



Bulletin Number 31

F&G Fee Increase, Management Issues

Oct-Dec 2008

Fee Increase Will Not Correct Mismanagement of Idaho Wildlife and Sportsmen License Dollars

by Ed Lindahl

(Ed Lindahl is a retired Army Infantry Officer and Combat Infantryman. An avid big game hunter, fisherman and all-around outdoorsman, he served for years as Chairman of the Clearwater Elk Recovery Team and as President or Director of the Moscow-based Concerned Sportsmen of Idaho.

The following testimony, provided by Mr. Lindahl to the Idaho Fish and Game Commission and Idaho Department of Fish and Game Director, was read aloud during the November 5, 2008 Public Commission Hearing in Lewiston, Idaho by Richard Hallisy. Mr. Hallisy has spent a similar amount of time serving on Fish and Game Advisory Committees or "Teams" supporting elk recovery during the same period.

Like countless other concerned Idaho citizens, these two leaders in Idaho's hunting community have followed the advice of the last four Idaho Governors to work within the system to restore responsible resource and fiscal management. The thousands of hours and dollars they and other responsible citizens have quietly donated to the effort with no visible improvement is evidence that the system is beyond simple repair. - ED)

Dear Members of the Fish and Game Commission and Department Director:

You, the members of the Commission, the Department Director and the Department's leadership have been poor stewards of our elk, deer, moose and antelope resource and even worse stewards of resident and non-resident hunter, angler and trapper revenues and associated Pittman-Robertson (P-R) and Dingell-Johnson (D-J) revenues. The reality of our State's poor ungulate resource stewardship has come about because of the reality of your disengaged, rubber-stamp revenue stewardship.

The Department, having admitted that the above noted revenues are spent robustly and routinely on non-game and non-hunting/fishing/trapping programs solely because a segment of our State's citizens who desire those non-essential programs either don't fund them at all or only fund them on a very limited basis. Those "free-loaders" are mostly smug members of both political parties who do

not hunt big game, don't like sportsmen much, but do compliment the Fish and Game Department for those wonderful free programs provided to them.

Those types also praise the fact that willows are now growing profusely along several riparian areas in Yellowstone Park. That growth has been made possible by their beloved wolves that have decimated the Park's and nearby elk herds. For that matter, elk and other wild ungulate herds have been significantly reduced throughout much of Idaho by their beloved wolves.

The Department will not fly the Selway and Lolo Zones this winter, both critical to Department revenue and full of wolves, to conduct elk vital counts. But it can take wonderful care of those bird watchers and other like-minded interest groups who drain game management budgets because members of those groups don't pay their way for the programs they enjoy.

Revenue they do provide in order to match federal grants comes from donations, tax check-offs, license plate sales and other sources. State Wildlife Grants (SWG) from federal oil dollars rarely benefit the hunted, fished for and trapped species.

Additionally the proceeds of the federal laundering (a redistribution) of sportsmen's P-R and D-J excise taxes/revenues that return to mainly Idaho's anti-hunter types or their barely hunter-tolerant brethren under the title of the Multi-State Conservation Grant Program (MSCGP). That MSCGP program requires a federal fix. All of those revenue sources pale in comparison to those coming from sportsmen.

Now, in the midst of severe economic times, the employee-bloated Department is seeking a twenty percent fee increase, of which eighty percent will perpetuate the obscene and unbalanced distribution of sportsmen-generated revenues to free-loader programs. The Commission approved that increase some time ago in what appeared to be a better economic environment.

What lavish and wonderful gifts you have given
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F&G Mismanagement - *continued from page 1*

these free-loaders You join a long list of Commissions appointed by Governors Andrus, Batt, Kempthorne, Risch and Otter.

Director Mealey tried to get control of the fiscally, out-of-control Department of his time, but was fired for his efforts by three Andrus/Conley era green Commissioners and one Kempthorne (Batt) appointee. Through time, to the date of this letter, no Commission and no Commissioner has publicly stood up to the Department's never-ending and ever-growing thirst for more revenue for non-essential programs.

Similarly, no Governor has had the intestinal fortitude to reverse the trend of non-stop rubber stamps by numerous former Commissions. Courage is an absent commodity in this Commission and in the leadership of the Department. The Governor's courage has yet to be seen or heard, but based on his early support of the fee increase, its intensity and direction could be highly predictable.

The Director makes reference to a "publicly supported" strategic plan (The Compass) to justify the fee increase in the Department website's "Letter of Support". The bitter irony for sportsmen is that the "public support" for the Compass was solicited and received in a similar fashion from the same freeloaders the Department is now soliciting to support the fee increase.

If the increase is approved, the parasitic draining of hunter, angler and trapper generated revenues away from the management of game, fish and furbearer species will continue. You can bet the ranch that public support will be far reaching and deep.

Who among you has researched, in any detail, the program/mission/outcome to revenue allocated ratios of the Department's 2009 budget? Who has done the same for the personnel time allocated to programs/missions of the Department's five hundred plus employees?

Who among you on the Commission is willing to stand up publicly and declare that enough is enough? Who among you will enjoin your less willing and less courageous colleagues to work together with you to reverse the immoral distribution of services carried out by a morally bankrupt and less than professional Department that seeks public support for a fee increase from the non-(hunting, fishing and trapping) public?

I challenge you all, at this November 2008 Commission meeting, to add to the agenda an action item entitled "budget reduction by program/program termination" and, when addressing that agenda item, boldly evaluate and kill all non-essential programs that are not funded by revenues collected for those program's purposes or are clearly outside of the mandate of the Fish and Game Department.

Additionally, reduce the scope of the fee increase to only increases in Department employee compensation that other State employees receive. If our Governor does

not agree with your killing of those unfunded or under funded and non-Department relative programs, get him to divest and transfer those unfunded or under funded and non-Department relative programs to other governmental departments and offices in our State where they rightly belong.

Idaho and the Department of Fish and Game can no longer afford to serve the freeloaders who have been benefiting from the hard earned and limited dollars provided by Idaho hunters, anglers and trappers and their non-resident counterparts. Act now and act boldly.

I request of the Director that this letter (without enclosure) be read aloud to those present by a member of the leadership of the Fish and Game Department on 5 November 2008, during the period of public comment, that is part of the Commission's Lewiston meeting. I further request that this letter and its enclosure be made a part of the official minutes of the above noted meeting.

Sincerely.

**Ed Lindahl
Sagle**

Enclosure: October 30, 2008 letter to Idaho Governor Butch Otter

Dear Governor Otter:

The Fish and Game Commission and Department are in need of your strong leadership and support. In these recent times of a rapidly slowing economy, the Commission and the Department are caught in the position of requesting from the Idaho Legislature a twenty percent fee increase that you long ago endorsed.

Additionally, the proposed 2009 Department budget has Idaho hunters, anglers and trappers funding numerous non-game and non-hunting/fishing/trapping expenditures. Department Director Groen has told me he wants to relieve Idaho sportsmen of the responsibility of funding those expenditures through their license, tag, punch card and permit fee revenues and Pittman-Robertson (P-R) and Dingell-Johnson (D-J) revenues collected from the excise taxes paid by Idaho sportsmen.

I believe you can bring quick relief to this situation by making some bold decisions regarding the fee increase and the organization of Idaho's government. These are issues of fairness for Idaho sportsmen.

Some in the Department believe the answer to replacing sportsmen's fees and P-R and D-J revenues presently spent on the non-hunted, fished for or trapped species and their overhead resides in appropriating Idahoans' general tax revenues for those non-essential expenditures. I do not.

I believe the answer lies in a reassignment of departmental missions away from the F&G Department to other offices in our State government.

Personnel, overhead and equipment would be, likewise, transferred out of the Fish and Game Department under such reassignments of missions. The Fish and Game Department would be reimbursed for work done for other departments. Responsibility for plants could be divided between the Departments of Agriculture (DA) and Lands (DOL).

The functions of the Department's former Natural Resources Policy Bureau could be carried out by the Office of Species Conservation (OSC), as could the monitoring of the Department's Species of Concern. OSC presently handles Threatened and Endangered Species.

Such bold actions and others would take the long-endured financial burden off of the backs of hunters, anglers and trappers. Let those other State departments and offices solicit general revenues from the Legislature for those missions and their attendant personnel, overhead and equipment.

Having hunters, anglers and trappers petition the Legislature for general tax revenues is unfair and, if it becomes a reality, it will bring about political consequences already experienced in States such as Washington and California, regardless of political party to which the Idaho governor belongs. Director Groen can speak to the consequences from his experience in Washington. Idaho doesn't need a designated anti-hunting seat on the Fish and Game Commission.

