bridge construction on the Yellowstone River.

Lee Deming -

- Keep hearing support for shoulder seasons. Is there information he could get on the new system and electronic tags?

Steve Regele –

- Thanks to Mile Ruggles, Barb Beck and the FWP team for great work on the Lake Elmo project so far.
- Legislator(s) and/or committee - champion a “non-consumptive”/“non-game” funding program to help pay for wildlife, habitat and recreation management like PR and DJ for fishing and hunting users. Good summary articles in the MT Outdoors magazine issue March-April 2017.
- Affordability and accessibility are still a major issue for many low- and mid-income Montanans, families, and visitors. Don't overdo and overprice State Parks facilities and recreational opportunities.
- Covid era fortifies the awareness of the 'awesome' value of outdoor recreation and opportunities.

- Shoulder season - concerns about confusing numbers and dates of different permits. Per some Region 5 landowners, some hunting friends and myself, simplify. Ask FWP to please facilitate a better system of bringing qualified hunters together with landowners that have cow elk to harvest - web forum, phone tree, etc.
- Special mention about the front desk staff at the MFWP across the state. They are excellent, so familiar with MFWP, programs, staff, issues and details. They field so many questions about so many things and do so effectively and efficiently, and nicely. Great representatives and first contacts for MFWP and the State of Montana.
- Sharpen focus on native fish and wildlife species (including migratory species) and diminish focus on introduced species of fish and wildlife, examples - bass vs native species, pheasant's vs grouse. There are problems with introduced competing with native.
- Minimize threats to native fish/wildlife and good ecological integrity.

Rusty Butler –

- Can we expect the surplus tag system to remain the same going forward as it was this year?
 - Jessica Plunkett – Will at least have that system in place for the upcoming year. When ExploreMT comes on line it will be reevaluated.

Susan Gilbertz –

- Just wanted to say thank you to Harold Guse for being available to some of her students this fall at MSU-Billings. Updated notices from FWP really help her out also.

Parks Board:

Angie Grove – The Board members thank parks, fishing access site and law enforcement staff for stepping up to meet the surge in visitation and activity that happened with the pandemic. FWP tried their best to keep open and provide those spaces for Montanans and visitors. Really appreciative of that and want to make sure that the legislators are also.

Scott Brown – There is an opportunity to acquire a new state park on Flathead Lake located along the north shoreline. The board took action in October to add this area into the Flathead Lake state park system. Hoping to have support from the legislature also. The board would support anyone at the community level to provide feedback to your local legislators to make that happen.

Q&A from Legislators

Senator Molnar – He has been working on a bill with Ron Jendro that he plans to introduce. He has enjoyed working with Ron who has helped with the process. He emphasized that on the department level as much cooperation as possible be given to legislators as that builds credibility. He feels Ron is doing a great job of that, which is appreciated.

Meeting Adjourned