

NEVADA BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS
Wildlife Damage Management Committee

#14 A

Winnemucca Convention Center
50 West Winnemucca Boulevard
Winnemucca, Nevada 89455
March 21, 2008, 9:00 a.m.

MINUTES

Those Committee Members in attendance were:

Other attendees were:

Agenda Item #1 – Call to Order – Chairman Bentley

Chairman Bentley called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Agenda Item #2 – Introductions – Chairman Bentley

Chairman Bentley introduced the committee members in attendance to the audience and stated he was pleased with the number of people interested in attending this meeting.

Agenda Item #3 – Approval of Minutes from the August 10, 2007 Meeting – Chairman Bentley – ACTION

The Chairman asked if anyone had any discussion or changes to the minutes from the August 10th meeting. There being no comment it was motioned and seconded to approve the minutes as written. The motion was passed by unanimous vote.

Agenda Item #4 – Commission Member Items - Chairman

Chairman Bentley asked the Commissioner if there were any issues related to this committee and meeting they would like to discuss. There were no items brought forward.

Agenda Item #5 – Public Comment

The Chairman asked those in attendance for any public comment.

Mike Laughlin – Retired, Wildlife Services – Concerned with the deer decline in the state. He feels that there is a correlation between predator populations and the deer decline. Mr. Laughlin sent Dave Rice (previous Public Information Supervisor) a letter outlining his

concerns about the deer decline. Only part of what Mr. Laughlin wrote was published, so he presented the Committee members with a copy of his original letter and asked that it be placed in the record. (A copy of that document is attached.) Mr. Laughlin would like the Commission to take a “longer look” at what factors are contributing to the deer number decline, and he thinks the major cause is the large number of coyotes.

Joel Blakeslee asked Mike Laughlin for suggestions on what the best method to use to control the coyote population. Mr. Laughlin stated that we should conduct a aerial control program during the spring months in key deer areas.

Pat Laughlin – Agrees with what his father has said. He also feels that coyotes are the major reason for the deer decline, and nothing is being done to reduce their numbers. More emphasis needs to be spent on predator control to help the deer populations recover.

Mike Fordino – Is in agreement with the Laughlin’s but his concern is with mountain lions. When lion limits were changed from Unit to Region harvest objectives outfitters are hunting seven days a week and the population has been “knocked down to nothing.” He would like to see the Commission change the harvest strategy back to Unit objectives.

_____ - Spoke about coyotes. His concerned about the population is large enough that they are starting to come into the city limits to make their homes.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their comments and stated that the committee is aware that coyotes are the adaptable and prolific animals, and they will address this problem to the best of their ability.

Guy Vega - The Government coyote hunters used to fly over his home northeast of Elko, and they have not been doing these flights for the past two years. He was told that other state agencies were concerned that these flights were outside of the stateline. This past winter several hundred antelope wintered in this valley and the coyotes taking many animals. The only way to get into the area to remove the coyotes is by aerial flights. Joel stated that this is the Devil’s Gate population Joel also suggested that he submit a project proposal through his local county game board to this Committee to do some control in this area.

Agenda Item #6 – Update on FY2008 Predation Management Projects – Kevin C. Lansford& Wildlife Services - INFORMATIONAL

Kevin stated he appreciated all of the public comment, and we are moving in the right direction and will continue to do so. Further Kevin stated one if the challenges we face when talking about large predator removal projects, it is not economically feasible right now, the money is not there. Aerial gunning costs have risen sharply. Kevin also stated that we do need to get conduct some control projects in these areas but we also need to defend the work that is currently being and has been done. Was also need to do this work on a scale that will produce results and we will not be able to reduce the numbers on a statewide level anymore because it is not feasible.

Kevin gave a brief overview of the current projects. (A power-point slide show was prepared and presented for this agenda item and it can be shown upon request at the Department of Wildlife's Reno Office.)

Project 6A Delamar Mountains Bighorn Sheep – Last year the project was expanded to include coyote and bobcat removal as well as mountain lions.

Project 14 Wilson Creek/White Rock, Unit 231 - Coyote removal for deer enhancement.

Project 15 Horse and Cattle Camp Loop, Unit 222 – Coyote removal for deer enhancement.

Project 17 Elko County Deer and Elko, Units 101, 105 & 107 – Lion and coyote removal.

Project 18 Washoe County Deer, Unit 014 – Lion and coyote removal for deer protection.

Project 19 - Initiated two years ago after the catastrophic Elko fires, for emergency predator control. Money was given to Wildlife Services to do aerial control of predators in and around island habitat left available and around watersheds.

Project 20 Virginia Mountains Bighorn Sheep – Bighorn sheep augmentation area, and prior to and after the release a lion removal project was conducted. The collared sheep are monitored closely and be able to respond quickly to a mortality signal and target the responsible animal to remove it.

Project 6A – The bighorn herd received an augmentation of 50 animals in the fall. Twenty-four sheep were collared and 12 with satellite collars. This project has shown that in the Delamar Mountains we had more confirmed bobcat kills, so we expanded the project to include bobcats and coyotes. This project has given us a lot of information about the narrow window in which almost all of the predation occurs. Most of the predation happens in December, January and February.

