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Kenneth E. Mayer
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 22, 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: Leadership Team Meeting Minutes – Activities from May 5 - May 16, 2008

Director's Office

Director Mayer said the Department's Heritage Program had made great strides. The reorganization of the program has facilitated getting excellent proposals and technical review from staff. As a result we have received many compliments; because of the volume of project support material, next year we will ask that an Executive Summary be provided that can be sent to everyone interested. The full package of material will only be sent to the chair person of each CABMW.

Last week Governor Gibbons and Mr. Monte Miller attended a mule deer management presentation by NDOW Game Biologist Tony Wasley. The presentation and question and answers lasted one and one-half hours. People attending were Director Mayer, Deputy Director Hunt, Tony Wasley, and Game Division Chief Russ Mason and past Commission Chairman Chris MacKenzie. The Governor was provided a binder with the mule deer plan and other support material. Director Mayer will provide the Governor an update each year. From all appearances, the Governor enjoyed the briefing, understands the complexity of the problems facing mule deer and is supportive of the Department's efforts. He also challenged the Department to do what we can to turn the deer decline around and pay specific attention to the deer hunters of this state.

Deputy Director Hunt said Governor Gibbons was also impressed with the predator project in Ruby Mountains, and Game Biologist Tony Wasley did a fantastic job.

Director Mayer met with Associate Dean Kurt Pregitzer of Natural Resources at the University of Nevada, Reno and he wants to work with NDOW and build onto our good relationship with the College of Agriculture.

Director Mayer said in regard to sage-grouse, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is actually moving forward with identifying critical sage grouse habitat and will be developing maps with NDOW for fire

suppression efforts. Work continues in each western state on developing sage-grouse data to meet the USFWS “data call” and the modelers are making progress on completing a draft of Chapter 6 (Population Assessment).

Director Mayer and staff met with Nevada Mining Association (NMA) officials and discussed sage-grouse and other mining issues. The NMA will be working with NDOW on resolving the mining claim post bird mortality issues that have plagued Nevada for many years. NDOW and NMA will jointly introduce a solution to the problem at the Public Lands Committee. If successful it will allow NDOW to eliminate the hollow posts that induce bird mortalities.

The Leadership Team meeting is set for June 11 - 13 and will be at Kingston Canyon.

The Commission meeting was May 9 and 10 in Reno and from all accounts went very well. Numerous people commented about the excellent job Big Game Biologist Mike Cox did on the quota setting agenda item. Commissioner Lister reminded Director Mayer that we need to be mindful of the words we use to describe problems on the range. It is always more effective to use terms that do not incite an emotional response that may be the impediment to resolving issues that everyone agrees is a problem. This is good advice in our work and in general.

The Heritage Committee process went well. The Commission chose to rearrange dollars to give almost every project money. The Commission committed \$658,000. However, these dollars were matched to create a total of approximately \$2.5 million for game conservation work in fiscal year 2009.

Director Mayer and Deputy Director Hunt reviewed their notes from the May meeting and reviewed upcoming Commission agenda items for the June meeting: Two petitions have been received, one for Pioneer Hunting and Fishing License Program, and one for severely disabled hunters; Clark County off-highway vehicle issues; the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) representatives will be asked to come to the June meeting for reports on Wilderness issues, Mr. Pulliam will provide a list of NDOW comments to the Commission, and bring the NDOW/BLM Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) back to the Commission. Management Analyst III Kim Jolly and Chief of Habitat Dave Pulliam will work on developing that item. An economist from the University of Nevada Reno will be asked to attend the June meeting to explain their survey/research project. Commissioner Lurie requested a spreadsheet on depredation payments, and Mr. Sefton brought up the idea of an “educk stamp” concept to accommodate online sales of stamps. This would require a fee and make changes to NRS. As to the Heritage Account, all agreed that a letter needs to be included in the support material about not paying overhead on Heritage funds and that a Heritage completion report will be sent to all of the Commissioners. Commissioner Lister asked for a report on expenses by Division, and Director Mayer suggested that Administrative Services Officer III Dave Prather call Commissioner Lister for further clarification of his request. Commissioner Jeffress requested a fire update from BLM that focuses on fire suppression and mapping for staging of resources. Chief of Habitat Dave Pulliam will talk to BLM about meeting this request.

