



The Outdoorsman

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Idaho Fish and Game Fails to Document Claims of Limited Non-Game Sportsman Expenditures

By George Dovel

On Jan. 8, 2009 I emailed a formal request to Idaho Department of Fish and Game Director Cal Groen for the following FY 2008 information that had already been requested in person by an Idaho Legislator:

A-1 A list of IDFG employees whose primary function was either nongame (non-hunted/fished) species, or non-game (activities that do not directly benefit hunters and fishermen or the species they pursue).

A-2 A list of employees whose primary duty was not non-game with the approximate percentage of time they devote to nongame species or non-game activities.

A-3 A list of employees who were never involved with these activities during FY 2008.

B The source and amount of IDFG matching funding for each federal or other grant.

C. Nongame funding by Bureau

The Legislator was told the information would be prepared by the January 28, 2009 Commission meeting and I received the following response from IDFG Lawyer, Deputy Attorney Dallas Burkhalter, in a letter dated Jan. 14, 2009:

“Director Groen asked me to coordinate the response to your recent Public Record Request. There is no public record which responds to Items A 1 through 3 of your request. The Idaho Public Records law does not require an agency to create new documents to respond to a request.

“There is no public record which arranges the information requested in item B in your requested format. The information contained in item B of your request concerning matching funds for various grant programs is contained in grant application records maintained at the Department Headquarters office in Boise. You may review these records during business hours. Please contact Jeff Seward at (208)287-2811 to arrange an appointment so that the records and a conference room can be made available for your review.

“Item C of your request seeks a list of ‘total funding and source for all non-game/fish activities, including participation in printed and internet publications and videos in each Bureau, including Headquarters and each Region.’ There is no public record which specifically responds to your request. Attached is an eleven page FY 2008 Actual Expenditures Report which is responsive to parts of your request.”

In a 1,900-word response to several issues raised in a 500-word guest opinion published on Jan. 2, 2009, IDFG Communications Bureau Chief Mike Keckler came up with about \$70,000 in sportsman license fees spent for non-game activities and about \$168,000 in sportsman excise taxes spent for nongame employee salaries in the Wildlife Bureau. That is the highest total that anyone has admitted thus far.

During a fee increase promotion for an SFW-Idaho Chapter in Heyburn on January 23, 2009, Commissioner Wright reportedly said only about \$50,000 of the \$40 million collected from sportsmen is for non-game and most of that is for education such as the nongame publication “Wildlife Express.”

In a seven-page email to three concerned sportsmen, dated Jan. 17, 2009, Commissioner Tony McDermott used the same 11-page document forwarded to me by lawyer Burkhalter to claim that no sportsman money was spent on Nongame in two areas. He also wrote, “The Commission is now having internal discussions on directing Cal and his staff to no longer spend valuable staff time and sportsman resources on your (three recipients’) mean-spirited challenges and information demands.”

If that statement is true, the F&G Commission is violating Idaho’s Open Meeting Law and Public Records Law. If it has nothing to hide, why not invite the three critics to examine the records?

The following article documents significant differences in what IDFG Fee Increase spokesmen are telling the public about expenditures and what the record shows.

Letter from Idaho Fish and Game Commissioner Tony McDermott – Part one

By George Dovel

On January 17, 2009 I received an email addressed to Ed Lindahl, George Doval and Jim Hagedorn from Idaho Panhandle Region Fish and Game Commissioner Tony McDermott. A seven-page letter was attached and copies sent to IDFG Director Cal Groen and the remaining six Commissioners.

Although I have seen Commissioner McDermott at Commission meetings where we exchange greetings, we have had only one conversation, other than by email, in the four years I have known him.

During those years he sent me donations for *Outdoorsman* subscriptions for himself and for several Panhandle Region officials, and occasionally asked for my advice in addressing controversial Commission decisions such as the requirement to use only side-lock muzzleloaders for late-season elk hunting. My advice was always to use science and facts – not favoritism to any special interest group.

Until this email, Commissioner McDermott has sent me a series of emails over the years with high praise for each issue of *The Outdoorsman* and no criticism or suggested changes. But this letter included an often bitter attack against the three recipients, especially his close friend for 25 years, Ed Lindahl,

He challenged me to print his entire 3,000-word letter plus two additional pages of a Fee Increase document titled “Internal Use Only” in a single *Outdoorsman* issue. I opted not to do that because: (1) I would have to edit it and clean up inappropriate comments; (2) it would require a 16-page issue just to print his entire 8-9 pages plus a response, and I am constantly challenged to reduce – not increase article size; and (3) although *The Outdoorsman* occasionally provides a vehicle for readers to express their opinion, it is not a vehicle for a public official (who already has free access to the major media and a \$3.3 million Communications Bureau budget) to attack the integrity and motives of private citizens.

With an apology for its lengthy discussion of budget expenditures, which is confusing to many readers, the following are adequate unedited excerpts from most of Commissioner McDermott’s email to fairly represent each issue he raised in *italics*, followed by my response:

T.M. - IDFG and the Commissions mission is to administer the policy of the state to preserve, protect, perpetuate and manage all wildlife. This is not just the hunted, fished and trapped. All wildlife includes the bats, butterflies, snakes, all non-game birds and on and on. In today’s environment rattlesnakes are protected, white

pelicans that are nesting in large numbers and consuming alarming amounts of cutthroat trout from the upper Snake river are protected, as are ravens, magpies and hawks. The citizens of Idaho and our Nation value these non game species and charge State Fish and Game Agencies with responsible management.

Over time the Department has been directed by its Legislature through the lawmaking process to deal with these other species and issues. Like it or not, fish and wildlife belong to all Americans as a public trust. According the AFWA (American Fish and Wildlife Agencies) to sustain healthy fish and wildlife populations and provide opportunity for all of us to connect with nature, State agencies continue to advance the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Hunting and fishing are the corner stones of the North American Model. In order to further conservation in the public trust the National Fish and Wildlife agenda includes: children and nature, climate change, the endangered species act, energy development, farm bill, hunting and fishing heritage, invasive species, urban sprawl and loss of habitat, state wildlife action plans, wetlands, and on.

Have I made the point? You three have and continue to criticize the Department for what they are legally mandated with doing.

