

MINUTES
Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board
May 25, 2016

Celia Gould, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:02 am. Those in attendance were: Carl Rey, Board member; Ed Schriever, Fish and Game; Brian Oakey, ISDA; Todd Grimm, Wildlife Services; Donna Ralston, Wildlife Services; James Stoll, ISDA; Kelly Nielsen, ISDA; Janis Perry, ISDA. Attending by phone were Board members Tony McDermott and Richard Savage.

Visitors in attendance were: Ron Marquart, Defenders of Wildlife; Suzanne Stone, Defenders of Wildlife; Melanie Brown; Chanel Tewalt, ISDA; Riely Geritz, ISDA intern; Cole Lickley, ISDA intern; Dustin Winston, ISDA intern; Benn Brocksome, Governor's Office; Lynne Lamprecht, Great Old Broads for Wilderness; Lynda Squire; Roger Squire; Rick Kartes; Synthia Hernandez; Steve Goodall; Gene Abrams; and Alexandra Delis-Abrams.

Celia mentioned that the Board needed to catch up with approving meeting minutes. Carl moved that the December 7, 2015 minutes be approved. Ed seconded the motion. Motion carried. Tony moved that the February 8, 2016 minutes be approved. Richard seconded the motion. Motion carried. Carl moved that the September 14, 2015 minutes be approved. Richard seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Election of officers occurred next. Celia explained that the co-chairs are the directors of the Department of Agriculture and the Fish and Game Department by statute. Richard nominated Carl to remain as secretary. Tony seconded the nomination. Motion carried. Richard then nominated Tony to remain as treasurer. Carl asked if Tony and Richard will be reappointed since their terms end June 30, 2016. Brian indicated that the reappointment is up to the governor's office. Therefore, the consensus was to wait until the next meeting for any other elections.

In his fiscal report Kelly explained that the August expenses on the Tracking Report were actually for work performed in the previous fiscal year. The expenses paid in November, February, and April are payments for this year. He anticipates a similar situation for this year as Donna commented that Wildlife Services bills for the fourth quarter would be sent in July. Kelly stated that the livestock and sheep fund had received approximately \$75,000 in revenues so far this year as expected. He asked for questions, but there were none.

Brian opened discussion on the budget request for FY18 by explaining that the Board will be carrying forward a sizable balance. In prior years the Board has requested \$400,000 in general fund money. It is up to the Board to decide what the request will be. Brian indicated that he had

talked with industry representatives who felt that with their payments, the general fund money is important to them for this work.

Todd updated the Board on the Wolf Depredation Investigations and Control Actions of the Idaho Wildlife Services. The update through April 30, 2016 is attached. Wildlife Services conducted 75 depredation investigations related to wolf complaints from July 1, 2015 through April 30, 2016. Of those, about 70% involved confirmed depredations. This number was down from the same period in 2015. Based on their investigations, the minimum number of confirmed and probable livestock depredations due to wolves during the reporting period was: 6 cows killed, 28 calves killed, 120 sheep killed and 3 dogs killed.

There were no confirmed wolf depredations in the State from October 17, 2015 to March 21, 2016 – a total of 155 days. That is the longest Idaho has been wolf depredation free since 1999! By comparison in 2009-2010, there were 119 depredations with an estimated 856 wolves.

Wildlife Services removed 50 wolves during the reporting period and caught 3 in the act. Wildlife Services removed 20 wolves to protect big game herds. A total 35 wolves were removed via aerial control efforts in 38 flights that lasted a total of 155 hours.

The 18 Wildlife Services employees performed work with this Agreement for an estimated total cost of \$494,936.59. They drove approximately 146,286 miles while conducting wolf related duties during the reporting period. Todd indicated that there are nine actions currently open – 2 in the Clearwater, 3 in the Southwest, and 4 in the Salmon.

Carl asked how many depredations were for sheep. Todd said he thought that 15 depredations involved sheep.

Ed distributed the Fish and Game Wolf Depredation Control Actions report. He explained that all the work was conducted within the Lolo Elk Management Zone (Game Management Units 10 and 12). Four wolves from four packs were marked during January and February, 2016. Twenty wolves were removed from the Lolo Zone February 5-8, 2016. Expenditures were a little greater than the \$75,000 under the cooperative agreement with the Wolf Board with the majority of the cost for helicopter time. No questions were asked of Ed's report.

Regarding the Work Plan proposal from the Fish and Game for next year, Ed explained that their funding request to continue the Lolo work was reduced to \$40,000. He indicated that they may request a change in the Work Plan funding in the future. Tony asked for Ed to enlighten the Board on elk management in the region. Ed explained that they are about 50% below objective in that area, both in cow/calf ratio and population numbers. He stated that he would have to check to see when the herd comp survey counts would be done in that area. However, he did say

