

**IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
2270 Old Penitentiary Road
PO Box 7249
Boise, ID 83707**

**IDAHO WOLF DEPREDATION CONTROL BOARD
Minutes of June 16, 2021 Meeting**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Celia Gould, ISDA (Co-chair)
Ed Schriever, Idaho Fish and Game (Co-chair)
Richard Savage
Stephen McGrath
Butch Suor

DEPARTMENT STAFF: Dallas Burkhalter, Office of Attorney General – ISDA
Chanel Tewalt, ISDA
Kelly Neilson, ISDA
Dicsie Gullick, ISDA

OTHERS PRESENT: Jared Hedelius, Wildlife Services
Donna Ralston, Wildlife Services
Martha Wackenhut, Idaho Fish and Game
Matthew Reiber, Division of Financial Management

The meeting was called to order by Co-chair Gould at 10:00 AM MDT.

INTRODUCTIONS

Board members, staff members and others present introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (ACTION ITEM)

Steve McGrath made a motion to approve the minutes of May 19, 2021. It was seconded by Richard Savage. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Kelly Nielsen gave the financial update. The beginning balance in all four funds was \$372,004. Expenses to date, if the invoices going before the Board today were approved would be \$350,769.01, leaving a balance of \$21,234.99

ISDA FISCAL/ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE COSTS

Kelly discussed how ISDA invoices the Board. Currently ISDA charges a flat fee of \$2,000 per year for fiscal and administrative services. However, ISDA would like to switch to using an hourly rate of \$50/hr. Dallas Burkhalter stated that the agreement with ISDA will need to be modified. Co-chair Schriever asked if the \$2,000 invoiced for this year covered the expenses. Kelly stated that quite a bit of time has been used and the flat rate would likely not cover the fiscal and administrative costs. Co-chair Schriever asked Kelly to bring back some assessment of what the expenses based on an hourly rate would be.

APRIL/MAY WILDLIFE SERVICES BILLING

Kelly Nielsen presented the Wildlife Services invoice from April and May in the amount of \$8,526.00. This invoice included aircraft maintenance in January and February, up until the accident as well as April and May. Butch Suor asked how many animals had been taken with this bill. Jared stated that since the last meeting 6 wolves were moved and two more were radio collared. In January and February 4 wolves were moved and 3 were collared.

Steve McGrath made a motion to approve and pay the invoices totaling \$8,526.10. It was seconded by Butch Suor. Motion carried.

Kelly Nielsen presented an invoice from April 1, 2021-May 31, 2021 for personnel and other services in the amount of \$45,603.70 for program support.

Co-chair Schriever made a motion to approve the invoice in the amount of \$45,603.70. It was seconded by Richard Savage.

Steve McGrath made a motion to table the previous motion until additional supporting documentation could be presented, after executive session. It was seconded by Richard Savage. Motion carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Butch Suor made a motion that the Board go into executive session under Idaho Code § 74-206(1)(d) and (f) to consider records that are exempt from disclosure under the Idaho Public Records Law, Idaho Code § 74-106(9). The purpose of the executive session was to confer with legal counsel regarding pending litigation. It was seconded by Co-chair Schriever. The vote was: Co-chair Schriever, aye; Richard Savage, aye; Stephen McGrath, aye; Butch Suor, aye; and Co-chair Gould, aye. Motion carried.

The Board came out of executive session at approximately 11:22 AM MDT.

APRIL/MAY WILDLIFE SERVICES BILLING (ACTION ITEM)

Kelly Nielsen presented the Board with the additional documentation for the invoice. Stephen McGrath made a motion to recover the previous motion, to pay the invoice in the amount of \$45,603.70, from the table. It was seconded by Richard Savage. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION REGARDING WILDLIFE SERVICES WORK PLAN

Jared Hedelius presented the Wildlife Services Work Plan which included salaries, supplies, and travel and vehicles to carry out activities. He stated that the amounts were placeholders and the money could be amended within the category. The aviation flat rate was also in the work plan, which budgeted for 200 helicopter hours and 80 fixed wing hours for fiscal year 2022. The agreement was for \$650,000.

The Board discussed the work plan, specifically how much control the Board would have once it was signed, whether or not ungulates were controlled and what the minimum Wildlife services would need for Fiscal Year 2022. Jared stated that in order to keep personnel at the current level and to do the scheduled amount of flying, the would be minimum \$480,000.

Butch Suor stated that he was concerned with amount per wolf that the work plan represented. Jared stated that in fiscal year 2020 there were 90 wolves removed and an additional 8 wolves collared, which worked out to \$4800 per wolf that was moved and \$4400 per wolf that was collared. However, in addition to the wolves being moved and collared, there were 205 investigations conducted during fiscal year 2020. These investigations are critical to the livestock producers because if no investigation is completed, they can receive no reimbursement for depredation.

Co-chair Gould asked what amounts the Board has approved in the past and whether work agreements have changed over the years.

Jared stated that work plans have ranged from \$350,000-\$550,000 with an average between \$400,000-\$450,000.

Steve McGrath read a message from Wyatt Prescott stating that some producers would prefer money to be spent on removal of wolves, not investigation.

