

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

IDAHO WOLF DEPREDATION CONTROL BOARD
Minutes of October 26, 2023, Meeting
Meeting was live streamed via Teams

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Chanel Tewalt, ISDA (Co-chair)
Jim Fredericks, Idaho Fish and Game (Co-chair)
Richard Savage
Jerry Cloninger
Jon Goode (via livestream)

DEPARTMENT STAFF: Lloyd Knight – ISDA
Katie Oelrich, Idaho Fish and Game – IDFG – via livestream
Tricia Hebdon, Idaho Fish and Game – IDFG
Jon Rachael – IDFG
Dallas Burkhalter, Office of Attorney General – ISDA
Marshall Toryanski, Office of Attorney General – ISDA
Kelly Nielsen – ISDA
Denise Lauerman – ISDA

OTHERS PRESENT: Jared Hedelius – USDA Wildlife Services, Idaho Office
Donna Ralston – USDA Wildlife Services, Idaho Office
Trevor Walch – Predator Control Corporation
Dexton Lake – Idaho Farm Bureau
Suzanne Stone – International Wildlife Coexistence Network
Brad Carlson – Capital Press
Jeff Abrams – ICL
Dallas Gudgell – IWCN
Tara Jackson – via livestream
Joshua Uriarte – via livestream
Butch Suor – via livestream
Brad Carlson, Capital Press
Janet Jessup – via livestream
Sylvia – via livestream
Bailey Woolf, Idaho Sportsman – via livestream
Patxi Larrocea-Phillips, ICA/IWGA – via livestream
T Jackson – via livestream
Jonathan Oppenheimer – ICL – via livestream
Tina Fuller – via livestream
Rene Hersey – via livestream
Pamela Williams – via livestream
Levi Scott – via livestream
Greg LeDonne – via livestream
Megan Smith – livestream

The meeting was called to order by Co-chair Fredericks at 1:01 p.m. MT.

INTRODUCTIONS

Board members, staff members, and others present introduced themselves.

DISCUSSION – USDA/WILDLIFE SERVICES COMPETITIVE DIRECTIVE

Co-chair Fredericks started the meeting stating the board is here to discuss the producer proposals, as well as how Wildlife Services fit into the plan utilizing producers.

Jared Hedelius stated that Wildlife Services would not compete against private contractors. He discussed the USDA/Wildlife Services Competitive Directive, stating that this is a national directive. Jared referred to page 3, which he called the “meat and potatoes” of the document, specifically:

Policy 6. Wildlife Services (WS) recognizes that requesters of wildlife damage management (WDM) services have the right to enter into cooperative agreements with WS or with a private WDM business – whichever best meets the requester’s needs. Accordingly, WS will:

d. not provide direct assistance services at the same time and same location or tract of land where a private business or individual is independently conducting related activities with similar methods.

Jared stated again that WS will not compete with private contractors in the same locations at the same times; if they are contracted with the wolf board, WS may know them, what they are doing and where, and if they are not contracted with the wolf board, WS won’t know who they are, what they are doing or their location.

Co-chair Fredericks stated that all of the proposals were written very broadly.

DISCUSSION – PRODUCER BUDGET AND PROPOSALS (ACTION ITEMS)

Co-chair Fredericks stated that Co-Chair Tewalt would discuss the FY24 Budget. Co-chair Tewalt replied that the handouts she passed out included the budget for the wolf board; the first one as the budget stands currently and the second one indicating commitments that have been made so far.

Co-chair Fredericks responded that the board would now briefly go through the proposals.

Co-chair Fredericks asked if anyone was present at the meeting from Lemhi County. Co-chair Fredericks gave a brief overview indicating the wolf zone(s) listed in the Lemhi County proposal. Jon Goode, board member, replied that the proposal gives a total amount only and did not break down where the money is allocated. Co-chair Fredericks responded that they have left that open, but it is understood that this proposal is more ground-based.

Co-chair Fredericks added that there was not a producer proposal template developed, so that the producers could make their case within the proposal.

Richard Savage, board member, indicated to Dallas Burkhalter, Office of Attorney General, that the agreements need to be written in the correct manner. To which Dallas responded that once the producers are chosen, the draft agreement(s) will be put together.

Co-chair Fredericks asked if anyone was present at the meeting from the Valley County Davis Cattle Company proposal. Co-chair then gave a brief overview indicating the wolf zone(s) listed in the Valley County proposal.