The twenty percent 2009 fee increase is highly unwise given our recent economic environment. I oppose the increase except for the proposed increase in Fish and Game Department employees' compensation that other state employees will receive for 2009.

Please demonstrate your strong leadership to right these unfair revenue redistribution conditions present in the Fish and Game Department. Idaho pay-as-you-go sportsmen deserve a better deal.

We look to you for bold leadership. Idaho's economic environment has changed dramatically in recent months and weeks. Please act now to cut the Fish and Game Department's proposed fee increase with the exception of employee compensation and get the financial burden of non-essential programs off of the backs of Idaho hunters, anglers and trappers by divesting non-essential missions away from the Fish and Game Department to other departments and offices in our government.

Sincerely,
Ed Lindahl
Sagle

(NOTE: In 2003 when House Bill 67 was introduced in the Idaho House Resources and Conservation Committee, it removed the authority to protect wildflowers along road right-of-ways from the Department of Parks and Recreation and gave that duty to IDFG. During the

Committee hearing, Parks and Recreation Director Rick Collignon explained that his agency was receiving federal funds called "State Wildlife Grants" (SWGs) to develop species conservation plans for flowers and plants.

He said Parks and Recreation was responsible for managing the State's wild flowers and plants but his agency had not hired botanists and they used the Department of Fish and Game's Conservation Data Center [CDC] to track rare plants. He said IDFG already had the experts and assured the Committee that transferring the federal funds to IDFG would prevent unnecessary duplication of effort thereby saving money.

When a state agency turns down federal money that would allow it to build a bigger bureaucracy there is usually a good reason. Several members of the Resource Committee knew that Parks and Rec. was required to match every \$1 million it received from the feds with \$333,000 of state money that did not exist in its budget.

They also knew that once the species plans were completed, whichever agency was in charge must come up with \$1 million in matching dollars for every \$1 million it received in federal SWG money. Because hunters and fishermen provide almost all of the non-restricted income to support IDFG, those Committee members expressed concern that the transfer would cause sportsman license fees to be used to manage endangered plants.

But IDFG Director Huffaker told the Resource Committee the CDC had been in place for 15 years and said during those 15 years sportsmen money had never been used for anything that would not benefit sportsmen (Jan. 27, 2003 minutes). Yet four years earlier, former IDFG Director Steve Mealey presented an IDFG Stockholders Report documenting **\$2.9 million** of sportsman license fees that had been spent in FY 1999 on programs with no tangible benefit to hunters or fishermen.

And in 2000 a legislative Office of Performance Evaluations investigation provided a report to the F&G Commission charging that an additional **\$1.3 million** had disappeared from a dedicated hatchery/fishing pond repair set-aside fund and was never spent for the purposes for which it was set aside. These abuses and many others occurred because IDFG lacked an adequate source of income to fund its nongame and other non-hunting/fishing/trapping programs even before SWG federal grants existed.

Back in 1996 IDFG sought a fee increase to hire six regional "nongame" biologists in order to take advantage of federal nongame funding – despite Joint Finance Appropriations Committee Co-Chair Sen. Dean Cameron's warning it would result in another premature fee increase. Fiscal Chief Steve Barton claimed IDFG had a \$2 million surplus but, three months after the fee increase passed, Barton admitted a \$1.6 million deficit existed.

Since then, F&G has exploited Idaho's wildlife and misused millions of sportsman license dollars to fund the nongame/SWG monster created in Washington. – ED)

Lack of Integrity in State Wildlife Management

By George Dovel

In December of 1996 Steve Mealey was hired as Idaho F&G Director to correct the mismanagement of wildlife and license dollars by former Director Jerry Conley. After several weeks of meeting with agency employees and the various interest groups, Mealey vowed to end the practice of what he termed "combat biology," and issued a set of working principles to all Department personnel to be followed for the next six months.

"Provide Healthy Sustainable Wildlife"

His Directive explained: "Our main business is to provide excellent public service, and healthy, sustainable wildlife. We do this by assisting the Commission in carrying out the state's wildlife policy. We are advocates for wildlife in partnership with, especially, county commissioners, state legislators, the governor and sportsmen."

Mealey's directive continued: "The only limits on internal communication are dignity, respect and good taste. Open honest, frank, and sometimes critical discussions are necessary. Externally, however, we will speak with one voice, reflecting messages which have the understanding, acceptance, and support of the leadership team and the Commission."

At the March 1997 Commission meeting, Mealey explained that Idaho was being populated with hundreds of protected Canadian wolves because former Director Jerry Conley had endorsed the FWS plan in writing and issued FWS a permit to introduce the wolves in direct violation of Idaho law. A former wildlife biologist, Mealey explained the necessity of controlling predators to the media.

Yet his Fisheries Bureau Chief, Steve Huffaker, told the same reporters that predators and prey had coexisted without man's interference for thousands of years. While Mealey was rebuilding the Department's credibility with legislators and resource users, eco-activists in the agency conspired to undermine his leadership.

In the two years he survived the conspiracy to get him fired, he implemented systems to provide accurate big game population and harvest information, and criteria to maintain adequate recruitment and adults of both sexes. The systems still exist but the money to make them work is being used to fund non-hunting/non-fishing programs promoted by interest groups in the Nation's Capitol.

Promise, "End Misappropriation of License Dollars"

During his second year as Director, Mealey appeared before a joint legislative hearing with his Administrative Chief Steve Barton and promised the legislators he would end the misappropriation of sportsmen license dollars. He kept that promise briefly and Barton resigned just before the March 1999 Commission meeting and said he was heading for Missouri to work for Conley.

The End of Fiscal Responsibility

But Mealey was fired during that meeting and his Deputy, Jerry Mallet, promptly re-hired Barton to continue his financial slight-of-hand with dedicated sportsman funds. The three eco-activists on the Commission waited until a new Governor was sworn in to fire Mealey, and Commissioner Burns commented, "This marks the end of wildlife management (in Idaho) as we have known it."

It also marked the end of the Commission's effort to restore fiscal responsibility in the State agency. It had reduced the number of Deputy Directors from two to the one that is needed yet IDFG now has **three** "Deputy" Directors **plus one** Administrative Assistant to the Director. The following information provided by Idaho's State Controller and Secretary of State allows comparison of annual wages paid to Idaho's top elected officials by taxpayers – with calculated wages paid to the IDFG Director and his assistants by hunters and fishermen:

Annual Salary of Top Idaho Officials

<u>State Government</u>		<u>Idaho Fish and Game*</u>	
Governor Otter	105,560	Director Groen	129,043
Lt. Gov. Risch	27,820	Deputy Moore	108,222
AG Wasden	95,160	"Deputy" Kiefer	98,800
Sec State Ysursa	85,800	Deputy Unsworth	98,488
Controller Jones	85,800	Asst. Hutchinson	85,862
Treasurer Crane	85,800	(*hourly rate times 2,080	
Public Instr Luna	85,800	hours per year)	

Not only are the *five* F&G employees who share the Director's duties being paid more than their counterparts in charge of State government, there are other well-paid IDFG executives running various functions in the Bureaus and Regions. And these do not include 12 so-called "Natural Resource Program Coordinators" who draw an average annual salary of \$68,000.

Lack of Supervision Allows Uncontrolled Expansion

Although these examples reflect an overabundance of high-salaried executive-level employees, they still do not present the full picture of this exploding agency that is currently limited to 528 full-time equivalent positions (FTPs). In FY 1997, when Governor Phil Batt's F&G Commission appointees constituted a slim majority, he directed the Commission to halt the runaway spending, including reducing the excessive number of employees.

It cut the number of FTPs from 523 to 505 but that was still **215 more** than the **290** employees that existed when Jerry Conley became Director! After Mealey was fired in 1999 and acting Director Jerry Mallet was trying to get a fee increase passed in the 2000 Legislature, he issued an internal July 1999 memo outlining his intent to add "temporary" employees to circumvent the limit on FTPs.

Exaggerated Budgets Increase “8-Month Temps”

Historically temporary employees were hired by Idaho State agencies as part-time employees to fill a temporary or seasonal need. Most “temps” did not receive classified individual job titles and the “on and off” nature of their employment prevented them from being eligible for the valuable benefit package provided to *permanent* so-called “full-time” employees with classified job titles.

Those benefits include paid sick leave, holidays and vacations; an insurance package valued at ~\$10,000 per year; and the valuable PERSI retirement plan (Public Employee Retirement System of Idaho). Classified employees receive job protection by Idaho’s Merit System.

