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Kenneth E. Mayer
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 13, 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 Activities, May 19 - June 13, 2008

Director's Office

Director Mayer said cows were reported in the Carson Pasture and he asked Chief of Habitat Dave Pulliam to investigate the situation.

Director Mayer attended "Fire in the Great Basin" workshop in Elko as a participant on the final panel. Overall the group had good discussions about the status of Nevada and where to go from here.

Director Mayer spent Memorial weekend in the Southern Region with Law Enforcement patrolling the Colorado River at Laughlin. Director Mayer was very impressed with the work the wardens do and the professionalism they exhibit in difficult situations.

The Carson Valley Chukar organization met recently and Director Ken Mayer, Game Division Chief Russ Mason, and Habitat Wildlife Staff Biologist John Gebhardt attended.

Deputy Director Doug Hunt said budget information on reductions should be forthcoming for fiscal year 2010 and 2011.

Director Mayer said we need to look at ways to save money, such as mileage costs and utilities. Deputy Director Hunt said the agency's highest cost is payroll costs and Director Mayer charged the Leadership Team with thinking of cost savings ideas and to identify revenue streams to help lessen our reliance from the General Fund. We need to be creative across the board.

Deputy Director Hunt said he received an email from Elko CABMW Ken Wellington asking why a Lathrop scholarship was not in Elko on the guzzler crew and Chiefs Pulliam and Mason clarified what was supposed to happen and Wildlife Habitat Staff Biologist John Gebhardt was supposed to follow-up. Deputy Director Hunt assigned the follow-up on this issue to Chief of Habitat Dave Pulliam. Deputy Director Hunt said the June Commission's draft agenda was sent out and still need to know the names of the BLM representatives who will be presenting at the June Commission meeting. Commission General Regulation 358 for the June meeting will be held back from action due to LCB rewriting the regulation.

Deputy Director Hunt also told the Leadership Team to watch their accounts closely, Division reports for WAFWA are due June 9, 2008; and due to the Leadership Team campout being cancelled, he asked the flavor of the group if they still want to meet, and the group decided to use the time to work on Division budgets.

Deputy Director Hunt said Chief of Wildlife Diversity Laura Richards, Kim Jolly, Russ Mason, and Rob Buonamici are all going to meet and discuss human/wildlife conflicts. Chief of Diversity Richards said the element that staff is working on are the best scientific management methods to deal with nuisance wildlife, and the discussion of the script of what we do with the calls.

Civil Rights Review - The Department submitted its periodic desk review of civil rights to the USFWS, documenting education, program and activity access by the public, outreach to diverse communities, and environmental justice issues as requested by their Federal Civil Rights office. Disabled-accessible ponds in the State of Nevada are limited to Marilyn's Pond, Paradise Park, and Sparks Marina, which are operated and funded by county governments, State Parks, or federal agencies. Unfortunately, this small amount of accessible fishing areas also limits our ability to provide fishing clinics to anglers with disabilities. However, NDOW tries to make the best of what is accessible: Conservation Educators and volunteer instructors provide specialized angler education clinics for kids with disabilities, at a variety of functioning levels. Staff sets up these clinics through schools and teachers of children with special needs within the State. Conservation Educators are also researching ways to provide adaptive programming for adults with disabilities, and one specifically for new veterans with disabilities. As a result of the civil rights review, NDOW compiled demographics information as well. Volunteer demographics were representative of our community, with 8.7 percent of volunteers being minority, and 24 percent women, of those who indicated ethnicity or gender. An in-person civil rights audit by the USFWS will be conducted in 2012.

Budget Savings - Director's Office created "the Green Team" made up of a cross section of employees from several Divisions and areas led by Kim Jolly to explore both simple and "out-of-the-box" ideas that will save us money and make us money in these tough economic times. Additionally, the team will be relying on every employee for innovative ideas and suggestions to meet our goal, and they are encouraged to contact team members to share their ideas.

Director Mayer participated in the final conference call for the sage grouse technical team and said there is a 2 percent range wide decline in populations. He wants to provide Wildlife Management Institute staff with at least two weeks time to conduct a peer review by seven nationwide reviewers of the Conservation Assessment (CA), and by July 17, 2008, will submit the final version of the CA to the Service on time for the July deadline.

Director Mayer traveled to Southern Nevada to visit the Las Vegas Shooting Range development and meet with Don Turner and Conservation Education staff. The group toured the Clark County Shooting Range which is a huge development of 2,900 acres. The second day in Las Vegas Director Mayer went with Chief of Habitat Dave Pulliam to tour Overton Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Director Mayer was impressed with the overall richness of the Palm Oasis areas especially the wetland complex.

