

DOUGLAS COUNTY ADVISORY BOARD TO MANAGE WILDLIFE  
Minutes of the November 10, 2015 Meeting

The Douglas County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife meeting was scheduled for 5:30 pm on Tuesday, November 10, 2015 in the Douglas County Community Center, Carson Valley Medical Center Room, 1329 Waterloo Lane, Gardnerville, Nevada.

MEMBERS PRESENT:                    Craig Burnside, Chairman  
   Mike Turnipseed  
   Robert Rittenhouse

MEMBER ABSENT:                    Wes Emery  
   Bob Cook, Vice Chairman

OTHERS PRESENT:                    Travis Hawks, NDOW Fisheries Biologist  
   Lisa Heki, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
   Stephanie Byers, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
   Doug Martin, Chairman, Carson City Advisory Board to  
   Manage Wildlife  
   Dave Beauchamp, University of Washington

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Burnside called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm and determined a quorum was present. Noted was the absence of Members Emery and Cook.

**ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Chairman Burnside requested those present introduce themselves.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

No public comment.

MOTION by Turnipseed/Rittenhouse to approve the agenda as presented; carried with Cook and Emery absent.

**FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

- **September 22, 2015**

No public comment.

MOTION by Turnipseed/Rittenhouse to approve the minutes as presented; carried with

Cook and Emery absent.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA**

### **1. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE TRI-COUNTY WILDLIFE WORKING GROUP.**

The group has not met.

Doug Martin, Chairman of the Carson City Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife, feels there are common issues to the three counties that could be vetted in this working group and he would like to see the group get underway again. He suggested a discussion take place on why bear hunting is banned from the Tahoe Basin; political issue versus scientific reasoning.

This was a discussion only.

### **2. UPDATE (INFORMATIONAL ONLY) ON THE BI-STATE SAGE GROUSE.**

Member Rittenhouse stated the sage grouse issue is back in the courts to determine whether the State or the federal government will manage and control the program.

This was an update only.

### **3. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION ON THE PRESENTATION BY THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON AND THE U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE ON THE RESULTS OF THE COOPERATIVE STUDY ON THE BASELINE ASSESSMENT AND FOODWEB OF LAKE TAHOE.**

Dave Beauchamp, University of Washington, provided an overview of the objectives of the study, which included identification of the key species of influence in the Lake Tahoe ecosystem, their role in the pelagic portion of the food web, and the role environmental factors are playing in the interactions of the Lake system.

The main pelagic species examined were the lake trout, kokanee salmon, and mysid shrimp with lahontan redbreast and tui chub considered also. At the base of the food web is the current zooplankton population of which the copepods are the most important. Mysids are a non-native species in western lakes yet their role is very important because they can outcompete kokanee and other plankton eating fish for zooplankton, their diel vertical migration allows them to hide from their predators, and they helped overpromote the lake trout population in some lakes. Once mysids established in Lake Tahoe, the size of the adult spawning kokanee steadily declined. The decline in growth of the kokanee is partly because mysids feed on daphnia, which is the preferred prey of plankton eating fish. They also feed on copepods, which are a less preferred prey of the fish. The size of the fish is much smaller because the growth opportunity is just not there.

The study examined the abundance and distribution of zooplankton, mysids, pelagic fish, and

lake trout; examined the diet of mysids, kokanee, and lake trout; and it estimated consumption of each of the key consumers in the food web.

The abundance, distribution, and density estimates for the different species of fish in Lake Tahoe were determined and presented. The mysids averaged 200/m<sup>2</sup>; which is higher than other western lakes. Kokanee is estimated at 1.2 million for all ages, with ½ million being the small age class and the remainder being the other age classes. There is a 60% survival rate from one year to the next and that is high for Kokanee in western lakes. Lake trout are estimated to be 176,000 >16". The lake trout abundance has not changed dramatically over the years. Mr. Beauchamp reviewed the depth distribution and the diet information of each of the species.

The diet and abundance information is used to determine consumption estimates and the rate of the consumption. Mysids eat six times more biomass of copepods than kokanee. Mysids are eaten by kokanee and lake trout but kokanee are more abundant yet they are eating the same biomass of mysids as lake trout are. There are three size classes of lake trout: 10-20"; 20-25"; and >25". The fish that are greater than 25" predominately eat fish while the smaller size eat mysids. There is heavy cannibalism on the smaller lake trout by the larger lake trout and that can be an important mechanism for regulating the lake trout population.

