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Governor

STATE OF NEVADA

DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE

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Director

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 30, 2008

TO: Board of Wildlife Commissioners; Governor's Office; County Advisory Boards to Manage Wildlife Members; Department of Wildlife Employees; and Director Allen Biaggi

FROM: Kenneth E. Mayer, Director 

SUBJECT: Department Activities Report
Oct. 19 - 30, 200

Director's Office

Deputy Director Rich Haskins said he would like updates provided on the following subjects: Owyhee Air contract – which will be on next Board of Examiners' agenda; Mason Valley Wildlife Management Areas and the status of the damage caused by the recent wildfire and if any claims have been filed; status of furlough exception requests for the agency.

Chief Game Warden Buonamici said for the nuisance wildlife policy that the website is being worked on and is a work in progress which will improve over time. He advised that the regulations in place now are geared for reptile collection and need to be changed to encompass private entities performing nuisance wildlife control. The memorandum of instruction is to be sent to Deputy Director Haskins for review and he will insert the code.

Deputy Director Haskins said upcoming Legislative Commission meeting is in Las Vegas and staff from the Southern Region will need to attend as will Chief Game Warden Buonamici.

The take home vehicle list needs to be worked on as the Law Enforcement portion looks complete but not the Game Division.

Supervisors need to make sure there is written backup for employees' furlough days.

Computer Use Policy – Two chiefs provided input to the policy prior to the discussion and discussed computer usage with notes taken on the areas that needed work.

On October 15, the Carson City Board of Supervisors (Carson City is a consolidated city-county government) passed on second and final reading the bear proof container ordinance, which also includes a prohibition on intentional feeding of bears. Director's Office Staff testified in support, and has been working with the City Manager, Animal Control which will be implementing the ordinance, the Board, and most especially the Carson City Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife. Chair Gil Yanuck brought forth the issue in 2007, and remained persistent until it finally got passed. A bear ordinance, along with anti-feeding language has been needed in Carson City for a very long time. The Sierra Front Bear Working Group and others also assisted in sending a flurry of emails to the Board of Supervisors to support this measure.

Conservation Education

The outdoor education coordinator has submitted an application to the Nevada Department of Public Safety for a civil background check account to process hunter education, aquatic education instructors and volunteers who work with minors. After the account is in place fingerprinting new volunteers will begin as part of their application and training process. Each fingerprinting/background check will cost the Department approximately \$50 - \$60.

Western Region staff and field personnel organized volunteers to salvage fish out of the Washoe Ditch west of Reno. Staff and volunteers electro-shocked the ditch for eight hours on Oct. 15 and planted the fish into the Truckee River in Verdi.

Western Region wildlife education coordinator is currently working on three contracts for the Oxbow Nature Study Area (NSA) for noxious weed control; purchasing native trees and shrubs; and planting native trees and shrubs as part of the fire restoration effort. The projects are funded by the Question 1 Bond Initiative and a Nevada Division of Forestry grant.

The Connecting Children with Nature grant was approved at Interim Finance Committee with about \$60,000 available for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) grant which will fund a part-time 30 hour/week position. This position will provide wildlife education interpretive tours for elementary age children at two local nature trails, the Verdi Nature Trail and Oxbow NSA.

Staff has added another radio station in Yerington that will now carry the "Wildside of Life" radio program.

Staff continues to work on angler education videos for eventual use on the www.ndow.org website, as well as for use on the weekly KOLO TV news segment on Thursday mornings.

NDOW Conservation Education staff is seeing increased numbers of California hunters who cannot confirm hunter education due to the California state offices closures that are in effect three Fridays of each month.

The Wildlife Education Coordinator and Western Region staff will be teaching Project WILD seminars for teachers in late October.

Fisheries Division

Interviews were conducted for the Winnemucca fisheries biologist position. Two internal applicants, one former seasonal and five external applicants were interviewed with a selection made by the end of this week.

A response letter has been prepared for the USFWS in response to their five year status review on the recovery of the Lahontan cutthroat trout in Nevada.

An International Symposium on Terminus Lakes was held at the University of Nevada, Reno with multiple speakers presenting talks on Pyramid and Walker Lakes as well as the Walker River. Staff will present a discussion on the "Effects of increasing Dissolved Solids on the Walker Lake Nevada Fishery."

A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been issued for the Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment for the AFFS East Walker River Oil Spill. This concludes NEPA on the project so funding for the projects in the restoration plan can be distributed (a 2-3 month process). Background: On December 30, 2000, a tanker truck operated by Advanced Fuel Filtration Systems, Inc. (AFFS) overturned on California SR 182 north of Bridgeport, California resulting in the release of approximately 3,608 gallons of #6 fuel oil, the majority of which entered into the East Walker River. An out of court settlement agreement was reached in January 2004 that specified that AFFS shall pay a total of \$418,000. The settlement is to be used for planning, implementation, and oversight activities to restore the natural resources injured and the interim loss of recreational use caused by the incident.

NDOW, a member of the Trustee Council managing the money, coordinated with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to submit a project for recreational development in the Rosaschi Ranch area. The project is designed to provide or improve access to and along the river, provide amenities such as toilets and tables, provide interpretive signage and provide fencing and barrier rocks to eliminate access in sensitive areas. The work will be completed in three phases, the first phase which will use the Oil Spill mitigation money, is estimated to total \$84,900. NDOW is working with USFS to update the budget and determine if additional permitting is required.

In the Eastern Region Lahontan cutthroat trout were reintroduced into San Juan Creek (Reese River Subbasin) from Sante Fe Creek, a donor stream in the Big Smokey Valley Drainage. This is the first reintroduction effort into the San Juan/Cottonwood Creeks metapopulation area that was treated in 2005 and 2007.