Facts - For most of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game’s existence, “All Wildlife” was defined as “wild mammals, wild birds and fish hunted by man.” But when fringe radicals infiltrated the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (now shortened to **AFWA**), it directed State F&G agencies to convince their legislators to change the definition of “Wildlife” to “Any form of animal life, native or exotic, generally living in a state of nature.”

Most Idaho legislators thought that “animal life” meant mammals – or that it might include birds or fishes. They had no idea this meant that IDFG is now required by law to manage and protect black widow and brown banjo spiders, cockroaches and termites, head lice, body lice, crab lice, mosquitoes that carry West Nile virus, ticks that carry two types of spotted fever, rodents with their fleas and other parasites that host and transmit deadly plagues, and all the rest of the disease carriers that exterminators charge homeowners to destroy.

In addition to carrying other diseases, Idaho bats transmit bat rabies to other animals, and occasionally to humans, yet IDFG has spent thousands of dollars teaching school children and their parents never to harm a bat, including those that occupy their home. Recently the

Commission – not the Legislature – agreed to establish a civil value to be charged to anyone who causes the destruction of any protected nongame species.

F&G – Not Legislature – Pushed Nongame Protection

After The Nature Conservancy's subsidiary, NatureServe, told its 82 Conservation Data Centers which nongame species should be protected, Idaho CDC Biodiversity Specialist Rita Dixon, with help from AFWA's Naomi Edelson and Defenders of Wildlife's Sarah Vickerman, collaborated with IDFG Nongame Wildlife Manager Chuck Harris to prepare the Temporary Rule. Former Commissioner John Burns was the only one of the seven F&G Commissioners to question the source of the additional funding this would require before they passed that Rule unanimously.

As is always the case, a contingent of IDFG officials/lobbyists, whose wages are generally paid entirely by sportsmen, appeared before both Rules Subcommittees to pressure the legislators to accept that Rule, along with a host of unimportant "housekeeping" Rules. Then they lobbied individual legislators to make sure the Rule was adopted as a permanent IDAPA Rule with full force of law.

F&G Lobbied to Hire Nongame Biologists

Back in 1996 when IDFG lobbied the Legislature intensively to allow it to hire six regional nongame biologists to take advantage of a federal "nongame" grant, Senator Dean Cameron warned that this would create need for a premature fee increase to provide matching state funds in order to receive the grant. But Administrative Chief Steve Barton told the Legislators IDFG would have a \$2 million surplus for FY 1996 and would not need a fee increase until after FY 2000.

Yet three months later Barton reported a deficit of \$530,900 and projected a deficit of \$1,462,000 for FY 1998. Because of Barton's inaccurate information, tens of thousands of dollars of sportsmen license fees were misused to provide part of the nongame matching funds – just as they are today.

F&G Lobbied to Manage Wildflowers, Plants

Commissioner McDermott's letter cites part of one sentence in a 2003 law, "...the appropriate State agency for wildlife and plant management issues is the Department of Fish and Game," as "proof" that the Legislature forced IDFG to manage plants. If he has read each *Outdoorsman* issue as thoroughly as he claims in his letter, he knows that IDFG lobbied intensively to take authority to manage wildflowers away from Parks and Recreation in 2003. That lobbying included a false claim by F&G Director Huffaker that sportsmen's license money had never been used for anything that did not benefit sportsmen.

Outdoorsman articles have thoroughly documented the fact that every "nongame" activity, including initial wolf reintroduction, in either the Idaho Code or IDAPA Rules resulted from either lobbying or violation of the Code by IDFG officials. But the fact that current nongame

funding programs were set up by the Legislature to accommodate requests from IDFG does not constitute a Legislative "mandate" to manage nongame species.

Despite the rhetoric, by its own admission the only attempt by IDFG to "manage" nongame species is a few limited efforts to restore so-called "native" vegetation with either questionable or no success. The simple act of restoring the definition of "Wildlife" to "wild mammals, wild birds and fish" would at least eliminate the impossible mandate to protect and manage every organism in Idaho.

"Native" Species Have Top Priority

However it still would not resolve the issue of exotic (non-native) species in Idaho, including brook, brown, lake, and rainbow (except redband) trout, bass, crappie, bluegill, yellow perch, catfish, bullfrogs, pheasants, chukars, gray (Hungarian) partridge, California quail and all wild turkeys to name a few. All of these species are protected under both the former and the current version of Idaho law.

But because an international group has classified all non-native species as "Invasive Species," IDFG frequently eliminates some game fish populations – or raises and stocks rainbow trout hybrids that cannot reproduce – in order to "protect" some native species. This is another example of Idaho wildlife managers' allegiance to what McDermott calls "*the National Fish and Wildlife agenda*" rather than to Idaho law.

Unless the Idaho Legislature restores the original definition of wildlife and forces IDFG to obey Idaho Law instead of pandering to the national (and international) nongame agenda, it is probably only a matter of time until Idaho will be ordered by a federal judge to stop raising and stocking even sterile rainbow hybrids in most of its lakes rivers and streams. California's 100-year-old program of raising and stocking trout was halted by a judge in most rivers and lakes in Nov. 2008 in order to "protect" native amphibian and fish species from predation.

"National Fish and Wildlife Agenda"

McDermott's statement "*Like it or not, fish and wildlife belong to all Americans as a public trust*, is not accurate. The wildlife in each state is the property of that state and is held in trust and managed by the state for the people. His statement, "*In order to further conservation in the public trust the National Fish and Wildlife agenda includes: children and nature, climate change, the endangered species act, energy development, farm bill, hunting and fishing heritage, invasive species, urban sprawl and loss of habitat, state wildlife action plans, wetlands, and on,*" also emphasizes who is dictating policy to IDFG.

None of those topics are even mentioned – much less mandated in Idaho Wildlife Policy (I.C. Sec. 36-103) and only the Endangered Species Act is addressed in Fish and Game Title 36. Yet Idaho F&G spends several million

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dollars of sportsman license fees and excise taxes every year pursuing all but one of those agendas (hunting heritage) solely because international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) say they should.

