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Do You Have the Courage to Admit the Truth?

Review What Has Happened Since 1990 When the IAFWA Hired Bird-Watchers and Other Predator Preservationists to Replace Public Hunting in North America

By George Dovel

The Washington, D.C. – based international group that once represented the interests of state Fish and Game agencies by lobbying Congress and the President for them, is now their master. Although it chose to drop the word “International” from its name in order to sound “more friendly” to the North American hunters and fishermen it once supported, the “Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies” even added the State Forestry Administration of the People’s Republic of China to the long list of federal agency members it represents.

In 1990, IAFWA hired non-hunting bird watcher Naomi Edelson to establish non-consumptive wildlife recreation as all state F&G agencies’ number one priority. This shocking violation of the law in many states was ignored by commissioners and biologists.

In July of 1990, IDFG Research Biologist (now Deputy Director) Jim Unsworth wrote a 1991-95 elk plan based on the IAFWA directive which blatantly violated Idaho Wildlife Policy in Idaho Code Sec 36-103. That 74-year-old law clearly states that wild animals, wild birds and fish within the state of Idaho shall be preserved, protected, perpetuated and managed to provide continued supplies for hunting, fishing and trapping.

Yet the introduction to Unsworth’s Elk Plan said:

“Although this document is called an Elk Management Plan, it is really the plan of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (hereafter called the Department) for managing the many and varied impacts of people upon wildlife and wildlife habitat.

“...The Department believes the greatest return to society from the wildlife resource occurs when the maximum variety of products is provided and that maximizing a single product (e.g., harvest) is not necessarily desirable. We will encourage and promote nonconsumptive use of elk.”

On Nov. 29, 1993, Attorney Sam Routson and I met with Idaho Big Game Manager Lonn Kuck to convince IDFG to stop lying about the extent of big game losses from starvation during the 1992-93 winter. I reminded

Kuck that the year he was hired it was legal for a hunter to kill five mule deer in Idaho by hunting in three separate units and killing one female.

Kuck agreed and also admitted that thousands of deer and many of the elk that had been fed by Fish and Game had died because the feeding was not conducted properly. But then he said we were wasting our time and explained with the following comment:

“The public hunting you have known will be gone in another decade.”

The creation of citizen Winter Feeding Advisory Committees in 1994 and adoption of IDAPA requirements for IDFG Regional Supervisors to feed in 1995 were examples of Idaho Legislators’ unsuccessful efforts to force F&G to use the half a \$million they had requested properly. But as with Gov. Batt’s 1995 directive for the F&G Commissioners to submit their written resignations, state biologists continued to ignore Idaho Law and gave their allegiance to radicals thousands of miles away.

On June 24, 1996, F&G Teams that were formed to halt the decline in hunter harvests in mule deer and elk, unanimously agreed that one of their missions was:

“To provide elk and deer to feed bears and other large predators” (Upper Snake Wildlife Manager Ted Chu).

But when sportsman Elk Team Member Bill Chetwood suggested providing elk and deer for hunters to harvest (per I.C. Sec 36-103) the IDFG members refused to agree and Facilitator John Gahl stated:

“We’re not going to use anything that’s in the law as part of our Vision Statement or our Mission Statement.”

On July 10, 1996 the Elk Team ignored Colorado Researcher David Freddy’s advice not to use stratified hunt seasons (the A-B Tag system) as a tool to manage elk herds

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to restore populations. Freddy explained that Colorado uses its A-B-C seasons solely to raise money from tens of thousands of additional nonresident elk hunters, by allowing only one-third of them in the field at any given time to reduce complaints from resident hunters.

The Team also wrote:

“The team decided not to set a calf:cow ratio as a biological standard. The second biological criteria will measure the branched antlered:spike bull ratio from sightability surveys with 40% branched antlered as a minimum.”

Gross Ignorance – or Deliberate Deception?

Using the ratio of all bull elk older than 1-1/2 years to yearling (spike) bulls to measure bull status and trends is like trying to tell time with a clock that has stopped. It guarantees false readings most of the time.