Co-chair Fredericks asked if anyone was present at the meeting from the Siddoway proposal for Fremont, Jefferson, and Bonneville counties. Trevor Walch, Predator Control Corporation, responded that he would be speaking for this proposal as well as the Hunzeker and Faulkner proposals.

Trevor Walch, Predator Control Corporation, gave a brief overview of the Siddoway proposal indicating the wolf zone(s) listed in the Siddoway proposal.

Trevor Walch, Predator Control Corporation, then gave a brief overview of the Hunzeker proposal followed by a brief overview of the Faulkner proposal indicating the wolf zone(s) listed within each proposal.

Co-chair Fredericks handed out two maps: the first of Wolf-Caused Livestock Losses FY2018-2022 and the second of Total Wolf Harvest Mortality Harvest Seasons 2016-2021. Included with the maps was an Evaluation Criteria handout indicating a scoring system to better prioritize and rank each proposal.

Co-chair Fredericks went on to say that the board needs to evaluate, choose, and award funding. Jim stated this is criteria used in other processes. He stated that using frequency of depredations makes good sense, and when evaluating the proposals, to keep in mind that the maps don't show everything.

Co-chair Tewalt added that they appreciate trying to apply a system because a template wasn't supplied to the producers, and it may be hard to compare their projects. Co-chair Fredericks agreed, and stated that some proposals are broad, and some are in areas of no depredation. This will aid in future proposals, based on rough criteria, going forward, as funds are awarded.

Co-chair Tewalt stated that some parts of Idaho deal with wolves differently than other parts of Idaho. She further said that Wildlife Services responds to all investigations throughout the state. And added that wolves taken through the F4WM process are not eligible for reimbursement through these agreements.

Richard Savage, board member, stated that coming from the livestock industry, we just don't know the answers. This program is different, and that's exciting. We'll probably gain knowledge of what may work or not work. Each proposal is different and in different areas.

Jon Goode, board member asked if the board is funding to the full ask. To which Richard replied, no, in his experience proposals for grants and projects are usually presented at 10-15 percent over, probably fund 85-90 percent. Jon then responded, asking how the funding works, if it is by reimbursement. Co-chair Fredericks replied yes. Co-chair Tewalt added that it almost never goes to the total amount. That it must be an eligible expense to be reimbursed.

Richard Savage, board member, stated that it makes total sense. A lot of money, but worth the investment, livestock producers are losing money each year. The board needs to work from the information that they have.

Jerry Cloninger, board member stated that three of the proposals include aerial work on private, public, and federal land. Co-chair Fredericks responded that it is up to the contractor to ensure they have the necessary authorizations and that this will clearly be spelled out in the contract. Wildlife Services has that authority. Co-chair Tewalt added that the board stipulates that this shall be a legal process, that producers must get the necessary authorizations. Co-chair Fredericks stated that for kill authorizations it shall be clear that this is not a blanket kill authorization, the person with a hunting or trapping license cannot just go wherever.

Jon Goode, board member stated that the ballpark number from the prior board meeting was \$125,000. He'd like to see time frames as the proposals vary. He added that if the board funds 80 percent of all five proposals, then commit to a review halfway through the cycle for the assurance that progress is being made. Jon further questioned if the board says \$125,000 subject to a mid-point evaluation. If it is working, then great, put more money into it. The board is obligated to have some assurance prior to spending the entire amount of the proposal.

Co-chair Fredericks responded that at the last meeting since this is a pilot program, the board will learn as they go, \$50,000 is a starting point. Some proposals fit the criteria, and some do not. If the board had seen ten proposals totaling \$300,000, does the board feel the need to fund all of them, is the board comfortable funding all of them to learn as we move forward. The board will meet again in November or December, and we will see the most activities in March.

Jerry Cloninger, board member responded that he would hate to limit someone halfway through the season as wolves are moving dependent on the season. Co-chair Fredericks suggested asking Trevor Walch, if the intent is not to cut them off, but to give a 6-month grant with a check in 2-months later, how does Trevor see that idea. Trevor Walch, Predator Control Corporation, responded that the proposals would start on the ground because it is cheaper, than January, February, and March move to aerial work, and there is not much work beyond April. Trevor added that he had no issue with a check in.

Jon Goode, board member, replied that if ground is in the early part of the season, 30-40 percent, then the rest of the amount later? To which Trevor replied yes.

