

RECORDING OF PROCEEDINGS

Wyoming Board of Agriculture
September 9, 2009
WY Game and Fish Office
Casper, Wyoming

Present: Joe Thomas, President
Jim Bennage, Vice President
Juan Reyes
Jim Price
John Hansen
Bridget Kukowski
Dalin Winters
Shaun Sims
Frank Galey
Bryan Brost
Jason Fearneyhough, Director

Absent: Jim Hodder
Patrick Zimmerer
Ryan Lance, Governor Freudenthal's office

WDA Staff: Muff Parker, Recording Secretary
Jessica Crowder
Chris Wichmann
Leanne Stevenson
Derek Grant

Commissioners: Fred Lindsay
Aaron Clark
Clark Allen
Clifford Kirk, President
Ed Mignery, Vice President
Mike Healy
Jerry Galles
Steve Ferrell, Director

G & Fish Staff: Scott Talbot
Rich Reynders
John Kennedy
Eric Keszler
Mike Stone
Mark Fowden
Kathy Frank
Jay Lawson
Bill Rudd
Gregg Arthur
John Emmerich
Sheridan Voycheske
Wanda Pomeroy
Joe Lucero

Guests: Brian Kelly
Jim Magagna
Joy Bannon
Howard Ewart
Christy Hemken
Daly Edmunds
Rod Krischke
Jim Schwartz
Jim Logan
Brett Moline
Rick Pallister

Sage Grouse

Leanne briefed them on updates since last years' meeting.

John Emmerich followed up with the grazing and its benefits. There is, soon to be published, a condensed document to be used by livestock operators regarding the benefits of grazing management. A core area strategy is being used on sage grouse. There is also on-going mapping with reviews being done now.

Mapping seasonal ranges is also going to be done, which has never been done before. The state position is not to allow the Industrial Sighting Council to issue permits for wind farms until the impacts can be determined. John also said they are hoping to have enough data this fall to be able to implement it next spring. They are also hoping to encourage landowners to track information on the land, including counting males, females, and the number of leks, etc. The Game and Fish is willing to have workshops if it's necessary. He said there had been a significant increase in late 80's to 2006. They are now seeing a slight decline, but they are still way above the low point of sage grouse they saw in 1996. There is about a thirty percent mortality rate and hunting does not increase that figure. He said they close the season if the male population goes below 100 in any area. If the sage grouse becomes listed as threatened, there could still be a hunting season. The Game and Fish have identified 279 species as sensitive species.

Prairie Dogs

There are currently two petitions to list both the white-tailed and black-tailed prairie dogs. Inventories began on the Black-tailed one in significant areas and don't have to be done state-wide. The USFWS can do the listing any way they would like.

Access

Jim Price said it is difficult to manage the number of wildlife without landowner cooperation. Juan said we have gone from meat hunters to trophy hunter and we need to change the licensing procedure to stop this trophy hunting. Steve Ferrell said he doesn't feel this is the case. He also said he wants ideas to encourage landowner participation for hunting and fishing access.

Juan feels the millionaires need to be at the table when discussing access. They are usually not willing to allow hunting and fishing on their property. Scott Talbott said the Game and Fish is looking at the access issue internally and is willing to take on any ideas to encourage landowners to participate in allowing hunters onto their property to hunt. Steve Ferrell believes that perhaps there may need to be some legislative changes to help the situation. Jason Fearneyhough said there may be over utilization on the range and it would be a good idea to take the game wardens to review the capacity of the landowners' property before setting the license capacity of the area.

Jessica Crowder said that with herd management objectives, when the number of wildlife increases, they often decrease the AUMs.

Jerry Galles says he's observed Natrona County Game and Fish staff doing a good job of making sure the numbers of wildlife is not greater than the habitat will be able to support. Jay Lawson said they are all monitoring habitat when setting license numbers. Jessica said federal land managers are getting pressure to manage higher numbers which are above herd management objectives.

Brucellosis

Scott Talbott said they are continuing to do the following to combat Brucellosis: feed ground surveillance, bleed at feed grounds, vaccinate on 21 of the 22 feed grounds, statewide surveillance bleed tube mailings, monitor hunter kill bison, habitat enhancement, 1985 beginning of strain 19 vaccination test and slaughter, assist landowners in preventing co-mingling, research, target feed ground project, and several collar studies. They are spending about one million on Brucellosis and two and a half million on feed grounds.

Jason talked about the efforts from all agencies. Dr. Galey said that surveillance was a concern of the Governor's Brucellosis Coordination Team (GBCT) and Game & Fish has really stepped up. He expressed his gratitude to them for their help. He went on to say that the following are two concerns of

the GBCT; 1) the development of herd plans for wildlife and livestock in feed ground areas; and 2) research.

USDA National Brucellosis is recommending special management areas. There is a concern that USDA will change the rules and leave producers holding the bag. They have asked for help in finding out what is happening.

It is imperative that all agencies work together to be successful. There is a great need to protect ranches with no loss of habitat. APHIS is going to do away with brucellosis-free status. The states may sign an MOU with APHIS which has research dollars included. The benefits are that outside the area, testing is not required. If a case is found, there are options for taking care of the infected cattle. There will be a concept paper out in about three weeks in the Federal Register. Wyoming will need to verify the data from surveillance done by Game and Fish if APHIS does go ahead with this program.

The two boards agreed to establish a meeting of the Wyoming Livestock Board, Game and Fish, Department of Agriculture and producers to try and convince landowners to give access to hunters and fishermen.

In Stream Flow

Mike Stone said there is a growing interest in being able to have a temporary change of use without losing those water rights.

Invasive Aquatics

Steve Ferrell talked about mussel invasion and handed out a video on them. He said the Wyoming Game and Fish is preparing a management plan, and are aggressive in its efforts. They are preparing a bill with over 2 million dollars attached to it to do the surveillance and purchase the condemnation units that are necessary to contain these invasive species. They are also working with the Department of Transportation and the Department of Agriculture in assessing the problems.

Comments

Jim Magagna said the federal land agencies are listing species as sensitive species and that influences livestock grazing. He feels those agencies are pre-empting the responsibility of the Game and Fish.

Juan would like to have the two groups come up with one issue where they can work on solving. Joe would like a subcommittee formed between the two groups to work on an issue. Juan feels a joint statement would be good. Both groups will work on a statement and run it through the two Directors and have it finalized by December.

There being no additional business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Thomas, President

Date

Attachments: White papers on issue topics