Director Mayer asked that the Administrative Division look at our business practices and make sure we are charging an appropriate fee for items provided to customers in an effort to insure we cover our administrative costs.

There are seven weeks until the June Commission meeting thus draft items are due May 23, 2008.

Sparked from the issues brought up at the May Commission meeting, Kim Jolly is working to incorporate additional items into the CABMW manual, such as including more detailed information on CABMW budgets, what to submit for payment of travel claims, as well as including the State Travel policy, which is to be used for reimbursement for CABMW members. This manual will then be reviewed by NDOW legal counsel and then presented for approval by the Commission, and distributed to CABMW members, county managers and commissioners, and pertinent county staff involved with the advisory boards so that all are working from the same page.

The National Wildlife Federation has come out against the Farm Bill and has sent a letter to the Congressional leaders and a press release. Their opposition is in response to the negative effects the new “sod buster” program may have on sagebrush habitats.

The WRID meeting will be attended by Deputy Director Doug Hunt and Director Mayer will attend the Western Region staff meeting,

Deputy Director Hunt said the Oxbow Nature Study Area was destroyed by fire and estimated costs to rebuild is about \$100,000. Deputy Director Hunt asked the group to think about how to fund the repairs.

In researching how other departments handle heavy equipment training as part of the equipment policy and procedure update, one low or no-cost method used by some Nevada agencies for incorporating safety and training into a divisions’ budget is to include in the contract specs of new equipment purchase that the manufacturer must provide at least four hours of onsite training for that equipment, safety and training DVDs or VHS particular to that equipment as well as three copies of the operator’s manual (one for the operator to stay with the equipment, one for the crew, and one for the safety coordinator).

Staff submitted NDOW’s four Bill Draft Requests (BDRs) including substantive proposals: 1) Sage-grouse mitigation in light of the possible listing, and 2) Strengthening wildlife laws and penalties; and, housekeeping proposals: 3) Law Enforcement cleanup to correct confusing language, and 4) Boat law cleanup - Simplifying sections of the boat law for boaters. Those will be reviewed by the Department of Administration Budget office, then to the Governor for his review, and if approved, will be submitted to Legislative Counsel Bureau for their preparation.

Conservation Education

NDOW Information Service continues, with weekly emails to subscribers. A press release announcing the service was issued on May 2.

On May 1 47,563 postcards were mailed to lapsed anglers, as part of the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation grant/partnership to reach out to lapsed anglers. Recipients were encouraged to register their email online by May 16 to be eligible to receive a “How to Fish Nevada” guide. A second postcard mailout will occur in June, and results will be evaluated through the numbers of licenses purchased by postcard recipients.

The 2008 Free Fishing Day poster and the new Native Fishes poster were mailed. The two posters were sent to over 370 elementary schools in the state. Free Fishing Day posters will also be mailed to all license agents, state parks and resource agencies and all NDOW regional offices and facilities will also be receiving the posters to display. The Native Fishes poster is the result of a partner effort with USFWS, BLM, USFS, DCNR and Heritage. Two of the Native Fishes posters are being mailed to each fifth grade classroom in the state, to be used in conjunction with the students natural history of Nevada curriculum.

Western Region staff helped coordinate planning efforts following the Oxbow Nature Study Area Fire: Met with the media concerning the fire and fielded calls from the public about the fire; made calls to teachers, administrators, and volunteers concerning the closing of the park, spoke with teachers and administrators about re-scheduling or moving their wildlife education programs to another interpretive site; planning the rehabilitation and restoration of the Oxbow began with meetings concerning restoration efforts for the area and how the funding will be established; and staff began drafting the Management Plan for the rehabilitation and restoration of the Study Area.

