

# Board of Wildlife Commissioners

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## Elk Damage and Incentive Committee

Bristlecone Convention Center

150 6<sup>th</sup> Street

Ely, Nevada 89301

June 25, 2010

11:00 a.m.

## MINUTES

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Committee Members in attendance were:

Grant Wallace – Chairman, Board of Wildlife Commissioner

Pete Mori – Commissioner

Tom Cavin – Commissioner

Larry Gilbertson – Staff to Committee

Others in attendance:

George Corner – NOGA

Paul Dixon – Washoe CABMW

Joe Doucette - NDOW

Charlie Howell – Commissioner

Matthew Johnson – Esmeralda CABMW

### **Agenda Item #1 & #2 – Call to Order /Introductions– Chairman Wallace**

Chairman Wallace brought the meeting to order at 11:00 am. The Chairman introduced himself and the other Commissioners on the committee - Pete Mori and Tom Cavin.

**Agenda Item #3 – Approval of Minutes from the June 26, 2009 meeting – Chairman Wallace – ACTION**

Chairman Wallace asked if the minutes had been reviewed by the members and if there were any changes or additions, none were noted.

A MOTION WAS MADE AND SECONDED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 26, 2009 MEETING TO BE APPROVED AS WRITTEN. MOTION PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.

**Agenda Item #4 – Elk Damage Fund Status – DISCUSSION**

Chairman Wallace asked Larry Gilbertson to begin this discussion. Larry stated we would give a brief update on the Elk Damage Fund, which is the \$10.00 fee paid when applying for an elk tag. This money is put into a fund and used to pay damages, and after a couple years if it appears to be a continuing problem, then we will look into the feasibility of fencing to completely solve the problem. Our concern has been that the fund was running out. The balance was approximately \$800,000 several years ago because we were not building fences. It was suggested that we might use the money to hire a position, but then fence building requests began occurring. Due to the large number of requests received all at once we hired Honor Camp Crews and a private Contractor to do the work. This caused the fund amount to drop rapidly, so some thought we should raise the application fee.

We started in fiscal 2008-09 with approximately \$250,000 to \$260,000 dollars. In fiscal year (FY) 2010 we started at \$250,000, so the fund has not disappeared. We ended FY 2008, after the money was received from the tag application process, with \$262,000, and FY 2009 we ended with \$259, 531,80. The current balance just received is \$171,000, but the projected amount, including all of the application money, is \$222,000.

There are no major fencing projects occurring with the exception of a little alfalfa field 10 miles south of Wells that is a little over 2 miles in length and almost complete. We mostly use Honor Camps, so the cost for this project is \$18,000/mile totaling about \$40,000. The materials have all been purchased and the fence is up with only one wire and clean up remaining. This fence will help alleviate the damage payment we have had in previous years.

Some other damage payments we made this year were:

1. Lages Junction – Alfalfa use - \$2,000.
2. Altanta Farms – Various crops – over \$9,000/annually. We have had elk depredation hunts to reduce the numbers. We are removing some of the big bulls that are bringing their harems into the fields, but sportsmen are upset because the depredation tagholders are shooting some nice bulls, so there is controversy there. Larry prefers for sportsmen to take big bulls rather than have the landowner or Department remove them.
3. Alfalfa fields in Area 23 – Payment was approximately \$4,000.

4. A Bull in the Spring Mountain Range 50 miles north of Las Vegas visited a small community and damaged a cyclone fence and broke a plate glass window that resulted in a total cost approximately \$5,000.

The total we have planned to expend this FY is about \$66,825.32. Hopefully if we don't receive any big fencing requests, some of the damage payments will go away with already completed fencing projects, then all of the fees collected from next year's applications should build up the fund to \$300,000 leaving it in healthy shape.

Commissioner Mori asked if it is possible for a landowner to obtain a permit to take a specific animal causing damage. Larry stated our depredation program has a number of tools we can work with, and they are not just for elk but all big game. One tool is that animals can be hazed to leave the fields, or we can give landowners permits to haze themselves. The fund only applies to elk, but for deer and antelope there is no money, so we can't pay damages or build fences for those animals. We have budgeted some money in the past to build a fence around haystacks, and we have also purchase large 8 to 10' feet tall rolls of plastic netting for temporary protection, especially during the winter. Mostly we use the emergency depredation process to remove animals. The last resort is to give the landowner a permit to actually go out and shoot the animals or have Department personnel go out and remove them, but this does not happen very often.

