

MINUTES
Idaho Wolf Depredation Control Board
May 19, 2020

Ed Schriever, Idaho Fish and Game; called the teleconference meeting to order at 1:34pm. Those in attendance by phone were: Board members Richard Savage, Tony McDermott, Stephen McGrath, and Celia Gould; Martha Wackenhut and Toby Boudreau, Idaho Fish and Game; Todd Grimm, USDA – Wildlife Services; Matthew Reiber, Division of Financial Management; Sam, Eaton, Governor’s Office; Dallas Burkhalter and Katy DeVries, OAG - ISDA; Brian Oakey, Kelly Nielsen, and Janis Perry, ISDA. Participating by phone were.

Guests attending also by phone were: Pam Williams, concerned citizen; Ken Cole, Western Watersheds Project; Sean Ellis and Chyla Wilson, Idaho Farm Bureau; Cameron Mulrony, Idaho Cattle Association; and Brad Carlson, Capital Press.

Dallas Burkhalter advised the chair that a motion to amend the agenda was in order. Richard Savage moved and Tony McDermott seconded that the agenda be amended to include review of four unpaid invoices. Celia Gould commented that one of those was an old bill and she would vote no. Motion carried with one dissenting vote.

Ed Schriever introduced and welcomed new Board member Stephen McGrath who expressed appreciation for being appointed to the Board. He commented that he would suggest a housekeeping session to develop procedures for Board approval of invoices.

Following introductions and roll call, Ed Schriever asked for approval of the minutes. Tony McDermott moved that the minutes of the December 4, 2019 meeting be approved as submitted. Celia Gould seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Ed Schriever asked for public comments.

Ken Cole expressed hope that the money was being used responsibly and not just as a subsidy for the livestock industry.

Pamela Williams stated that whether the meeting was by teleconference or in person having a visual of the documents being discussed was important to those who don’t have access to the documents.

Cameron Mulrony expressed appreciation for the management of the wolf species and the protection of the livestock industry.

Kelly Nielsen reviewed the tracking form showing a starting balance of \$533,966 and a current cash balance of \$530,290. He indicated that with outstanding invoices that have not been paid, the cash balance would be \$367,700. After some confusion over which tracking form was being referenced, Ed Schriever clarified that it was by design that this year’s expenses were greater than revenues in order to reduce the cash balance.

Kelly Nielsen then explained how FY21 would be different. The ongoing budget from general funds started at \$400,000. At the governor's request, all state budgets were reduced by 10%, so the budgeted amount was set at \$392,000. An additional reduction of 5% to all state budgets, results in a current budgeted amount for FY21 from general funds of \$372,400. He indicated that this general fund money is used on an annual basis, but the funds would no longer roll over to the next year. He stated that the state match fund would be tracked separately with only interest being added to it from now on. The process will be to use the livestock and sheep sub account money first, followed by the general fund money, and then the remaining state match funds.

Matthew Rieber explained that the governor announced on March 27, 2020 for all agencies statewide to prepare a 5% hold back plan.

Responding to a question about when fish and game funds are used, Kelly explained that they are only used for projects related to ungulates, not for livestock control. Ed Schriever clarified that if any state fish and game license, tag or permit fees are spent on non-fish and game expenses that is considered a diversion of funds and makes Idaho ineligible for approximately \$20M annually of federal wildlife and sportfish restoration funds generated on the sale of sporting equipment.

Kelly Nielsen reminded the group that the procedure for reviewing invoices that have been paid was instituted as a way for the Board to review all bills paid. Stephen McGrath questioned the supporting documentation since the number codes don't mean anything to him. Kelly asked the Board to consider if what was provided was sufficient. Todd Grimm offered to consult with those who put the supporting document together to get additional information. Stephen suggested that any help would be appreciated since he would like more information about the charges. Celia Gould stated that she felt the same way and would not vote to approve. She stated that transparency is utmost and to protect her agency employees in case of an audit. After much discussion about the difficulties of getting information from APHIS in Minneapolis who handles the Wildlife Services billing, Celia moved the approval of the stack of already paid invoices. Tony McDermott seconded the motion. Celia indicated she had no choice to not further jeopardize the department employees who had approved the invoices to be paid. Todd Grimm suggested that if the Board would put together what detail would be satisfactory he would submit that to APHIS. Motion to approve the paid invoices carried with one dissenting vote.