Co-chair Tewalt stated that all the work must be in the state of Idaho. This is on the agenda as an action item for consideration. The board can take it up. Jon Goode, board member asked if they could decide on an amount over a period of time. Co-chair Fredericks responded yes; the board should decide on an amount. If \$50,000 is not enough, then set an amount. Then decide on five proposals as per the dates that the producers have listed in their proposals.

Dallas Burkhalter, Office of Attorney General, stated that if the board stays at \$50,000, maybe the top two proposals, then adjust to a certain percentage, drop game management units (GMUs), and note which areas to include, then the board can take the next step. Co-chair Fredericks responded that the board should fund the proposal, but not certain GMUs, they don't want wolves harvested that aren't causing any problems. Dallas stated that next year the board should put out specific details prior to receiving applications.

Jerry Cloninger, board member, wondered if halfway through the season, what if other producers want to join in. Co-chair Fredericks replied that there was no deadline originally stated, if funding had been rewarded, the board could agree to another producer. To which Richard Savage, board member, stated that it could affect the dollar amount the state gives the wolf board next year. Richard went on to say that if this program catches on, the board could lobby for more money.

Co-chair Tewalt stated that this is new to the board. The board is not altering the overall budget but is making amendments to how the same amount is used, targeted to various areas. The money for this program is not from an overage, it is not more money added to the budget. Kelly Nielsen, ISDA, agreed that the numbers the board is talking about are within the amount allocated to the board.

Co-chairs Tewalt and Fredericks both asked if anyone wanted to introduce a motion. Co-chair Tewalt made a motion to amend the June motion to fund all five applications at 80 percent of each project including a mid-point check in. Applications total is \$156,000, and \$125,000 would be 80 percent of that. It was seconded by Jon Goode, board member.

Jerry Cloninger, board member, added that if this is a pilot program that the board should think of funding the applicants at 100 percent for the first year to see how things go. Jon Goode, board member, wondered if the board could amend their motion at the mid-point.

Co-chair Tewalt responded that the producers would want a clear expectation of their season. Co-chair Fredericks stated that 80 percent of their totals allows all projects to show what they can do and is two and one-half times more than the June dollar amount.

Co-chair Tewalt added that the mid-point check in would be per proposal, to which Dallas Burkhalter replied that the board could write one date in the agreement for all.

Richard Savage, board member asked Trevor Walch if 80 percent of their proposal would be a negative to the producers if they are still bidding on wolf work in other states, to which Trevor replied that he didn't think it would be an issue, that it might just make scheduling more challenging.

Co-chair Tewalt stated that adding a mid-point check in would be for the wolf board to see the data, that it wouldn't mean altering the contract mid-stream.

Richard Savage, board member, wondered if 80 percent would limit the contractors and they wouldn't be as effective as they could have been. Co-chair Fredericks responded that the producers should go forward knowing that 80 percent is what they have. The producers should focus on certain areas if funded at 80 percent vs the broad scope of real estate they proposed.

Co-chair Tewalt asked Kelly Nielsen, ISDA, the amount if contracts funded at full amount vs 80 percent. Kelly responded that not including IDFG projects, the amount would be \$200,000 vs \$180,000 surplus funds. Co-chair Tewalt replied that the \$50,000 amount taken out of the one-time sub account does not get replenished.

Co-chair Fredericks stated that the board has a motion and a second on the table. Co-chair added that the intent with the motion is 50 percent, 80 percent, 100 percent, not splitting each proposal differently. She added that she didn't want the motion to hamper the work. Then stated 90 percent funding.

Dallas Burkhalter, Office of Attorney General, stated that the motion can be retracted. Co-chair Tewalt and Jon Goode, board member both agreed okay.

Co-chair Tewalt made a motion to fund each producer at 90 percent with a mid-term check in. It was seconded by Jeffy Cloninger, board member.

Jon Goode, board member, stated a different amount of \$140,625 vs \$190,000 at the end of the year. To which Co-chair Fredericks replied that this is a learning opportunity.

Motion carried.

OTHER BUSINESS

Co-chairs will work with Dallas and Marshall on the agreements to move as quickly as possible. Kelly Nielsen, ISDA, asked that an internal contract for \$125,000 also be drawn up at this time.

The Board identified December 14th at 9:00 a.m. for the next meeting.

Reimbursements can be settled with Denise.

ADJOURNMENT

2:21 p.m.