But conflicting definitions in I.C. Sec. 67-5302 allow a State agency to hire *unlimited* numbers of special “temporary” employees (often referred to as “8-month temps”) who receive all the benefits of FTPs if enough money is appropriated to cover their wages and benefits. Each year IDFG exaggerates both its projected total income and specific non-game expenditures by several million dollars in its proposed budget, which allows it to spend even more money on non-game projects and employees, without having to seek new spending authority (see June-July 2008 Outdoorsman page 7).

In a Nov. 26, 2008 reply to a query from Viola sportsman Jim Hagedorn, Administrative Assistant F&G Director Bill Hutchinson advised that the F&G Budget Proposal for FY 2010 (from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010) includes **424** benefited temporaries and “many” non-benefited temporaries. Added to the **528** FTPs that Hutchinson said are in that budget, it represents **952** IDFG employees that will be drawing full benefits in the Fiscal Year beginning seven months from now.

Benefited Temps Cost More than FTPs

All temporary employees, including “benefited temps” are prohibited from working more than 1,385 hours in a 12-month period – the equivalent of eight months at 40 hours per week. Yet they need to work only five months at 20 hours per week to receive full benefits and pension.

So depending on whether they work the maximum 1,385 hours or the minimum 413 hours, IDFG would have to hire from three to five temps to equal the output of two full time employees drawing the same wage. Total wages paid would be about the same but the added cost of the extra benefit packages makes the temps cost a lot more.

The Idaho State Controller recorded wages paid to IDFG employees in FY2008 (including severance packages for some of the 354 employees that ended employment during that period) totaling **\$29.3 million**. Yet **total (Actual) Personnel Costs** for FY 2008 are estimated* to be about **\$40 million** – one-third higher.

(* The *Appropriated* FY 2008 Personnel Budget amount published in the 2009 Legislative Budget Book is \$43.8 million and in FY 2007 *Actual* Personnel Costs were \$3.8 million less than the *Appropriated* amount.)

While the foregoing explanations may be a bit confusing to the average reader – what should not be confusing to anyone is the fact that the projected personnel (employee) cost in the IDFG budget increased from \$42.3 million in FY 2007 to \$46.5 million in FY 2009 – **\$4.2 million** higher in just two years! The *Governor’s Recommended* expenditure for personnel in FY 2009 was even \$1.1 million higher than that at \$47.6 million.

Highest Paid Temps – CDC, Nongame Employees

Increasing the number of “benefited” temporary employees each year to an unprecedented number accounts for most of that >\$2 million per year increase. A check of 33 higher-salaried benefited temps in FY 2008 (with assorted titles like “Staff Biologist” and “Conservation Educator”) reveals that only two of the 33 may help benefit game species that are harvested by hunters.

The remaining 31 consist of nongame biologists, botanists, GIS analysts and educators who are paid almost one million dollars plus benefits to supplement the staff in the Conservation Data Center or promote bird watching and similar non-hunting activities from Headquarters or the Regions. These 31 are **in addition to** the 27 authorized FTPs in the Natural Resource Policy Bureau and the Nongame FTPs in the Wildlife Bureau and the Regions

License Fees Also Pay Nongame Infrastructure Costs

In addition to their wages and benefit costs, these non-game employees nearly double the requirement for office space, computers and other high-tech equipment, utilities, communications, maintenance, vehicle use, other infrastructure and capital outlay – all of which are in short supply – with no adequate source of income to pay those extra costs except hunters’ and fishermen’s license fees.

But because these expenses are included in the budgets of the various Bureaus, with *no breakdown* of what dollars pay for what expenses, F&G can pretend sportsmen are not paying “most” of them. They ignore the fact that sportsman license dollars fund a majority of the expenses in all but one of the Bureaus.

That is why analysts from the Legislative Services Budget Office and the Division of Financial Management insisted F&G trace the source of every dollar spent to prevent the appearance that it is hiding something (June-July 2008 Outdoorsman). And the reason IDFG failed to keep its commitment to do this is because it **is** hiding something – its ongoing misuse of sportsman license fees to fund its eco-activist programs.

In an Aug-Sept 2008 *Outdoorsman* article by Ed Lindahl titled, “Bad Faith in Fish and Game Disclosure of Money Spent,” we included a Chart provided to Idaho Legislators which illustrates how misleading IDFG fiscal information can be. On the following page I’ve included two versions of that chart, both provided by IDFG, to illustrate that it is impossible for Legislators to know what even dedicated set-aside funds are actually spent for.

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Lack of Integrity - *continued from page 5*

No Accountability of Set-Aside Funds

Over the years IDFG has requested special purpose fee increases that are added to the cost of tags or permits, and placed in separate accounts to only be used for the purpose for which each was intended. Yet the money from all but one of these dedicated set-asides is commingled into a single “bucket fund” from which money is removed and spent without knowing which fund it came from.

The lone exception is the winter feeding money which is set aside in a separate feeding account and may only be spent for winter feeding upon declaration of an emergency by an IDFG Regional Supervisor. However, money in excess of \$400,000 in that account may be removed and spent solely for rehabilitation of winter range and for no other purpose.

Feeding Expenditures Misrepresented

In response to a Sept. 2008 request from Senator Diane Bilyeu and sportsman Gary Peck, Legislative Budget Analyst Ray Houston sent them a record of 2008 winter feeding expenditures provided by IDFG (First Version). When the extreme expense of Utility/Communications was questioned, IDFG prepared and sent the Second Version.

Winter Feeding Expenses			
First Version		Second Version	
Expenses-1	FY2008-1	Expenses-2	FY2008-2
State Auditor	2,395	State Auditor	2,395
Travel Costs	54	Travel Costs	54
Utility/Comm	257,176	Communications	113
Equip. Rental	56,386	Equip. Rental	9,244
Misc.	22,524	Misc	526
Contract Svcs	630	Professional Svcs	518
Repairs	13,456	General Svcs	32,954
Material/Supplies	<u>34,626</u>	R,M Suppls, Svcs	108,360
		Specific Supplies	232,936
		Fuel Costs	<u>147</u>
Total Expenses	387,247	Total Expenses	387,247
Account Bal	605,906	Account Balance	605,906

Although the \$387,247 total expense amount was the same in both versions, it exceeded the previously published FY 2008 statewide total feeding expense by nearly \$300,000 and the major expense items in the second version are not explained. Most of that ~\$300,000 was *claimed* to have been spent on range rehabilitation for the Mule Deer Initiative, yet it may not legally be spent except to specifically rehabilitate big game *winter* range.

Using the feeding set-aside properly is essential to preserve healthy nucleus breeding populations in certain critical areas during a severe winter. Concealing that information from legislators, and from hunters who pay this extra tag fee to prevent extreme fluctuations in mule deer and elk populations, can cost Idaho millions of dollars in lost revenue.

In 1984 (FY85) when Idaho Parks and Recreation and IDFG jointly implemented The Nature Conservancy’s Natural Heritage Program, IDFG was already getting in

over its head. Selling more hunting opportunity did not solve the lack of adequate funding for multiple non-game programs, yet IDFG took over the entire TNC Heritage Program (now CDC) from Parks and Rec. in 1987.

Hiring nongame biologists to “manage” over 1,000 recorded Idaho non-game vertebrates and invertebrates and accepting responsibility (and hiring botanists) to “manage” 2,800 Idaho plant species from Parks and Rec. in 2003 (see page 3) placed an impossible burden on the agency and on the hunters and fishermen who foot the bills. With the exception of nongame elk license plates purchased by hunters, other sources of matching state money for federal nongame funds provide very few dollars.

The Wildlife Watching Lie Exposed

The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation Survey claim that Wildlife Watchers outnumber hunters and fishermen and spend \$billions on that activity was based on applying virtually all of the expenses from every trip by tourists or other travelers to “Wildlife Watching.” The fact that seeing wildlife was only an infrequent incidental activity on almost all of those trips was conveniently ignored.

Yet that false information was used to implement the multi-billion-dollar nationwide “Watchable Wildlife” program in state and federal agencies. Now the “USDA Forest Service Visitor Use Monitoring Results for FY 2007,” dated October 28, 2008, provides further proof that the wildlife watching claims are simply a myth promoted by a small minority of bird watchers who want hunters and other taxpayers to fund their private recreation.

Although more than a third of the visitors said they enjoyed seeing natural wonders, relaxing, hiking and seeing wildlife on their visit, **only 2.3%*** reported viewing wildlife as a primary activity! But even more revealing, despite millions of dollars reportedly spent by the agencies to develop birding trails and wildlife viewing sites over the past few years, National Forest visitor use declined dramatically from FY2004 through FY2007!