When a severe winter, excessive predation or excessive harvest by hunters reduces the number of spike bulls below what is needed to replace adult death losses, it *increases* the ratio of older bulls to spikes. Yet the total number of bulls also always *decreases* – a situation that must be corrected in order to maintain a viable population.

On April 30, 1996, two months before the Team made its final decision to ignore calf survival when setting seasons and harvest levels, Researcher George Pauley sent Clearwater Wildlife Manager Jay Crenshaw, a two-page memo citing changed elk ratios in the Clearwater Region during the past four years compared to the prior five years.

1. Cow elk numbers remained static at 21,000 to 22,000.
2. Total bull elk numbers declined 25%, from a bull:cow ratio of 22:100 to only 16:100.
3. Calf elk recruitment declined by 34% from 32:100 cows to only 21:100.
4. The number of yearling bulls declined by 41%, while the number of branch-antlered bulls dropped by 13%.

Pauley pointed out that the dramatic increase in the ratio of large bulls to yearlings did not mean there were more adult bulls when there were actually fewer. It simply meant that the *loss* of replacement bull calves was higher than the death loss of larger bulls during the same period.

His memo explained that State Big Game Manager Lonk Kuck and others touting the new “tool” ignored the fact that it was totally misleading unless calf recruitment remained at the same level year after year (a scenario that does not occur). Pauley correctly insisted if elk managers fail to use calf-to-cow ratios, they must use both total bull numbers and bull-to-cow ratios just to determine bull elk status and trends.

Pauley’s Memo documented that both of those figures were already well below the minimums established as the criteria for reducing bull elk harvest in 10 of the 11

general season elk units in the Clearwater. He warned that unless significant harvest changes were made, the unacceptable bull elk decline would continue.

But his memo was withheld from the general public and most hunters believed IDFG when they were told the ratio of mature bulls was increasing so it was okay to kill even more bull elk in the Clearwater Region. Three F&G Commissioners appointed by Gov. Batt did not appear to understand what was happening, and assured their constituents they would not approve inappropriate changes in the new elk plan when it was finally presented for their approval in 1997.

Teams Made No Effort to Restore Elk, Deer

During the next Elk Team meeting on July 31, 1996, Team Member Bill Chetwood asked, “Will the elk team address the public perception of predators as a problem?” To which Biologist Brad Compton responded:

“The team decided that it was not appropriate to make any comments regarding the effects of predators on elk populations as we know that predators (as well as weather, nutrition, and other factors) play a role in elk population dynamics that vary spatially and temporally.”

The Teams made no effort to utilize – or even discuss – any of the biological tools used to restore big game populations during the first half of the 20th Century. Many of the IDFG Biologists who hunt big game are archery hunters and both of the Public Representatives who hunted big game on the Elk Team were also bowhunters.

Elk Team Ignored Commission’s and Hunters’ Wishes

During their Nov. 19-21, 1996 meeting the Team unanimously agreed to give bowhunters the lions’ share of opportunities to harvest elk. Just after Jeff Rohlman left the room in disgust, the Team voted to recommend the A-B Zone Tag with hunter caps option, despite the fact that it was the most unpopular of the four primary management options presented to hunters in public scoping meetings.

Only the Panhandle Region hunters supported it – obviously because it was almost identical to the Panhandle Elk Tag which already limited Panhandle tag purchasers to hunting elk just in the nine units in that Region.

The second most unpopular option was limiting the number of hunters who could hunt in a “Zone” by requiring them to submit a lottery-style application for a limited number of permits to hunt. The Commission had told the biologists to hold the scoping meetings with all of the primary and secondary options on the table, and then hold a second series of meetings offering hunters just the two most popular choices.

Instead, in the final round of scoping meetings, the biologists offered only the two options overwhelmingly *rejected* by the majority of hunters during the initial scoping meetings. And to make sure bowhunters approved their choice of the A-B Zone Tag over the limited controlled hunt option, the biologists quietly encouraged

archer friends to attend scoping, and promised they would be allowed to hunt elk in an exclusive general season during the rut and kill either sex – without drawing for a special permit as rifle hunters must do in most units.