that with increased GPS capabilities, elk and deer age specific mortality was more accurate. He agreed to get back with information on the monitoring schedule. Carl moved to approve the Fish and Game Work Plan proposal. Tony seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Brian explained that updates to the Strategic Plan are due to be filed by July 1. Suggested changes involve rewording Goal 2 for clarification and adding a sentence to the Summary. Since the Board's role is clearly outlined in statute, the Strategic Plan and Performance Report are fairly clear cut. The Performance Report approval could be put off so that end of year activity could be included, along with the Fish and Game information. Carl moved that the Strategic Plan edits be accepted. Richard seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Todd explained that the Work/Financial Plan with Wildlife Services for next year requests \$582,583.48. This is mostly for collaring more wolves. Carl stated that he appreciated Todd's concise and informative reporting. Tony moved to approve the Work/Financial Plan with Wildlife Services. Richard seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Back to the Budget Request for FY 18, Brian asked for a recommendation from the Board. Carl asked that since this was the third time around, were there any trends. Brian stated that the request from Wildlife Services is an increase of \$100,000, but there appear to be fewer complaints. Celia explained that the Cattlemen and Wool Growers are receptive to continuing the work. Carl moved that the Board again request \$400,000 from the general fund supplemented by \$210,000 from sportsmen and livestock industry. Richard asked if the carry-over would be \$500,000. Brian indicated that it would be reduced by the fourth quarter work. Ed stated that he felt the current carry-over would pay for the future since with the sunset in 2019 the contemplated funding beyond then is uncertain. He stated that the number of wolves (750) has stayed consistent and conflict management has helped. 108 packs of wolves is 4 to 5 times the recovery standard. He stated that Fish and Game supports the request. Tony stated that if we were to have a bad snow year, the balance could quickly change. Richard stated that we need to keep the reserve to be prepared so he seconded the motion to request \$400,000. Motion carried.

In Other Business Brian explained that the Performance Report is due September 1. He suggested having a mid-August conference call meeting to approve it. Carl congratulated those that attended the meeting as visitors. He stated that it was first time in about ten meetings that the Board had visitors. He suggested that future agendas include a section for public testimony. Celia offered each visitor five minutes to speak to the Board.

Lynne Lamprecht asked Ed how many wolves Fish and Game estimates that they will kill this year and what proportion of removals are killings. Ed explained that Fish and Game manages hunting and trapping seasons and that 267 wolves were taken, split roughly evenly between hunting and trapping. With the number of wolves remaining consistent, they felt that control

action on livestock and reproduction were balancing each other. She stated that she felt that interests from non-hunters are not being heard.

Ron Marquart commented that he felt that the \$400,000 could be better spent on health care expansion. He stated that he spent two weeks in the Frank Church wilderness and did not hear a wolf. He also stated that he acquired property in Unit 39 and had not heard a wolf and asked Todd if wolves were there. Todd stated that northeast of Idaho City there was a depredation on sheep and that wolves are concentrated in that area.

Suzanne Stone thanked the Board for the opportunity to attend the meeting and to speak. She stated that she had requested before but this is the first time she had received notice. She said she was disappointed that public comment was after the decisions were made and that all the money would be spent on lethal means. She felt that education funding would be a better use of the money. She encouraged the Board to consider non-lethal deterrents. She left a brochure outlining a nine-year project where only 35 sheep were lost to wolves.

Melanie Brown moved from San Diego to what she thought was a wildlife state. She felt that there must be a better way to support wildlife. Ed explained that the Fish and Game funds of up to \$110,000 are not general funds.

Linda Squire shared that she just came back from Yellowstone where Idaho is known as the state that hates wolves. She stated that it was amazing to hear the sound of wolves. She asked if there aren't other ways to spend tax dollars with a different approach than helicopters. She thanked the Board for letting her speak.

Roger Squire said he was an engineer and numbers guy. He asked what the reason for the decrease in depredations in a given area. He wondered how many livestock were in the same area. He also offered his thanks.

Rick Kartes stated that the public did not have access to the papers. Brian stated that he could get them through a Public Records Request. Rick mentioned a sheep rancher presentation using methods to deter wolves including noise and lights. Ed indicated that the Board can choose what methods to use and that there are different opinions on non-lethal methods. He stated that Idaho manages 2/3 the density of wolves that are in Yellowstone at .02/square mile. Celia explained that the Board are not policymakers. The broader decisions come from the legislature. She suggested that we gather up information on "the other side of the story."

Carl again thanked the public for coming. He wanted to remove the doubt that the Board is not aware of non-lethal means. He stated that Wildlife Services always begin with an investigation.

Cynthia Hernandez felt that there are different methods to protect ranchers. She wondered if ranchers could all be required to use lights. She also felt that nature needs to take care of itself. She thought drones might be less expensive than planes.

Celia hoped that all will listen to the other side.

Gene Abrams stated that Idaho could have tourists visiting to see wolves, like in Yellowstone. He felt we should look at how we are spending money. He asked what income comes to the state by killing wolves.

Alexandra Delis-Abrams asked why testimony is being accepted after voting took place. She stated that New Zealand has declared all animals “essential beings.” She also said that people are traveling to Alaska to see wolves, even though in Denali they are declining rapidly. She suggested taking another look at non-lethal methods. She asked that everyone be open since a closed mind is based on fear. She encouraged compassion and respect.

Richard commented that the Board had plenty of information. He stated that he has lived near a research station for a long time where they are trying to develop non-lethal methods. He said some are successful and some are not. He stated that “we are not wolf haters,” but people trying to keep conflicts at a minimum. He appreciates the comments and hopes that all will take a fair look at the other side.

Celia shared a story of getting a llama to protect her goats from coyotes. She adjourned the meeting at 10:49 am.