Director Mayer attended the Public Lands Legislative Committee meeting in Elko and he presented information regarding NDOW's public lands issues, endangered species, and sage grouse took the lead in the presentation. Additionally, Director Mayer and Chief Laura Richards supported the hollow pipe mining claim issue. Mr. Bob Goodman of Audubon took the lead in the presentation. Everyone at the meeting was supportive. The off-highway vehicle issue was also discussed. Director Mayer was asked what NDOW's position was on the issue of enforcement. He affirmed that we would provide enforcement, but it would need to be funded. He also made it clear to the committee that if they wanted the Department to take the lead on the actual registering of the OHV's that would require a large infrastructure cost. While registering OHV's is a departure from the Department's mission it could be done, but it would require new building facilities, more staff, and a new computer system and support staff.

Chairman Chad Bliss of the Eureka CABMW is planning a shooting event at Perdiz Club in Eureka in conjunction with the August Commission meeting.

Deputy Director Hunt said he received a draft conveyance for Carson Lake Pasture.

The Fiscal Analysis Team met last week and the Department has \$4.8 million in the bank with the Director's Office and Habitat Division running short, and have cancelled all the Director's travel for the rest of the month to save money in the fiscal year.

Deputy Director Hunt said the agency had a build-up of compensatory time with some individuals with more than 120 hours on the books. He will speak with Division Chiefs individually about this issue.

As a cost savings approach earlier this year we looked at transcription services for Commission meetings and several are recognized by State Purchasing. The Director's Office needs to decide how to budget for this and it may require more equipment. Deputy Director Hunt asked that each chief estimate the number of times that the committees they staff meet.

Director Mayer recommended that the Lands Committee meet to discuss establishing regional teams to develop conservation needs assessment to drive land acquisitions projects and decision-making on future properties.

Director Mayer will call Director Todd Rich of Department of Personnel today and try and get some movement on the fisheries positions – hatcheries technicians and biologists. The Fisheries Division is really feeling the pinch of the lack of staff especially at Gallagher Hatchery.

Conservation Education

Staff is working on the release of this year's duck stamp program information with Nevada Waterfowl Association as this year's sponsor and the featured species is the Canada goose. Contest rules will be available on the NDOW website.

Press releases written: Angler information guide press release, five Free Fishing Day activities press releases, and game wardens report kids not wearing lifejackets release, and an update on fire impacts over the past 10 years.

Marketing coordinator prepared for the second round of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation lapsed angler outreach direct postcard mailing.

The volunteer coordinator is preparing for Marlette Lake spawning operations and completing sage-grouse lek survey work and data entry and submission.

The 2008 Hunt Book was finalized and sent to Publication Printers and should be delivered within the next two weeks.

The International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) conference was held in Illinois and attended by the Outdoor Education Coordinator and the Southern Region Hunter Education Coordinator. Of concern were the results of a survey that a growing number of students pursuing wildlife management do not understand the role hunting plays in wildlife management or its funding; finalized the quarterly Outdoor Educator newsletter which is distributed to all active hunter and angler education volunteer instructors.

Statewide preparations for Free Fishing Day events are under way for Sparks Marina in Reno, Cave Lake, China Gardens, and at Lake Mead. State Parks has agreed to allow free admission to state parks with water for those who have a fishing pole. The Lake Mead event promises to be better than ever, it is a joint effort with National Park Service, Bureau of Reclamation, and the Public Lands Institute. Local fishing organizations are also involved.

Staff attended a Project Wild and Project Aquatic WILD conference at Lake Tahoe.

Oxbow Nature Area restoration ongoing: A noxious weed spray crew was recruited to spray invasive weeds that have appeared in the area since the fire; determined which trees and shrubs needed to complete restoration goals; met with City of Reno staff several times to keep them informed with what was going on at the Oxbow, and what was going to be occurring within the next month or so. NDOW has applied for \$8,000 in grant funds from the Nevada Division of Forestry to assist with fire rehabilitation efforts.

Fisheries Division

Fisheries Division is beginning to feel the impact of retirements and transfers, which has been complicated by the current hiring freeze. We currently have 3 three employees at Gallagher Hatchery, a five man station.

Eastern Region staff is attending a range wide bull trout meeting to discuss the efficacy of distinct population segments (DPS) versus significant portion of the range (SPR) determinations.