Despite the fact that the A-B Zone system severely limits elk harvest opportunity for general season rifle hunters in all but the back country outfitter areas, an average of four out of five of the final scoping participants chose it as their preferred method of regulating hunters. When concerns were expressed that most of the attendees were archers, the February 12, 1997 Elk Team minutes published the following comments:

“We know public meetings are always biased by who shows up. The open houses are not intended to be a random sampling of our publics; we are fulfilling a process requirement rather than strictly a data gathering requirement. The information gathered may be socially meaningful rather than statistically meaningful. We will present the Commission with a summary of the comment form (from) questions and try to avoid any effort to interpret or extrapolate the results beyond what they are.”

In my experience after working with them closely over long periods, IDFG biologists regularly survey their traditional support groups, or any other segment that agrees with their opinion, so as to skew scoping results presented to the Commission. And when they fail to slip something by the Commission because sportsmen learn about it in time to object at the public hearing which is scheduled *before* it is presented, they pretend they’re going to rewrite it to correct contested issues – but don’t.

An Example from 2007 and 2008

In 2007 when IDFG ignored the intent of Idaho’s only lawful Wolf Policy and defied the Idaho Legislature by writing a wolf plan to manage for five times as many wolves as both the Legislature and the USFWS had agreed to, we let hunters know about it. At the Commission hearing, hunters vigorously objected and the biologists were directed to rewrite the plan to address those issues.

Instead, over the next few months the biologists promoted the same plan at meetings of big city civic groups. Approval was given by those groups’ membership without their knowing the Plan had been soundly rejected by hunters, or that it would cost Idaho millions of dollars in lost revenue annually.

When the biologists resubmitted their wolf plan to the Commission at their March 6, 2008 meeting, it was quickly approved by the same Commissioners who had rejected it earlier. But even if you ignore the fact that it violated the intent of Idaho’s Wolf Policy, the law required that *any* changes be submitted to the next session of the Legislature for approval, amendment or rejection.

The F&G Commission failed to do this and this made the 2008 Wolf Plan illegal – yet Gov. Otter, his Office of Species Conservation and IDFG sent a letter and

exhibits to FWS promising the new provisions would be strictly adhered to by the State of Idaho.

Elk hunters in Washington State were suing game managers for complicating elk hunting by increasing the number of general elk hunting season tags from two to four. Yet on March 6, 1997, the Idaho F&G Commission approved more than **250** separate classes of elk season tags with the incredibly complex A-B Tag system!

While many outfitters and some local hunters liked the idea of reducing competition in their hunting area, the system caused thousands of dollars in lost revenue every year by jamming the automated licensing system whenever too many hunters tried to buy the assorted tags at one time. F&G Commissioner Fred Wood apparently realized what a nightmare the A-B Tag system would be to administer and suggested implementing unlimited controlled hunts for a couple of seasons to find out how many people wanted to hunt elk in each zone.

But the biologists argued they had spent a year of effort “carefully designing the best system to restore healthy elk populations” and insisted the Commission should try it for a couple of years and then discard it if it wasn’t satisfactory. I attended every Team meeting as a qualified observer and was appointed to serve on the “Deer and Elk Plan Implementation Team”, yet I never saw any evidence of the Teams’ intent to restore big game numbers.

Teams’ Goals Maximized Revenue from Hunters

The short term goal of the Teams was to provide elk and deer to feed bears and wolves, while creating the plans plus thousands of limited hunts to maximize revenue from elk and deer hunters (until Congress passed CARA using offshore oil revenues to fund their new agenda). Their long-term goal was, and still is, to implement their agenda of turning up to half of many “lower 48” states into “Wildlands” where uncontrolled native predators and their parasites and diseases are free to impact other wildlife.

In 1997 I suggested to Deer Team Leader Jim Unsworth that he design a simple matrix using population level, animal condition and winter severity to determine if antlerless mule deer harvest could be allowed that year. It also determined how long the antlerless season could be – either 7, 14, or 21 days – and was approved by the Commission to be published in the Mule Deer Plan.

But when it was published in July 1988 a statement was quietly added claiming the model was not designed to dictate when the department will offer antlerless hunting opportunity!