(* The tiny 2.3% viewing wildlife compares to 16.5% hiking or walking; **15.0%** hunting or fishing; 14.8% downhill skiing; and 13.4% viewing natural features)

One More Broken Promise to Sportsmen

When F&G Commissioner Gary Power helped rewrite the Department’s 15-year strategic plan, “The Compass,” to address sportsmen concerns about funding for the vast array of non-hunting/fishing programs, it included the following commitment to Sportsmen: “The Department will not use hunting and fishing license fees to meet all the desires of the public, other agencies and local governments for managing fish, wildlife and native plants.”

Yet Power recently joined the other six Commissioners in unanimously approving a proposed 20% sportsman license fee increase – with “80% of that increase intended to *support the status quo.*” The Commission continues to make hunters and fishermen support extremist agendas that conflict with Idaho Wildlife Policy.

IDFG Store Running Out of Merchandise

By Delmar Phillips

Our present (misnamed) Fish and Game Department has gone beyond description. They want to operate as a store: aisle 2, two-point deer or elk \$10; aisle 3, three-point deer and elk; aisles 4, 5, 6 and 7 are out of stock - check at Wal-Mart.

Fish and Game is already a store for sportsmen - first a license, then tags, fee to draw, steelhead tag, duck stamp, muzzleloader permit, archery permit, hound permit, bear tag, cougar tag, bobcat tag, two-pole fishing license, put-and-take \$20 pheasant, trapping license, sharptail or sage grouse tag, turkey tag, \$6 to draw for many of the above with no refund. Now they want to raise license fees, for what? F&G's new name could be "Chasing the Dog."

DELMAR L. PHILLIPS

Emmett

(NOTE: Del Phillips is an experienced hunter, trapper and wildlife observer who has been directly involved in promoting the conservation and wise use of Idaho's wildlife resource for several decades. His editorial above was a response to an IDFG media release reporting its plan to "bring Fish and Game into the 21st Century and run the Department 'like' a store - charging the value of each product it sells."

Using the theme, "*Those that benefit pay, those that pay benefit,*" F&G plans to charge hunters and fishermen an additional \$20.8 million over the next three years by charging differential fees (higher fees for tags and permits for bucks, bulls and certain fish - and for controlled hunts where there is a better chance of harvesting game). In a cleverly worded Revenue Increase Video on its website it says, "This will help us keep prices low for **more general licenses and permits.**"

"Keep Hunting, Fishing Fees Affordable for All"

It continues, "The median household income in Idaho is just under \$43,000 per year (and) federal studies show us that hunting and fishing rates decline sharply in households making less than \$40,000 because of costs. This is a major reason why Fish and Game is not seeking an across-the-board fee hike."

"We want to keep basic hunting and fishing fees as reasonable as possible - affordable for all households." Then it cites the \$3.50 (11.2%) increase in the combination hunting/fishing license as an example.

Census Bureau data shows that the 2006 income in half of Idaho households is below \$42,865 and in most of those households it is below \$40,000. It is no secret to those families that the high cost of hunting and fishing and the lack of wild game to harvest has already prevented all or most of their family members from participating.

Wheeler - "No Huntable Pheasant Population"

There is no doubt that families with less than \$40,000 in total income (who are paying \$3 or more per pound for cheaper cuts of beef or hamburger) could use the healthy protein in wild game. So if one family member spends ~\$37.00 to purchase a new combo license, what wild meat would it allow him or her to harvest?

The answer in most parts of Idaho is cottontail rabbits, pheasants or forest grouse - all three of which are producing all time record low harvests.

During the Idaho F&G Commission meeting on November 6, 2008, Chairman Cameron Wheeler asked Commissioner Budge "Do you think from the standpoint of a realistic discussion on pheasants, particularly in southern Idaho, we should just say, 'It's over'? I'm talking about not being a hypocrite to the extent that we're trying to pretend there's a huntable pheasant population when there isn't."

"And what ties in to this discussion in my mind is this 'put-and-take' thing that we do on WMAs. I think this whole pheasant thing needs to be looked at and dealt with in an honest way and I'm not so sure that we're doing that as a Commission."

Will Harvesting Deer or Salmon Be Affordable?

But what about the lower income family harvesting a big game animal or a nutritious salmon or steelhead for the freezer? With severely declining big game populations over most of Idaho will the various tag, permit and controlled hunt drawing fees necessary for a reasonable chance to harvest wild game for the table still be "affordable" to lower income families as it says in the video?

During the Nov. 6, 2008 Commission meeting, Director Groen and the Commission watched the Fee Increase Video and praised Communications Bureau Chief Mike Keckler and each other for their "honest upfront" presentation to sportsmen and the Legislature about the proposed fee increase. The video implies that the percentage of fee increase for resident families will be lower than for non-resident sportsmen who buy the same type of licenses, tags and permits

The Truth about Affordable Fees for All Residents

The 11% increase for a Resident Combination Hunting and Fishing License is certainly less than the 20% increase for a Nonresident Combination License. But was this done to benefit lower income Idaho families or to encourage them to buy the combination license which qualifies IDFG to receive about twice as many 3-to-1 matching federal excise tax dollars per license as buying just a single fishing or a single hunting license?

continued on page 8

F&G Out of Merchandise - *continued from page 7*

The increase in the *total* cost of just the bare license and tag to hunt or salmon fish is: deer or elk - **23%**, bear - **48%**, salmon - **31%**. Adding controlled hunt fees to increase poor harvest odds can almost **double** the increase.

The Commission/Director claim that the Fee Increase video is “honest (and) upfront” is not true.

Proposed IDFG Fee Increases by Percentage

Type	Resident	Nonresident
Hunt, Fish Comb. License	11%	20%
Fishing License	16%	20%
Hunting License	16%	13%**
Sportsman's Package	20%	n/a
Deer Tag	28%*	4%**
Controlled Hunt Deer Tag	36%*	17%
Archery or Muzz Permit	11%**	11%**
Elk A Tag (archery)	10%**	12%**
Elk B Tag	26%*	21%
Controlled Hunt Elk Tag	26%*	21%
Bear Tag	85%*	23%
Mountain Lion Tag	85%*	23%
Gray Wolf Tag	85%*	23%
Salmon or Steelhead Permit	64%*	118%
Controlled Hunt Application	83%*	200%
CH App. for Bucks, Bulls	317%*	428%

(* Extreme increases for resident permits and tags)

** Minor increases for archery and NR hunt, deer, elk)

The scarcity of mule deer in most general season units is impacting efforts to recruit juvenile hunters regardless of their desire or marksmanship ability. With most game species at or near record lows in Idaho and most traditional non-game species protected for the past five years, youthful hunters have little opportunity to develop the hunting and shooting skills that are a big part of the hunting experience.



Potential hunters with marksmanship training like Caitlyn Dovel of Emmett lose their enthusiasm with nothing to hunt.

Allowing antlerless youth hunting in areas where it is virtually impossible for them to have the opportunity to make a good clean close shot on a standing deer is doing more harm than good. The number of Hunter Ed graduates who have given up on hunting is alarming.

Misplaced Allegiance

The change in F&G priorities from perpetuating Idaho’s wild game and fish populations to supporting The Nature Conservancy’s ecosystem agenda was apparent during the recent Commission meeting. In spite of Chairman Wheeler’s expression of concern that southern Idaho no longer has a huntable population of pheasants, only Clearwater Commissioner Trevey expressed concern that 62 hunters only checked one elk through the Kooskia check station on the two-day opener.

None of the Commissioners expressed concern about the reported decline in mule deer taken by hunters at check stations in their respective regions. And although the video and Director Groen both said sportsmen should not be paying for CDC and non-game programs (and pledged to find another source of funding) neither IDFG nor any Commissioner expressed any reluctance about charging hunters and fishermen a few million more dollars to help fund those non-hunting, non-fishing programs.

Informal Survey Results Disturbing

Following the end of most deer and elk seasons I received an unprecedented number of emails from hunters reporting the lowest mule deer harvest in many years and a lower elk harvest than normal. In late November I asked several friends to conduct an informal confidential survey of outfitters and taxidermists in their respective areas.

Taxidermists reported 80-100% fewer clients than normal and even long-time outfitters reported 10% or less elk success for the season. Most outfitters blamed the low elk success on wolves and many private elk hunters said they saw more wolf sign than elk sign.

Some Advice to Hunters

If you are a reader from another state who is considering hunting mule deer or elk in Idaho, you should be aware that Idaho wildlife managers do not actively manage elk and mule deer, or the wolves that are preying on them. In 2008, IDFG offered 15,131 special hunt permits for deer and 17,176 similar permits for elk.