We have received a response back from Southern Nevada Waterfowl Association regarding water issues at Lake Mead Hatchery and will be scheduling a meeting in the near future.

A recent report of silver carp at Roger's Spring near Lake Mead, turned out to be pacu. While this is not necessarily a good thing, they are certainly less of a threat than silver carp. The threat we face from aquatic invasive species is such that it is not if we will have another quagga mussel type discovery, but what, when and where.

Game Division

On May 29 at the request of the Modoc/Washoe Experimental Stewardship Steering Committee, a Game Division biologist and the Wildlife Health Specialist attended a meeting in Cedarville, California. Among other topics, the meeting focused on disease transmission between bighorn sheep/domestic sheep and goats, and the Hay's Canyon die-off. Lani Estill chaired this section and presented some historical documents detailing the original agreements between producers and NDOW related to the release of bighorn sheep into the Hay's Canyon Range. A discussion followed and the Game Division biologist was able to provide a detailed summary of the events leading up to the die-off in 2007. The discussion included a description of the necropsy results and pathological findings that were observed in the animals we were able to examine during the die-off. During the committee discussion that followed, there was no disagreement that domestic livestock posed a disease risk to wild sheep and in fact there was a suggestion that the recent die-off was a result of contact with domestic goats.

On May 29 the Game and Habitat Division Chiefs met with representatives of the University of Nevada College of Agriculture to discuss opportunities for collaborative research and management efforts related to the four state Governor's Memorandum of Understanding related to cheat grass and wildfire management. One outcome was a decision to prepare a Memorandum of Agreement between the University and Department to define respective roles and expectations.

The Division continues to be contacted by constituents voicing concerns over a rumor that deer and antelope compensation tags, elk incentive tags, and elk damage payments are being made available to ranchers purchased by the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA). Constituents were informed that since the SNWA is a quasi-governmental organization, and since compensation, incentive, and damage are private lands programs, no SNWA ranch or other property is eligible for participation in the programs.

The Division is trying to confirm reports of bighorn sheep (rams, ewes) in Hayes Canyon. The hope is that the die-off experienced last winter did not completely eradicate the population. This good news is tempered by additional reports of feral goats in Washoe County, some of whom may present a risk to bighorn. The Division has received a report of five domestic goats on public land in the south Virginia Range. These goats are very close to a radio-collared ewe. The Division will search for these goats in the near future, and follow the procedures outlined in the existing Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Agriculture and the Woolgrower's to assure that these goats are removed.

Habitat Division

No report submitted

Operations Division

The roll out of the new Point of Sales (POS) devices which interface with the Nevada Wildlife Data System (NWDS) continues with two agents going live--the second largest (by sales) license agent, Wal-Mart of Elko, chalked up almost \$2,100 in license and stamp sales in three days using the new process, and Ace Hardware of Spring Creek also went live. We now have six agents live, and for the most part, this new sales process is being well received. The benefits will be many, to include greatly reduced error rates currently experienced by agents using the paper licenses and near-real time access to sales data by the agency.

Big game tags coming to lucky applicants soon and Assemblywoman Debbie Smith of Sparks was one of several attendees present at Systems Consultants (SCI) on May 29 for the big game draw. Also present were members of the Commission, county wildlife board, the department and the public. Applicants should be advised of the draw results no later than June 20.

Divisions who have not yet submitted to Pat Wlodarczyk their IT/personal computer requirements for the FY10/11 budget should do so this week.

With the assistance of Systems Consultants the License Office expects to provide updated license sales data to the Conservation Division this week.

SkyTrac Communications Contract Approved – The contract between the agency and the Canadian company, SkyTrac, was recently approved by the Clerk of the Board of Examiners. This contract puts into effect a GPS tracking system to be installed in all three of the agency's aircraft, and will allow for the in-flight location tracking by our dispatch operations. This is a major enhancement to the safety of our air operations program.

Revised Nevada Wildlife Data System reporting format for Legislative Counsel Bureau Analyst Eric King which is also sent state legislators.

The Kietzke Lane office in Reno, which houses much of the Operations Division and Fiscal Services Section, underwent a fire inspection last week. Only two minor discrepancies reported.

Wildlife Diversity

Wildlife Diversity Division supervisors and staff specialists met in Reno this past week to develop a framework and core content for a division-wide Data Management Policy and Procedure. Feedback from field staff on previous drafts together with information from federal plans was integrated into the two-day process. The team worked to develop procedures on data acquisition, database management roles and responsibilities, data quality assurances, data ownership and dissemination. A final draft will be circulated to field staff for comment within 6 weeks.