If you wonder why they did this, ask yourself how F&G could stop selling thousands of unlimited archery and muzzleloader permits allowing either-sex mule deer hunting plus 7,000 limited antlerless mule deer permits to tens of thousands of rifle applicants, and still support its hidden “Wildlands” agenda. If you’re still not convinced, read how F&G then ignored winter feeding laws.

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In 2001-02 IDFG Defied 1995 Feeding Law Criteria

Virtually all of the big game emergency feeding rules adopted by IDFG and enacted as law after the 1993 disaster were ignored in south/central Idaho in 2001-02. Feed and troughs were not stored on site by Dec. 1st despite widespread abnormal snow depths exceeding the minimum to commence feeding in late November of 2001!

In mid-December, SW Region Supervisor Don Wright was ordered to hire two experienced Garden Valley residents to feed. He authorized one of them to distribute their remaining stock of Wildlife Energy blocks until deer and elk pellets could be manufactured and delivered.

Voluntary wildlife rehabilitation veterinarian Dr. Liz Scott examined the feed sites just prior to a Jan. 9, 2002 feeding meeting, and then warned IDFG that most of the animals were not getting enough feed. However IDFG refused to feed at two-thirds of the feed sites and refused to feed elk in most locations, claiming it was going to “train them to forage for food on the wind-blown ridges above the South Fork of the Payette River” (see photo below).



Wind-blown ridges above the South Fork of the Payette River where IDFG claimed the elk could find adequate natural feed.

On Jan. 18, 2002 when IDFG Director Rodney Sando announced his resignation in the media “because of philosophical differences with the F&G Commission,” his biologists had already declared war on emergency big game feeding. SW Region Wildlife Manager Jon Rachael refused to allow the use of more Wildlife Energy blocks to save hundreds of elk that were starving to death, and the local C.O., Matt Erickson, asked the Forest Ranger to ban all feeding and wildlife block use on USFS lands.

Local feeding experts used donations from private citizens to purchase several tons of Wildlife blocks which were trucked from Buhl to private storage sites in the Garden Valley to Grandjean area by volunteers. Then block sites were established on privately-owned land, which saved several hundred elk from starving to death.



Garden Valley feeding volunteer Jere Calloway replenishes Wildlife Energy Blocks used to prevent elk starvation on privately owned timber lands in 2002.

In mid-January 2002, IDFG ordered the feed cut by 50% which was a death sentence for most of the animals. It fired feeding expert Sandy Donley because he truthfully answered a reporter’s questions, and replaced him with Al Marion, who kept repeating Regional Wildlife Manager Jon Rachael’s lie in the *Statesman* newspaper that the deer and elk were in no danger of starving.

Two highly respected veterinarians spent countless hours inspecting feed sites and dead carcasses. A third vet Dr. Charles Lange, solicited hay to feed the starving elk and forwarded the right front leg bones from multiple carcasses to the Caine Veterinary Center to confirm the dead animals were all in an advanced stage of malnutrition.

Boise County Commissioners appointed four local experts to locate and record death losses where evidence of predation was absent. Despite the deep snow, they found an average of >20 dead deer and elk per square mile above the feed sites serviced by Al Marion with feed cut by 50%.



The tips of elk antlers protruding through the snow revealed bull elk that died, unable to move on the “wind-blown ridges.”

Former Sheriff Mike Butler, who was also feeding but was not fired, ignored the F&G order to cut the feed in half in his area, resulting in almost no deaths. But on March 1, before any green-up occurred, IDFG cut the feed by another 25% “to wean the deer and elk away from the feed sites.”

Campaign to Discredit Veterinarians and Citizens

SW Region IDFG employees and all but one of the Feeding Committee members mounted a massive campaign of deliberately lying to discredit the veterinarians and private citizens who documented the starvation losses. But Committee member Jerry Stuart took his video camera to the area where Marion was feeding and videotaped dozens of deer and elk carcasses in the vicinity of Marion’s feed sites.