AFWA, TNC/Natureserve and its Heritage Programs/CDCs are all international entities yet McDermott and IDFG admit they are following their agendas instead of obeying Idaho Law and managing the species held in trust for Idaho citizens. Environmental programs like “Project Wild” that taught our children and teachers to preserve our “natural” heritage rather than protect our hunting and fishing heritage, helped produce a generation of zealots who argue that animal life has at least equal value to human life, and who demand even more free services that sportsmen are being forced to pay for.

McDermott’s statements, “*State agencies continue to advance the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Hunting and fishing are the corner stones of the North American Model,*” are no longer true. Other articles in this issue offer proof that Western State and Provincial Fish and Game agency protectionist agendas and excessive fees are now driving all but the wealthy away from hunting and fishing.

T.M. *We want what you want and are pursuing a course of action to get there. The Director is currently wrestling with the problems of how to deal with CDC issues and is prepared to make draconian cuts in-order to protect license dollars. From my perspective there is absolutely no interest from a legislative perspective or anywhere else other than the three of you in transferring (Outdoorsman-latest issue) “the entire non-game insects and flowers agenda back to Parks and Recreation where it will stop destroying Idaho’s Hunting Heritage”, as George suggests.*

After listening and looking at the pro’s and con’s of where non game issues should reside and how Idaho and other States are organized I am convinced that IDFG has no choice but to make the best out of the situation it has. IDFG is the best place for these non game programs as we maintain total control. Budget transparency and adequate funding for non game programs are also critical. This system has been a confusing mess for years and it will take time and a considerable amount of effort to get it untangled. The FY 08 expenditures for the Conservation Data Center (\$1,202,937) and Non Game (\$1,406,945) Programs totaled \$2,609,882 funded through Federal wildlife sources, Federal grants, private/local sources, non license set-aside and trust funds. From my analysis and according to the Department no sportsman/license dollars have been assigned to these programs! Cal will provide a complete picture of the budget and where the monies go at

some point in the near future. Suggesting that we pass these programs and responsibilities to other state agencies is analogous to passing the wolf issue to the Nez Perce Tribe or Department of Agriculture.

The current Director, his Staff and the Commission are moving the Department in the right direction and are making progress. Cal has done a complete review of the Conservation Sciences Program with the direction for a zero base budget for FY 2010. We are facing huge challenges with species listings, wolves, elk declines, habitat loss and evolving public demands. The Department desperately needs adequate funding to meet these challenges. The Commission advocates that hunting and fishing license funds be directed to hunting and fishing benefits and that the Department pursues and broaden alternative funding sources to meet the needs of public, government and statute demands.

IDFG’s Director and its current Commission are aware of the problems associated with the issues that go beyond core hunting and fishing services. They are totally committed to using license dollars for what they are intended and not non-game programs and issues. Cal has established an alternate funding committee that is made up of key staff, him-self, three Commissioners and key Legislators to look at these problems. While there has not been a lot of progress with respect to finding a badly needed funding source this group has at least identified the problem and is working on possible solutions.

Facts – As *The Outdoorsman* has explained many times, there is a significant difference in the single word “nongame” (species that are not classified as game) and “non game” or “non-game” (hundreds of IDFG activities, publications or programs that do not directly benefit license buyers or the species they pursue and harvest). The Director’s promise to sort out (only) actual nongame expenditures and present them during the January 2009 Commission meeting will not address the Department’s runaway spending for other non-game activities.

Sportsmen Pay for Non-Sportsmen Facility Use

In the initial FY 2008 meeting of the Alternate Funding Committee described by McDermott, Director Groen told the Committee that funding non-game programs resulted in cutting law enforcement and fish stocking, and Commissioner Wright stated that IDFG had only 25% of the funds needed to fund its non-game activities. At that meeting Dr. Wright told me that most of the people who took advantage of the free IDFG WMAs, camping, boating and parking facilities, etc., including members of his own family, did not purchase any type of F&G license or permit and said sportsmen are wrongly paying for their recreation.

Yet in a meeting with the Mini-Cassia Chapter of SFW-Idaho at Heyburn on Jan. 23, 2009, Commissioner Wright reportedly told attendees that “only about \$50,000 of the \$40 million collected from sportsmen is for non-

game use and most of that is for education such as the nongame publication "Wildlife Express." What happened to the \$4.5 million sportsmen pay to manage WMAs or the \$594,358 sportsman match for boating access, etc.?

Commissioner McDermott's letter claims no sportsman money was spent for Nongame in either the CDC or the Nongame Portion of the Wildlife Bureau Expenditures. Yet according to the FY 2008 Expenditure Report, \$231,338 of sportsman excise taxes was used to fund just those two programs.

Natural Resource Policy Bureau Expenditures, which includes CDC but does not include Nongame in the Wildlife Bureau, totaled \$3,349,159 of which \$1,002,275 was sportsman license fees and \$629,115 was sportsman excise taxes. In other words **49%** of the NRPB expenses were paid by sportsmen.

An article by Communications Bureau Chief Mike Keckler in the *Idaho Press Tribune* and a news report in the *Idaho State Journal* both report that 12% of nongame salaries are subsidized with sportsman excise tax dollars and Keckler also mentioned several annual nongame uses of sportsman license fees, totaling about \$70,000, of which \$42,078 pays personnel wages for Project Wild.

Other Nongame Costs Paid by Sportsmen

FY 2008 expenditures totaling \$64,199,426 in six Bureaus required additional Administration costs of \$11,573,942. Adding that 18% prorated cost to the \$4.8 million spent just by Nongame Wildlife and NRPB would raise the cost of those two programs by \$864,000. And because sportsman licenses and excise taxes pay 66.9% of the cost of administration that added another **\$578,435** to what NRPB and Nongame Wildlife cost sportsmen last year.

Multiple activities and promotions of Nongame Wildlife and NRPB that are charged to Communications and Enforcement are also paid for by sportsmen. The claims that Nongame is costing sportsmen either nothing or only a few thousand dollars are obviously not true.

The Myth of "Total Transparency"

When IDFG stopped publishing its "Stockholder's Report," it was no longer possible to read the amount of the Wildlife Bureau Budget spent to manage Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). Instead of making a continuing effort toward providing at least some degree of transparency F&G leaves the public, their elected officials, and even the Commissioners in the dark by including WMA expenditures in several commingled lists and categories.