Staff continued work on edits and layout of 2008 Hunt Book and the 2008 Hunt Unit Map.

Western Region staff produced television segments on the following topics: How to Fish is Easy; Sage-grouse Strutting; and Wildlife Commission Meets; and produced five radio segments on the following topics: Fish - Spring Flows; Bear - Chance Meeting; Chukars —Spring Needs; Chukar Reproduction; Big Game —Drought and Desert; and also recorded one-half hour public service shows with two radio groups that will air between now and early June; and staff dealing with media extensively on bears, marmots, mountain lions, fishing clinics etc.

NDOW staff had an information booth for the 5th Annual Reno River Festival May 9 - 11 in Reno on the Truckee River. Attendance to this kayaking/river fest was estimated at over 40,000 people from all over the country and the world.

The Southern Region Wildlife Education Coordinator (WEC) organized and conducted a Wildlife Watch at the Overton Wildlife Management Area May 3. This event gave participants a chance to experience bird watching and viewing of other wildlife species; staff reached out to the rural community of Caliente by conducting an introduction to fly-fishing workshop at the local middle school.

Fisheries Division

The continued illegal movement of fish around the state is cause for concern to our local fisheries biologists. Not only are undesirable fish species being moved by “bait bucket biologists” but potentially unseen hitchhikers such as quagga mussels, New Zealand mudsnails and a variety of fish diseases, could be transported in the water or by the fish. These selfish acts threatened several of our popular fisheries. Investigations continue.

Chief and staff are working diligently on FY09 DEA and FY10-11 budget.

Game Division

The Game Division Chief and the furbearer staff specialist attended the WAFWA Mountain Lion Workshop. NDOW is leading the WAFWA effort to revise the Cougar Management Guidelines so that they incorporate more practical information to meet the needs of state agency managers.

The Lathrop-Capurro Scholarship Committee met on April 29 and selected three new scholars, Luke Wartgow, Adam Burnside, and Peter Bartmus. Two of the students will work with Western Region personnel while the third will work with the Southern Region this summer.

The Division Chief met with Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) on May 12 to discuss departmental priorities. One topic of considerable interest, and one on which RMEF is already engaged, is habitat management for wildlife on Southern Nevada Water Authority properties in eastern Nevada.

The Division Chief will participate in an assessment of the UNR Resource Economics program on May 13.

Bear problems in Washoe Valley are occurring early this year. Within the past week, division law enforcement personnel have responded to two bear complaints, including one depredation incident involving goats.

On May 21 the Game Division will meet in Eureka to discuss upland species management and monitoring, with one priority being any potential changes to upland bird seasons.

On May 22 the Division Chief and the wildlife health specialist will attend a meeting of the Nevada Board of Agriculture to discuss the Great Basin Wildlife Health Initiative and the recently signed Memorandum of Agreement on Livestock-Wildlife Disease Transmission.

Habitat Division

Chief and staff working diligently on FY09 DEA and FY10-11 budget.

Law Enforcement

Game wardens are spending time responding to bear and mountain lion calls.

The Division of Law Enforcement is working on FY 10 and FY 11 budgets and work programs.

With the pending retirement of Staff Game Warden Steve Albert his duties are being transferred to Staff Game Warden Cameron Waithman and a new guide program/investigator will be hired to fill Waithman's position.

Southern Region Game Wardens served a search warrant on an individual illegally possessing a Pakistan Black Cobra and charges are pending the completion of the investigation; assisted in the investigation of two separate incidents involving swimmers drowning over the weekend. Neither swimmer had on a Personal Floatation Device at the time they drowned; and on Lake Mead rescued four juveniles that had been in a canoe that overturned on Lake Mead during high winds over the weekend.

Game Wardens investigated a case of an elk killed in the wrong unit last season, involving a Master and Sub Guide. Charges are pending completion of the investigation.

