

Pheasant Recovery in Idaho – Part 2

by George Dovel



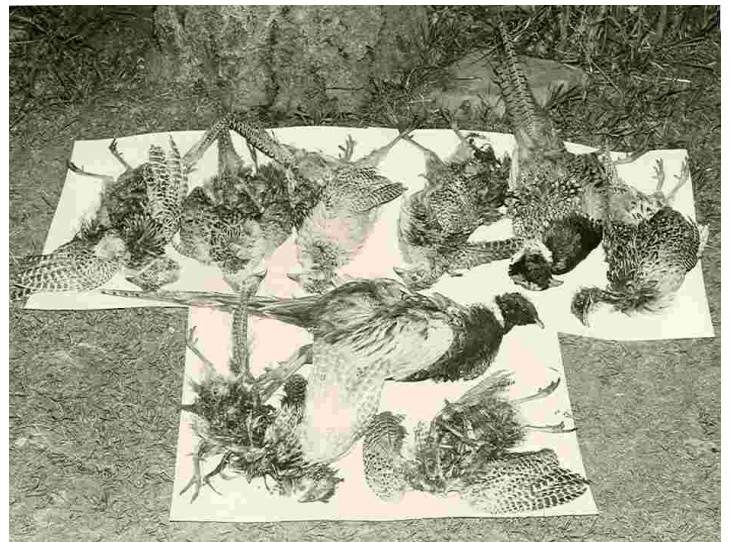
A mixed bag when pheasants were plentiful a few years ago. The mallard and cottontail were a bonus.

During the 1981-82 winter our family acquired a small run-down ranch in the Jerusalem Valley northeast of Horseshoe Bend in southwest Idaho. The irrigation ditch banks had such a network of Columbian ground squirrel tunnels extending under the hay and grain fields that we were forced to replace the ditches with buried pipelines.

There were a few elk, pheasants and quail on the property that winter but hawks, horned owls, foxes and deer were abundant. When the snow melted, my son John and I counted over 200 mule deer eating new grass on the bare south slopes along the road a half-mile east of our house.

I, and my four youngest sons who were still in school, spent several years replenishing nutrients in the soil to obtain optimum yields of alfalfa and grain on 90 acres of irrigated cropland. Conservation Reserve programs were not available but we spent a lot of time and money trying to increase the forage quality on several hundred acres of hilly dry grazing land for both livestock and wildlife.

A significant rainbow trout spawning stream runs through a half mile of that property and the banks are lined with cottonwoods, willows and hawthorns. I set aside a



Dead pheasants collected at fox den and photographed by IDFG Conservation Officer.

long narrow strip of creek bottom as a pheasant sanctuary and allowed hunting by permission on the rest of the ranch, which had abundant feed and cover.

Each year we planted a small patch of oats in the bottom land near the house for the pheasants, and actively controlled predators that were killing adult pheasants, as well as those that robbed their nests. After the first three years it was not uncommon for hunters to limit out on pheasants and we often saw 30 or more roosters in or near the patch of oats in the sanctuary.

Nine years after the restoration project began, two men drove into our driveway and the younger one approached me and said he had just counted 49 cock pheasants among the oats. He explained that he was the editor of the IDFG publication "Fish and Game News" and said he and his dad had been driving all over trying to locate a place to hunt pheasants, which were really scarce.

I explained that the strip along Porter Creek was a sanctuary and suggested he and his dad hunt in a nearby swale between two alfalfa fields when they returned.

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He thanked me but did not return. Several days later, on the IDFG radio program in Boise, Director Jerry Conley encouraged hunters to drive up Porter Creek Road a few miles to bag their deer and stop on the way back down and pick up a limit of pheasants.

Early the next day a procession of pickups with Ada County plates and shotguns in evidence drove up and down our narrow gravel roads looking for birds. Most did not ask for permission to hunt on fenced land and a few had hunters riding in the pickup bed who ground-sluiced any bird they saw as the driver braked to a stop.

If a pheasant or quail happened to be located between those irresponsible shooters and my irrigation pipes the pipes wound up with one or more holes in them. The onslaught continued through most of the season and my favorite saddle horse was blinded in one eye by small shot.

Thanks to IDFG, when the either-sex portion of the deer season arrived, a number of pickups with campers from the state of Washington drove up and down Porter Creek Road searching for deer. A few asked permission to hunt but one three-vehicle caravan simply pulled over and began firing at a group of does and fawns several hundred yards inside my neighbor's fence.

Too Few Pheasants – Too Many Predators

Despite our best efforts to restore the pheasants, an ample supply of predators further reduced their numbers during the next few winters. When the goshawks arrive in this area each winter, they efficiently reduce pheasant and quail numbers, regardless of the cover that is available.

During the occasional severe winter when deep snow or ice storms make other prey unavailable, the local Swainson's and red-tailed hawks also kill a significant number of pheasants and quail. Like most other predators, these slow flying buteos and the great horned owls are opportunists and kill a variety of birds, including pheasants.

The Royal Museum of Zoology in Toronto conducted a three-year analysis of the prey consumed by a variety of hawks and owls collected in all seasons. The large percentage of birds found in most species, and the number of pheasants found in great horned owls reinforced my personal observations.

Nesting Cover Important

To increase pheasant chick survival, adequate nesting cover is very important. Of the skunks, weasels, foxes, coyotes, raccoons crows, magpies and other nest-robbing predators in our area, magpies appear to account for the greatest nesting losses. Once a slow, low flying magpie detects a disturbance in the vegetation or spots a hen on its nest, one or two take turns distracting the hen and the rest of the family systematically devours the eggs.

While pheasants can nest and survive the winter in a variety of habitats, states with the largest number of birds

generally maintain strips of unharvested grasses mixed with leafy legumes. They also provide woody cover and windbreaks in their public access pheasant hunting areas. South Dakota has the highest pheasant harvest in the U.S. and spends about \$500,000 of sportsmen's license fees matched with \$1.5 million in sportsmen excise taxes on this type of habitat improvement each year.

Several of our neighbors tried to help our second pheasant recovery effort by shooting or trapping foxes and coyotes. Those with limited experience often simply "educated" the younger predators by missing a shot or pinching a toe with the wrong size trap.

The period when Idaho hunters harvested half a million pheasants each season coincided with the period when IDFG paid a bounty on magpies. By law the magpie is now a protected nongame species which may only be taken in protection of private property.