Another example of misleading information found in the FY 2008 Actual Expenditures Report is "Emergency Feeding of Big Game" which lists a total of \$64,266 in the four regions where feeding was actually done but then adds another \$277,773 "statewide" for a claimed total of \$342,039 for "emergency winter feeding of big game." That statement is false.

McDermott's repeated claim throughout his letter, that Commission policy is total transparency and seeing that no sportsman dollars are used for non game activities obviously does not agree with the facts. Since he became a member of the F&G Commission, the limited transparency that did exist in the "Stockholders Report" has disappeared and millions more sportsman dollars are being used to fund non-game activities (per FY2008 Actual Expenditures chart).

P-R Taxes Are Part of Sportsmen Costs

The Pittman-Robertson/Dingall-Johnson excise taxes that both resident and non-resident Idaho sportsmen pay when they purchase guns, ammo and fishing tackle is not a gift from a benevolent federal government. These taxes are forwarded to our state fish and game management agencies to restore wild game and fish populations based on the number of sport licenses sold, and are as much a part of sportsmen's contribution to the restoration and perpetuation of Idaho wildlife as the hunting and fishing license fees we pay.

The following chart shows the total dollars spent by each Bureau in FY 2008 and the percent of those dollars paid entirely by hunters and fishermen.

IDFG FY 2008 Actual Expenditures

Bureau	Total Sports Fees + Tax	Total \$ Spent	% Paid by Sportsmen
Administration	7,748,577	11,573,942	66.9%
Communications	2,680,099	3,271,572	81.9%
Enforcement	9,307,757	9,478,150	98.2%
Engineering	816,945	816,945	100.0%
Fisheries	9,824,374	27,974,709*	35.1%
Winter Feed	2,888,874	2,888,874	100.0%
Nat. Resource	1,631,391	3,349,159	48.7%
Wildlife	11,415,690	16,420,016	69.5%
Totals	46,313,707	75,773,368	61.1%

* Includes \$17 million in federal anadromous fish grants and dam mitigation money from Idaho Power, Bonneville Power, etc.

(NOTE: Without the \$17 million in grants and mitigation money sportsmen fees and tax would comprise 79.3% of the total)

The Truth About the Increase in FY 2008 Spending

The IDFG Fee Increase promotion package that is blanketing Idaho as this is written includes a two-sided color brochure asking "How has Idaho's budget changed compared to other state agencies? Although "State Agency Appropriations" is mentioned in another place, to the general public this means "how much was spent?"

Both the presentation and Director Groen's sales pitch imply that IDFG has trimmed the fat and held the line on spending, with a budget increase of only 2% during the past two years, and suggest that means it deserves a fee increase. Comparing actual spending in FY 2007 with actual spending in FY 2008 in the chart on the next page will reveal whether spending increased by only 2%.

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IDFG FY 2007 & FY 2008 Actual Expenditures

Bureau	FY 2007	FY 2008	Increase
Administration	9,618,700	11,573,942	20.3%
Communications	3,135,600	3,271,572	4.3%
Enforcement	9,208,300	9,478,150	2.9%
Engineering	782,700	816,945	4.4%
Fisheries	23,543,400	27,974,709	10.3%
Winter Feed	2,167,200	2,888,874*	33.3%*
Nat. Resource	2,728,000	3,349,159	22.8%
Wildlife	15,338,700	16,420,016	7.0%
Totals	66,522,600	75,773,368	13.9%

* reported winter feeding increase was actually a reseeding effort to restore "native" vegetation.

To refer to a known one-year **\$9.3 million 13.9%** increase in budget spending as "only a **2%** increase in budget" is misleading, yet the Commission approved the claim in the current Fee Increase package and the Director continues to use terms like "We pinched things down more last year" in his oral presentation to the public.

While the 2% increase in budget *request* and *appropriation* was technically accurate, IDFG failed to explain that it had been exaggerating its anticipated revenue by several million dollars in its budget request each year so it could spend more on its non-game programs than they were taking in. Once the Legislature approved the inflated spending for non-game activities, IDFG used sportsman fees from an emergency "rainy day fund" and other programs to make up the non-game deficit.

I reported this early in 2005 when the Legislature's Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee (**JFAC**) and the House and Senate Resource Committees directed Legislative Services Budget Analyst Ray Houston and Division of Financial Management Analyst Larry Schlict to conduct a F&G Commission workshop on that subject. The Commission promptly agreed to correct the dishonest practice and Director Huffaker laid out a Department goal to be able to track every license dollar from the time it comes in, showing exactly what it was spent for.

Yet the FY 2006 and FY 2007 Budgets each exceeded anticipated income by more than \$7 million, and finding where sportsmen money was spent became an even bigger mystery. Instead of holding the line in the FY 2008 budget as Groen claims, it was the first budget in several years to accurately report anticipated revenue (which increased substantially over FY 2007).

Before actual FY 2008 expenditures were known, I wrote another detailed article covering the subject in the June-July 2008 *Outdoorsman* entitled, "What Has Happened to F&G Transparency?" That issue was mailed to Commissioner McDermott on August 12, 2008.

About 10 days later I received the following email from Commissioner McDermott. His comment indicates that he was pleased with the information in all of the articles in that issue:

From: Anthony McDermott
To: George Dovel
Sent: Friday, August 22, 2008 9:24 AM

George:

This months *Outdoorsman* was exceptionally well done! Thanks. I just finished reading the article in the September *American Hunter* concerning OK's Right to Hunt legislation and would appreciate your input. From my perspective the current commission will support. Cheers.

Tony

Hunters Charged Unfairly for Habitat

That *Outdoorsman* issue thoroughly documented the fact that AFWA has made nongame wildlife its top priority since 1999 and told how it had dropped the "International" from its name, but still represents and lobbies for the governments of Mexico and Canada. The same issue exposed the FWS/AFWA/TNC-funded classes that were teaching F&G Communications Specialists in every state how to sell the TNC Native Forage Restoration program to their Governors and Legislators.

