

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
2270 Old Penitentiary Road
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Boise, ID 83707

IDAHO WOLF DEPREDATION CONTROL BOARD
Minutes of December 8, 2021 Meeting

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

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Martha Wackenhut, Idaho Fish and Game
Katie Oelrich, Idaho Fish and Game
Jared Hedelius, Idaho Wildlife Services
Donna Ralston, Idaho Wildlife Services
Emily Merrigan, Idaho Animal Damage Control Board
Trevor Walch, Predator Control Corp
Cameron Mulrone, Idaho Cattle Association
Dick Jordan, Interested party
Benjamin Howard, Interested party

The meeting was called to order by Co-chair Schriever at 10:01 a.m. MDT.

INTRODUCTIONS

Board members, staff members and others present introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (ACTION ITEM)

Co-chair Gould made a motion to approve the minutes of October 14, 2021. It was seconded by Butch Suor. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Cameron Mulrone offered support of industry for the Board for their work on behalf of the state of Idaho.

REVIEW FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Kelly Nielsen presented a financial update to the Board concerning the four funds that comprise its budget. The Livestock/Sheep fund had a balance of \$86,788.69 at the start of the fiscal year. \$37,560.13 has been spent, leaving a balance of \$49,228.56. The general fund had a balance of \$392,000 at the beginning of the fiscal year. No money has been spent from that fund, so it had a balance of \$392,000. The Idaho Fish and Game fund had a balance of \$35,127.59 at the beginning of the fiscal year and had an approximate transfer of \$300,000 giving a balance of \$335,426.00. The state match fund had a balance of \$227,547.00 at the beginning of the fiscal year. No money has been spent from that fund, so it has the same balance. Kelly went on to say that the livestock excess fund has been depleted and currently contains \$0.66. So far this year, livestock has collected \$22,685 and sheep have collected \$11,644.

REVIEW INVOICES

Kelly Nielsen presented the flat rate Wildlife Services invoice from June and August in the amounts of \$1,750.00 and \$525.00. These invoices include fixed wing and helicopter flights.

Kelly Nielsen presented an invoice from Wildlife Services for November 2021 for personnel, travel and other services in the amount of \$118,696.12 for program support.

Kelly Nielsen presented an invoice from Wildlife Services for September 2021 for personnel, travel and other services in the amount of \$19,046.85 for program support.

Butch Suor stated that he was in favor of approving invoices from this fiscal year, but believed prior invoices should not be approved and felt 60 days was adequate time to send invoices to the Board.

Kelly Nielsen presented an invoice from Wildlife Services for November 2021 for personnel compensation and travel expenses (fleet charges for April, May and June of 2021) for program support. The charge for \$33.94 was personnel compensation from pay period 16. The fleet charges were for specific vehicles that were used 100% of the time for wolf depredation events.

Butch voiced his unhappiness with billings from the prior fiscal year.

Co-chair Schriever asked why there was a separate \$19,046 billing and where the \$33.64 charge came from. Jared Hedelius stated that they had one employee specific to wolf trapping and when his term was up, he did not return and he had some time that needed to be paid out.

Co-chair Gould made a motion to approve all Wildlife Services invoices. It was seconded by Richard Savage. The vote was, co-chair Gould, aye; Richard Savage, aye; co-chair Schriever, aye; Butch Suor, nay. Motion carried.

Kelly Nielsen presented an invoice from Idaho Fish and Game in the amount of \$111,607.72. \$108,750.00 was for the Foundation of Wildlife Management. There is a \$200,000 agreement

between Idaho Fish and Game and Wildlife Services regarding the taking of wolves. \$108,750 of the \$200,000 is this billing.

Butch Suor asked if the Department of Fish and Game has received the invoice for the remaining \$92,000.

Martha Wackenhut answered that they have received the second invoice and are in process of reviewing the invoice and documentation.

Co-chair Schriever added that Idaho Fish and Game pays 4WM and the Board reimburses the payment. They have used the entire \$200,000 and the next bill will be closed out.

Co-chair Gould made a motion to pay the interagency billing in the amount of \$111,607.72. It was seconded by Richard Savage. Motion carried.

REVIEW WILDLIFE SERVICES ACTIVITIES SUMMARIES

Jared Hedelius presented the Review of Wildlife Services Activities for the first quarter of the fiscal year. Between July 1, 2021 and September 30, 2021 there were 84 investigations for 46 different livestock producers in 13 counties. 49 (~58%) were confirmed wolf predations, 5 were probable, 28 were possible and 2 were other predations.

Jared then compared numbers from quarter one in the previous fiscal year. There were 106 investigations with 71 (~67%) confirmed wolf predations. There were 22 less investigations and 22 less confirmed predations during this fiscal year as compared to the same quarter last year.

Of the 84 investigations in quarter one this fiscal year, 29 were on private property and 25 were on forest service land. There were 53 control actions over 16 Game Management Units (GMU). 21 wolves were removed in 7 GMUs and one wolf was collared in GMU 39.