During several public hearings, individual F&G Commissioners have encouraged sportsmen to shoot magpies to minimize their impact on nesting pheasants, in the guise of protecting property. While preventing magpies from stealing pet or livestock food can be a legal excuse for killing them it is no substitute for legalizing magpie control where it is indicated.

Only A Handful of Birds Left

Several years ago, we sold most of our ranch to an individual who promised not to subdivide it. The food, cover and farming practices are exactly the same as they were when we had several hundred pheasants, yet there are only a handful left in the entire area.

Red foxes, coyotes and raccoons are abundant and we see far more magpies than we do pheasants. Two days ago my wife and her mother located only 16 mule deer eating new grass on the warm south exposed slopes where we formerly counted more than 200 when green-up began.

As with the pheasants, IDFG encouraged too many people to kill mule deer in this small area, and too many coyotes, lions and wolves now prohibit recovery. Yet IDFG continues to allow unlimited either-sex archery or youth rifle hunting plus 900 antlerless rifle deer permits in this unit.

Restoring pheasant populations in the excellent habitat that still exists here would require an intensive predator control and restocking effort. Transplanted wild birds can be supplemented with day-old chicks that are released in the wild when they are 12-13 weeks old, during early summer when predation is lowest and the birds have an opportunity to adapt.

Based on my experience, pheasants that have been raised in pens for 6-8 months and released during the Fall have poor odds of surviving. Hopefully this account of my personal experience will remind hunters of the important role landowners play in pheasant restoration programs.

A comparison of pheasant programs in other states will be discussed in Pheasant Recovery – Part 3.

Legislative Update

Wolf – Big Game Animal. As reported in the January issue, the Commission's rule designating the wolf as a "big game animal" resulted in lively debate in the House Resources and Conservation Rules Subcommittee Chaired by Representative JoAn Wood.

On February 7, Rep. Mike Moyle introduced a proposed bill to authorize all methods of take for the management of wolves in accordance with existing laws or approved management plans regardless of the classification assigned to the wolves. Then he introduced a second bill to clarify that specified law shall not limit or prohibit the lawful control of wolves through the use of helicopters if deemed necessary by federal or state agencies in accordance with existing laws or management plans.

Both were assigned to printing and became HB 132 and 133. On February HB 132 passed the house by 63-3-4 with Representatives LeFavour, Pasley-Stuart and Ringo voting Nay. HB 133 passed by 67-0-4.

Both bills are scheduled for a vote as this issue is being printed and the Commission Rule classifying the wolf as a game animal is being held in the Resources Committee pending passage of the two bills. If they fail it is assumed the Rule will not be approved.

HB 134, the 14% IDFG fee increase bill died in the House Resources Committee as described elsewhere in this bulletin.

A new fee increase bill, **SB 1191**, proposed a general 10% fee increase with several exceptions, an increase in the "vendor" fee from \$1.50 to \$1.75, and a provision allowing sportsmen to pay extra money and "buy their way to the front of the line in controlled hunt drawings. It was sent to the 14th Order in the Senate for amendment on March 17.

Its fate may be decided by amendments or it may be approved and go to the House for a Hearing. One exception to the 10% increase was an increase in the Senior Combination Hunting-Fishing License from \$3.00 (+ \$1.50 vendor fee) to \$10.00 (+ \$1.75 vendor fee). Another was a substantial reduction in the fees for nonresident bear and mountain lion tags.

SB 1171, the hotly contested bill designed to give \$100,000 of surplus interest earnings to "Access Yes!" and the remainder to IDFG directed predator control, passed the Senate on March 18, 2005, by a 21-13-0 vote. A discussion of this bill and the unethical tactics used by IDFG in its effort to defeat it are discussed elsewhere in this issue.

If it passes the House and is signed by the Governor it will provide the first step in forcing predator protectionists in the Department to control predators to restore healthy game populations.

The 11 Senators who voted against **SB 1171** were:

John Andreason, Republican District 15, Boise
 Mike Burkett, Democrat District 19, Boise
 Charles H. Coiner, Republican District 24, Twin Falls
 Richard L. Compton, Republican District 5, Coeur d'Alene
 Bart M. Davis, Republican District 33, Idaho Falls
 John W. Goedde, Republican District 4, Coeur d'Alene
 Kate Kelly, Democrat District 18, Boise
 David Langhorst, Democrat District 16, Boise
 Edgar J. Malepeai, Democrat District 30, Pocatello
 Gary Schroeder, Republican District 6, Moscow
 Joe Stegner, Republican District 7, Lewiston
 Clint Stennett, Democrat District 25, Ketchum
 Elliot Werk, Democrat District 17, Boise

Senator Stennett sent the following reply to me, and to others who emailed testimony concerning HB 1171:

Dear Mr. Dovel,

Thank you for contacting me. I understand your support for SB1171. I see some benefits of this legislation, but I will not support SB1171 because it did not run through the Fish and Game Advisory Committee. By statute since 1989, this committee has been making the decisions about these funds relating to the Idaho Wildlife Depredation Law. The committee is under the supervision of both directors of the Fish and Game and the Department of Agriculture and the 12 committee members are represented with 6 members each from the sportsmen and agriculture communities.

This committee has provided recommendation to the legislature as needed and they work towards a consensual decision before doing so. To date, all the committee's recommendations have become law. I contribute this in part to the design of the committee; they offer a balanced solution to these complex problems. Committee members have not even been given the opportunity to address the problems the sponsors seek to resolve with this legislation. So for this reason, I believe we should respect the tradition this committee has began and allow them the opportunity to offer a solution for these funds before side-stepping around their authority.

Again it's not the actual legislation that I oppose just the way it was brought to the legislature. Let's see what solution the Fish and Game Advisory Committee comes up with before we become involved.

Thanks again for your comments.

Sincerely,

Clint Stennett, D-Ketchum

Senate Minority Leader, District #25

IDFG Organizes Opposition To HB 1171

By George Dovel

When Idaho Wildlife Policy was written into the Idaho Code in 1938, it provided a clear blueprint of how Idaho's wildlife resource would be managed. It is unlikely that anyone could misinterpret the statement, "All wild animals, wild birds and fish shall be preserved, protected, perpetuated and managed (to) provide for the citizens of this state...continued supplies for hunting, fishing and trapping?"

Appellate courts have consistently upheld the premise that a state's wildlife is held in trust for the people and managed for their benefit. Terms like "Watchable Wildlife" and "Project Wild" resulted from the fertile imagination of eastern groups who have abandoned their heritage and are determined to impose their warped ideas on the rest of us.