Charging hunters for half of the Natural Resource Policy Bureau Budget under the heading of "Technical Expenses" is unreasonable. Hunters already pay \$4.8 million from set-aside and Wildlife Bureau funds for habitat and weed control on WMAs and one other area, which should be at least shared by the primary users.

Making hunters foot any part of the bill for TNC's multi-state multi-billion-dollar sagebrush-steppe native plant restoration project – instead of charging it to the IDFG newly formed Conservation Sciences Program that is promoting it – is depriving game management of critical funding. With record low populations of most game species and the number of hunters declining, every dollar hunters contribute in fees and excise taxes is needed to restore game populations by mitigating losses.

T.M. – In "An Important Message for All Americans", page 16, last issue is why you are "out of touch". You cover 75% of what bothers me about what you three are attempting to do in this issue on this one page. If there is a conspiracy theory involving the Nature Conservancy, U.N.Wildlands Initiative, Western Governors, CDC non-game and a whole host of other organizations focused on destroying Idaho's Hunting Heritage, I am missing it. If there is a "conspiracy", it is so far above your ability to influence that you would better off, partnering up with Ed and Jim, stepping out on the back porch and...(censored).

I will however send you a \$50 check for two subscriptions, but seriously doubt that it will result in any progress with helping "citizens to take back control of their government and their future". If I agreed completely

with 1/2 of the material that you print I would turn in my letter of resignation and recommend to the people of Idaho that IDFG be eliminated in its entirety because the ball game is over--it's hopeless.

Facts – The charge of “conspiracy theory” and the claim “you three” (are the only ones emphasizing return to game management) are well-worn clichés used to discredit the messenger when the message cannot be refuted. I have two file boxes and part of a desk drawer containing unsolicited letters I have received, agreeing with and praising what I am printing.

And although I do not publish my email address or solicit emails, since the last *Outdoorsman* was mailed on Dec. 23rd I have received 1,000 or more unsolicited emails from people who similarly support the publication. As happened in the late 1960s and early 1970s, legitimate scientists and concerned laymen are using vehicles like *The Outdoorsman* to combat the false science that is locking up our natural resources and evicting rural people from the land.

Recent *Outdoorsman* issues are now read and discussed by tens of thousands of Americans daily on several websites and other nationwide media outlets. Perhaps Commissioner McDermott listened to Ed Lindahl's interview by the nationwide Outdoor Talk Radio Network a week after he sent his letter.

No *Outdoorsman* article has ever suggested that the Western Governors, and others who have been duped by the TNC propaganda, are part of a conspiracy “*focused on destroying Idaho's hunting heritage.*” But many articles have documented the result of AFWA making the nongame agenda the top priority of state and provincial wildlife managers.

T.M. – *George, the only positive aspect of the last issue is that you have been so negative for so long that the legislators you send copies to toss them with out reading them.*

I would be remiss if I did not complement you on the two page wolf update (in the same last issue). George I could not agree more with what you have laid out with respect to the subject in this issue and this alone is worth paying for a new subscription. Hopefully, delisting in Montana and Idaho will occur before you read this, and it has. Idaho's wolf population needs to be reduced to a manageable number immediately. Your editorial opinion is absolute fact. Idaho is already feeling the effects of non-resident license sales and the resident sportsman whom I have talked with understand the challenges. This issue alone has the potential to destroy Idaho's "Hunting Heritage" and must be dealt with immediately. These creatures were foisted upon the citizens of Idaho by the Federal Government. Sportsman did not want them, the majority of the public did not want them, the Legislature

didn't want them and most of the Department didn't want them. Wolves must be considered a National animal and the \$64,000 question is who is going to pay for controlling them in the years following de-listing? My bet is that the State will get stuck with footing the bill? You can help by targeting future issues of the Outdoorsman to solving this problem.

Facts – Copies are mailed to all 105 Idaho legislators and I am aware of those who toss them, either because they have no interest in scientific natural resource management or because they have been told by IDFG that the facts I publish are suspect. But let me assure that members of both Resource Committees and many others read each issue and sometimes request extra copies or even back issues that are one or more years old to use as reference material on a particular subject.

Even those Legislators who sometimes disagree with my editorial opinions recognize that my facts are accurate and well documented.

The wolf article, that Commissioner McDermott says he agrees with completely, described how the F&G Commission violated provisions of the Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, I.C. Sec. 36-715 as amended in 2003, and Idaho's Official Policy on Wolves by approving the so-called "Idaho Wolf Population Management Plan" on March 6, 2008.

Instead of implementing Wolf Management Policy in accordance with the Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan as required by 36-715, the Commission unanimously approved a plan that pandered to wolf extremists by illegally changing the minimum “trigger” from below 10 breeding pairs to 20 breeding pairs, and agreeing to manage for a minimum of 518 wolves instead of using the required 15 breeding pairs (150 wolves).

The claim that this was necessary to assure delisting is obviously not true. The DOI/FWS delisting rule was already published in the Federal Register agreeing to the 10-15 breeding pairs provided in the Idaho Plan a week before the Commission approved the unlawful IDFG version.

Transmitting the OSC/IDFG letter agreeing to manage for nearly three times as many wolves as was agreed to by all parties, added confusion to what should have been an orderly transition from federal to state management. And sending a newer version of that same letter to FWS recently resulted in a still unauthorized commitment to manage for a minimum of 518 wolves being published in the new delisting plan (which is being reconsidered by the new administration).

The January 16, 2009 News Release by Idaho Governor Butch Otter further complicated the situation by calling the IDFG plan “Idaho's State Management Plan” (see Gov. Otter's comments on next page)

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F&G Commissioner Letter – *continued from page 7*

(By Gov. Otter) - “Idaho is committed to managing for a viable, self-sustaining population of wolves. In fact, Idaho’s State Management Plan calls for managing for no fewer than 518 wolves – nearly five times the minimum number agreed upon for our state prior to reintroduction. My administration supports that commitment – and I personally support that commitment – contrary to what has been said in the past.”

The Commission also violated I.C. 36-2405 (4) by not sending its plan to the Legislature for approval amendment or rejection. I.C. Sec. 36-2405(7) clearly states, “Nothing in this act shall be interpreted as granting the department of fish and game with new or additional authority.”