Commissioner Mori asked if a landowner incurs losses in their AUM's from the Forest Service of BLM allotment, can they receive compensation through this damage fund? The answer is yes if federal agency monitoring documents elk use that then forces the agencies to not allow cattle to graze that year, NDOW would pay for lost AUM's. Larry stated we could also establish an emergency depredation hunt in an area where elk have been concentrating so hunters could remove some of the animals and disperse them. Also, when the AUM's for a grazing allotment are used up by both livestock and elk, NDOW has worked cooperatively with federal agencies to implement vegetation projects to increase forage for all users of the range. Another time on private land where elk used a pasture, we contacted some of the adjacent property owners to ask what they were charging per AUM, and then the landowner was reimbursed for that amount (this was private meadow not public land).

It was asked if we accrue interest on this account, and Larry stated that it is approximately \$10,000 per year.

#### **Agenda Item #5 – Incentive Tag Program – DISCUSSION**

Larry stated the Committee wanted a brief review of the Incentive and Damage program. Larry stated we are issuing 81 tags this year by 31 individual applicants.

Commissioner Mori stated that with the recent downturn in the economy that value of these incentive tags has decreased, and the whole intent of the program is to develop a higher tolerance for elk use on private property. Perhaps we should change the elk incentive tags to match the deer and antelope program. With elk incentive tags, a specific weapon hunt is selected, but with deer anyone of the three weapon class seasons can be chosen. Commissioner Mori thinks that by

making this change the value of the tag may increase in value and the landowner's tolerance for elk on his property may also increase.

Chairman Wallace asked what it would take to implement this change. Larry stated that 4 to 6 years ago we made those exact recommended changes to the NAC language. Larry further stated that he and Mike Cox developed the new language, put it through the county game board and commission processes, and people said no thank you. This does not mean that we cannot go through the process again, but we did try it once.

Chairman Wallace asked Larry if we could send out the previous language out again to the County Advisory Boards (Cab's) for their review, and bring this issue back to another meeting. Larry suggested that this item could be put on our August agenda as an Action item to go forward with some changes in the Elk Incentive regulation to use tag in more than one season.

Commissioner Mori stated that regulations allow for either-sex tags and most hunters will not harvest a cow. He would like to have a system in place where landowners could receive cow tags or permits. These tags would be available to sportsmen, but not for the big money.

Larry stated that at a recent meeting with our neighboring states (Idaho & Utah) the issue of landowners having elk on their private property and causing damage was discussed. Also, Larry stated that the problem with the emergency depredation hunts is that by the time the calls are made, applications are mailed, and the money is received, the elk may have moved out of the area. Emergency depredation hunts that Department sets up will sometimes approve maybe 20-30 hunters who the landowner does not know, and sometimes these hunters will scout the area chasing the animals away from fields, thereby not being able to remove depredating animals as intended. If the landowner has the permits he can decide who and how many hunters he will allow on his property to remove the elk. Larry prefers this method as the landowner is involved and he is observing the elk every day. Larry also stated that this committee needs to develop some language, discuss it at another meeting and send it out for review to the CAB's before we move further forward.

George Corner stated he feels the guides association would support the option of opening up the elk incentive tags to all three seasons.

Gil Yanuk commented that he supports this new idea. Also if we make the price of these tags attractive to both the hunter and the landowner it is a winning combination. This program has worked in other states, perhaps it will work well here, The quality of the herd can be increased and the number animals is reduced at the same time with this type of program.

Commissioner Mori stated that the cost of these tags should be the same as what is now charged for applying for an elk tag through the random draw.

Chairman Wallace stated that as an assignment for the next meeting to have some language developed by Larry to address this issue, and we can then send it out for review to the CAB's and sportsmen. (Some comments we received from those in attendance but were not intelligible.)

**Agenda Item #6 – Public Comment** *(Please limit Comments to 3 Minutes)*

Comments were received on items as they were discussed during the meeting and there was no further comment.

**Agenda Item #6 – Assignments – Chairman Wallace**

Assignments were given out throughout the meeting.

**Agenda Item #8 – Adjourn – Chairman Wallace**

There being no further discussion Chairman Wallace adjourned the meeting at 11:58 a.m.

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Respectfully Submitted  
Dawn Carter  
June 22, 2010