Richard Savage stated that he knew of a handful of individuals who had been depredated and they rely on the continuing support of Wildlife Services. He stated that he would like to know who Mr. Prescott had been talking with. He then told of a lady who was afraid she was going to go out of business because of depredation and stated that the Board could not turn away from people who are being hurt. Those being depredated need protection.

Co-chair Schriever stated that the Board needed to be careful in wanting fewer investigations. If investigations are not conducted, Wildlife Services would be implementing a control actions on instances that did not involve wolves. He asked Jared how many of the 205 investigations from Fiscal year 2020 were confirmed wolves. Jared stated that 50% of the investigations were confirmed to be wolf related. Investigations are important to focus control actions.

Steve McGrath stated that the inquiry into livestock producers was just to seek advice on how to allocate money.

Co-chair Schriever stated that he would rather have money spent on control over investigation, unless it limits the ability to issue a control action.

DISCUSSION – OTHER CONTRACTS

There were no other contracts to discuss.

DISCUSSION – IDAHO FISH AND GAME

Martha Wackenhut stated that Idaho Fish and Game did not have a work plan to present to the Board. The commission will meet in July and the work plan will come later.

2021/2022 WILDLIFE SERVICES WORK PLAN (ACTION ITEM)

Butch Suor made a motion to approve the work plan changing the amount from \$650,000 to \$480,000. The motion died for lack of a second.

Kelly Nielsen stated that while the annual amounts of the funds the Board would receive totaled approximately \$500,000, he wanted to remind the Board that there was \$227,000 left over in the account to be used as the Board saw fit.

Co-chair Schriever made a motion to accept the work plan as presented with the caveat that Jared and Wildlife Services be as responsive as possible to the Board as to how the money is spent. He also pointed out that the contract was written as “not to exceed” and not all the money budgeted would necessarily be spent. The motion died for lack of a second.

Richard Savage asked Jared what would happen if a number less than \$480,000 was granted. Jared stated that Wildlife Services would first focus on maintaining the full-time employees, but the 3 seasonal employees would not be able to stay, and response time would be longer. When asked exactly how much cutting the seasonal employees would save, Jared answered approximately \$25,000. In addition, the cut in staff would mean that Wildlife Services would lose the ability to target certain parts of the state as staffing would be based on seniority.

Co-chair Schriever made a motion to fund the Wildlife Services agreement in the amount of \$640,000. It was seconded by Co-chair Gould.

There was discussion regarding the total working budget for the fiscal year and Kelly Nielsen pointed out that the total amount of available funds is approximately \$699,000. He also reiterated that the work plan was written as “up to” and Wildlife Services is not likely to spend the entire amount. He stated that the new policy of having April and May billed and presented in June means that part of the money budgeted was paid in the previous fiscal year.

The Board also discussed the lack of other contracts. There have been some people say they wanted to get some of the work that Wildlife Services does, but they did not present any plans.

Dallas Burkhalter asked the Board to give ISDA direction to ask for requests for private work plans. He asked what the Board would like to see from private contractors.

Co-chair Gould stated that Wildlife Services has been very responsive and there would likely be money left over from the \$640,000 and private contracts would give flexibility for rough patches.

Steve McGrath announced that his term expires on July 1 and that he would no longer be a member of the Board. He felt it was inappropriate to vote on the motion and he would be abstaining. He then thanked all that have helped with the Board.

Butch Suor asked if either director had been contacted by other people wanting a contract.

Co-chair Schriever stated that he had received a phone call from an individual that had no desire to make money or be contracted. He is permitted under the federal Airborne Hunting Act and does coyote control. He offered to be helpful, but the Aerial Hunting Act is not recreational hunting, it augments control actions.

Co-chair Gould asked for a vote on the motion before the Board. The vote was co-chair Gould, aye; co-chair Schriever, aye; Richard Savage, aye; Butch Suor, opposed; Steve McGrath, abstained. Motion carried.

OTHER CONTRACTS

No other contracts were presented, but ISDA will need direction if the Board would like other contracts presented.

Richard Savage suggested having a form that prospective contractors could fill out.

Co-chair Schriever stated that the Board needs to consider how best to add capacity to the program. The determination of cause of depredation is critical, but having an at will contract in place to expand capacity could be helpful. The Board will need to know about the availability of contractors, rate and response time.

Co-chair Gould stated that ISDA could put together a template for contracts as well as a small questionnaire to gather the required information.

IDAHO FISH AND GAME AGREEMENT

Idaho Fish and Game did not present a new agreement.

IDAHO WOLF DEPREDATION CONTROL BOARD STRATEGIC PLAN & PERFORMANCE MEASURES (ACTION ITEM)

Chanel Tewalt presented the Strategic Plan and Performance Measures, but stated it would be updated to show a the \$640,000 amount for Wildlife Services.

Richard Savage made a motion to adopt the Strategic Plan and Performance Measures with the change of Bench mark to \$640,000. It was seconded by Steve McGrath. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Stephen McGrath made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:55 PM MDT. It was seconded by Butch Suor. Motion carried.