If IDFG was managing our wildlife properly, it would not need a \$3 million Communications budget and a statewide damage control network to conceal what it is really doing with the funds it receives from sportsmen. This article illustrates the Department's use of sportsmen dollars to spread misinformation in its effort to defeat a bill designed to restore wild game populations - ED.

In November 1988, IDFG spent \$62,851 of sportsmen license dollars to invite environmental activists and preservationist groups to help determine how wildlife should be managed. Outraged legislators ordered an investigation into the unlawful use of dedicated sportsmen funds, which received broad media coverage.

Although Idaho's lawful Wildlife Policy has never been changed, IDFG recently spent more than half a million dollars of dedicated sportsman fees and excise taxes in another effort to justify expanding non-hunting activities. Misuse of sportsmen dollars to support these programs has become so common it is now largely ignored.

Interest Dollars Used to Fund Non-Game/Fish

One source of sportsmen dollars that has frequently been used to make up deficits in non-game/fish programs is the unencumbered leftover interest in the Primary Depredation Account. The interest, not the principal, from a large balance in a depredation account is used to pay valid crop damage claims.

Each year after June 30, any unused unencumbered interest from the depredation account is transferred to the Fish and Game Account. Last year IDFG used \$75,000 of that money to fund the "Access Yes!" program. The remaining surplus (more than \$100,000) was used to make up deficits in non-game/fish programs.

IDFG often claims it has no money appropriated to control predators adversely affecting game birds and game animals but that is not true. One of the intended uses of the

dedicated money in the "Winter Feeding Set-Aside Account" is to "control predators affecting antelope, elk and deer," yet the Department chooses not to use surplus money in that account to control predators.

Another source of dedicated IDFG predator control funding is its "Animal Damage Control Account." Each year IDFG pays \$100,000 into that account and the F&G Commission is required by law to direct how the money will be spent. Last year, it directed that half of the money be spent for a mule deer research project in Southeast Idaho and the remaining half was simply split among the five Animal Damage Control Districts.

F&G money in this fund was specifically appropriated to restore declining game species such as mule deer, pheasants and sage grouse. But predator advocates in the Department, like their retired F&G allies in the Idaho Wildlife Federation, refuse to control predator numbers unless it is incidental to research.

Utah biologists had the same attitude until the legislature forced them to control coyotes to restore declining mule deer populations. Yet IDFG biologists continue to ignore the Utah studies, which proved the control was both successful and cost effective.

New Funding For Access, Predator Control

Nate Helm, Executive Director of Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife – Idaho (SFW), worked with members of the Legislative Resource Committees in both Houses to write legislation that changed the Depredation Accounts.

As written, the bill, SB 1171, would establish the "Access Yes! Set Aside Account" and deposit \$75,000 of unencumbered interest income in that account each year to fund the sportsman access program. Any remaining unused interest income would be transferred into Fish and Game's Animal Damage Control Account where it would be used by the State Animal Damage Control Board to control predatory animals or birds as directed by the F&G Commission.

SCI – Idaho Chapter Lies about SB 1171

A copy of the proposal was provided to IDFG Director Steve Huffaker and was promptly "leaked" to a group of individuals who conduct "damage control" for the Department. The "Legislative Alert" section of Jerry Bullock's SCI-Idaho Chapter website quickly published a number of untrue statements about the bill and viciously attacked SFW for its role in promoting the bill.

It claimed the legislation was promoted by "the folks who want to totally strip Idaho Fish and Game of the ability to do their job by denying them adequate funding." It implied the bill would cap all "Access Yes!" funding and the rest of the interest income would "line some ag group's pockets."

The Website claimed SB 1171 sends the rest of the interest money “to the State Agriculture Department's Wildlife Services to shoot coyotes *where the Ag people deem appropriate*. That won't be the special and limited areas where coyote control might help deer, but most likely at lambing sites and calving sites for sheep and cows.”

The “State” Wildlife Services program it refers to is actually part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), which helps alleviate wildlife damage to agricultural, urban, and natural resources. WS may be hired by the state animal damage control board to control the predators, but only the F&G Commission can direct where, when and what predators will be controlled to benefit wild game bird or animal populations.

The untruthful SCI-Idaho warning continues, “The money in HB 1171, stolen from F&G, accounts for about 10-20 4-year-old buck deer at \$7-10,000 a coyote IF you shoot all the coyotes in deer fawning/winter range areas.” The warning ends with “And you fishermen! Your turn is coming. You'd better get interested in these game issues because wait till you see what they have in store for your fishing!”

These false, inflammatory comments from the organizer of the Idaho Sportsmen's Advisory Council ignore the agreement he signed as Vice President of SCI-Idaho Chapter to “provide a complete and *factual* review of proposed legislation” to sportsmen (see “New Council Members Ignore Bylaws” on page 9).

Another member of the unofficial IDFG damage control team is political scientist Kent Marlor of Rexburg. His Doctoral thesis, written more than 30 years ago, blamed IDFG mismanagement on its critics.

Since then Marlor has defended the IDFG position in many skirmishes as an office-holder in the Idaho Wildlife Council, the Idaho Wildlife Federation, the Fish and Game Winter Feeding Advisory Committee or the Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

IDFG Helps Write Anti-SB 1171 Editorial

On Tuesday, March 8, 2005 at 11:48 A.M., Marlor emailed a copy of a draft editorial condemning both SFW and SB 1171 to IDFG Communications Bureau Specialist Ed Mitchell. Marlor's email included the following message:

*“Here is the piece. Please look at helping me make the thing flow better. Switch as you deem necessary. Thanks so much.
Cheers,
Kent*

P.S. Would you get me back the finished copy ASAP so I can send it to other news papers.”

At 2:03 PM on the same day, Mitchell forwarded Marlor's email from his official IDFG email address to an undisclosed list of recipients with the subject “Don't Gut Depredation Law”. The following day, Marlor's editorial,

with several figures changed, appeared on the Idaho Public Television website and in several of Idaho's metropolitan newspapers.

Former IDFG Communications Specialist Jack Trueblood utilized a similar secret email list for similar inappropriate purposes, including undermining the leadership of former Director Steve Mealey. Sportsmen license dollars pay for these employees and the facility and equipment they use to defeat beneficial legislation and denigrate the mainstream sportsmen groups who support it.

IDFG/IWF Deception Fails to Kill Bill

On March 11, a fairly large group of sportsmen and environmentalists attended the Senate Resources Committee hearing to testify against SB 1171. Many of them had not even read the bill and simply criticized SFW. Others, including IDFG Director Steve Huffaker, parroted the false claim that Wildlife Services will dictate how the money would be spent.