The aircraft used included 10 flights, 8 fixed wing flights and 2 helicopter flights. 30.4 hours were flown and 14 wolves were removed by helicopter. The employee hours were 3100.5 with expenditures totaling \$120,446.12.

Co-chair Schriever asked if the decline in investigations was due to fewer predation complaints or fewer investigations completed. Jared answered that they investigate all complaints, so fewer investigations is due to fewer complaints.

Jared Hedelius presented the Review of Wildlife Services Activities semi-annual report. Between July 1, 2021 and November 30, 2021 there were 110 investigations for 51 livestock producers in 17 counties. 65 (~59%) were confirmed wolf predations, 7 were probable, 34 were possible and 4 were listed as other. In 2020 at this time there were 130 investigations, so there are 20 less this year.

Of the 110 investigations, 44 were on private land and 28 were on forest service land. There were 67 control actions with 21 wolves being removed and 2 collared.

The aircraft used was for 12 flights, 9 fixed wing and 3 helicopter and employee hours were 4786.25.

Butch Suor pointed out that with 21 removals through November his calculations were that it was costing \$5700 per wolf.

Jared Hedelius pointed out that there was another wolf removed in December, but his report was only through November 30th.

FISH AND GAME ACTIVITY REPORT

Martha Wackenhut presented the Fish and Game Activity Report from July 1, 2021 through November 30, 2021. Idaho Fish and Game has implemented actions to protect elk in elk management zones and in areas where there are depredation management plans as well as areas where there are histories of conflicts. Fish and Game is making plans for wolf capture in the Lolo Elk Zone and potentially in the adjacent GMUs, 7 and 9. The capture/collar activities are scheduled to begin in January if weather permits.

Fish and Game is also working to reimburse hunters for their cost with wolf harvesting. The one invoice approved was for 66 wolves. Twenty-two of those wolves were in chronic depredation zones and 40 were in units identified as important for elk.

DISCUSSION ON WOLF COLLARING

Co-chair Schriever introduced the topic and stated that this is a proposal to the Board to utilize money for radio collaring wolves for conflict management. New authority was granted by the legislature in SB2211 which gives the flexibility to contract with vendors that are not government agencies. Private contractors are required to go through the procurement processes that are in place. A formal request was made to use existing mechanism under Idaho Fish and Game. We received a letter from the Division of Purchasing that the contractors would have to agree to honor the price agreements currently held by Fish and Game for the Board to utilize them.

Co-chair Schriever also reminded the Board that there is likely to be a surplus of \$150,000, and if it turns out to be wrong and Wildlife Services uses the entire amount, there is \$200,000 of money covered forward from previous years that can be utilized.

Katie Oelrich of Idaho Fish and Game presented the Board with a Wolf Radio Collaring Prospectus outlining the proposal. She began by explaining the four main components to procuring a vendor: 1) helicopter; 2) fixed wing aircraft; 3) immobilization drugs; and 4) radio collars. Most of Fish and Game vendors have capture crews, but most do not have veterinarian staff. The Fish and Game veterinarian provides the drugs to use.

Katie went on to explain that Fish and Game uses radio collars for other animals and orders them on a regular basis. The cost is between \$1,200-\$2,000 each depending on model and it is 2

months from when they order until they receive them. Fish and Game does have some collars on hand and they have ordered 10 others, but if more are needed, she recommends the Board act quickly.

Katie continues explaining that operations would take place when pilots are available and when winter conditions are good. Snow on the ground and experienced pilots have the best chance of success. Helicopter vendors range from \$1700 per hour to \$2300 per hour depending on the pilot's experience level and type of helicopter. Fixed wing support is around \$350 per hour. The low-level fixed wing aircraft helps track a large number of wolves while the helicopter focuses on one or two animals.

Katie explained that collared wolves make for easier removals in the future.

Co-chair Gould asked what Fish and Game needed to start collaring wolves.

Co-chair Schriever explained that this would need to be a Board action as an activity with the Support of Fish and Game. If the Board is going to do collaring in the long term, the Board will need to work on the procurement process. The Board would need to approve development of a contract with Idaho Fish and Game, authorizing Fish and Game to develop a contracting mechanism with up to \$150,000 to be spent.

Co-chair Schriever asked if \$150,000 is worth collaring 20-25 wolves. Katie Oelrich stated that collars are very helpful to fish and Game and Jared Hedelius added that it would be money well spent. The faster that offending animals can be located the quicker the conflict can be stopped.

Co-chair Gould made a motion for the Board to support the collaring of wolves project, and asks Fish and Game to facilitate the contracts to accomplish this with funding not to exceed \$150,000. It was seconded by Richard Savage.

Butch Suor asked if Tundra Air should be on the list and asked how the wolf tag money was being spent and added that the Department had plenty of money to work with.

The vote was Co-chair Gould, aye; Richard Savage, aye; Co-chair Schriever, aye; Butch Suor, nay. Motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Co-chair Schriever adjourned the meeting at 11:36 a.m. MDT.