Project 14 – Much aerial hunting has been conducted in the area. We are collecting teeth from the coyotes being removed from the area, to have them aged. Some studies show that when you start removing the predators and reduce the population, you can analyze the teeth to determine the age structure of the animals in a specific area. It was asked who is actually doing the control work. Kevin stated that the teeth aging is done at a laboratory called Matson 's. A report is sent back with the age data and prepare a spreadsheet with GPS coordinates. We will map the teeth, and the locations of the take to determine the population dynamics of the coyotes in the area.

Project 15 – Control is focused on high elevation fawning grounds March through August. Currently 340 coyotes have been removed through this project. This is not a year-round project as it is on conducted during the most critical months.

Project 17 – Currently we are working with UNR to analyze the data from this project to assess if we are doing any good. The information we are collecting is sample size and in fawn/doe ratios. These ratios need to be compared to actually see if some fawns survive.

We need to look at sample size to see if some of the turnover on winter range is saving deer on winter range. We are finding we are getting better results from working on the winter range area rather than the fawning grounds. The elk population is increasing, as they hadn't been producing calves in any significant numbers in the last several years. . It was asked what the wildlife services and sportsman harvest is. Kevin stated at the next meeting he will present a map with overlays showing sportsman vs wildlife services harvest.

Project 18 – This past year 13 lions have been removed out of the Granite Range.

Project 19 – Aerial hunting continues for coyotes in the designated areas. Raven control is also occurring for the protection of sage grouse. Several significant leks were destroyed by wildfire.

Project 20 – A total of 5 lions have been removed from the Virginia Range. We have satellite collars on 7 or 9 sheep and were receiving multiple readings each day trying to pinpoint them when we get a mortality signal investigate, and immediately pursue the lion.

Pete Mori – He has spoken with Dave Torrell of the Ballard Ranch, and he stated that their calving area is included in Project 17. He further stated that they coyotes as seen rarely and the deer herd seems to have doubled. These observations prove that this control project seems to be working. Commissioner Mori asked if the problem is we don't enough projects or money to do jobs on a larger scale. Kevin stated that is correct. Kevin further explained that with limited funding we are trying to perform projects where we can "get the biggest bang for our buck."

Commissioner _____ stated that some of these projects do not seem very efficient in utilizing the funding, and there a lot of studies involved, such as the Delamars. Kevin stated that all of the money spent in the Delamars (\$10,000) goes straight to the lion hunter in the area, and his observations are also valuable information. A discussion ensued and Commissioner _____ gave a few suggestions on how to make the projects more efficient with their funding.

1. NDOW doing some of its own control.
2. Paying individuals by the animal they remove.

Perhaps these are items that have been explored in the past, and if not we should explore them now. Kevin stated that private contractors have expressed interest in the past, but they have found being a contractor for the state is much more difficult than just taking out your traps and setting them up. A bounty system was discussed. Some committee members were interested in the cost for each animal taken. A lengthy discussion ensued. There was also a lot of discussion on using private trappers as contractors with no decisions made.

Agenda Item #7 – Discuss 2009 New Project Proposals and/or Changes to Ongoing Projects – Kevin C. Lansford & Wildlife Services – INFORMATIONAL

Kevin stated that without a final budget we are looking as some prWoposals that are "on the table." Kevin and Mike Cox when through and discussed projects centering around

augmentations and reintroductions contained in the biennial Big Game Release Plan. We will have preliminary proposals ready in June and all of the final proposals ready for the August meeting. With regard to sage grouse and the wildfires, we have spent some of our emergency contingent fund money on raven removal around leks and nesting grounds in Elko, Lincoln, and White Pine counties. Also we have entered into an agreement, Commissioner Mori, with a livestock producer to contribute some money for some aerial gunning for coyotes in Humboldt County. This area surrounds some key sage grouse leks.

We will also contribute some contingency money at the Overton WMA for some raven control to assist with turkey production and other upland game/waterfowl species. Kevin foresees some raven removal projects being proposed this year. Raven control projects are relatively less expensive, but very effective.

Mike Dobel, Steve Kimble and Kevin are working on some new deer projects. We also have more proposals this year such as gray fox and a lion study in conjunction with a UNR Ph.D student. Kevin will send the new proposal information out to the Committee members prior to the next meeting.

Commissioner Bentley asked if there is any documentation about raven problems on fawning ranges with regard to deer and antelope. Jack Spencer stated that he has gotten some information on upland game species and waterfowl but none on big game.

Commissioner _____ asked where the money for the UNR study is coming from. Kevin stated it would be between \$5,000 and \$10,000 and we have asked for funding from the Heritage Fund, the Lake Tahoe License Plate fund, and we will approach NBU. Kevin will not be asking this committee for any funding. Kevin is only looking for some good PR for the Commission to be listed as a supporter of this study.

Agenda Item #8 – Assignments and Agenda Items for the Next Meeting – Chairman Bentley – ACTION

The Chairman asked the Committee for their thoughts. Kevin stated we would have basic budget information in June for a meeting. The Chairman felt that it would benefit the committee to have an informational meeting in June to cover the preliminary budget and projects submitted so far.

Chairman Bentley stated the assignments have already been stated in these minutes and Kevin will be busy.

Agenda Item #9 – Establish Date, Time, and Location of the Next Meeting – Chairman Bentley – ACTION

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, June 27th beginning at 9:30 a.m. in Reno.

Agenda Item #10 – Adjourn

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted
Dawn Carter
June 3, 2008