However, Animal Damage Control Board member Stan Boyd corrected the misinformation provided by Huffaker by reading the appropriate Code Section to the Committee. I.C. Sec. 36-112 requires the money provided by IDFG to be spent as directed by the F&G Commission and Boyd explained that the Board receives a letter from IDFG every August dictating how the money will be spent.

In fact, I.C. Sec. 25-2612A, which created the Animal Damage Control Board, requires the F&G Director to appoint one member of that Board every two years and stipulates “the authority of this board is not to supersede the state fish and game department.”

Only two people, both representing SFW, gave oral testimony in support of SB 1171. Yet a majority of Committee members voted to increase the \$75,000 Access Yes! funding to \$100,000 and leave the rest of the bill intact.

The bill survived the Amending Order and passed the Senate today, March 18, 2005, by a 21-13-0 vote. If it passes in the House, one of the easiest sources of misusing the Fish and Game Fund to make up deficits in non-game/fish programs will be eliminated.

We provided the bill's Senate sponsor, Sen. Dean Cameron, and the eight other Senate Resource Committee members, with proof of the false and inflammatory statements on the SCI-Idaho website before the SB 1171 Committee hearing and amendment. Yet Bullock left the misinformation and false accusations on the website until after today's Senate vote.

This evening he replaced them with slightly less inflammable rhetoric and a new false claim that SB 1171 removes the \$1,000 deductible for *all* depredation claims after the first year. But he's right about one thing.

SB 1171 does make a limited amount of money available for predator control to restore healthy populations of deer, pheasants, sage hens or other scarce wildlife. IDFG can no longer use the excuse that no funding exists.

The Idaho Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Council Boon to Sportsmen or Wolves in Sheep's Clothing?

By George Dovel

A new alliance of about 15 carefully selected Idaho sportsman groups was formed in March 2005. It has the potential to either protect Idahoans' hunting, fishing and trapping heritage by helping restore depleted wild game and fish populations, or to maintain the status quo by insulating the Idaho Department of Fish and Game from Legislative control and oversight.

This article explains how and why the alliance was created and how it may affect management of Idaho's billion-dollar wildlife resource.

National Organization Origin

Back in 1989, leaders from the nation's hunting and fishing industry addressed the nationwide decline in hunting and fishing by forming the "Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation" (CSF) in Washington, D.C. At the same time, they invited members of the U.S. Congress to form a bipartisan "Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus" and promised to keep them informed on issues affecting hunting, fishing, trapping and wildlife conservation.

The Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus presently includes 253 House members and 61 Senators in 47 states. Membership in the Caucus is open to Congressmen and Senators who are sportsmen or who support the concept of sustained use wildlife management, even if they do not hunt, fish or trap.

All four members of Idaho's Congressional Delegation are members of the non-partisan Caucus and Senator Mike Crapo is the current Senate Caucus Republican Co-Chairman.

Emphasis on Dollars Spent By Sportsmen

The CSF employs six specialists in governmental relations, fund-raising, communications and forming policy, and works with the Caucus, industry officials and sporting group financial supporters to shape Congressional policy on sportsman issues. Its 2005 officers are also officials in Cabela's, Inc., UST Public Affairs, Inc. and Bass Pro Shops.

The CSF Mission Statement "Protect the right and increase the opportunity to hunt, trap and fish by serving as the Sportsmen's link to Congress," emphasizes increasing "opportunity" rather than providing sustainable fish and game populations to harvest. CFS explains, "The more federal funding that goes for conservation and access means more hunters and anglers spending more days in the field and on the water ultimately purchasing more equipment."

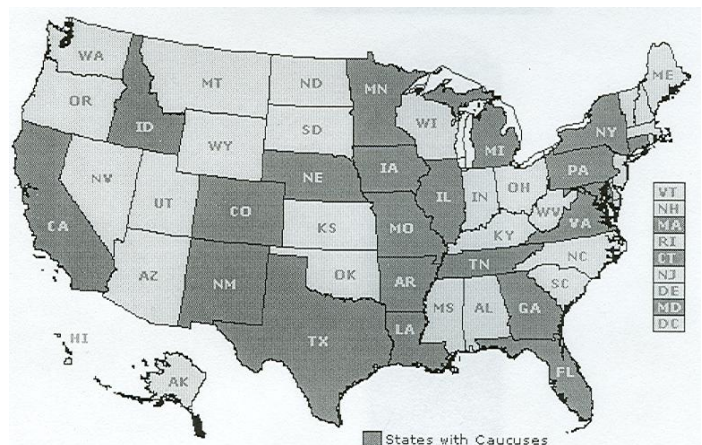
"This adds up to a better bottom line for outdoor companies and even more money for fish and wildlife conservation." The slogan, "A trap gun this year a turkey

gun next" emphasizes the extra dollars spent by affluent hunters when hunting opportunity is increased.

While endorsing the concept of expanding hunting opportunity, the CS Foundation blames lack of hunter access to federally managed lands for declining numbers of hunters. Its program emphasizing public land access is funded by the National Rifle Association (NRA), the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), the Pope and Young Club, Safari Club International (SFI) and the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI - also funded largely by manufacturers).

State Legislative Sportsmen's Caucuses

In 2001, the CS Foundation began an ambitious program to create state legislative sportsmen's causes in every state to protect sportsmen's hunting, fishing and trapping heritage. It proposed that sportsmen organizations in each state would unite in one advisory council to keep the legislative caucus informed on issues affecting hunting, fishing and trapping.



As of February 2005, legislative sportsmen's caucuses have been formed in only 21 states.

At the present time, 21 legislative sportsmen's caucuses have been organized, with several having at least some beneficial impact on sportsmen. For example, in 2004, the legislative caucus leaders in Louisiana convinced fellow legislators to pass an effective right-to-hunt, fish and trap amendment to the state Constitution.

Its language was similar to the 2002 proposal in Idaho, which was held in the Resource Committee because of IDFG objections. The Louisiana amendment preserves the right to hunt, fish and trap, protects private property from trespass without permission, and requires management "to protect, conserve and replenish" the renewable wild game and fish resource.

With Constitutional protection of private property and the requirement that wildlife be conserved and replenished rather than exploited, Louisiana voters approved the Constitutional amendment last November by an unprecedented 81 percent.