Wilson Sink electro-fishing survey found large numbers of Class 0, 1, and 2 largemouth bass, but few larger fish. The colder water temperatures had the larger bass in deep water, which obviously makes them more difficult to find. The Wildhorse Reservoir electro-fishing survey found very few large bass and perch, while freshly stocked trout and holdover trout were abundant. The enormous cohort of perch from the 2008 spawn were picked up in large numbers as age class 1's. If water levels hold, perch fishing will be fantastic in three to four years. The Collection Ditch (Ruby Lake NWR) trout survey was completed for the fourth time in the last two years. We continue to document poor carryover of stocked trout in this trophy trout fishery. Hopefully, with the data from these surveys and an aquatic habitat survey completed this past summer, we will be able to coordinate habitat improvements (dredging) with the Refuge.

In the Southern Region NDOW staff met with representatives of the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) and USFWS at Lockes Ranch to discuss the Railroad Valley Springfish die-off and next steps to resolve the issues. USFWS agreed that the best long-term solution is to insure that no springfish remain in the ditch north of Highway 6 so that future maintenance and management actions don't create a potential take issue. The issue is remaining fish from salvage operations done last year prior to site restoration as it is unlikely that new fish are moving into the habitat from the pipe supplying livestock water. We will work with USFWS to thoroughly salvage any remaining fish and then dry up the area. For now, USFWS is insisting that a full Biological Opinion (BO) must be done before NDOT can clean out their culvert. We are assisting NDOT in completing the project proposal for shoveling dirt out of the existing culvert so that work can hopefully proceed in the next month.

Based on discussion today with the Clean Water Coalition (CWC), development of the SCOP effluent diffuser and pipeline is in indefinite suspension because of the economy and resultant vaporization of development in Las Vegas Valley. This is the project to construct a pipeline and discharge system that would move most of the future effluent input to Lake Mead from Las Vegas Wash to diffusers in mid-Boulder Basin. CWC will complete existing commitments for modeling to assess effects of different effluent input scenarios when construction is again scheduled. The effluent management plan for Lake Mead will also be completed, but for now treated wastewater will continue to be input through Las Vegas Wash and Bay. The wastewater collector pipeline system along Las Vegas Wash will be completed, but will still discharge back into the Wash. This is probably a good thing for fisheries as the effect from radically changing nutrient input locations

and concentrations on shad production and seasonal abundance has never been fully understood.

Game Division

Game Division in conjunction with Human Resources will be conducting interviews to fill the Area 10 game biologist's position (Elko-based). More than 60 applications were received which resulted in a highly competitive pool of applicants from which to draw.

A dead adult male desert bighorn sheep collected from the Wassuk Range last week underwent a full necropsy performed by the wildlife veterinarian and veterinary pathology staff at the Department of Agriculture. The necropsy revealed that this animal died of a severe, necrotizing bronchopneumonia (i.e. respiratory disease). Prior to death this animal was observed to be in close proximity to several other female sheep attending a common water source. Subsequent observations by the game biologist have revealed no evidence of illness in any other bighorn sheep in the area. Domestic sheep do not utilize this portion of the Wassuk Range. Regular observations will continue and Game Division staff will respond if necessary.

Several reports of wolves (apparent sightings and reports of vocalizations) have been received from the Eastern Region in the past several weeks. NDOW in conjunction with APHIS Wildlife Services are ready to respond to such reports and will be expending additional effort (where feasible) to verify such reports. The US Fish and Wildlife Service have been advised.

Game Division is finalizing plans to conduct approved capture operations during the month of November. These include a previously approved bighorn sheep release into the Stillwater Range, capture and translocation of 20 desert bighorn sheep from the southern region to Utah and various mule deer, elk or bighorn sheep net-gun captures for the purpose of radio-collaring.

A radio-collared mountain lion, part of an ongoing UNR-NDOW collaborative study in Western Nevada was lethally removed by APHIS-Wildlife Services due to a reported domestic livestock depredation incident in the area of Walker River south of Yerington.

Game Division (Eastern Region) has received several complaints from hunters attempting to access public land areas in the Pequop Mountains. There is apparent miscommunication between representatives of the Pequop Conservancy and the public regarding

access in the area (relative to checkerboard land ownership patterns). Eastern Region Game Division biologists are following up these concerns and are working to resolve any differences or misunderstanding.

Habitat Division

No report submitted.

Law Enforcement

No report submitted.

Wildlife Diversity

The Wildlife Diversity Division staff completed this year's efforts on the Rose Cave radio telemetry study in the Spring Mountains of White Pine County. This is a joint study between NDOW, the Bureau of Land Management and three proponents of wind energy development projects. Rose Guano Cave supports a large migratory population of Mexican free-tailed bats. Three wind developments projects are in the planning stages in Spring Valley, just west of Rose Guano Cave. This telemetry study is being conducted to determine migration patterns of bats that use Rose Cave.

The Wildlife Diversity Division conducted small mammal surveys in Elko County on the Marys River. These surveys are a continuation of a long established survey effort to look at restoration of riparian habitat on the Marys River following land management changes.

Crews from the Nevada Conservation Corps have completed two fenced exclosures on aspen stands in the Beaver Creek area of Elko County. Supplies for the construction of three more exclosures were staged into the project area awaiting volunteer crews to construct the fences.

Survey efforts to evaluate wildlife use in historic abandoned mines were conducted in central Nevada. A report from the contractor is forthcoming this winter.

Wildlife Diversity Division staff coordinated with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff on their wildlife conservation funding through the annual Farm Bill appropriations process.