

Public Lands Committee

September 25, 2023 | 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Boise Centre

MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order | *Vice Chair Bryce Somsen*

Idaho County Commissioner Skip Brandt made a motion to approve the minutes from February 2023, Onybee County Treasurer Annette Dygert seconded. Motion carried.

Sage Grouse & Grizzly Update | Josh Uriarte

There are 28 counties that have sage grouse. The BLM is redoing the sage grouse maps.

Idaho state plan alternative – basis:

Uncertainties in BLM process and alternatives, proactive stakeholder engagement, emphasis on Idaho data, balanced Idaho perspective and circumstances, and Governor's Idaho 2021 sage-grouse plan. (We wanted an Idaho plan, not a federal plan).

Development process:

National Level: There is the WGA Sage-grouse taskforce, and the BLM alternatives which include no action on the 2015 amendments or the 2019 amendments.

In Idaho: The office of Species Conservation and Idaho Department of Fish and Game provide technical assistance. There is also an Interagency Sage-grouse Implementation Team.

They will be looking at the 2015, 2019 plans and we don't agree with the intermediate protections with ACECs. We have a sage grouse task force with regional folks.

Idaho's alternative tries to use the best data available:

OSC uses lek counts, telemetry (space use and movement), and habitat models (nesting, late brood-rearing, wintering, sagebrush cover, and tree/annual grass cover).

There are three tiers in the Idaho alternative:

PHMA: high and medium-high breeding bird density

IHMA: Lower breeding bird densities

GHMA: lowest breeding bird densities

Washington County connects a little bit with Oregon State, but they are pretty isolated, so we moved the tier to be a little more flexible. Clark and Fremont Counties and south there were a lot of bird with collars that helped determine the winter patterns for the birds. It was thought that they were losing birds, but they were just migrating for the winter.

Stakeholders stated the maps needed to be more precise. Key recommendations: increase trigger precision with fine scale areas (need trigger areas to be more targeted), retain no disturbance caps (we don't want disturbance caps), and continue to advocate for tiers. Need to have consistent WAFWA definitions, grazing should not be affected if meeting health standards, there needs to be more discussion predation (need to be monitoring other animals' impact on the birds), plus others.

Grizzly Bears:

There were no livestock depredations yet this year.

There was 1 bee box hit by a grizzly north of Bonners Ferry.

OSC is emphasizing information, education, and outreach.

They are working with IDFG to start Idaho's 1st livestock carcass disposal program in Boundary County.

OSC has attended 3 different north Idaho County Fairs to distribute bear information and have also attended markets, school events, homesteader conferences. Working with boundary county landfill to allow for disposal.

Wolf conflict prevention program – the state can help pay for many different things: trail cameras, purchasing guard dog food. Everyone was awarded something but not necessarily the whole request. This is separate from depredation. There was \$44,005 awarded this year, producers applied for \$303,000.

Outdoor Recreation Fund Advisory Council - Skylar Jett

Historic investment in Idaho's state parks. \$5M was appropriated to this council. The funding is for projects that promote outdoor activities. The council is made of up 13 members [click here](#). The council had its first meeting was a couple of weeks ago. The discussed priorities. The funding will be similar to a grant program. The council is looking for interagency collaboration. Project selection will be reviewed, and recommendations will be sent to the Governor and then Idaho Parks and Rec for final approval. Hoping to have projects to start by the end of the year. Meeting on October 19th at Parks and Rec.

What is the application process? For the first year, the three main agencies put forth projects to consider but there is a hope that it is open to others in the future. Most projects are state lands, no federal lands. There is a possibility to have these projects on county lands in the future.

Resolutions

- PL-01 Wolf Management
IDFG brought a proposal to the legislature to reduce the wolf numbers from ~1,200 to 500 by a certain date. The proposal didn't appear to have anything in it to actually achieve their goals. Wolves have a big impact on our ranchers and sportsman. This resolution seeks to reduce the number of

wolves to 500 or less. It is also proposed to have an independent audit. We may be able to partner with our national guard and use it as a training exercise. This resolution is requesting support for possible future legislation.

Adams County Commissioner Viki Purdy made a motion to approve PL-01, Idaho County Commissioner Skip Brandt seconded.

Who will be doing the ongoing audit? We don't know yet. Where did the 500 number come from? How do know that is the proper number? You need to look at the suitable habitat. There should be more information about the biology of it. More information would be nice.

Motion carried.

- PL-02 Wind & Solar Facility Siting

Locals are at the mercy of the BLM. This resolution seeks to allow counties to have more input on large scale energy facility siting. Counties would like to have a little more control on these types of facilities when they are proposed. What's the pushback on private property rights? The biggest pushback staff has heard is from Idaho Power, not from residents. Idaho Power probably has some projects coming. The counties have the authority to regulate private lands. Counties have already placed ordinances for private lands. This provides an additional tool for counties when it comes to public lands. Other states have adopted similar laws. It has helped bring federal partners to the table to make these decisions.

How are they going to account for burying these just like we have to do with our solid waste? The idea that the feds have put forward that they will just cut the top off and just leave the pads there. One of the biggest concerns is the damage to the aquifer.

Washington County Commissioner Gordon Wilkerson made a motion to approve PL-02, Idaho County Commissioner Skip Brandt seconded. Motion carried.

Open Discussion

n/a

The meeting was adjourned.

Public Lands Committee

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