What drives what they choose to eat and how much they have to eat is thermal stratification (water temperature). Graphs were reviewed on the densities and depths of copepods/zooplankton and the ability each species has to access the different levels.

In summary, Mr. Beauchamp stated the key points from the baseline food analysis are: mysids affect everything in the Lake; they are at a relatively high density compared to what is found in other western lakes in general and they eat more zooplankton than kokanee or other plankton eating fish; the growth of kokanee and other planktivorous fish are limited by the food that is available to them since they are primarily feeding on zooplankton; mysids eat more phytoplankton than zooplankton and they eat more than kokanee do; lowering the density of mysids would not increase the density of zooplankton since they would simply shift away from the vegetable matter in their diet and increase their consumption rate of zooplankton; lake trout predation on fish increases at the 25" rate; mysids subsidize the growth and potentially the survival of lake trout in this system; a radical reduction in mysid density would affect the lake trout; and cannibalism by lake trout could potentially be self regulating.

Member Rittenhouse asked about replenishing cutthroat into the Lake and how they fit into the food web. Mr. Beauchamp state cutthroat were once the top predator in the system. As adults they would feed on kokanee and minnows and as juveniles they would feed mostly on insects and some zooplankton. There are potential concerns about them being vulnerable to predation by the larger lake trout. Member Rittenhouse wondered if it was counterproductive to replant only feeder streams to Lake Tahoe with cutthroat with the hope that they will move down. Mr. Beauchamp recalled that LCT disappeared in the 1930s, which was before mysids came into the Lake. In some western lakes, native cutthroat populations coexist with other lake trout. It seems to be dependent on how the juvenile life stages of cutthroat behave (if they can reduce their vulnerability or not).

Chairman Burnside asked if LCT tended to be more pelagic or more shoreline. Mr. Beauchamp answered they are pelagic as adults. In the juvenile life stages, it is not clear. Chairman Burnside asked if the kokanee population would be affected by the adult cutthroat, if they are pelagic, given the limited zooplankton food source. Mr Beauchamp responded it could but that throughout the west, cutthroat population can coexist with kokanee or sockeye salmon populations. The native minnow species would be hit heavily and the fish could cannibalize themselves as well. The larger cutthroat can outgrow their vulnerability to lake trout and can find a depth that is most comfortable for them.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Mickey Daniels, Lake Tahoe, asked for the life expectancy of mysids. Mr. Beauchamp said they live for two years in Lake Tahoe. Toward the end of their life, they live bear their young. The new brood comes out between February and April.

Doug Martin, Carson City Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife, recapped what he took from this presentation and asked how this information would be used going forward. Mr. Beauchamp said the study is intended to be a baseline study to identify mechanisms in play to either allow a new introduction and if so, under what conditions, or is there a threat that may be too big an obstacle to allow a shift to happen. Mr. Martin asked if the mysid are a big obstacle to the reintroduction of other species and Mr Beauchamp responded it is not an obstacle to LCT if the younger LCT behave appropriately to protect themselves from predation by staying in the more productive shelf areas. The behavior of the organisms is the wildcard.

Lisa Heki, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, reiterated the purpose of the study. She stated their focus for LCT management will be on Glen Alpine and Fallen Leaf Lakes and the Fish & Wildlife Service has no plans for the reintroduction of LCT into Lake Tahoe.

Don Weirauch, Angler's Edge, asked if there are any plans for the rest of the basin or the Upper Truckee for LCT. Ms. Heki is not directly involved in the Upper Truckee program; they are focusing on Fallen Leaf Lake and Glen Alpine.

Chairman Burnside wondered if there are mysids that have gone from Tahoe downstream into the Truckee River system. Mr Beauchamp explained that they can float down but will not survive since most of the water will be too warm.

Ron Perrault, Truckee, discussed Independence Lake and its public/private control. He asked if any research is being done there. Ms. Heki said the management there is the local USGS office and other agencies. Travis Hawks, NDOW Fisheries Biologist, believes the program there was recently permanently shut down.

Public comment closed.

MOTION by Turnipseed/Rittenhouse to accept the presentation; carried with Cook and Emery absent.

Everyone expressed support for the presentation and thought the data was very valuable.

*At this time, the Board took a brief recess and reconvened at 7:08 p.m.*

4. The following items, 4a through 4c, are items that will be heard before the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners at the next meeting, November 13 & 14, 2015, at the Truckee Meadows Community College, 7000 Dandini Boulevard, Sierra Building-Room 108, Reno, Nevada. The Douglas County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife may take the following action, or a variation thereof, on each item: support the item, not support the item or not take a position on the item. Public Comment will be allowed on each item.