In order to appease sportsmen, F&G regularly publishes only part of I.C. Sec. 36-103 Idaho Wildlife Policy: “...preserve, protect perpetuate and manage...to provide continued supplies for hunting fishing and trapping,” as its “Mission Statement.” It chooses to ignore the second part.

“...because it is inconvenient and impractical for the legislature of the state of Idaho to administer such policy, it shall be the authority, power and duty of the fish and game commission to administer and carry out the policy of the state in accordance with the provisions of the Idaho fish and game code. The commission is not authorized to change such policy but only to administer it.” (emphasis added)

The unauthorized change in State of Idaho policy by the Commission also resulted in the new 10J rule requiring a minimum of **20** breeding pairs before wolf control can be used to halt excessive predation on our wildlife. If FWS wolf experts could not find 10 breeding pairs in 200 wolves until 3 years had passed, how long will it take to document 20 breeding pairs once litigants challenge the new technique of estimating breeding pairs from reported wolf packs?

The Commission also submitted a series of Wolf Hunting Rules which reiterated management for 500+ wolves, provided stricter limits on harvest methods than for bear and mountain lions, and required mandatory reporting of wolf harvest within 24 hours rather than the 10 days for bears and 5-10 days for lions. On Jan. 21, 2009, The House Resources F&G Rules Subcommittee, Chaired by former F&G Commissioner Fred Wood, voted 5-0 not to recommend approval of the wolf rules.

How We Got Where We Are

2001 – The Idaho Legislature recognized the extreme damage to wildlife and livestock by fewer than 200 wolves and passed HJM 5 demanding that wolves be removed from Idaho: <http://www3.state.id.us/oasis/2001/HJM005.html>

2002 – After years of input by countless people three Senators rewrote the 17th draft of the Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan provided by the Idaho Wolf Oversight Committee, deleting the IDFG provision that no wolves would be hunted for the first five years after IDFG assumed management and no guarantee wolves could be hunted then. This 32-page plan, adopted as SCR 134, emphasized the rights of Idaho citizens under the State Constitution; reiterated Idaho Wolf Policy demanding removal of wolves; insured protection of livestock, property and wild game from unacceptable depredation and contemplated increasing the number of wolves only when those conditions existed; IDFG must “submit any changes (in this plan) to the Idaho Legislature as if it were a new plan submitted for approval, amendment or rejection under Section 36-2405” (Plan has never been amended).

http://species.idaho.gov/pdf/wolf_cons_plan.pdf.

2003 – HB 294 amended I.C. Sec. 36-715 to its present form, which directs IDFG and OSC to prepare implementation plans in consultation with Wyoming and Montana - emphasizing five times that the implementation shall be pursuant to the Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/idstat/Title36/T36CH7SECT36-715.htm>).

2005 – HB 132 provided that, notwithstanding the classification of wolves, all methods of take, including those utilized by USFWS and USDA are authorized for the management of wolves in accordance with existing laws or approved management plans.

<http://www3.state.id.us/oasis/2005/H0132.html>

A Sportsman’s Perspective

January 25, 2009

Editor, The Outdoorsman:

I just returned from a meeting with F&G along with concerned sportsmen discussing the fee increase. Most of the issues that concern us locally don't really relate to the wolf. Thank God for that in the short term at least. I don't envy anyone in Elk country right now. When something is in your back yard and bad enough and you are able, you have a responsibility to right the wrong! (MORE ELOQUENTLY SPOKEN IN OUR COUNTRY’S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE)

Pheasants and deer top our list. After listening to all sides about the fee increase it seemed quite obvious to me it's not about the money for the sportsmen! After listening to our region’s director and commissioner I became a bit confused. Prior to the meeting I was convinced the F&G was my enemy.

These two figureheads explained eloquently they did not have all the answers, but had the responsibility to work hard with whatever they were given. They went on about how they really wanted to hear from everyone and

would make the time to really listen to concerns people wanted to share.

My thoughts were they really had changed. No longer were they going to call me an armchair biologist for arguing that improvement in game populations could be fixed through management while giving everyone a yearly season. They would hear me say, through my experience in the field, that deer and pheasant numbers could be enhanced greatly. Maybe not to where they were through 60's 70's & 80's, but certainly substantially higher than the present.

They seemed to say they wanted to put RUBBER ON THE ROAD. Honestly they made me feel guilty for the price vs. time a field as compared to a golf pass or season of bowling. I really would be glad to pay a steeper fee but only if they are trying and especially listening.

During the meeting there was a gentleman who shared beliefs along the same lines as mine. He had lived here all his life and where he hunted as a young man hasn't changed much if any. The pheasant numbers had dropped far greater than the loss of habitat. If anything hunting pressure has been less than his youthful days.

He admitted that he didn't have all the answers but predators topped his helpful suggestion list. Frankly he was disturbed the F&G for the last 20 years in his opinion had done nothing to improve the situation.

If the figureheads really meant what they said about wanting to listen, then this guy's request was well within their grasp to try something. Even if there was no money F&G could talk to the farmers about the birds' needs, and educate them for the birds' sake. On issues like when to disk weed patches, burn stubble or not, what areas are valuable to nesting, etc. At least focus on key geographical areas F&G know as very important.

Even 5 years from now if the birds' numbers did not grow, both parties would be happier knowing they had put rubber on the road. Like I said they made me feel like they wanted to move forward and that seems like a big change.

With mixed emotions I was leaving the meeting feeling fairly positive. On my way out I was talking with one of our head F&G biologists. Suddenly a F&G habitat specialist butted in our conversation. He leaned over to his fellow employee's ear and tried to cover his whisper with his hand so that I couldn't hear. I heard his short conversation very clearly.

He made fun of the pheasant fellow with his fellow employee. Basically stating that, "he didn't know his butt from a hole in the ground". He was just in the area the pheasant fellow was talking about and saw another area disked up, proving that the fellow's claim pheasant numbers could increase was bogus. He went on to say the biologist needed to stay after the meeting to talk to this guy so he could learn about pheasants. The Biologist replied "no thanks, I want to get home before midnight".

My knowledge of this pheasant fellow and his past history is very limited. Maybe he has had some past conversations that were unproductive. His comments this night seemed very reasonable to me. Those F&G employees' arrogance about this man's story go to the root of our problem. They really do believe they have it all figured out. The sportsman is their problem and has very little if any truthful knowledge about his hobby.