The newly formed legislative Caucus in Minnesota implemented dove hunting, and the Maryland caucus helped defeat a proposed ban on leg-hold traps and a proposed moratorium on black bear hunting. It also helped reverse a 280-year-old ban on Sunday deer hunting on private property and put a cap on commercial menhaden harvest.

House Bills Prompt Idaho Caucus Formation

During the 2003 Idaho Legislative Session, three bills were introduced in the House Resources Committee that IDFG vigorously opposed. House Bill 252, sponsored by all three legislators from District 1 and supported by the Idaho Association of Counties, was intended to halt the IDFG purchase and removal of private land from the tax rolls, which significantly decreases funding for schools and services in some rural counties.

In its original "no net gain of property" version, HB 252 would have required IDFG to sell an amount of land equal to the amount of new lands purchased anywhere in the state. The bill was amended to address only the 10 Idaho counties where private land constitutes 25% or less of the total land area and would then require IDFG to get approval from the County Commission before additional land was removed from the tax rolls in those counties. It was sent to the House floor by a 15-3 vote but failed to pass the full House by one vote.

HB 277 would have put fish and game law enforcement under the Idaho State Police. Sportsmen license dollars would only have paid for fish and game law enforcement rather than also subsidize law enforcement for other agencies as happens now. Two-thirds of the license dollars currently charged to the Enforcement Bureau would have become eligible for 3-to-1 matching federal funds.

HB 278 would have changed the penalty for unlawfully killing, possessing or wasting a single moose from a felony to a misdemeanor as it is with deer and elk. Neither HB 277 nor HB 278 were considered by the Resources Committee.

Although none of the three bills passed, IDFG and its traditional supporters used them as a rallying cry to organize a selective legislative sportsmen's caucus. The SCI-Idaho (southeast) Chapter website still calls the bills "three of the most misguided and hateful anti-Fish and Game bills to ever be introduced."

Anti HB 252 Legislators Selected

SCI-Idaho invited Representatives who voted against HB 252 to attend a free banquet in Blackfoot, along with IDFG officials, Commissioners and selected sportsmen. SCI's proposal to form the Legislative Caucus was part of the banquet.

Formation of both the Caucus and the Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Council has been spearheaded by Jerry Bullock, current Vice President of SCI-Idaho. A special sportsmen strategy session was scheduled for February 21, 2004 but representatives of fewer than 10% of Idaho Sportsmen organizations were invited to attend.

Marv Hagedorn, President of United Sportsmen's Alliance of Idaho, attended the session and asked Bullock for a copy of the paperwork that was included with the invitations. Bullock reportedly declined to provide him with a copy saying that it might be damaging if it fell into the wrong hands.

Based on a current list obtained from IDFG, there are from 203 to more than 300 organized sportsman groups in Idaho. Yet on March 9, 2004, only a small group of sportsmen and about 40 legislators attended a banquet in Boise to form the Idaho Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus.

Senators John Andreason (R-Boise) and Clint Stennet (D-Ketchum) agreed to serve as Senate Caucus Co-Chairmen. Representative (now Senator) David Langhorst (D-Boise) and Rep. Richard Wills (R-Glenns Ferry) agreed to serve as House Co-Chairmen.

Langhorst had led the opposition to HB 252 in the Resources Committee and both he and Wills voted against it on the House floor. Langhorst was also a Director of the Idaho Wildlife Federation from 1992-2001 and was Executive Director of the Hailey-based Wolf Education and Research Center, represented as the largest wolf advocacy group in the world.

Langhorst implemented the fenced wolf facility near Winchester, formed the "adopt-a-wolf" program in Idaho schools and strongly supported every aspect of wolf recovery in Idaho. As a panelist at the January 9, 1999 Predator Symposium in Boise, Langhorst claimed that Idaho hunters poach more than ten times as many big game animals as wolves kill.

On Dec. 4-6, 2004, newly elected Senator Langhorst joined 22 legislators from other states attending the first meeting of the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses near Ft. Worth, Texas. He helped write bylaws for the group and was elected to its 10-member Executive Council.

Few Groups Involved in Advisory Council

Sen. Langhorst has replaced Sen. Stennett as the Democrat Co-Chairman of Idaho's Senate Sportsmen's Caucus and he has assisted Jerry Bullock in getting the advisory council started. The first organizational meeting was held on August 14, 2004 with 17 people from 12 sportsmen groups attending.

IDFG Director Steve Huffaker discussed several legislative issues, including IDFG budgets, and urged the group to get formed and present a "unified sportsmen's review of legislation." A committee of five volunteers was appointed to prepare bylaws for the Council.

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The National Rifle Association asked me to attend the second Advisory Council meeting on February 12, 2005, along with NRA Idaho Liaison Brian Judy and Senator Gerry Sweet, who is not a member of the Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus. I had asked the leaders of several active sportsmen groups if they planned to attend, but only two people, both representing Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife-Idaho (SFW), attended.

Although their names and addresses are available at IDFG Headquarters, none of the members of the other groups had received an invitation or notice of the meeting. Several expressed concerns that the group's organizers did not represent the interests of mainstream Idaho sportsmen and would simply "rubber stamp" IDFG legislation and environmental agendas.

Bylaws Restrict Sportsman Participation

About 20 people attended with one or two representing each organization as had occurred at the previous meeting. The NRA representative and Sen. Sweet suggested several significant changes in the Council's Mission Statement and Guiding Principles.

These included requiring all member organizations to sign an affiliation contract to support the right to hunt, fish and trap and the bylaws of the Council. However the NRA and Sweet left before other membership qualifications were discussed.

A majority of the group approved the requirement (later changed) that a small board, not the member organizations, would approve or reject applications for other organizations to become members of the Council. The group also approved a requirement (which still exists) that all groups applying for future membership must have existed for at least three years before they can apply.

Because all of the Idaho Chapters of SFW were organized less than three years ago, this would prevent SFW-Idaho from becoming a member unless it was one of the founding members. Bullock announced that the Council could not be formed until the Bylaws the attendees had approved were typed up.

He said that attendees who wished their groups to become founding members must get their group to approve the \$200 annual fee and bring a check for that amount to the next meeting scheduled for March 5, 2004.

IDFG Fee Increase Exposes Hidden Agenda

Three days later, on February 15, 2005, IDFG sent out a call for help to its traditional support groups that support F&G sponsored legislation. Its fee increase bill was in trouble in the House Resources and Conservation Committee and it needed sportsmen to testify that their groups supported the increase at a February 17, hearing.