These do not include unlimited permits or the general season deer and elk hunts. Several limited hunts with poor drawing odds will allow hunting where mature mule deer bucks or bulls exist, but most are designed to increase license revenue in units where deer and elk numbers are steadily declining and harvests are reduced.

Attempt To Attract Nonresident Hunters

The limited increase in the cost of the Nonresident Deer Tag or Nonresident “A” Tag for Elk appears to be an attempt to sell more of the unsold tags. Many are sold as a second tag to residents because nonresident hunters know Idaho is a poor place to harvest a mature mule deer or elk.

Forcing hunters to provide most of a \$21 million bailout to an agency that has become dysfunctional would simply prolong the destruction. A more logical approach is downsizing by getting rid of the non-productive employees and restoring the agency’s ability to produce. – ED)

Is It Wrong For The Sportsmen Who Pay The Bills To Get Something For Their Money?

By Harvey Peck

(Harvey Peck is well known in Bannock County and most of southeast Idaho as a sportsman/conservationist who worked tirelessly to restore Canada Geese to the area. He received the "Sportsman Conservationist of the Year" award from the Idaho Wildlife Federation in 1984 but left the organization when it began to ignore sportsmen and embrace a radical environmental agenda.

He was largely responsible for passage of the F&G emergency big game winter feeding legislation in 1984, which has provided nearly \$11 million to fund emergency winter feeding and related programs. Yet he has also documented the Department's consistent refusal to feed starving animals and its misappropriation of several hundred thousand dollars from this dedicated fund in the 24 years since then.

In 1995 the Idaho Legislature ratified IDAPA Rule 13.01.18 requiring F&G Regional Supervisors to stockpile feed to begin feeding immediately when a condition of "Limited or unavailable winter forage caused by fire or unusual weather (e.g. abnormally deep snow)" exists. During January 2008, that condition existed in scattered accessible locations from the SE corner of Idaho to the Canadian border.

Yet IDFG refused to feed and most of the mule deer and some elk in those critical locations starved to death. Despite token feeding efforts by IDFG to satisfy the media and local area legislators, there was still \$605,000 in the feeding account on June 30, 2008.

In November 2008 Mr. Peck mailed the following letter to a small group of legislators who are familiar with the feeding law and the history of IDFG biologists' refusal to obey it. The letter contained photos of dead deer and documentation of events. – ED)

Dear _____

On April 5, 2008, my friend and I took pictures of these 13 dead deer a few miles from Montpelier, Idaho. They were taken in a little less than a 75 yard radius. We ran out of film or we could have gotten many more.

As we drove down the road you could see many more deer that were staggering and almost dead. It was very sad. What was even more saddening is that Walton's Feed Stores (that makes deer pellets for feed) was just a few miles from the starving deer.

John Kontes, owner of the Eight Ball Gun Shop in Pocatello sent these pictures to Governor Otter in a letter. The reply that John received told him to get in touch with the Regional Feeding Advisory Committee.

I am also sending you a letter written to me from Cal Groen, Fish and Game Director, stating that we need to work with the feed committee. Another letter from Randy Budge, Fish and Game Commissioner of Region 5, also tells to work with the feed advisory committee.

The Feed Committee is made up mostly of people that are hand picked by the department and they do not believe in feeding the big game animals. Does anyone really care?

That is why I am writing this letter and showing the facts. The legislators are the *only* people that can make a change in the department to bring back the wildlife in our state for the people that pay the bills.

I met with Brad Compton and other Fish and Game personnel in the spring of 1993. Our animals died by the thousands that year. In our region, only \$3,648.15 was spent for actual feed out of wintering feed monies that were \$459,722.00. We have never really recovered from that and it was 15 years ago.

In February 2006 I received a phone call from a lady in Montpelier, Idaho who said the Fish and Game Department was going to have a depredation hunt on cow elk. My friends and I went down there and took pictures of 14 dead elk on the railroad tracks which had been hit by a train. They wanted to hunt these elk (most of which were carrying calves) from snow machines in the dead of winter.

This lady made a call to Fish and Game Director Steve Huffaker and another to Senator Bob Geddes. Two days later the County sent a blade in and plowed the road and made a feed lot about 1-1/2 miles from the highway. Semi trucks brought hay in for the starving elk and two weeks later the lady phoned and informed me that (since then) no elk had been hit on the highway or railroad tracks.

In 2006 they spent \$12,001.07 out of \$736,000.00 that was available in the emergency feeding account. In the spring of 2008, only \$8,976.50 was spent out of \$721,000.00.

I am going on 83 years old and am a U.S. Navy veteran of WW II. Born and raised here in Idaho, I am also the person that made a motion at our local Rod and Gun Club in 1984 to charge the fee on tags for deer, antelope and elk to feed our animals – HB 596 that Jerry Conley (Director) and Ken Norrie wanted me to help with by phoning legislators.

One last question - Is it so wrong for the sportsman that pays the bills to see something for it? Please help us. You *can* make the change. No more fee increases.

Harvey Peck

continued on page 10

Is It Wrong To Expect...*continued from page 9*

Groen's Incriminating Letter

(NOTE: In a May 28, 2008 letter response to Pocatello resident John Kontes, with a copy to Governor Butch Otter who directed him to write it, IDFG Director Cal Groen wrote the following:

"The Department is limited to **\$303,802** in legislative spending authority for the winter feeding account per fiscal year. "This year (FY 2008) the Department has spent \$188,058 as of May 18 with additional bills to be paid."

Yet on Sept. 10, 2008, Legislative Services Budget Analyst Ray Houston provided information indicating IDFG actually had **four times** that amount of spending authority and had spent **\$387,247** from the Winter Feeding Account by June 30, 2008 with **\$605,906** still remaining in that account on June 30th (see "Winter Feeding Expenses" chart on page 6).

Director Groen's letter to Mr. Kontes continued, "The Department strives to *manage this limited account* for the most efficient and effective results to mule deer populations across the state. (M)uch of the habitat improvement work being done in Southeast Idaho as part of the Mule Deer Initiative is dependent on these funds."

This indirect admission by Groen that IDFG limits the amount of money spent on feeding deer that will otherwise die in order to provide more money to the Mule Deer Initiative illustrates two things:

1. The agency's disregard for the Idaho Code and the Idaho Administrative Procedure Act Rules, and for the hunters who pay the money
2. Its willingness to decimate mule deer herds in order to fund its native plant restoration agenda.

Four Facts about Winter Feeding

After 24 years of inventing new excuses not to feed starving deer and elk, IDFG now claims it is more "efficient" and more "effective" to let the deer starve and spend the dedicated feeding money on restoring native vegetation on winter range. Let's examine several facts.

Fact #1: When winter forage, no matter how abundant or nutritious, is covered with 18 or more inches of snow and ice, it is not accessible to mule deer. If you cannot understand this simple fact, don't bother to read any further.

Fact #2: During even a normal Idaho winter, if digestible forage is not available to wild ruminants for even a few hours, stored energy (primarily body fat, muscle tissue and, finally, bone marrow) is burned at an accelerated rate. When a deer has lost 20%-25% of its early fall body weight, emergency feeding will not save it.

Fact #3: When digestible nutrients are not available and the rumen is empty, deer and their larger cousins fill their rumen with needles, bark, woody stems or

similar materials that either require much longer to digest, or are not digestible at all. At that point, unless the animals have received a specially formulated energy ration, the microorganisms that digest their normal forage quickly die.

Fact #4: Animals in this condition, even with adequate fat reserves to survive until spring green-up, will experience high mortality due to their inability to digest high quality natural forage at green-up.

Increasing Big Game Forage on Winter Range

In an area where summer and transition ranges provide adequate fat reserves but the winter range has been so decimated that an abnormal number of animals die during a *normal* winter, it may be possible to increase winter survival by increasing the quantity or even the quality of winter forage. That is the only circumstance where an excess of winter feeding funds may legitimately be spent.

But where the abnormal losses occur only during an extreme deep-snow winter, attempting to increase winter survival by increasing winter range forage is generally a waste of time and money. Based on the lowest BLM per-acre figure for re-establishing shrub-steppe habitat, it would cost five billion dollars to rejuvenate the 10% or less of Idaho considered winter range for deer.

Rehabilitating Forage on Summer Range

Other than providing supplemental feed or wildlife energy blocks when either is indicated, the key to increasing deer and elk survival during an extreme deep snow winter is to be sure the animals have adequate fat reserves by early fall and are not unduly stressed by predators or humans going into winter. If the forage available on summer range does not allow this, wildlife managers must first use available facts to determine the cause – and whether it is temporary or permanent.

