

BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS
Mule Deer Restoration Committee
Meeting
Nannini Administration Building - Elko
540 Court Street
Elko, Nevada 89801
August 20, 2010 , 10:00 PM
MINUTES

Committee members in attendance were:

Scott Raine, Chairman – Commissioner
Wilde Brough – Committee Member
John Carpenter – Committee Member
Pat Laughlin – Committee Member
Cory Lytle – Committee Member

Staff and interested public in attendance:

Joe Doucette – NDOW
Joe Bennett – USDA WS
George Corner – NGOA
Megan Brown – Nevada Cattleman’s Association
Don White
Brad Quilici
Bryan Cassadore
Cliff Gardner

Agenda Item #1– Call to Order – Chairman Raine

Chairman Raine called the meeting to order at 10:09 a.m.

Agenda Item #2 – Approval of Meeting Minutes from April 19 and April 29, 2010 – Chairman Raine - ACTION

John Carpenter moved that the committee approve the minutes of April 19 and April 29, 2010 and the motion was seconded by Cory Lytle. Motion unanimously passed and minutes approved.

Agenda Item #3– Committee Member Items – Chairman Raine - INFORMATIONAL

John Carpenter expressed his desire to discuss survey and inventory methodologies for mule deer in Nevada and how deer are considered “part of the herd.” Mr. Carpenter also wanted to review and discuss the potential impacts of mineral supplementation for mule deer.

Agenda Item #4 – Public Comment – Chairman Raine – INFORMATIONAL

Brad Quilici introduced his concept of a “Mule Deer Restoration Tag.” Mr. Quilici stated that he had talked with Assemblyman Carpenter about the tag and that they would need a BDR to go before the legislature. Mr. Quilici proposed creating a special mule buck tag sale to raise money for the sole intent to “protect, restore, and enhance Nevada’s dwindling mule deer population.” The money is intended to be for “on the ground

projects.” Mr. Quilici proposes taking 500 buck tags from the resident, youth, and non-resident hunts. Mr. Quilici stated that it was going to be fair and that a percentage of tags would be taken from each hunt and made available to residents only on a first-come first-served basis for \$1,000 each. Mr. Quilici anticipates an internet “frenzy” for these tags. The tag sales would generate \$500,000 that could then be used as match to get federal funds at either 2 to 1 or 3 to 1. There is the potential to generate over a million dollars a year through these tag sales. This money is for on the ground mule deer projects only. Mr. Quilici stated that in this bill he is going to suggest that 47% of the revenues generated would go directly to habitat projects and 47% of the money would go to predator control. Mr. Quilici stated that he knows of 100 people that will buy these tags right now and they will go quick. The monies generated will come before the Wildlife Commission and the Mule Deer Restoration Committee for authorization of on the ground projects “for mule deer only.”

Cory Lytle asked Mr. Quilici why 47% to each habitat and predators and why not 50% to each. Mr. Quilici responded that NDOW is going to want to take some administrative fees and he doesn’t think it should be any more than 6% so he took that out of the total percentage. Mr. Quilici also stated that he thinks it is important to be as specific as possible with respect to how the money will be used, otherwise it will be spent on new pickups or trips to WAFWA.

Mr. Quilici introduced Idaho’s Mule Deer Initiative as an example of potential program direction for Nevada’s mule deer restoration efforts. Some discussion followed.

Chairman Raine asked Mr. Quilici if he had spoke with anyone about sponsoring his proposed legislation for the “mule deer tag?” Mr. Quilici indicated that he had talked with Assemblyman Carpenter and thinks he would be the best person to write and submit the BDR. Mr. Quilici also reiterated his concern that the language be as specific as possible to ensure revenues are utilized for their intended purpose.

Chairman Raine noted that the mule deer restoration committee can make recommendations to the commission and that the commission has a legislative committee that could then take it over.

Wilde Brough asked Mr. Quilici why first come first served and not in the draw. Mr. Quilici answered that the draw would cost us a lot more money and that would just be money taken away from on the ground projects. Discussion ensued.

Wilde Brough then asked Mr. Quilici why he is excluding the non-residents. Mr. Quilici stated that was something we could look at. He didn’t care where the \$1,000 came from.

Cliff Gardner then spoke about his communications with “old sheep men” , various private landowners, and others, along with their anecdotal observations as such on the landscapes of Nevada. Mr. Gardner encouraged private management of the state’s land rather than socialist government management.

Chairman Raine followed with his observation that Elko county is the “3rd largest grazing county in the nation and has 50% of Nevada’s mule deer.”

NDOW Staff to the committee, Tony Wasley, provided clarification regarding federal fund availability and matching scenarios. Mr. Wasley cautioned that although the concept had merit, all federal funds were encumbered each and every year. There is not the existence of additional federal funds that could be encumbered. At hearing this, Mr. Quilici suggested that perhaps the tag price be raised to \$1,200 - \$1,500 per tag.

Agenda Item #5 – Review for Possible Action, Issues Affecting Mule Deer. Issues to be Considered for Possible Action Include; Feral Horses, Pinyon Juniper Encroachment, Noxious Weeds, Decadent Forage, Carrying Capacity (Doe Hunts), Competition with elk, and Compatibility with Livestock. – Chairman Raine – ACTION

Feral horses were discussed by the group. Several strategies were discussed. Strategies included; manage horses as a production based animal, follow Land Use Plan guidelines, restore habitats, education and public outreach, and land management support for horse management.