**4a–4c. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING WHETHER THE DOUGLAS COUNTY ADVISORY BOARD SHOULD TAKE A POSITION ON:**

**4a. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION ON THE PETITION SUBMITTED BY DON MOLDE, FRED VOLTZ, LEAH STURGIS, AND CONSTANCE HOWARD.** Don Molde, Fred Voltz, Leah Sturgis, and Constance Howard have submitted a petition to the Commission requesting a regulation(s) which prohibits wildlife killing contests involving mammals. The Commission may accept the petition and initiate regulatory action or deny the petition.

Member Turnipseed thought this was going too far. He was advised that this is anti-hunting and has nothing to do with contests but upon reading it, he disagrees. During the last contest, only 1% of the coyote population in the state was killed.

Chairman Burnside used the fishing tournament in Topaz as an example.

Member Rittenhouse would like to see a PR department established to avoid things like what happened in Elko with the coyotes. He is concerned that nothing is being done to help raise the status with 95% of the people who have no opinion on the subject. He has no issue with shooting coyotes. He suggested one of the members be a trapper and have the hides processed and sold with the monies going to the state for coyote management. He added he would have liked to see someone at this meeting to speak to either side of the issue.

No public comment.

MOTION by Turnipseed/Rittenhouse to recommend the Commission deny the petition; carried with Cook and Emery absent.

**4b. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION ON THE CONSIDERATION OF POSSIBLE CHANGES TO WATERFOWL HUNT ZONES FOR 2016-2020.** The Commission will hear alternatives and may choose to provide direction to the Department on possible changes to waterfowl hunting zones. The Pacific Flyway entertains changes to waterfowl hunting zones every five years, and potential changes must be noticed by Dec. 1, 2015 to receive consideration. Any changes accepted by the Pacific Flyway will not take effect until autumn 2016 and would remain in effect until autumn 2020, at which time they Department may again suggest changes.

Chairman Burnside reviewed the possible changes/alternatives. He stated support for Alternative #1.

No public comment.

MOTION by Burnside/Turnipseed to recommend the Commission forward Alternative #1, which adds Eureka and Lander counties to the northeastern zone, to the Pacific Flyway Committee; carried with Cook and Emery absent.

**4c. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION ON WILDLIFE COMMISSION POLICIES AGENCY INITIAL REVIEW WITH SUGGESTED ACTIONS.** The Department shall provide the Commission with a report of an initial Commission Policy review. The initial Commission Policy review included an evaluation of relevancy, need, and redundancy of the Commission's current policies. The Department's broad recommendations for potential Commission Policy edits and updates will be provided to the Commission. The Commission may choose to provide direction as to the process for updating existing policies or developing new policies that may be warranted. Any Commission Policy changes, or new policy adoption, would require at least two public meetings prior to adoption.

MOTION by Turnipseed/Rittenhouse to support the agency review of wildlife commission policies as listed in the supporting material; carried with Cook and Emery absent.

**5. CORRESPONDENCE OR COMMUNICATIONS BOARD MEMBERS HAVE RECEIVED.**

No correspondence was reported.

**6. DISCUSSION ON THE RESULTS OF THE SEPTEMBER 25 & 26, 2015 NEVADA BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSION MEETINGS.**

No report was provided.

**7. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION REGARDING ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER COMMITMENTS TO ATTEND UPCOMING WILDLIFE COMMISSION MEETINGS AND TO REPRESENT THE FINDINGS OF THE DOUGLAS COUNTY WILDLIFE ADVISORY BOARD. ONE MEMBER WILL BE DESIGNATED AS A SPOKESMAN FOR THE DOUGLAS COUNTY ADVISORY BOARD.**

Chairman Burnside will attend the Reno meeting.

**8. FOR POSSIBLE ACTION. DISCUSSION TO SCHEDULE THE NEXT WILDLIFE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING.**

Due to a scheduling conflict, the next Douglas County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife meeting is tentatively scheduled for **Monday, January 25, 2016.**

**9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS.**

- Tri County Wildlife Working Group
- Bi-State Sage Grouse

MOTION by Turnipseed/Rittenhouse to adjourn the meeting; carried with Cook and Emery absent.

There being no further business to come before the DCABMW, the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

The minutes of the November 10, 2015 meeting of the Douglas County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife are so approved this 25<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2016.

Respectfully submitted:

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Chairman