What Happened in the 2007-2008 Winter?

In the three regions that make up the Mule Deer Initiative (and in the Southwest region as well), most mule deer entered the 2007-08 winter with the highest back fat measurements recorded in the past few years. That fact indicates that the forage on summer ranges in the areas provided adequate TDN (total digestible nutrients) for survival during even a moderately severe winter.

Some of those deer in excellent condition wintered in areas that received excessive snowfall and many of them that did not receive emergency feeding in time died. Yet others wintered in adjacent areas with near normal snow depths and their survival rate was high.

Those facts indicate that the condition of summer and winter range was not a factor in the scattered areas with poor deer survival. Yet the only money spent by IDFG to feed mule deer was in areas where citizens were already feeding – or in a handful of failed IDFG efforts across southern Idaho that supplied far too little feed to starving deer too late to save most of the juveniles and mature breeding bucks.

The fact that IDFG took dollars from the winter feeding account to “rehabilitate” both winter and summer range as outlined in the Mule Deer Initiative, rather than spend more money feeding deer that would otherwise die raises an obvious question. What’s behind this obsession with eventually spending millions of sportsman license dollars to restore native plants rather than to save a healthy nucleus population of mule deer in critical areas?

The Truth about MDI Range Rehabilitation

The assortment of botanists and native plant enthusiasts who lead the ecosystem “management” cult in state game management agencies now influence every aspect of game management. They and the federal agencies involved in “habitat restoration for wildlife” programs for nongame species, now include game species such as sage grouse and mule deer in their projects in order to legitimize them as well as to justify the use of hunters’ license and P-R dollars to fund them.

The alleged need to restore healthy native plant communities in the shrub-steppe habitat of Idaho’s MDI is actually part of a national scheme promoted by The Nature Conservancy and facilitated by its Conservation Data Centers (CDCs) to restore a “shrub-steppe ecosystem covering portions of Idaho, Nevada and Oregon.” Like IDFG, Nevada DOW is blaming its mule deer decline on wildfires, invasive plants, etc. and promising that deer populations will start improving down the road once it can restore its portion of that shrub-steppe ecosystem.

Eco-Clichés and Deception in Idaho’s Mule Deer Plan

Neither agency offers any credible proof that the multi-billion dollar effort will increase mule deer numbers but both refuse to use other biological tools to halt the decline. Idaho’s controversial 2008-2017 Mule Deer Management Plan stresses the need for its own ecosystem experts to monitor shrub-steppe habitat and states that the federal agencies, who actually manage this forage, contract with CDC to perform ecological site evaluations.

In the section Titled “Winter Feeding,” on Page 9 it purports to list the Commission (IDAPA) criteria that mandate winter feeding – yet omits the most important one of the four criteria and modifies another to fit its anti-feeding agenda.

The criterion to feed when “d. Limited or unavailable winter forage caused by fire or unusual weather” exists was not mentioned and the criterion to feed when “c. Excessive mortality which would affect the recovery of the herd” might occur was redefined as: “30% or more of the adult female population (would die).”

The Winter Feeding Section also omitted mention of the IDAPA requirement for IDFG to maintain feed stockpiles every year at predetermined locations before snowfall in order to facilitate immediate feeding when the conditions described in “d” above occur.

From 1994 when these rules were adopted as a temporary rule by the F&G Commission until 1999, our

Feeding Advisory Committee facilitated and inspected IDFG compliance with these Rules, including making sure it stocked feed onsite at selected locations, regardless of the weather. The misrepresentation of these rules in the Mule Deer Plan is one of many examples of the Department’s willingness to ignore its lawful mandate to perpetuate and manage wildlife and instead promote the TNC natural ecosystem habitat agenda.

The Real Reason F&G Refuses to Feed

The multiple excuses IDFG officials use to not feed reflect both ignorance and bias. Their real reason for not feeding is expressed in the eco-cliché found on their nongame website (i.e. “Don’t alter the environment by feeding the animals. Feeding wildlife supplies more food than would normally be provided by nature.”)

Emergency feeding was never intended to feed most of the statewide mule deer population – nor is it intended to maintain a higher population in a given area than the forage will support in a normal year.

If feeding is initiated *immediately* when any of the four criteria exist and mule deer are fed *free choice*, annual dependency and unhealthy “yarding” do not occur. Nucleus healthy breeding populations are maintained in critical local areas, with high mature buck and fawn survival and no gaps in age classes.

Attempts by IDFG to feed late using less feed, that emphasize survival of adult females, always result in unnatural crowding and stress from rushing the troughs and fighting over feed; increased danger of contagious disease being spread; massive losses in replacement fawns and mature breeding bucks; absorption or abortion of some fetuses and/or one or more generations of stunted, unhealthy offspring; and large gaps in certain age classes.

Even if the remaining animals are not in a classical predator pit by then, it takes several years to restore a viable deer herd. Unlike feeding timely and properly, which always translates to increased income in a few years, that type of irresponsible feeding is never cost effective.

Back in 1994, one recommendation by Regional Conservation Officer Brent Hyde that was never passed on to the Feeding Committee, Commission or Legislature, would have prevented many problems and excessive costs of feeding. That was to subcontract the feeding to local area citizens with the equipment, expertise and a proven track record of successful feeding.

This would provide a qualified labor force and eliminate the extended “comp time” vacations or overtime payment (now) that *always* result when full-time F&G employees attempt to run an emergency feeding operation.

The Logical Solution

But regardless of who feeds, a sensible solution to the misuse of emergency feeding funds is to amend I.C. Sec. 36-111 by transferring winter habitat improvement to the \$2 set-aside for acquiring or rehabilitating big game ranges where it belongs. – ED)

Fish and Game News or Nongame Propaganda?

By Jim Hagedorn

Dear Director Groen:

I received my copy of the special edition of the "Idaho Fish and Game News," describing the Idaho Fish and Game Conservation Sciences Program. It has taken me all week to calm down before I wrote this letter.

Director Groen I have some questions? I don't want to have to send a FOI, but I will if I have to, to get the information.

- (a) How many of these did you have printed?
- (b) What was the cost of printing?
- (c) How many were sent out by mail?
- (d) What was the cost of postage?
- (e) How many IDFG hours were spent by each of these employees to assemble this paper?

Director you and your staff spend all this time on non-game when so many of the animals or birds we value as game; elk, mule deer, antelope, pheasants, grouse, Huns and many other species, are or soon will be on the "threatened" list.

This paper is nothing but a lobby campaign to promote the fee increase to the public. You have a Deputy Director that we pay \$96,000-plus a year to do the lobbying. Why do we have to spend more money on this kind of propaganda?

Yes, I am mad, Director. I will do everything in my power to defeat any fee increase until this Department removes the blubber from within. The Department no longer even tries to hide the fact that they use very badly needed sportsmen dollars to fund non-game agendas.

Awaiting your reply.

Best Regards

Jim Hagedorn
Viola, ID

Cc: Governor Otter
Idaho F&G Commissioners

Why Are There So Many Benefited Temps?

(NOTE: When Viola sportsman Jim Hagedorn received a list of FY 2008 F&G employees from the State Controller, only a little over 80 were listed as "temporary" and about 800 had classified job titles. When he asked F&G Director Cal Groen to explain the 800 that had jobs, Groen responded "IDFG has 528 full time positions and a large number of temporary part-time positions.")

In another email exchange, Mr. Hagedorn explained that only a few were listed as temporary

employees, and Director Groen responded, "No, 300 are temps. We do have 'some' full time temps."

During the Nov. 6, 2008 Commission meeting, Director Groen told the Commissioners that, for three weeks, people had been asking why they hired so many (300) "temps." Groen said F&G staff had responded to that concern.

Video "Bites" Are Not Proof

In the Fee Increase Video they included alleged examples of why so many temps are needed. These were a series of brief video images of trapping and tagging mule deer, loading and stocking fish, manning check stations, volunteers collecting sagebrush seeds and releasing wild turkeys – all mixed with catching fish and seeing game.

Groen said that (Gov.) Butch Otter had viewed the video the day before (Nov. 5th) and implied the Governor was satisfied with the "explanation" of why there were so many temps.

But the reality is that only 21% of the temps on the payroll in FY 2008 were not receiving the full-time benefit package that is provided to full-time permanent employees. The other 79% are called "temps" only because they cannot be paid for more than 1,385 hours per year without becoming one of the ~528 maximum FTP (full time position) employees authorized by the Legislature and the Idaho Code.