They throw you trinkets to divert your attention or start fights amongst ourselves about insignificant issues compared to the big issue. The big issue being there are several people who have made hunting and fishing more than a hobby. They have compiled decades into their profession and really understand their environment and game. They truly care for the animals they hunt and want their children and others to experience some of what they have seen.

It's foolish for the younger generation to not seek out their advice even though they may not carry a college degree. They're easy to spot, everything they do relates to hunting and fishing. Their most common advice is that there is so much more Idaho has to offer. They may differ on how to get there exactly, but no mistake, all things considered Idaho has been producing far less than its current potential.

Some less experienced people would argue that their current situation is not appreciated enough. Arguably they have been catching 12-inch bass on the Snake and 10-inch rainbows on the Portneuf every day all summer long. Little do they know 5-lb. fish were very common on the Portneuf.

As far as the Snake is concerned I've got pictures of six trout averaging over 7 pounds apiece on one man's stringer. Having a bass fishery take over a once world class trout fishery is like replacing our deer herds with javelina.

They may taste great, but you obviously don't understand what you have lost. "well at least we have something" they would say, "and those bass are real fighters."

I for one will not support the fee increase because again I have learned the F&G is speaking with a forked tongue. It is like giving more money to your drug-addicted brother. You give it to him the first few times because you care for him. Sooner or later most of us will realize that if you really care for him you can't give him the money any more without REAL change.

Bryan Sprague
American Falls

Bryan Sprague is the former Secretary of Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife – Idaho Chapter, and is a Life Member of the organization. He is currently Co-Chairman of the Pocatello, Idaho Chapter of SFW.

Too Many Blue-Collar Hunters Now Unable To Afford Big Game Tags

By JIM MATTHEWS

Outdoor News Service

(Recently an Outdoorsman reader, who is also a sporting goods dealer in rural Idaho, sent me a copy of the Nov/Dec issue of *Shooting Sports Retailer* magazine and referenced an article on page 26 titled "High Tag Fees Are Helping To Put you Out of Business." The article by Jim Matthews described and documented the fact that state wildlife agencies, especially in the Western States, keep increasing the cost of big game tags well above the cost of living or rate of inflation. This, added to inflation, forces thousands of hunters to quit hunting, which severely impacts local businesses in many rural communities.

SSR Editor, Bob Rogers in Story, Wyoming graciously gave me permission to publish that article but I chose the following article written by Mr. Matthews for his Outdoor News Service, which addresses the subject as both a resident and non-resident hunter. - ED)

Another American dream is turning into an American myth. Between the high cost of gasoline, skyrocketing ammunition fees, and big game tag fees that have far outpaced inflation, many blue-collar hunters can no longer afford to hunt big game.

Late last year I was asked by my long-time friend Lee Hoots, who is (was) the editor of *Petersen's Hunting*, to do a piece for the magazine on non-resident tag fees in the West. While I don't know if it was my whining about how much a trip to Montana last year had cost me just in tag fees and gasoline, he knew it was a story that would resonate with long-time sportsmen.

Doing the research for the piece was an eye-opener. That story is in the Sept., 2008 issue of the magazine.

When I bought my first deer tag as an 18-year-old here in California in 1972, it cost \$3, and really included two tags as part of the package and an application for a third tag. That made the tags \$1.50 each. Today, a single resident deer tag costs about \$26. If pegged to the cost of inflation that \$1.50 tag would cost \$7.65* in today's dollars.

(*NOTE: The \$26 tag is 17.33 times as much as it cost then but, if based on inflation, it would only cost 5.1 times as much.-ED)

Sonke Mastrup, the Department of Fish and Game's deputy director, will tell you that every license or tag fee increase translates directly into fewer hunters taking to the field. For a percent of guys each year, the increase is the final straw and they simply give it up, especially with

the disproportionate increase in other costs like gasoline and ammunition (both lead and non-lead).

It wasn't all that long ago that California had about 1 million resident hunters, but today we're less than 1/3 that number. If you figure that each deer hunter has to make up for the money formerly paid by his two counterparts who gave up the sport, you can get a ballpark idea where today's \$26 tag fee comes from.

Fewer and fewer hunters are paying more and more. But it goes well beyond just higher tag fees.

Sportsmen are getting far less for the investment today. Back in 1972, we had unit biologists throughout the state who actually did annual deer composition counts, there were hunter check stations, and about three times as many wardens as we have now.

That means we had about 12 field biologists for Southern California who spent time studying and working with deer. Today we have, I think, two – but it might just be one.

They don't do annual deer surveys, there hasn't been a check station here in decades, and there's no such thing as field data and biology anymore. We make management decisions based on what someone wrote about our herds decades ago.

Some of us are so tired of the shop-worn excuses why our deer herds are fractions of what they once were, that we tune out those who spout the rhetoric. Today's DFG biologists have other priorities and are even afraid to try to grow more deer on public land.

Sadly, this is true almost everywhere in the West. Yet, there are still deer here almost in spite of the California DFG and other game agencies and their lack of management (or active mismanagement, some would say).

There are deer here in spite of poaching, in spite of habitat loss, in spite of more roads and road kills than in history, in spite of the highest predator base we've had in over 100 years.

Some places actually still have good deer numbers and great public land hunting. Today, the vast majority of big game hunters can only afford to pursue game in their home states (if that) because of high non-resident tag fees, even though most hunting in the West is on federal lands, not state lands.

When I first hunted pronghorn antelope in Wyoming, I was reasonably assured of getting a \$100 tag when I applied. Today, to reasonably assure myself of getting the same tag, I'd have to spend just a bit over \$600.

Once upon a time, I applied for bighorn sheep tags in all of the Western states each year, only paying the \$2 to \$5 application fees in each state, knowing my hunting buddies would collectively loan me the \$150 to \$300 for the tag and license if I was drawn and couldn't come up with it myself. I'd have done the same for them.

Today, you have to apply with the whole tag fee amount (which the state usually keeps for three to six months) and in some states you have to actually buy the non-resident general hunting license before you can apply for a tag. With the non-resident gouge on bighorn tags running from \$1,700 to \$2,300, a lot of us can't even afford to apply to one state, never mind all of them.

