

**MSB FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION**

**Special Meeting: June 1, 2023**

**ADF&G Game Season Summary Meeting**

**Minutes**

DSJ Building, Lower Level Conference Room //TEAMS Remote Participation

**Minutes prepared by Ted Eischeid, Planner**

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**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting called to order at 5:07 PM by chair Mike Wood.

**II. ROLL CALL – DETERMINATION OF QUORUM/LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**Present:**

Mike Wood MW

Andy Couch AC

Howard Delo HD

Larry Engel LE

Pete Probasco PP

Kendra Zamzow KZ arrived at 5:09 PM

**Absent:**

Rob Yundt RY

Jim Sykes JS

Tim Hale TH

Quorum established.

MW read the Land Acknowledgement:

*We acknowledge that we are meeting on traditional lands of the Ahtna and Dena'ina people, and we are grateful for their stewardship of the land, fish, and wildlife throughout time immemorial.*

**III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Moved by LE; seconded by HD .**

**Motion passed without objection.**

**IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**V. INTRODUCTIONS/Opening Statement**

**a. FWC**

MW made an opening statement.

**b. ADF&G**

Todd Rinaldi- Area Manager

Tim Peltier- Regional supervisor

Chris Brockman- Acting Palmer Biologist

Rick Merizon- Director

- VI. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (*three minutes per person, for items not scheduled for public hearing*):
1. Jessica Winnestaffer, CNV

VII. PRESENTATIONS

A. Staff Report – Ted Eischeid

1. Draft OR 23-049 Update (PC and Assembly dates).
2. Pending FWC membership changes: Yundt resignation, Tew application
3. My Summer Schedule/Plans
4. Mileage Forms of 2022-23 Fiscal Year Due by June 15.

B. ADF&G

1. Game Season Highlights:

AC: How much pressure on small game hunting? RM: based on our statewide surveys, 3-4 days of annual targeting on average, but with a big range in effort; for waterfowl our effort mirrors national effort, average of 2-3 days, with some hunters putting in bigger efforts.

2. Emerging Issues Summary:

VIII. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

a. FWC/ADF&G Dialogue on Mat-Su Wildlife/Game

HD: Looking at some the data, you like to see a minimum bull/100 cow ratio of 20+... is the predator control program in GMU 16 going to be reinstituted? TP: we have some low numbers, but that is not surprising given the hard winters; we are looking at twinning rates to inform our decisions; some of our data shows that the losses are happening in the summer, which suggests bear predation as a factor rather than wolf predation;

MW: impact of coyotes on moose calves?; CB: Coyotes are effective predators on calves, but we just don't have the coyote numbers to make a major impact on moose; coyotes have had impact on sheep calves in some areas like GMU 20A;

PP: on GMU 14 and 16... data differences?; TR: some long term datasets, but they aren't statistically robust, so only useful for trend analysis; we are trying to incorporate more robust datasets; I can get the FWC more detailed data sets if requested.

KZ: how do you derive population estimates from observations, especially for GMU 14? CB: explained the process, use a stratified process; KZ: do you look at habitat as well? CB: yes.

LE: for GMU 14A, a large number of the public judge the health of Moose population by what they see driving across the Palmer Hay Flats, and the numbers seen there has decreased over time; what kind of an explanation is there for this apparent historic decline in the Flats? CB: the habitat on the Flats has matured since the 1964 earthquake; they are mostly concentrated along Wasilla Creek and Rabbit Slough away from the road; likewise, brush has matured and makes it more difficult to see the moose; Similarly, Mt. Baldy has seen similar changes in moose populations; mainly a distribution thing, that changes over time; its not that they aren't there, it's a distribution thing; a habitat and distribution thing;

PP: in 2023 GMU 14 experienced a deep snow year... what have you observed in terms of moose winter kill? CB: I'm not too concerned about excessive moose winter kill. We had some winter kill, but mostly among the calves of the year/yearlings;

HD: Since this was a pretty good snow year, wouldn't a high road kill trigger a special targeted hunt? TP: we've had a problem recently with the TPS system and the data they provide; we've gone from specific detailed information to generalized automated data; also not getting data on a regular basis;

MW: Regarding GMU 13 moose, I see a lot of railroad/moose mortality; saw a lot of dead moose on the Chase rail trail section; what specific parameters and where are you looking for data? TR: The railroad is supposed to be reporting numbers and providing a mitigation plan for moose losses. TP: just got some railroad moose numbers of 177 - that is actually on the low side historically; TR: there is a threshold of moose kill that is supposed to trigger a railroad mitigation plan, but ...; as far as wolves in 13E we do have a public wolf predator control program; the department is not going to allow predator control where ACs won't allow antlerless hunts to correct ratios; TR: we are interested in working with the railroad to address these issues; the FWC could be helpful in that regard.

