



JIM  
GIBBONS

STATE OF NEVADA

## DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE

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Leadership Team Minutes  
October 6, 2008, Meeting


KENNETH E.  
MAYER  
*Director*

DOUG HUNT  
*Deputy Director*

### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** October 17, 2008

**TO:** Board of Wildlife Commissioners; Governor's Office; County Advisory Boards to Manage Wildlife Members; Department of Wildlife Employees; and Director Allen Biaggi

**FROM:** Kenneth E. Mayer, Director 

**SUBJECT:** Department Activities Report  
October 6, 2008, Leadership Team Meeting

Attendees: Director Ken Mayer, Deputy Director Doug Hunt, Executive Assistant Suzanne Scourby, Chief of Wildlife Diversity Laura Richards, FSS Dave Prather, Chief Game Warden Rob Buonamici, Chief of Fisheries Rich Haskins, Acting Con Ed Chief Chris Healy, Chief of Operations Bob Haughian, Chief of Habitat Dave Pulliam.

#### Director's Office

Director Mayer reported on last week's White House Conference on Wildlife Policy: He attended along with Department staff. At least 20 state wildlife directors were also in attendance. Several subject panels were formed to receive input from participants. The directors will edit the proceedings upon completion. Funding to place into action recommendations of the conference was a common request. Director Mayer said he made it clear to the federal agency attendees that the states do not have the ability to provide additional match for new programs. The federal government needs to keep this in mind when structuring new grant programs that direct funding would be preferred. He said the Executive Order is clear, that the federal agencies shall work with states to implement the North American model of hunting. There is also the need for more discussion on the Wilderness Act and how it is implemented/interpreted state by state.

Director Mayer said he has been working with the governor's office on a proclamation which recognizes the importance of conserving Sage-grouse and its habitat in Nevada.

Jeff White of Newmont Mines called Director Mayer expressing concern with the recent mine inspections conducted by agents from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Chief Game Warden talked with the USFWS special agent in charge of the inspections and found that they endeavored to inspect every active Nevada mine prior to fall migratory bird flights to ensure sufficient measures were in place to protect these birds.

The special agent was very pleased with what they found. Only one mine had a problem with pooling in their leach fields and mine managers were in consultation with specialists to resolve the problem. The special agent was very complimentary of NDOW employees and their work with the mines. The bird losses experienced 20 years ago have been greatly reduced due to coordinated efforts between NDOW and the mining industry. NDOW will get a copy of the report and Director Mayer will brief Senator Amodei.

Deputy Director Doug Hunt announced his retirement from the agency effective November 14, 2008. Director Mayer said we will have challenges with the agency as we will lose more history and knowledge, and will need to rotate leadership team in or have someone fill in.

### **Conservation Education**

A new display was installed at the Verdi Nature Center that currently houses a "History of Fishing" theme with old fishing rods, reels, and lures. If anyone has some old fishing tackle that they would like to loan or give to NDOW to better the display we would be glad to accept.

The annual Truckee River Clean Up was held with 40 volunteers working at the Oxbow Nature Study Area and they pulled about 20 cubic yards of weeds and garbage. Trails were worked on that were in dire need of restoration as well as widening trails.

Hunter Education Instructor David Priest of Wendover was killed while riding his motorcycle. His wife Brenda, who was on the back of the motorcycle, is expected to survive though she has lost a leg. Staff sent flowers and attended his memorial service. Dave was well liked in Elko County and it appears that the support system for Brenda and her two children is very good.

A new Hunting Heritage Partnership web page is being finalized that will echo the focus of the recent seminars held in Reno and Henderson that encouraged lapsed hunters to give upland game and waterfowl hunting a try instead of just the big game draw.

### **Fisheries Division**

The number of Devils Hole pupfish has increased to 126, the highest number recorded since 2004. Fall pupfish population numbers ranged from approximately 400 – 550 individuals from the mid 1970s until 1995. For reasons that are still unclear, the population began a precipitous decline in 1996 dropping to a low of only 38 fish in the spring of 2006. NDOW, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service and others have been working cooperatively to understand the dynamics of Devil's Hole in order to secure this unique population of desert fish, which is the flagship for native fish issues in the desert southwest.

## **Game Division**

A total of 2,500 mule deer hunters in Management Areas 7, 11, 12, 13, 22, 23 and 24, were sent letters requesting that they bring their harvested mule deer or elk to offices in the northern half of the state for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) testing. Letters were also sent to 1,181 hunters requesting animals be brought in for body condition analysis. Staff is coordinating this effort and it appears that we have coverage at offices for completing this work. Questions or problems can be coordinated through our Wildlife Health Specialist.

Game biologists have been placing wing barrels and collecting hunter harvested Sage-grouse wings for future demographic work. Eastern region staff have also placed signs to alert hunters about sharp-tailed grouse inhabiting areas where they may be hunting Sage-grouse.