Over the past month, Wildlife Diversity personnel continued to work directly with environmental consultants on wildlife data requests for the proposed Ruby Pipeline. In addition to data requests, staff also provided input on several wildlife survey protocol methods along with timing of surveys and of pipeline construction activity.

Winnemucca field staff coordinated with several high schools in Northern Nevada on the growing of sagebrush and bitterbrush seedlings. Construction of a greenhouse at Lowry High School is structurally complete and electrical and irrigation system work will be completed in the next few weeks. The greenhouse is expected to be fully functional by the middle of June.

Several surveys were undertaken this past month across the western region. Aerial sandhill crane surveys, conducted in Humboldt County, indicate similar numbers of breeding birds compared to those recorded over the past three years. Later this year, 3 satellite transmitters will be placed on three adult sandhill cranes in an effort to better understand where these birds overwinter. Annual shorebird surveys also continued in Lahontan Valley. A second spring shorebird count, conducted via airboat, revealed a number of short-billed dowitchers while an aerial survey of nesting water birds in the Lahontan and Humboldt sink recorded 2,500 white-faced ibis nesting on Carson Lake and Stillwater

National Wildlife Refuge. Seventy great blue herons were documented nesting in trees in the Lahontan Valley. Surveys for ospreys in the Mason Valley resulted in the confirmation of two occupied nests, and colonial bird surveys were initiated at Virginia Lake.

Work also continues with the BLM to complete environmental reviews on bat friendly mine closures using Question 1 monies in the Western Region. Construction started on two bat gates at the Murphy mine in Pershing County; when completed the project will protect over 100 hibernating Townsend's big-eared bats.

Within the Tahoe Basin, furbearer study camera stations began to receive bear visits this past month. Where snow is not limiting access, units are currently being removed. As part of the Upland Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Project, two furbearer camera stations were monitored resulting in several images of deer, gray fox, and bears. The presence of these species appears positive; the area was previously inaccessible to large mammals due to the amount of large downed trees from beetle kill.

The Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) Coordinator was instrumental in helping establish a Nevada Fish Passage Work Group made up of representatives from NDOW, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Trout Unlimited and the Natural Resource Conservation Service. The group will coordinate with the Anadromous Fish Restoration Program (USFWS) and the California Fish Passage Work Group. Future actions include the development of a Memorandum of Understanding between the agencies, and the development of a NDOW website devoted to fish passage issues, including a database of fish barrier locations, conditions, priorities for restoration, restoration techniques/information, etc. The group also plans to develop a grant to hire a coordinator to maintain momentum based on the California template and to develop a monitoring protocol.

The LIP Coordination is also working on a wildlife escape ramp project that prevents wildlife from drowning in water tanks. This is a cooperative project between USFWS, USFS, BLM, NDOW, and Bat Conservation International. A total of 1,000 escape ramps have been constructed by a local company in Elko, to be distributed and installed in water developments during the summer of 2008. A public "build day" and publicity event for the project will be held on July 1 at a local ranch in Elko County.

Other LIP projects include the Virgin River Fish Passage Barriers project which has been completed with site visits scheduled to document vegetation restoration. The construction of the boardwalk is scheduled to begin this summer on the Nature Conservancy's Torrance Ranch Project in Beatty. The reseeded of 5,000 acres affected by the Winters fire in Elko County has been completed. The Smith Creek Ranch/Edwards Creek Restoration Cooperative Project is in progress with a Safe Harbor Agreement being developed for Lahontan cutthroat trout. The Susie/Camp Creek Riparian Restoration project, a cooperative project with the BLM and the Maggie Creek Ranch is scheduled for implementation this summer. The TS Ranch rabbit brush control project is currently under development.

The Director and the Wildlife Diversity Division Chief presented testimony during a recent Legislative Public Lands Committee Meeting in Elko on threatened and endangered species issues in Nevada and also on proposed legislation to eliminate the threat to wildlife from hollow mine claim markers. The proposed legislation amends NRS 517.030 to state that only solid mine claim markers will be considered legal, valid claim markers. The proposed legislation also states that one year after the adoption of the regulation, any hollow pipe used to mark the boundaries of a claim will not be considered valid and may

be knocked down or removed from the claim. Many thanks go to the Lahontan Audubon Society, the Red Rock Audubon Society and the Nevada Mining Association in lending their support to this issue.