



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

CAC MEETING MINUTES

December 5, 2023

In Attendance:

Members: Tim Aldrich, Lea Bossler, Louie Bouma, Peggy Cordell, Kit Fischer, Matt Fregerio, Everett Headley (Chair), Denley Loge, Bill Mitchell, Pat Sweeney and Susan Thraen

R2 Staff: Randy Arnold, Vivaca Crowser, Liz Bradley, Loren Flynn, Morgan Dollinger, Kyle Miller, Dori Schiele and Alyssa Sukopp

Other FWP staff & guests: Parks and Recreation Board member Jody Loomis, FWP Special Projects Manager Deb O'Neil, FWP Disease Ecologist Emily Almberg via Zoom and two students from UM

Welcome, Overview & Introductions

Vivaca and Randy welcomed all in attendance gave an overview of what was going to be discussed for the evening. Two students from UM attending for a class assignment introduced themselves.

Everett Headley (CAC Chair): Updates and Upcoming Items

Everett offered the following questions and topics for the group, with a few additions from other members. Some were addressed in quick updates, and others will likely be topics for consideration on 2024 CAC meeting agendas.

- Transparency in non-resident licenses and what that looks like
- FWP app: plans for the future and how it is currently working
- What direction new FWP Director Dustin Temple sees the agency going regarding the CAC specifically
- Avian Influenza
- Grizzly ESA updates
- Ice fishing, at Georgetown Lake specifically, and other fisheries updates from Georgetown and the Upper Clark Fork
- Looking at the value of the “gutless method” regarding helping prevent spreading CWD. Could possibly teach the gutless method in hunter education classes (Lea Bossler introduced this question/idea).
- Block Management: possible “type 3” which would focus on quality
 - Defining what “quality” means, as it can be different for everyone
 - Looking at issues with current Block Management situations where the land and/or ranch rules are not being respected by some hunters
- Private Land Public Wildlife Council (PLPW) is revving back up after summer break
 - PLPW is a safe space for candid conversations and different viewpoints regarding topics where public and private landowners/access meets

- Have been looking at WY and how they have handled corner-crossing

Deb O'Neil FWP Special Projects Manager

FWP app updates by March 1, 2024:

- Will implement a tab to buy the same licenses that users had the prior year
- Push notifications for deadlines, drawing dates, etc.
- Using AI to look at documents for veterans, students, non-resident natives, etc. so that they may purchase their licenses and tags on the app

Loren Flynn: Blackfoot-Clearwater Wildlife Management Area Opener/Parking

MT Highway Patrol and DOT has asked FWP to find a solution for the parking situation that occurs every year prior to the Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA (especially for the west side) opener on May 15. People que almost a month early in the highway right-of-way in preparation for antler shed hunting, though it is illegal and creates a safety hazard. FWP will be working on this issue in the coming months, and updated the CAC, asked for initial feedback, and will keep them involved moving forward.

Possible Options:

- Delay the opening of the west side by an hour or two, enticing more people to que on the east side.
- Que people and campers across the highway on the two-track dirt road until the gate opens and then close the highway for 10 minutes to allow vehicles to cross into the Game Range. This would be difficult for vehicles without a higher clearance.
- Que vehicles on FWP land going north/south of the west entrance and off the highway right-of-way. This would create off-road use on FWP land that where there is no off-road use currently.
- Have a drawing or registration for a number in line or time of entry and potentially then use the east entrance. This could create an issue related to change of process for 2024 and related frustrations.

Emily Alberg FWP Disease Ecologist: CWD and HPAI in Montana

Emily gave a presentation via Zoom.

CWD:

FWP has been collecting samples and documenting cases since 2017. To date there has been over 40,000 samples collected and 1,244 of those samples have tested suspect or positive. This season, there has been 174 suspect or positive samples.

- Hot spots for CWD around the state include Libby, Twin Bridges/Sheridan, the Hi-Line, South-Central Montana, and the boundary between HD 704/705.
- Three HDs where CWD had not been detected previously have had suspect or positive samples this year, including HD 213 which is the first CWD-positive sample from R2.
- Management of CWD:
 - Target "hot spots"
 - Minimize large groupings of deer

- Increase overall harvest, especially bucks
- Prevention of CWD:
 - Carcass disposal rule
 - Prohibition of transport of live cervids/carcasses from CWD-positive states
 - Voter initiative ban on new game farms

HPAI:

Avian influenza (AI) is an infectious viral disease of birds that can cause high mortality rates in domestic flocks. Migratory waterfowl are the primary source for avian influenza. Wild birds can be infected and appear healthy but shed virus in the feces, saliva, and respiratory secretions. Domestic poultry become infected through direct contact with infected wild birds, or through contact with contaminated objects, equipment, or the environment.

- FWP has collect 357 samples to date and 128 tested positive.
- The first positive case in Montana was reported on April 8, 2022 in poultry
- Mountain lions, bears, coyotes, domestic cats, etc. can all be affected
- Geese and raptors are the most commonly affected species of wild birds
- Unknown and hard to say if AI could completely be resolved

Closing:

Meeting adjourned at 9:00pm. The next quarterly meeting is to be determined. Vivaca will sort through everyone's availability and send out an email.