Top Executive Leads F&G Damage Control Effort

As this article is being written, Director Groen is traveling the State as part of a sales and damage-control program for the fee increase. To those who know at least part of the truth, including Jim Hagedorn, Groen admits that biologists use temps to do work they should be doing themselves and admits those temps need to be cut.

Yet, regardless of whether or not the fee increase passes, if the proposed FY 2010 Budget is approved by the Legislature it will authorize an unprecedented increase of **55%** over the *actual* number of benefitted temps in FY 2008 (according to the **424** FY 2010 benefitted temp figure provided to Jim Hagedorn by Bill Hutchinson).

The Law of Diminishing Returns

One of Director Groen's selling points for the fee increase is a report stating that the F&G budget (actual expenditures) has only increased by four percent in the last two years compared to much larger increases in other state agencies. According to Groen, that shows the Department has trimmed the fat by eliminating wasteful programs and deserves a license fee increase.

If that is true, why has IDFG increased the number of its nonessential benefitted temps that Groen says should be cut – and, instead, cut vital game services such as big game census flights?

When the supply of wild game declines below a reasonable level, fewer people purchase hunting licenses, tags and permits. Unlike other state agencies that receive most of their income from an annual general fund appropriation, the automatic slowdown in F&G funding is its own fault for not providing continued supplies of wild game for hunters.

Each time IDFG receives approval for a general license fee increase, the number of nongame or CDC (Conservation Data Center) employees increases followed by additional declines in populations of game species. In a production system this is commonly referred to as the “law of diminishing returns” or the “law of increasing opportunity cost” – an appropriate term for the current IDFG dilemma.

“Nongame Has Overspent Its Budget”

In a Dec. 16, 2008 meeting with Mr. Hagedorn, Director Groen reportedly told him that “Nongame” has overspent its budget *for several years*. He had previously announced his intention to combine Nongame and the Natural Resource Policy Bureau with its CDC into one Bureau and the “Idaho Fish and Game News” criticized by Hagedorn was all about “Conservation Sciences,” which is the new name of that non-hunting non-fishing program.

Articles in this *Idaho F&G News* issue, written by Director Groen, SE Region Commissioner Randall Budge, Natural Resource Program Coordinator Dale Toweill and at least six of the nongame 1,385-hour-per-year* so-called “benefited temps,” provide alleged “reasons” why hunters and anglers should pay to support these non-hunting, non-fishing programs.

(*these six are part of 31 nongame biologists, botanists, GIS analysts and educators who are paid almost one million dollars plus benefits as “temps,” described in “Lack of Integrity in State Wildlife Management” on pg 5.)

The “Big Lie”

The “reasons” stated by Groen, Budge and Toweill why hunters and anglers should pay for these non-hunting and non-fishing programs are summarized below:

1. Nine out of 10 Idahoans say wildlife issues are important but only 24% buy hunting and fishing licenses.
2. Income from tax check-offs and wildlife license plates is declining and *no longer** meets the cost of these expanding programs.
3. In the natural world everything is connected.
4. Sportsmen have always footed the bill for wildlife conservation and since taxpayers won’t fund these “eco-management” programs sportsmen should.

(* This is The Big Lie – even though hunters buy the majority of nongame wildlife license plates, those donations have never been adequate to meet the required match for all the TNC and federal nongame programs.)

Idaho Law vs. Nongame “Mission Statement”

In Commissioner (attorney) Budge’s article, “A Conservation Perspective,” he admits that Idaho law requires IDFG and the Commission to preserve, protect, perpetuate and manage wildlife to provide continued supplies for hunting, fishing and trapping. Yet he cites only the claimed “mission” of the Conservation Sciences Program – “*To preserve, protect, perpetuate and manage Idaho’s biological diversity for all generations,*” – as a “reason” for sportsmen to pay for that program.

Whatever the cost of printing this elaborate sales pitch (for hunters and fishermen to pay for the TNC/federal nongame agenda) was, it pales in comparison to the amount of license money IDFG has been spending for months to plan, advertise and lobby for the fee increase.

Unwilling to admit that the fee increase is designed to entice lower income Idaho families to buy a basic license in order to increase the 3-to-1 federal dollars it receives, F&G officials from the top down continue to deceive the public about what it will really cost for even a poor chance to harvest game.

On Dec. 14, F&G Biologist Mark Taylor sent 14 north Idaho Legislators an email advising that the cost of buying a combo license, deer and elk tag and one other item would only increase by about \$17 for the “average adult sportsman.” But he neglected to mention that increase meant paying a new *total* fee of nearly \$120 for only a 1-in-4 (or worse) chance of killing any game.

Take a Walk in the “Average Sportsman’s” Shoes

Taylor, who received \$56,492.80 in wages last year plus thousands more in liberal benefits and perks, doesn’t know what it feels like for an Idahoan who makes half that much to have to choose between buying food and clothes for his youngsters or paying \$120 each year on the chance that he might get lucky and kill a piece of meat to feed them once every four years or so.

If that “average adult sportsman” happened to travel to Lewiston on November 5, 2008 to testify about wolves’ impact on game, and heard Commissioner Budge repeat the lie* that neither the Department nor the Commission wanted wolves when they were forced on them by the feds, his reluctance to support “more of the same” with another fee increase is understandable.

(* On September 27, 1994 former IDFG Director Jerry Conley violated Idaho Law by signing a letter to FWS Wolf Team Leader Ed Bangs supporting the introduction of Canadian wolves and issuing a permit authorizing FWS to release them in Idaho. In January 2005 IDFG published a full-page “Position Statement on Gray Wolves: IDFG supports wolf recovery in Idaho,” etc.

One of the worst deceptions of all is the claim that nongame, with its CDC activities, interpretive centers, and “WILD” activities statewide, costs less than 2% of the F&G Budget. Just the salaries and benefits of all NG employees alone cost several times that amount! – ED)

Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Update

By George Dovel

Table 1. Confirmed wolf depredations and wolf mortality in Idaho from 2003 to Dec 4, 2008.

YEAR	Depredations ¹				Wolf Mortality			
	Cattle	Sheep	Dogs	Total	WS ²	10j ³	Other	Total
2003	7	130	3	140	7	0	8	15
2004	19	176	4	199	17	0	21	38
2005	29	166	12	207	24	3	16	43
2006	41	237	4	282	35	7	19	61
2007	57	211	10	278	43	7	27	77
2008	102	215	14	331	87	14	43	144
Total	245	1133	47	1425	213	31	134	378

¹ Includes confirmed depredations resulting in death or injury

² Authorized take by Wildlife Services

³ Authorized take under 10j or while delisted for protection of stock and dogs

Increase in Wolf Depredation and Wolf Mortality

Footnote 1 in the above chart should read only “resulting in death” and not include “injury.” According to IDFG, USDA/APHIS Wildlife Services (WS) confirmed that wolves *killed* 16 cows, 86 calves, 215 sheep, 14 dogs and one foal (ttl. 332); *injured* one cow, seven calves, six sheep seven dogs (ttl 21); probably killed six cows, 22 calves, 57 sheep (ttl. 85); and probably injured one cow, three calves, one sheep and two dogs (ttl. 7).

This equals **353** confirmed and 92 probable – a total of **445** animals that were apparently killed or injured during the first 11 months of 2008 instead of the 331 shown in the chart. Either figure is a significant increase over the **278** in 2007 but remember that earlier studies in which WS participated indicate the remains of only one in six animals killed by wolves are even found!

The increased kills occurred despite the fact that the *known* wolf mortality in these 11 months was nearly double that recorded in 2007. Outdoorsman readers may recall that the increased depredation was forecast by Wildlife Services due to the continued high percentage of increase in wolf populations.

Singles and Small Groups Go Undetected

On Dec. 5th, an Outdoorsman reader spotted a large dead wolf by the side of the road near the city limits of Star in the Boise Valley. He examined the carcass and the broken pieces of plastic from the vehicle that hit it but when he came back about a half hour or so later the carcass had disappeared.

Neither IDFG, nor local law enforcement and road dept. personnel were aware of this wolf even being in the vicinity, which again confirms that lone wolves and smaller groups go undetected. Reports by elk hunters from

the Boise foothills to the Panhandle Region indicated significant increases in both wolf sign and wolf sightings.

ID, MT Officials Report Declining Harvests

In 2008 spot checks and check station records, mule deer hunters in Idaho reported the worst harvest in years and elk hunters in many units, both north and south of the Salmon River, checked significantly fewer harvested elk than in previous years. IDFG says the increased wolf presence and increased livestock predation is caused by increasing wolf numbers moving into previously unoccupied areas.

