

Upper Missouri River Citizens Advisory Committee (UMR CAC)
Annual Meeting – Montana Wild in Helena
9:00AM on 12/08/2021

Participants

UMR CAC Members: Mike Agee, Bart Bratlien, Pete Cardinal, Dale Gilbert (Jim Gillespie; not present)

FWP: Eric Roberts, Jason Rhoten, Adam Strainer, Troy Humphrey, Chris Hurley

Other Attendees: Pat Byorth (FWP R3 F&W Commissioner), Mark Traxler (FWP R4 CAC Member)

Meeting Introduction

Rhoten – Introduction, meeting agenda, CAC role, meeting goals and action items

1. Participants approved meeting agenda
2. Offered Travel Expense Vouchers to non-FWP employee participants
3. Briefly described CAC framework. Provided outline of the meeting, specifically the format for discussion for proposed management actions. Described the process if a management change was to be proposed.

UMR CAC Member Updates/Reports

Agee – Reported that he thought the reservoir system in the plan area is in good shape, spoke to many happy anglers and considered 2021 the “best year ever fishing-wise”. Specifically, rainbow trout fishing in upper Holter Reservoir was exceptional in 2021. He is very concerned about the current amount of angling pressure on the Missouri River from Hauser Dam to Holter Reservoir.

Bartlien – Reported that he sold the most amount of fishing tackle at his shop in 2021 and spoke with many satisfied anglers. Specifically, he heard good reports from anglers having success in the fall on Canyon Ferry and Hauser Reservoirs. He did hear some concern from anglers about “weed growth” in upper Holter Reservoir; however, anglers were still finding fish.

Cardinal – Stated he was pleased with the consistency of maintaining the same CAC within the framework of the current management plan and implored the group to continue using science to inform management decisions. Reported anglers have a lot of interest in increasing observations of northern pike in the system above and below Holter Dam. Stated he felt things were going well overall.

Gilbert – Reported that he did a lot of outreach to his stakeholders and didn’t receive a negative comment to report other than walleye fishing in upper Holter/Missouri River below Hauser was slow in 2021. Specifically, walleye fishing in the spring of 2021 was slow. Reported that he heard good things from anglers about fall fishing in 2021 and was generally encouraged by the 2021 results from the Canyon Ferry Reservoir Walleye Fest Tournament.

Gillespie – No report. Not present.

Waterbody Update

Spoon – Presented 2021 data related to plan goals for the Missouri River from Toston Dam to Canyon Ferry Reservoir and updates on the Creel, Deep Creek project, and low flows in 2021.

Discussion regarding presentation – Discussed vegetation growth and walleye being caught by anglers prior to sampling observations.

Strainer – Presented 2021 data related to plan goals for the Missouri River from Hauser Dam to Holter Reservoir and updates on water temperatures and the Beaver Creek project in 2021.

Discussion regarding presentation – Discussed angling pressure, low brown trout abundance goals in the Plan compared to rainbow trout, and the yellow perch tournament on Canyon Ferry.

Humphrey – Presented 2021 data related to plan goals for Canyon Ferry Reservoir.

Discussion regarding presentation – Discussed northern pike, water forecast, reservoir elevations and the April 2021 walleye regulation change.

Strainer – Presented 2021 data related to plan goals for Hauser Reservoir.

Discussion regarding presentation – Discussed low yellow perch abundance, Lake Helena yellow perch populations, northern pike abundance, burbot, and kokanee fishing.

Strainer – Presented 2021 data related to plan goals for Holter Reservoir.

Discussion regarding presentation – Discussed anglers and kokanee, kokanee and brown trout interactions, northern pike, and the increase in the yellow perch population.

Group Discussion: Management Strategies - Maintain Status Quo or Consider Management Actions?

Missouri River – Toston Dam to Canyon Ferry Reservoir

FWP – Recommended Status Quo

CAC – Recommended Status Quo

Missouri River – Hauser Dam to Holter Reservoir

FWP – Recommended Status Quo

CAC – Recommended Status Quo

Canyon Ferry Reservoir

FWP – Recommended Status Quo

CAC – Recommended Status Quo

Hauser Reservoir

FWP – Recommended Status Quo

CAC – Recommended Status Quo

Holter Reservoir

FWP – Recommended Status Quo

CAC – Recommended Status Quo for 2021. Pete Cardinal initiated discussion that in the future FWP consider proposing a management change to increase yellow perch harvest restrictions for Holter Reservoir. The recommendation was made in response to observed increased yellow perch abundance. After some discussion, the CAC proposed that FWP should propose changing the yellow perch limits to 50 daily and in possession starting Jan 1, 2023 pending standardized survey results in Fall 2022.* The 2022 survey results would need to display yellow perch relative abundance above the goal range of 8 to 12 yellow perch per net to propose a change to the current Holter Reservoir yellow perch harvest restriction.

*FWP will regionally discuss and consider the conceptual management change. If regionally supported, the proposal consideration to increase yellow perch harvest restrictions will be forwarded on within the Department for consideration. It is important to note that within the Plan for yellow perch it states (pg. 25):

“To maximize fishing opportunity, consider more liberal bag limits when abundance trends increase above goal range.”

Meeting adjourned

Note: Did not discuss reappointment of current CAC members. Rhoten will contact current CAC members regarding interest in reappointed.