PP: followup, a good question to ask the railroad for better mitigation? CB: the FWC could have a better result lobbying the railroad than ADFG would have; we are having a hard time having this conversation with the railroad and holding them accountable to their mitigation plan;

AC: if we going to have a targeted hunt, it would make sense to cover some of the areas with high railroad moose mortality; CB: we have the flexibility in 14A/14B to do that; we have more of an issue with railroad mortality in 14B versus 14A.

HD: small game discussion, at MP 247 on the Richardson ran into a large group of snowshoe hares... must have been 100+ hares in a brush opening along the road; are we expecting a peak in hares in about 5 years? RM: yes, pretty consistent 8-10 year cycle, with the peak moving from north to south; expect the peak in 2027-2028; lynx cycle is strongly correlated with and follows the hare cycle (reference: see L. Keith research). HD: is grouse wing data still being used? RM: yes, wing database was originally very useful for grouse management. HD: are you seeing consistent chick survival trends over the years? RM: no, the chick survival is correlated with post hatch weather conditions during the first 2-3 weeks after hatch; HD: do you do much with waterfowl? We do some, but its mostly federal.

PP: tell me more about sheep management and research? TR: we actually have some good sheep research going on; also have some good wolf/moose research going on; many of our recent research projects are in the mature, writing phase; we currently have a lot of research money, but a lack of staff to do the research and associated projects;

MW: you said the unpredictable weather keeps you up at night and the impact on wildlife populations; I have seen changes in snow cover that probably impact our game species; how with the department adapt to these climate changes? TR: the next 20-30 years will be a challenge for game management, especially with how variable the weather has become; species using ecotone edge habitats will be most affected, while opportunistic species will do better;

LE: comment on why moose regulations have become so complex over time? CB: because of the

public process and BOG decision has led to greater regulatory complexity; and there are a lot more hunters in certain areas and that has an impact;

HD: on sheep, your answer suggests weather is an issue with sheep populations; one of the department's biologists once said there were disease issues with certain populations. Please discuss; CB: we have discovered MOV (*Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*) in some sheep, but it doesn't seem to be a mortality factor;

MW: white-fronted geese in Su Refuge seem to know exactly when to leave prior to Sept. 1... ; on the bear baiting question, I appreciate your answer on the different roles of ADFG and BOG, but is there anything about bear baiting you'd like to know more about? TR: we'd like to know the GPS coordinates of bear baiting sites.

AC: it looks like the Mat-Su in general focuses on moose, is that accurate? CB: in general that's accurate, but you need to take the data with a grain of salt; our harvest tickets don't always provide useful information, especially for species like black bear.

HD: a philosophical question, looking at the makeup of the FWC, we have a lot of expertise but weighted towards fisheries; the difference I see between BOF and BOG involves money (BOF) and emotion (BOG); would you tend to agree with that analysis? RM: I started in fisheries before wildlife, I would argue that BOF can be very emotional, especially when it comes to people's livelihoods; in Palmer BOG the meetings were very emotional; TR: BOG is dealing with a lot of charismatic megafauna, and the BOG is mostly made up of hunters, guides, and is not necessarily representative of the public at large.

## IX. FINAL COMMENTS

### a. Members of the Public

Jessica Winnestaffer: no comment.

### b. ADF&G

RM: thank you for this dialogue, looking forward to future talks.

TR: pleased that FWC seems concerned about needless loss of moose due to collisions; anything we can do with FWC to reduce this would be appreciated; the DOT put lights on KGB that improved moose survival there, someone from MSB convinced them, and that was appreciated.

### c. FWC

KZ: Thank you for being there; I am following climate change issues closely, esp. on migratory birds.

LE: I saw some red fox on the drive in to Anchorage;

PP: thank you guys for your excellent work.

AC: we seem to focus on fish a lot, so this was appreciated.

HD: thank you very much; especially the frankness of the discussion.

MW: thank you, and I learned so much. We do get fish focused, but wildlife are so important; maybe in the future the FWC could have a meeting with the railroad to discuss wildlife mitigation; this is probably my last meeting as FWC meeting. I hope you continue to get the support and the staff to continue your good work.

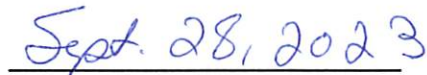
X. NEXT MEETING DATE: Thursday, September 28, 4 PM, LLCR.

XI. ADJOURNMENT  
**Moved by PP, second LE.**  
**Motion passes unanimously.**

*Meeting stands adjourned at 7:03 PM*



Andy Couch, FWC Vice Chair

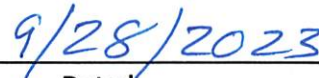


Dated

ATTEST:



Ted Eischeid, Planning Division Staff



Dated