But a group of outdoorsmen who are monitoring both wolves and elk in remote areas more intently than IDFG does, also believe wolves have decimated the elk herds in those areas and moved to farm/ranch areas where livestock and domestic animals make up for the decline of wild game in their diet. In either case, there is agreement that Idaho wolves have increased beyond their available habitat.

In Northwest Montana, hunter harvest surveys revealed a 17% decline in the number of whitetail bucks killed by hunters in 2007. This year, reports of wolf encounters by Montana hunters have increased significantly and wolves are also killing more livestock.

Hunter Proposals Seek State Management

As is happening in Idaho, Montana hunters are extremely upset by the lack of game, and some agricultural groups that have remained aloof are now reportedly joining hunters in a united effort to introduce legislation to remedy the problem. Proposed legislation in both states, and similar proposals in Wyoming, generally say the states have acted in good faith and kept their commitments and should be allowed to assume management as promised.

Several proposals also cite the 10th Amendment Right of the states to manage all wildlife within their borders. Although that is a legitimate position to take, courts may question why states waited 35 years after the fact to challenge the 1973 CITES Treaty and 1973 passage of the Endangered Species Act.

In Idaho, the Governor and several Legislators have expressed opposition to any form of wolf legislation being introduced prior to the end of January (when it is rumored that at least two of the states will once again have the authority to manage wolves under FWS supervision). Proponents of the legislation argue that this will not stop wolf preservationists from again challenging delisting and seeking another injunction to halt hunting of wolves.

Three Issues ID Legislators Need To Address

Three other issues that must be resolved even if wolf management is restored to the states are:

(1) the contradictory Implementation Plan passed by the Idaho F&G Commission with a minimum population criterion that exceeds the 15 breeding pair management goal in Idaho's 2002 Wolf Conservation and Management Plan by several hundred percent;

(2) the inability of private hunters and trappers to reduce wolf populations in Idaho to the extent necessary to restore healthy big game populations and limit wolf predation on livestock and domestic animals;

(3) the need for a guaranteed annual federal funding amount that is adequate to effectively monitor both wolves and their prey – as well as pay for the aerial control that will be necessary to supplement sportsman harvests.

1. Correct the OSC-IDFG Implementation Plan

When Idaho reached the 10 breeding pair recovery goal, FWS applied pressure to the three states to add a 50% buffer of five more breeding pairs in their management plans. If the number of breeding pairs fell below 15 in Idaho, it did not automatically halt hunting and trapping as some who apparently have never read the plan insist.

The Idaho Plan does not halt wolf harvest until the number of breeding pairs falls below 10. Being below 15 pairs simply requires more careful wolf monitoring and harvest to insure halting lethal control if the population falls below the magic 100 wolves. When the Legislature gave the Office of Species Conservation (OSC) and IDFG the joint authority and duty to develop an implementation plan in cooperation with Montana's and Wyoming's plans, it said the plan must be in accordance with the existing (2002) Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan.

Instead, IDFG biologists insisted a third minimum of 20 breeding pairs (200 wolves) be inserted in the new implementation plan and a new management goal of 50-70 breeding pairs be established in the plan as another "safety net." Both of these changes violated the 15 breeding pairs management goal in Idaho's Plan yet the Commission rubber-stamped the complicated plan to manage for 500+ wolves instead of for 150.

Even Judge Molloy who issued the injunction accepted the 10 breeding pair minimum and 15-breeding pair management goal as the correct criteria for Idaho management. Yet IDFG and OSC recently sent him and FWS a letter pandering to the wolf preservationists and reiterating their intention to manage for 500+ wolves.

2. Private Hunting/Trapping is Inadequate

Wolf experts agree that the only place sport hunting and trapping might limit wolf numbers is on flat, fenced areas. Nothing like that exists in most Idaho wolf habitat so relying on sport hunters and trappers to take enough wolves to restore healthy densities defies logic.

3. Securing Adequate Annual Federal Funding

Montana wolf biologists have already used up the federal funds allocated to monitor wolf populations in this fiscal year and the amount of money required to monitor wolf and prey populations in the Idaho plan was grossly underestimated by IDFG. The 2002 Plan Directed IDFG to actively secure additional funding for wolf management yet its nongame account balance is inadequate – even without spending any funds for wolf management.

Idaho's 2002 Plan emphasized that state wolf management depends upon the ability of Idaho's Congressional delegation to obtain adequate annual funding. Like State Wildlife Grant funding, wolf management funding relies upon an annual appropriation by Congress and there is no assurance that sufficient funds will be available beyond the current fiscal year.

The Plan stipulates that if adequate federal funding is not available Idaho will cease managing wolves but this will not prevent it from spending money to control wolf depredation. This remains a generally well-written plan that provides for most contingencies and, hopefully, the Idaho Legislature will not allow any person or agency to alter this plan.

Editor's Opinion

(Prudent citizens and legislators in all three states recognize that the costs and impacts of wolf recovery in the northern Rocky Mountains now far exceed all of the EIS projections. We are at a critical point where no one, including the wolf advocates in FWS and the state wildlife agencies, can afford to manage wolves.

If Idaho, and the other two NRM states, cannot manage wolves on their own terms expressed in the state management plans accepted by FWS, they would be well advised to walk away from this monster before it devours them. Several Idaho Legislators still blame Wyoming for the mess we are in and biologists in Montana FWP are trying to distance themselves from Idaho, claiming that Idaho's plan is "just as bad" as Wyoming's.

Legislators in all three states should stop trying to deal with the devil separately and present a unified insistence on either sticking to the original agreements, or else file damage claims and dump this problem back on FWS and Congress where it originated. – ED)

An Important Message for All Americans

The Nature Conservancy/U.N./Wildlands Initiative goal to establish "Wildlands Core Areas" and connect them with "Wildlife Corridors" is being implemented in every state (see July-Sep 2007 Outdoorsman). CDC nongame employees in your state wildlife agency have already mapped these wildlife corridors and are working with other agencies to implement the plan with direction from TNC.

Western Governors Endorse Eco-Agendas

One month after Idaho Governor Butch Otter's Inauguration in January 2007, he joined the other Western governors in approving a policy resolution titled "Protecting Wildlife Mitigation Corridors and Crucial Wildlife Habitat in the West." Much of the information in that resolution, and in a subsequent initiative adopted by the 19 governors in June 2008, was provided by TNC.

These documents directed the governors to use their state wildlife agencies to oversee virtually every state activity from location and construction of roads to energy exploration and development. Like many other states, Gov. Otter made his F&G Director a member of his staff, and nongame activists in IDFG are now calling the shots.

Wildlife management on public lands in Idaho now consists of token efforts to restore native plants, and selling extra hunting opportunity to pay for the CDC and nongame bureaucracy. The fee increase package discussed at length in this issue proposes to increase put-and-take harvest of tame pheasants and hatchery trout, while continuing to exploit wild game on public lands.

Deer hunters in Pennsylvania also charge that deer on public lands are mismanaged and exploited. Idaho F&G is asking legislators for its *third* fee increase for deer hunting since 1999 – yet Pennsylvania is asking for its *first* fee increase for deer hunting since 1999.

While Idaho Gov. Otter has already endorsed the proposed fee increase of 23% to hunt deer, the Chairman of Pennsylvania's House Game and Fisheries Committee, Ed Staback, has refused to consider a fee increase until an independent study of deer management on both public and private lands is completed. The year-long study authorized by the Pa. Legislature last spring will be conducted by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee.

Although only about 15% of Pennsylvania is public land, Chairman Staback points out that the "Big Woods Country" is where many hunting camps exist and hunters are forced to hunt. In Idaho ~70% of the land is owned/controlled by government and the vast majority of hunters are finding very little game to harvest.

Idahoans are entitled to a similar independent investigation, not only of game management on these lands, but of the F&G agency that is trying to duplicate the functions of Parks and Recreation, Environment, Lands, Water Resources, Commerce and Development and other state and federal agencies. Focus must include the hundreds of benefited temporary F&G employees, many of them promoting a non-hunting agenda while their salaries and expenses are paid by hunters and fishermen.

CDC and the entire nongame insects and flowers agenda must be transferred back to Parks and Recreation where it will stop destroying Idaho's Hunting Heritage. F&G officials must be forced to manage wildlife properly.

If you believe it's time for citizens to take back control of their government and their future, I urge you to give as many 1-year gift subscriptions as you can afford. Donating \$25 to cover costs for one year will provide facts to one private citizen or public official of your choosing anywhere in the U.S. Please don't put it off. – ED)

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