Ed Schriever asked the group to consider the invoices that have not been paid. He explained that at Wildlife Services' request a fixed wing pilot contracted by Fish and Game was used to spot livestock depredating wolves resulting in the taking of 14 problem wolves. Since this was not ungulate work, Fish and Game requests that the \$9,144 be paid not from the fish and game fund. This amount is included in the Fish and Game invoice for \$62,287. Kelly Nielsen asked if there was a hesitancy to attach the original invoice. When Ed said no, Kelly indicated that would be helpful. Celia Gould moved to approve the invoice of May 13, 2020 after receipt of the invoice, including the money for livestock depredation. Stephen McGrath seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Celia Gould moved to hold the Q3 Wildlife Services invoice for \$69,242 for further information. Stephen McGrath seconded the motion. Todd Grimm asked what kind of detail the Board needed. Motion carried.

Much discussion resulted from the old Wildlife Services bill for \$23,852. Todd Grimm indicated that somehow it had slipped through the cracks; the work was done, but never billed. Stephen McGrath moved

that the invoice be suspended for further clarification by Wildlife Services. He also asked the Attorney General's office to research the statute of limitations on such billing and the statutory framework for paying invoices before they had been approved. Dallas Burkhalter indicated he made note of the questions. Celia Gould seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Todd Grimm summarized the Wildlife Service's depredation control report from July 1, 2019 to April 30, 2020. He stated that they have completed 180 investigations, involving 95 producers in 16 counties. He stated that 84 cases (47%) involved confirmed depredations due to wolves. This was a significant decrease from the prior year. In response, Wildlife Services removed 77 wolves and collared five. He indicated that a handful of actions are still open in the state, but they are trending down so he feels that their efforts are working. There are still two months remaining in this fiscal year and most depredations occur during the summer months. In response to a question about the cost per wolf, Todd explained that it changes from year to year and that he feels it is not the most important factor in reporting results since there are many components that cannot be controlled. He stated that the reason they exist is to reduce depredations. He did agree to calculate the five-year figure but cautioned that it is not a way to tell if progress is being made. Stephen McGrath commented that he would like to see that for the budget. Ed Schriever responded that there is a learning curve for a new Board member and finding the wolves causing problems has lots of moving parts.

Todd Grimm outlined the Wildlife Services Work Plan for FY21. He stated that it is identical to the livestock plan for the current year. He also stated that Wildlife Services would be spending all of this year's amount, probably closer to \$550,000. Stephen McGrath asked if the reduction in the budget should be reflected in the plan as well as a provision to submit invoices with a procedure in place. Ed Schriever suggested that the number in the plan was more of a "not to exceed" number. When Todd indicated that Wildlife Services would need a new contract in the next three weeks, Ed suggested a working group to meet next week to develop a procedure. Stephen McGrath, Brian Oakey, Martha Wackenhut, and Dallas Burkhalter will form the working group with Martha coordinating next week's meeting. Ed indicated that this would solve two issues: billings having sufficient documentation and codify the procedure in the work plan.

Martha Wackenhut explained that Fish and Game following their objective of an integrated wildlife management program where ungulate population are below objective, they focused efforts in the Lolo zone. They removed 17 wolves. Their expenses included aviation services and purchase of collars. She indicated that the fuel trailer to facilitate capture and removal activities was nearly ready and that invoice would be coming soon. She explained that the Fish and Game Work Plan for FY21 is similar to the current year primarily for aircraft services and collaring in the Lolo zone.

In response to a question regarding Fish and Game's wolf count, Ed Schriever explained that managing Idaho's wolf population is the Idaho Fish and Game Commission's role and this was the first comprehensive estimate ever conducted providing a baseline summertime estimate of 1,540 wolves. He described how synchronized cameras were used to capture 11 million pictures which were analyzed. He indicated that it is the Commission's desire to manage a smaller population than currently and a strong commitment to reduce conflict with depredating wolves. Tony McDermott shared that the Sportsman's Foundation contracted with 40-50 trappers to harvest 256 non-depredating wolves in North Idaho.

Stephen McGrath suggested that the Fish and Game Work Plan include the same procedure language as the Wildlife Services one. Ed Schriever stated the Board recognizes the need for clarity on billing and contracts.

There being no other business, Ed Schriever indicated it was appropriate to recognize the work that Todd Grimm has done over the years since he is retiring from federal government on May 29. Todd indicated that he enjoyed working with the Board and that he felt they had come a long way. Ed, Richard Savage, and Celia Gould thanked Todd for being a good partner in this difficult and often controversial work.

Ed Schriever adjourned the meeting at 3:48 pm.