Assemblyman carpenter shared information with the group regarding the development of a large private horse preserve in southeastern Elko county. Some discussion ensued.

Meghan Brown with the Nevada Cattleman's Association spoke in support of NDOW's efforts regarding feral horses and encouraged the group to provide comment to the BLM regarding the impacts of feral horses on mule deer, discouraging any expansion of HMAs, keeping populations at AMLs, and discouraging repopulation of HMAs.

Cliff Gardner cautioned against horse introductions via new HMAs or expansion of HMAs.

Chairman Raine suggested that this issue was large enough that it would require a committee of its own. Chairman Raine stated that in his new capacity as chairman of the commission he would appoint 3-5 individuals of the commission to a new wild horse committee.

Mr. Wasley suggested that a position statement from the agency indicating priorities, agency direction, and potential strategies might circumvent the need for an additional committee and all the associated meetings.

Pinyon juniper encroachment was then discussed as it relates to mule deer habitat. Measures to improve efficiency were discussed. Chairman Raine expressed a desire to see more effort on public outreach and education with respect to PJ encroachment.

Mr. Quilici recognized that many of these issues are land management issues. He followed that perhaps the role of the committee could be to make recommendations to the commission, and the commission can then recommend to the department the appropriate actions to follow.

Assemblyman Carpenter suggested some PSAs or information in publications regarding the need to reduce PJ density and distribution.

Mr. Gardner supported the notion of increased public awareness through brochures, etc. for both noxious weeds and PJ encroachment.

Further strategies and specific examples of each were discussed.

Chairman Raine asked the committee what particular actions should be performed by the committee with respect to each of these issues. Mr. Wasley suggested the committee review the extant language with respect to each of these issues in the current mule deer management plan and use that as a starting point for adoption of policy and emphasis of particular strategies. The committee will be provided a copy of the plan for that stated purpose.

Noxious weeds were recognized as a negative impact on mule deer habitat and methods regarding their control were discussed.

Decadent forage was recognized as a problem for mule deer habitat and reasons why and remedies were discussed.

Wilde Brough shared some personal experiences from rested fields within his allotment and after sharing his experiences chairman Raine summarized Mr. Brough's experiences to be "under-utilization of forage is far worse than over-utilization of forage." Mr. Brough responded, "oh, by far." Chairman Raine followed that his personal experiences concur with Mr. Brough's and as a general observation, is true state-wide.

Remedies and strategies were then discussed.

Cliff Gardner shared his findings with respect to the history of public land management practices. Discussion ensued.

Chairman Raine questioned the committee's intent for handling this issue and what the findings of fact are regarding decadent forage. Chairman Raine asked the committee what has led to this decadent forage? Mr. Wasley suggested that decadent forage is a result inadequate disturbance. Chairman Raine suggested language to capture the sentiment surrounding the decadent forage issue as: "the disturbance that took place in the late 1800s through the mid 1900s brought about massive mule deer numbers, subsequent changes in land management practices has decreased the utilization of resources, thereby providing inadequate disturbance to forage on a landscape scale. Therefore we recommend an increase in high intensity, highly rotational, short duration grazing to be utilized as the best tool to disturb forage on a landscape-wide scale."

Language specific to PJ treatments was suggested by Mr. Lytle as, "promote approved mechanical, chemical, or prescribed treatments in appropriate areas."

(Short recess)

Carrying capacity and doe hunts were discussed and Mr. Wasley explained the concepts and logic behind carrying capacity and doe hunts. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Quilici stated 25 years ago with cattle and sheep on the range we had more deer and bigger deer and that might be part of the problem. Mr. Quilici followed that he doesn't believe habitat is limiting the survival of deer. He feels predators are the problem and that if the committee made a recommendation to the commission, we could get rid of doe hunts entirely.

Chairman Raine asked the committee for suggestions on the direction the committee should take on doe hunts. Chairman Raine followed that deer impacts on agriculture are minimal. However Chairman Raine stated that there are lots of studies out there that claim that all these theories about carrying capacity are wrong. That most of the area out there can carry far more mule deer than most scientists think, based on studies from enclosures.

Chairman Raine expressed his concern that carrying capacity can't be determined and asked other committee members their thoughts.

Assemblyman Carpenter stated that he did not like it either. He does not think it is habitat and doesn't think there is any shortage of habitat.

Mule deer compatibility with livestock was also discussed by the group. The committee discussed potential language regarding this issue. Potential language included; disturbance provided by livestock, in general, has more positive benefits than it has negative impacts. Discussion ensued

Agenda Item #6 – Government Wildlife Population Management Methodology vs. Other Methods of Wildlife Population Management – Wilde Brough - INFORMATIONAL.

Wilde Brough shared some of his thoughts on the differences between production minded population management as occurs in domestic animal husbandry and compared those to wildlife population management practices as performed by the government. Discussion was not completed and will be continued at the next meeting.

Agenda Item #7 – Highway Wildlife Crossings – Wilde Brough – INFORMATIONAL

NDOT budget sheets for 2 overpasses and 3 underpasses on hwy 93 north of Wells were reviewed and discussed.

Agenda Item #8- Establish Date, Time and Location of the Next Meeting – Chairman Raine – ACTION

Date of the next meeting was agreed upon as September 16, 2010. The Committee desired to use the Nannini Administration Building again if it was available on that date. No meeting time was discussed.

Agenda Item #9-Adjourn – Chairman Raine

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:00 p.m.

Submitted
Tony Wasley
September 3, 2010