Part of the problem is that most Western states are in bed with outfitters who have good lobbies in the state capitols. They insist their livelihoods are at stake and, because of declining tag numbers, and they believe they should get a percentage dedicated just to their clients.

Most states have set aside a large pool of special tags they sell at higher prices, making sure that hunters who can afford \$5,000 to \$12,000 or more guided hunts can reasonably be assured of getting a tag. Do you need a translation for that? It's "blue-collar hunters stay home."

Unfortunately, a lot of rural community businesses relied on those blue-collar guys, and the little cafes, grocery stores, motels have closed up shop in small towns throughout the West. There are a lot of ways to exclude anyone but the wealthy. Wyoming says you must have a guide or outfitter to hunt in designated wilderness, and their "preference" tags are about double the cost of the regular tags.

Montana simply has set aside a portion of its tags each year for the guides and floats the price based on demand. If the tags don't sell out by September each year, they reduce the price the following year; if they do, they increase the price.

So the Montana non-resident outfitter deer license has gone from \$795 to \$1,100 in just the last three years, jumping about \$150 a year. (The general non-resident deer license is \$353 with about three to one odds of drawing.)

All the Western states auction off one or more of their coveted bighorn sheep tags to the highest bidder and rake in \$60,000 or a lot more from some wealthy guy. All this is simply wrong.

Once upon a time, hunters from across the country dreamed of packing up family truck or sedan and heading to the high sagebrush and aspen country of the West and hunting mule deer, elk, and pronghorn. Not that long ago, a working man could save his money and afford to do just that on a one- or two-week camping vacation on public lands.

Not any more. Now poorer hunters are even being squeezed out by costs in their home states. America's big game doesn't belong to the people anymore. It belongs to an increasingly fewer number of wealthy people.

The Peasant Wars

Opinion by George Dovel

In 2003, North America's foremost wildlife scientist, Dr. Valerius Geist, made the following observations:

"The miracle of North American conservation is that it is basically a blue-collar system, grounded in the political and financial support and the active participation of large numbers of middle-class citizens who bring their basic honesty and decency to bear on important issues. This is just the opposite of the elitist system that has existed throughout Europe for centuries and is spreading like cancer around the world today, even right here at home.

"Because of the democratic nature of American hunting and wildlife management, and the demands for accountability it implies, our system has worked miracles in returning wildlife to a continent that, just a hundred years ago, saw the near-extinction of most big game animals and other wildlife. In my mind, this represents the world's greatest environmental achievement of the last century."

In 2006, representatives of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) adopted and agreed to fund the "Public Trust Doctrine in Fish and Wildlife Conservation." This was essentially a doctrine reaffirming that wildlife is the property of the people, held in trust and managed for them and by them, and that hunting shall remain a democratic process available to all of the citizens who own the wildlife – not just the wealthy.

Yet WAFWA and the state wildlife agencies are exploiting the wildlife by selling it to the wealthiest hunters and excluding less affluent families from equal opportunity to harvest the wildlife they jointly own. The so-called "North American Model of Wildlife Conservation" is ignored in their rush to promote wolves and agendas that destroy the wild game sportsmen spent more than half a century restoring.

A week or so ago, in an exchange of emails between scientists and other concerned outdoorsmen like me, Dr. Geist wrote the following observation:

"I may be permitted to take this opportunity to comment on another matter, namely the futility – in the long term – of narrow conservation efforts such as those of the Wolf Recovery Foundation.

My point of departure is the exceedingly brutal history of wildlife management in our occidental society, which, unfortunately, is all but unknown to North Americans. It inevitably begins with wildlife held as resource in common, accessible to citizen for their use and training in arms."

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The Peasant Wars - continued from page 11

It winds up as the de facto private property of the elite, which disarms citizens, and protects its privilege position of owning wildlife by force of arms (against the citizen). This is one substantial reason among others for armed rebellions by the deprived, most notably such bloody rebellions as the peasant wars of the 1520's and the French revolution.

Take away wildlife or make it irrelevant to the citizen, and wildlife winds up as private property, jealously defended. There is good reason for this as wildlife is a creator of wealth and privilege and thus very valuable.

Currently, simple-minded efforts to spread and multiply wolves lead to a depletion of wildlife - severe enough to lose the hunting public and with that the passion for wildlife. And with that it moves very surely into private ownership.

And when wolves, grizzly bears and cougars are private property, the public has no say over their fate. I need not emphasize that even in North America the de facto grasp for wildlife by large land owners has led to the defense of that wildlife against the public with force of arms.

Currently on Vancouver Island the following developed. With the return of wolves in the 1970's deer populations dropped precipitously. The hunter kill went from about 25,000 deer annually to less than 3,000 in recent years.

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Deer hunters go to the mainland to hunt deer now. Still, it's a loss to the island economy of about 50-75 million dollars.

The large forest companies began to close and cut off roads that were previously kept open by public pressure. There is little protest as the voices are now so few for keeping the backcountry open.

Deer are very scarce in the backcountry, not worth the effort to get there and hunt.

The latest we hear now is of chalets being planned in the now - roadless - back country where wealthy clients can go to recreate by helicopter in a wilderness setting. The good fishing in the backcountry lakes, the hunting of giant elk, the wilderness, etc will thus be reserved for the elite."

Best regards
Val Geist

Whether you are a hunter or fisherman, a natural resource manager, or just a citizen who is concerned about the ongoing depletion of our valuable wildlife resource and our way of life, I urge you to contact your State legislators and express your concerns to them. Write letters to the editor, call in on talk radio, and do whatever you can to energize your fellow citizens.

Remember English philosopher Edmund Burke's warning, "The only thing necessary for the triumph (of evil) is for good men to do nothing."

And when your efforts are criticized I urge you to remember this: "He who fears criticism is hopeless. Only those who do things are criticized. To hesitate for fear of criticism is cowardly. If our course is right, be not afraid of criticism; advocate it, expound it, and if need be, fight for it. Critics always have been and always will be, but to the strong-minded, they are a help rather than a hindrance. Take your part in life's stage and play your part to the end." Thomas Jefferson

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