That night Bullock sent an email to 59 individuals, including the meeting attendees (minus the two SFW members) urging them to assemble at IDFG Headquarters on Feb. 17, for a briefing, and proceed to the Legislature to

testify in support of the fee increase. He added, "Since we don't have the Advisory Council up and running, it is important that as many organizations as possible show up."

Although several sportsmen groups sent emails, faxes or phone calls to the Resource Committee opposing the fee increase, only two sportsmen, including SFW's Director, and a low-income advocacy group opposed it in person. Of the 59 people Bullock urged to testify in support only 11, including Bullock, testified.

Despite this relatively poor showing from support groups, the *Idaho Statesman* reported that a "strong majority" of sportsmen supported the fee increase. If the Advisory Committee had been formed, a yes vote from those 11 people would have been represented to the Legislature as strong support from Idaho's sportsmen.

Criteria For Membership Changed

Two days after the fee increase hearing, Bullock emailed attendees a different set of bylaw requirements for membership than had been approved at the February 12, meeting. Now a group will be rejected if it has not supported the "long term economic viability (fee increases) of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game" in the past.

Like Don Clower's Idaho Wildlife Council, Bullock's SCI-Idaho (the Southeast Idaho Chapter – not the Treasure Valley Chapter) has a history of attacking sportsman organizations who criticize IDFG management or who do not support IDFG fee increases.

If sportsmen organizations work together for the common benefit of Idaho's billion-dollar wildlife resource and for all licensed hunters, fishermen and trappers who fund its management, wild fish and game populations inevitably prosper. But when a few groups or individuals blindly support the Department in return for favored treatment, it enables the agency to substitute special agendas for sound management.

Early Activities Raise Questions

Although individual members or officers of several respected sportsmen groups are participating in the formation of the new Advisory Council, the appearance that it is being formed to function as another "rubber stamp" for IDFG has already caused many concerned sportsmen to question its legitimacy.

On March 1, 2005 Jerry Bullock attended a meeting of the Southeast Idaho Mule Deer Foundation and urged them to become a member of the Advisory Council. According to a member who attended, he admitted that his group had attended the February 17, briefing at IDFG and testified in support of the IDFG fee increase on behalf of other groups but said they were all SCI-Idaho members.

The SEIMDF reportedly voted not to become a member of the Council until they had the opportunity to examine the final bylaws. Several NRA members also expressed concerns about changes in the approved bylaws and about Bullock's failure to encourage other active Idaho sportsman groups to participate.

SB 1171 Causes More Changes In Bylaws

Earned interest money in an IDFG deprecation account is used to pay valid deprecation claims to farmers. Each year any interest money that is left over has been given to IDFG. Last year IDFG used \$75,000 of the leftover interest to fund "Access Yes!" and spent the rest to make up deficits in other (non-game/fish) programs.

If SB 1171 became law as it was written, The first \$75,000 of leftover interest would be put in a set-aside account to fund "Access Yes!" and the remainder would be put in the IDFG Animal Damage Control Account. Money in that account is spent for the control of predatory animals and birds as directed by the F&G Commission

Instead of supporting this, the SCI-Idaho website falsely claimed the bill was intended "to totally strip Idaho Fish and Game of the ability to do their job by denying them adequate funding." It said, "The money in SB 1171, stolen from F&G, (would be) handed over each year to a 'coyote shoot' appealing to the uninformed."

Bullock amended the Bylaws again to include: "safeguarding the fees paid by sportsmen to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game for all permits, licenses, and services. All sportsmen's dollars shall remain within the Fish and Game budget and not be diverted to other government departments or *entities*." According to the Membership Clause, any group that has not supported that principle is not eligible for membership in the Council.

More Restrictions Approved

The NRA asked me to attend the March 5, Council meeting and authorized me to express concerns about the unreasonable restrictions on additional membership. The group listened politely to my input but, except for minor changes to the mission statement, it approved all of the unreasonable restrictions on new groups being admitted.

That meeting was also attended by Idaho Senators Langhorst and Andreason with both making a statement that they would not provide input into the Bylaws. However Sen. Andreason insisted several times that the reference to "game" in the bylaws be changed to "wildlife" so as to include all non-game species.

Sen. Langhorst stated that Advisory Councils in several other states strongly supported funding for Fish and Game as part of their mission and the group quickly approved Bullock's IDFG funding amendments.

At the previous meeting and on his SCI-Idaho website, Bullock claimed more than 40 Legislators are members of the Idaho Sportsmen's Caucus. But in response to a question from the SFW member present, Sen. Langhorst admitted there are only 28 members in both Houses.

Bullock announced that it had been decided that Chapters of state or national organizations such as SCI and SFW would only be allowed one vote on the Council while loosely affiliated groups such as various Idaho bowhunter organizations would each be given a vote.

Setting a minimum membership requirement for new groups was suggested several times but was not acted on. Several of the groups represented at the table have fewer than 50 members and several other participants actually represent only small local affiliates of state or national groups such as the Idaho Wildlife Federation.

The Foundation for North American Wild Sheep representative is a retired IDFG employee and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is represented on the Council by Boise environmental attorney Dennis Radocha, who serves as voluntary Chair of the RMEF Northwest Region.

Radocah and Idaho State Bowhunters President Tom Judge helped write the bylaws and they insisted the group quickly vote on Judge's hasty motion to approve the amendments, rather than allow everyone ample opportunity to discuss each one. Although Sen. Andreason's insistence that "game" be changed to "wildlife" was never discussed or voted on, the change was included in the final Bylaws emailed to attendees by Bullock the following day.

New Council Members Ignore Bylaws

Article VIII Paragraph A. of the final Bylaws gives the nine-member Council Board of Directors the responsibility to prepare a complete and factual review of all pending legislation. Paragraph D. stipulates "At no time may a member organization in good standing cast divisive, destructive criticism on the Council or other Council members."

Yet on March 11, several of the new Advisory Council members and other members of their organizations provided false information to the Senate Resources and Environment Committee about SB 1171 and/or viciously attacked SFW for its support of the Bill. The Council members' willingness to ignore the truth and its bylaws in order to blindly support the Department of Fish and Game position appears to reflect a different agenda than simply providing the Advisory Council's vote to the Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus.

Real Intent On SCI-Idaho Website

As I write this on March 18, 2005, Bullock's Idaho Chapter Safari Club International Website "Sportsmen's Caucus" section still contains the following comments:

"The real power behind the Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Council is the capacity of each member organization to mobilize their membership when a bill important to hunter's and fishermen's interests comes up for a vote in the state legislature. We need to be able to reach you with the information quickly, and you need to be willing to take the time to call or write your representatives in the Idaho House and Senate and let them know your position on the bill at hand. Please make sure that we have the means of contacting you by e-mail so we can get the information to you in timely manner."