Operations Division

No reports submitted

Wildlife Diversity

Staff attended a supervisory meeting to review FY 10-11 budget submittals, a draft Data Management Policy and Procedure, and complete final edits to the 2007 Job Progress Reports. Several very good projects have been developed for FY 10-11, yet the concern is the ability to fund some of these key projects due to limited funding. Staff will reconvene to further discuss the draft Data Management Policy and Procedure in Reno from May 28-29.

Staff attended the Biological Work Group (BWG) for the Spring Valley Stipulation Agreement for the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) proposed water project. Several documents from the BWG are in need of review including end of year progress report, and the numerable chapters for the monitoring plan. The Hydrological Model is out for review and a meeting has been scheduled to review the model in Las Vegas on May 6.

Staff will be flying helicopter surveys in May and June for nongame species inclusive of raptors, shorebirds and sandhill cranes. There is still only one helicopter available so staff is working diligently to streamline and economize survey efforts.

Staff spent considerable time discussing pet tortoises and the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center (DTCC). The USFWS is requesting NDOW's level of involvement for tortoises related to research needs and possible future translocation from the DTCC. Other key partners include: Smithsonian Institute, San Diego Zoo, Senator Reid's Staff in Las Vegas, and the BLM.

Staff provided comments to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Amphibian and Reptile Subcommittee regarding listing constrictor snakes in the genera *Python*, *Boa* and *Eunectes* as injurious wildlife.

Staff began 2008 Peregrine falcon ground surveys in southern Nevada. Currently, about 90% of known historic territories are occupied. Additional surveys will be completed to determine success and productivity.

Staff continues surveys for shorebirds and waterbirds throughout the Southern Region. Also, assistance was provided to Game Division conducting sage-grouse surveys. Spotted frog egg mass surveys, and ferruginous hawk surveys were also initiated.

Over the past month, Wildlife Diversity personnel have continued to provide input on the proposed Ruby Pipeline. Staff attended an agency scoping meeting held by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) where they provided input on potential wildlife and habitat impacts as well as potential alternative routes. In addition, Winnemucca personnel continue to coordinate directly with Ruby Pipeline environmental consultants on wildlife data requests and wildlife survey protocol methodology.

As part of the development of a draft Environmental Impact Statement for the transfer and management of Carson Lake and Pasture to the state, Wildlife Diversity and Habitat division personnel conducted an on-site visit on May 6 with Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) staff. Follow-up meetings focused on the impacts of BLM geothermal leasing within the Carson Lake and Pasture boundary. Discussion of WHSRN designation and status was a concern given the nature of the proposed geothermal development and activity.

Annual shorebird and water bird surveys are underway across the northwestern part of the state. Surveys were completed at Continental Lake and Gridley Lake in Northern Humboldt County. In the Fallon area, spring shorebird surveys were conducted in Lahontan Valley and Humboldt Sink with a second round of surveys completed during the first week of May. Shorebird numbers at these sites were low compared to past years. Surveys were also completed at Washoe Lake and Valley, Artesia Lake (lake is dry), Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area, and Swan Lake.

In close coordination with Game Division personnel in Winnemucca, four sage grouse trend lek surveys were completed in Northern Humboldt County. All data gathered and collected during the sage grouse surveys was forwarded on to the Game Division for analysis.

Within the Tahoe Basin, furbearer survey work continues. Five camera stations were visited and monitored, two remote cameras were removed and three new sites were set-up. At this time, the winter season of 2008 has provided three new marten detection locations. Camera stations will continue to be monitored through May until bear activities increase and bait stations are affected.

The annual Spring Wings Festival, a community supported watchable wildlife event coordinated with the Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, was held this past weekend. Once again, it proved very successful and drew large crowds of people. Wildlife Diversity staff were on hand throughout the weekend conducting educational presentations and tours, and participating in the educational workshops for grade school children. Visitors signed up for the nocturnal bat tour were treated to sights of pallid bats and a presentation on bat conservation issues. The bat and owl presentation, geared towards grade school children, drew over 120 kids and the owl presentation over 60.