Eastern and Western Region biologists have been conducting postseason pronghorn surveys from the ground.

Southern Region sheep biologists are currently conducting desert bighorn aerial composition surveys. Based on these flights, we will be conducting a desert bighorn capture in the Toquima Range on Oct. 30. These sheep will be transported to the Tobin Range to augment a small existing herd. Flights in Clark County will help delineate source stock for capture and release in the Delmar Range.

Follow-up flights on bighorn in the Grant Range and White Pine Range were recently completed using contract services with Owyhee Air.

The elk depredation hunt in the Goose Creek area was monitored. Approximately 50 elk were on private meadows before the hunt but elk left the area by the opener. Hunter success rates may be lower than anticipated. Some landowners complained about excessive dust from traffic in the area.

## **Habitat Division**

Habitat Division staff are reviewing pros and cons of a purchase of the Peer property adjacent to the Overton WMA with a recommendation expected this week.

The Habitat Division continues to participate and provide information to the Governor's committee on renewable energy transmission access.

The habitat headquarters and regional staff are currently providing review and input on the following major projects: New Comstock Wind Project, Ruby Natural Gas Pipeline Project, Southwest Intertie Project, White Pine Energy Project, Nevada Wind Pah Rah Project, Delmar Valley Solar Project, and Southern Nevada Water Authority Importation Project.

The Habitat Division, in cooperation with other divisions is developing guidelines for the review of wind energy projects.

### **Law Enforcement**

Our boating education coordinator participated in a Tiger Team meeting to improve National Safe Boating week and “Wear It” campaign.

Investigations are ongoing on the following: Poaching of a bighorn sheep and three mule deer has been initiated; three bull elk were killed and left in a field above Eagle Valley; and an investigation into a helicopter landing on Peavine Mountain on the opening day of deer season.

The boating access program (Sportfish Restoration Grants) has initiated 15 grant projects totaling \$1.63 million over the 20 months that this program has had a full time coordinator. Five recently approved grants include: re-decking of boat docks; boat ramp extensions; new boat ramp/dock with parking, restrooms and picnic ramadas, rehabbing of existing facilities to make them ADA accessible; replacement of two fish cleaning stations; and a new snow blower tractor for keeping the boat ramps open at Tahoe during the winter.

One boating infrastructure grant (BIG) program project has been initiated with Las Vegas Boat Harbor. They were the only applicant able to submit a proposal meeting the deadline for these funds.

Southern Region wardens made two more seizures of prohibited piranhas. One seizure involved two fish which led to a seizure of over 60 fish. Citations were issued and civil penalties assessed in both cases.

### **Wildlife Diversity**

Field staff attended a meeting set up by Great Basin Wind to introduce pre-construction survey protocols for the New Comstock Wind Energy Park in the Virginia Range west of Virginia City. Representatives from BLM, NDOW, Kleinfelder Consultants, and Detect Radar Inc. were in attendance. A review of proposed bird and bat monitoring was presented including raptor and nesting surveys, and bat surveys using ANABAT recordings and Merlin radar. NDOW provided input and will continue to do so as the monitoring project continues.

In late September, a technical team, consisting of NDOW and Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) personnel, met to begin an evaluation of conservation status of the Lahontan Valley Wetlands. Using the Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Assessment “tool”, the first two stages “Management Effectiveness” and “State” (that is, “state” or “status” of shorebird populations and habitats) were completed. The results will be presented in October, at a full partnership/stakeholder meeting, where the larger

group will be asked to engage together to complete a draft of the assessment or send it back to the technical team for draft completion.

Wildlife Diversity staff continued greater sandhill crane trapping efforts in the western part of the state during September. Although no cranes were captured, it is hoped that the working knowledge gained during this field season will aid efforts next year. As large groups of cranes were observed in late September (these were most likely migrating birds), trapping efforts have been suspended until next spring when breeding sandhill cranes return to Humboldt County. Staff also conducted pika discovery surveys around the Santa Rosa Peak area in the Santa Rosa Range. Several good rock talus areas were surveyed, however no sign was observed.

Nocturnal bat surveys on abandoned mines were conducted for multiple mine workings in the Pah Rah and Virginia Range. Results of these surveys are used to determine if a bat friendly closure would be appropriate in conserving important bat habitat. Field staff also assisted the Eastern Region in a bat study to determine foraging characteristics, migration patterns and flight characteristics of a large colony of Mexican free-tailed bats.

Within the Tahoe Basin, while the Franktown/Hobart Aspen enhancement project has finished for the season, the Sugar Pine Old Growth Restoration Project continues. A small five person crew began removing the heavy shrub component (e.g. manzanita) of the vegetation but completing the task will require a larger field crew (10-20 people) for an extended period of time.