Unless these comments have been erased before you read this issue, they can be viewed at:
<http://www.idahosci.org/Sportsmen%20Caucus.htm>.

The 2004 Idaho Wolf Report

By George Dovel

Two articles in the January 2005 *Outdoorsman* discussed the impact of wolves in Yellowstone and other national and provincial parks. Following requests from several Idaho legislators and other readers, this article presents the most recent information published on the impact of wolves in the nonessential experimental recovery area in Idaho.

In an August 12, 1994 letter to FWS employee Charles Lobdell, Wolf Reintroduction Project Leader Ed Bangs admitted that evidence of an increasing number of wolves, both singles and pairs, existed in the proposed Central Idaho Recovery area. But Bangs explained that he and IDFG Biologist Jon Rachael had omitted that information from the Wolf EIS because it appeared to conflict with Rachael's report that successful breeding activity had not been documented.

Bangs insisted that any wolves that have not been collared, and observed over time to successfully reproduce and start packs, are "of minor or no significance to wolf recovery." Now, ten years later, reports to FWS of uncollared wolves that are observed traveling alone or in pairs are not verified or even investigated unless the report also involves killing of livestock.

Minimum Figures – Not Reliable Estimates

During the past few months, residents living along the paved highway a few miles east of Lowman occasionally spotted a single wolf on or near the road. Employees of a roadside restaurant became afraid to walk home after work but FWS declined to investigate until the local residents reported deer kills and extensive howling, indicating pack activity.

When the FWS Team arrived with a helicopter they found two new packs and radio-collared several wolves. Except for the persistence of the local residents, neither pack would be included in next year's wolf population figures.

Because most wolf pups have not been collared during the past decade, there is no accurate record of dispersal or of how many packs, much less singles or pairs, actually exist in Idaho. Since FWS projections did not include the two packs in the Idaho City-Lowman area, there is a strong probability that a number of undiscovered packs exist in more remote locations.

The population statistics and charts published in the FWS 2004 Wolf Report and reproduced in this article are identified as a "minimum number". As with the reported livestock kills, the actual number may be significantly higher than the figures provided.

Because part of the Greater Yellowstone Recovery Area is in Idaho and part of the Central Idaho Recovery

area is in Montana, the minimum number of wolves listed in Idaho (422) is 30 fewer than the 452 listed in the Central Idaho Recovery Area. Neither set of figures includes the Idaho wolves in the Panhandle north of Highway 90 since they are not part of the so-called "Nonessential Experimental Population" recovery program.

The following table shows the FWS *minimum* wolf population in known packs by state and the minimum number of "breeding pairs" by state from 1994-2004:

Year	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04
State											
MT	48	66	70	56	49	74	97	123	183	182	153
WY		21	40	86	112	107	153	189	217	234	260
ID		14	42	71	114	156	187	251	263	345	422
TOTAL	48	101	152	213	275	337	437	563	663	761	835

Year	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04
State											
MT	5	6	7	5	5	7	8	7	17	10	15
WY		2	4	9	6	7	12	13	18	16	24
ID			3	6	10	10	10	14	14	25	27
TOTAL	5	8	14	20	21	24	30	34	49	51	66

FWS classifies a "breeding pair" as two or more adult wolves with two or more pups that survive at least until December 31. If a pair of wolves has a litter and all but one pup dies from disease, starvation, predation, control by humans, etc. by the end of December, the alpha male and female are not considered a breeding pair.

When FWS discovers a new Idaho wolf pack in 2004 with at least two adults and two yearlings, it updates the number of breeding pairs in 2003 by adding one. But if that pair of adults does not have at least two surviving pups at the end of 2004, it is no longer considered a breeding pair.

Several factors affect the total number of wolves listed in each state each year including pack movement between states, pup survival and the number of new packs that are discovered by residents and reported and then confirmed by FWS. The number of wolves, including entire packs, killed in Montana by Wildlife Services (WS) and ranchers with kill permits is another obvious reason for fewer packs and/or fewer total wolves being reported.

Federal Costs of Wolf Recovery

The FWS report says that its cost for wolf recovery in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming through 2004 was approximately \$18,944,618, with no adjustment for inflation. In FY 2004 total FWS funding for wolf recovery in the three states was \$2,090,000.

FWS estimates the cost to federal taxpayers will be \$2,159,618 for each year wolves remain unlisted. It was allocated \$100,000 for responding to complaints of wolf damage last year and \$1,300,000 for investigating and addressing predator damage.

Confirmed Livestock Losses

This level of funding does not permit sufficient monitoring of radio-collared wolves to provide an accurate total population estimate or an accurate assessment of either big game losses or total livestock losses. The summer grazing allotment study in Lemhi County by the U of I, Wildlife Services and the Nez Perce Tribe found that for every calf killed by wolves and found by a rancher, as many as 5.7 additional wolf kills may have occurred without ever being detected.

The following chart shows the confirmed kills of livestock and dogs by wolves in each state from 1995-2004 but does not include the probable kills for which ranchers were also compensated. It also shows the number of wolves that were relocated and the number that were legally killed to prevent additional livestock losses.

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	TOTAL
Montana										
cattle	10	19	10	20	14	12	20	24	35	190
sheep	13	41	0	25	7	50	84	86	91	409
other	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	0	3	12
dogs	1	0	1	2	5	2	5	1	4	26
wolves moved	22	20	0	14	6	17	0	0	0	96
wolves killed	5	18	4	19	7	8	26	34	39	166
Wyoming										
cattle	0	2	2	2	3	18	23	34	75	159
sheep	0	56	7	0	25	34	0	7	18	147
other	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	10	2	13
dogs	0	0	3	6	6	2	0	0	2	19
wolves moved	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
wolves killed	0	2	3	1	2	4	6	18	29	65
Idaho										
cattle	1	1	9	11	15	10	9	6	18	80
sheep	24	29	5	64	48	54	15	118	161	518
other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
dogs	1	4	1	7	0	2	4	5	3	27
wolves moved	1	0	3	5	10	1	0	0	0	20
wolves killed	1	1	0	3	11	7	14	7	17	61
Total, 3 States										
cattle	11	22	21	33	32	40	52	64	128	429
sheep	37	126	12	89	80	138	99	211	270	1074
other	0	0	0	1	0	4	5	10	5	25
dogs	2	4	5	15	11	6	9	6	9	72
wolves moved	23	21	3	19	16	18	0	0	0	117
wolves killed	6	21	7	23	20	19	46	59	85	292

The totals for Montana include 26 cattle, 12 sheep, one dog and six wolves that were killed and nine wolves that were relocated between 1987 and 1995. The "other" livestock confirmed to have been killed by wolves in Montana and Wyoming were nine llamas, 12 goats and four horses.

The substantial increases in both cattle and sheep killed by wolves in all three states between 2003 and 2004 occurred despite the increased number of wolves killed to prevent predation on livestock. As wolf numbers continue to increase and occupy more civilized habitat such as farms and ranches, big game populations will decline more rapidly and wolf predation on livestock will also continue to increase.

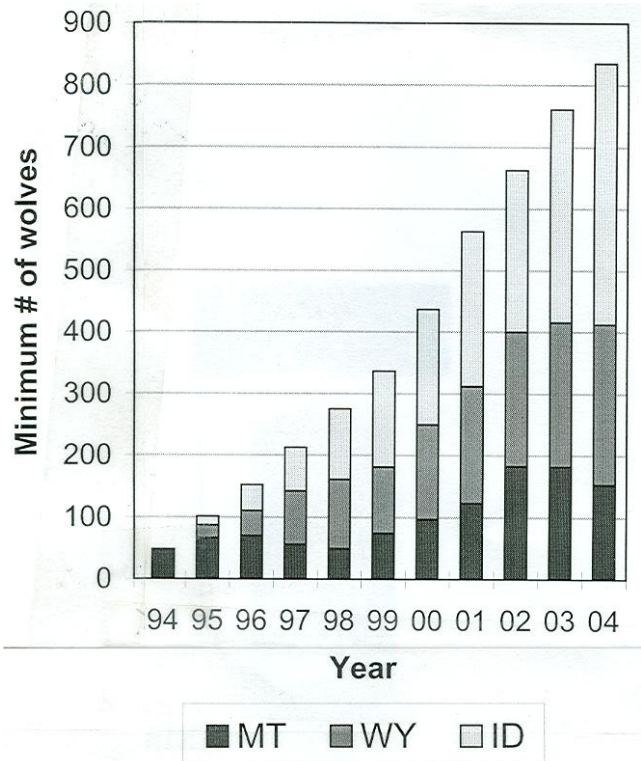
The biologists in charge of wolf recovery in all three states claim that livestock predation will "level off" as wolves exceed the carrying capacity of their habitat and either stop increasing or increase at a lower rate. That is not what happened in Minnesota and it will not happen here any time soon.

From 1988-1993 the Minnesota wolf population increased only 15 percent, an annual increase of only 2.7%. Yet white-tailed deer populations in northern Minnesota continued to decline and predation on moose and livestock increased. This required an increase in the number of wolves killed by Wildlife Services from 59 to 139.

From 1996-2002 Minnesota's wolf population stopped increasing but moose numbers declined and the annual wolf kill by Wildlife Services increased to an average of 154. Now, despite a diseased wolf population that is not increasing in northern Minnesota, moose are rapidly declining and livestock predation remains high.

A careful study of the Idaho portion of the chart on the preceding page reveals that from 2003-2004 confirmed wolf predation increased 36 percent on sheep and 200 percent on cattle. The number of wolves killed by Wildlife Services increased 143 percent but that did not stop the increased killing of cattle and sheep by wolves.

The following FWS graph illustrates how wolves have increased faster in Idaho than in the other two states and are continuing that rapid rate of increase.



Idaho is well behind the other two states in documenting its big game losses in order to justify control.
continued on page 12

continued from page 11

IDFG Failed To Do Its Job

Of the three state Fish and Game agencies that must deal with the results of uncontrolled wolf predation on the wild game they manage, IDFG is the only one that has made no effort to document the impact of wolf predation on deer and elk during the past 10 years. Unlike Idaho and Montana, who publicize the decline in elk hunting as a direct result of uncontrolled wolf predation, Idaho officials deny any knowledge of declining numbers.

When IDFG asked the Legislature and Idaho sportsmen to approve the largest fee increase in history in the 2000 Legislative session, it used wolf predation to partly justify such a large increase. State Big Game Manager Lonn Kuck and others said they needed some of the extra money to increase the scope and frequency of aerial big game counts in order to determine when a deer or elk population dropped 25 percent over a five-year period.

The major incentive the FWS used to sell its Nonessential Experimental Classification to the Idaho Wolf Committee was its promise to relocate wolves promptly when deer or elk numbers dropped 25% in five years. Once Idaho reached the criterion of 10 breeding pairs, FWS agreed to use lethal control if a specific big game population dropped 25 percent.

But once the fee increase was approved IDFG ignored its commitment and used most of the money to increase funding for nongame species and for other non-

game/fish programs. From July 1, 2000 to July 1, 2003 IDFG increased the already mushrooming nongame budget by nearly \$1 million, yet added only a little over \$200,000 for all game surveys.

Now IDFG is using the new federal wolf control money to radio-collar about 30 adult deer and elk in several areas and pretend the tiny sample size will tell them how much wolf predation is affecting several hundred thousand animals. Meanwhile, several local deer and elk herds have already been driven into the classical predator pit by the additive nature of wolf predation.

(The Department's refusal to participate in predator control for several decades plus the effort and tactics it employed in opposing SB 1171 may dictate a more realistic approach to the wolf problem. One solution might be for the Legislature to mandate what will be done and ask for the resignation of any F&G Commissioner who fails to follow that mandate.

Another might be for the Legislature to either oppose any fee increase for hunters, fishermen and trappers, or simply mandate how the money must be spent. It would not seem prudent to depend on the Department to solve the problem it helped create.

Otherwise an unknown number of Idaho wolves will probably kill 10,000 or so deer or elk plus an unknown number of livestock this year. This will have a severe impact on sportsmen, ranchers, outfitters and all the businesses that derive income from them.-ED)

Each month, Outdoorsman articles reveal little known facts about a variety of fish and game management issues that affect every Idahoan, especially those who cherish Idaho's hunting, fishing and trapping heritage. Please help distribute these facts to help stop the destruction of our billion-dollar wildlife resource and restore sound wildlife management for future generations. A donation in any amount will help defray the cost of printing and mailing these informative bulletins to elected officials. A donation of \$20 or more will pay the cost of printing and mailing all bulletins to you for the next 12 months, and will guarantee they will also be sent to the Senator and Representatives in your District.

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