On March 12, during a joint Legislative hearing, the Boise County Committee provided evidence of 328 deer and elk that had been photographed and confirmed to have died from malnutrition in <10% of the winter range. Of those, 262 were found near the Marion feed sites where the deer ration had been cut by 1,396 pounds per day for 45 days and by 2,094 pounds per day for another 12 days.

Yet at the same hearing, IDFG Veterinarian Mark Drew presented written testimony claiming that only 46 elk and 19 deer had been found dead of all causes on the entire range, and only eight elk and no deer died of malnutrition! He further claimed that each deer had received an *average* of more than nine pounds of deer pellets per day – an impossible exaggeration due to their small rumen capacity.

Several IDFG employees, including Al Marion and C.O. Matt Erickson, testified that total deer and elk losses on the South Fork winter range were “less than 10% which is normal.” Marion blamed the feeding controversy on “ignorant local citizens, agri-business veterinarians who also testified, and legislators who are meddling.”

During this, and another hearing in Garden Valley later that day, Erickson repeatedly lied about the snow depth at 4,000 feet to begin feeding, and claimed the total 2001-02 snowfall was less than normal. When he claimed there was only 9 inches of snow at the Garden Valley Ranger Station’s 3,100 foot elevation, the FS instrument recorded snow depths increasing from 18-28 inches in that 24 hours, and the winter snowfall was recorded as 105.5 inches – the second highest recorded snowfall in 50 years!

Rachael Refuses to Restore Deer, Elk Herds

Instead of being fired for refusing to feed the deer and elk as required by law and for lying to the public about snow conditions and death losses, both C.O. Erickson and SW Region Wildlife Manager Jon Rachael were retained and both have been promoted. When Rachael replaced Lon Kuck as IDFG State Game Manager, he continued Kuck’s agenda of slowly eliminating public lands hunting.

Rachael has let the public know that Idaho hunters’ heritage of hunting and harvesting big game for food on public lands will cease to exist. His published quotes in the

news media concerning excessive numbers of wolves that have driven local deer and elk populations into a predator pit include:

“Actually, yes, we would like to reach some sort of balance over time, but it’s not likely to be the balance acceptable or desirable for those folks that, for the last 100 years, looked at deer and elk as a food source. We could manage for a much larger number of deer and elk but that would be a larger number of wolves to go with it.”

While a few Idaho F&G officials continue to allow hunters and their legislators to think they may rebuild the unhealthy deer and elk populations, they have no intention of doing it. The IDFG Jan. 2012 admission that at least half of the dead wolves brought in by Panhandle hunters since September 1, 2011 came from areas they didn’t even know had wolf packs, is further evidence they have no intention of controlling – or even honestly estimating – the unhealthy wolf densities in many parts of Idaho.

Meanwhile, Rachael continues to prepare us for the “end of public lands hunting” forecast by Kuck in 1993. Concerning the disappearing elk populations in zones where FG has allowed excessive wolf numbers to drive them into a predator pit, Rachael offered the following:

“Populations are not going to disappear. Is it reasonable to expect those to fully recover? No. But they’re not going to disappear.”

One Idaho F&G Commissioner, who has asked not to be named, has apparently finally come to the realization that Idaho’s billion-dollar wildlife resource is being destroyed by the agency that is required by law to protect it. Whether or not I name him, it’s no secret he is frustrated with IDFG officials, including Rachael and Unsworth for their failure to try to rebuild Clearwater elk populations.

In Dec. of 2011, when he learned that F&G Director Virgil Moore had invited assorted non-hunting activist groups to a proposed “Wildlife Summit”, without inviting traditional hunting and fishing groups, he quickly alerted *Lewiston Tribune* outdoor writer Eric Barker to publicize that the event would also include sportsmen.

Back in June of 2011 while Moore was attending an environmental forum in Boise, he announced his intention to convene a “Wildlife Congress” in 2012 “to hear from sportsmen and other wildlife groups about what the priorities for the agency should be and how to pay for them.” But this was quickly followed with an article by *Western Watersheds* Media Director Brian Ertz in which he blasted hunters and anglers for allegedly claiming they should have more voice in how wildlife is managed because they pay for its management.

Ertz said, “federal dollars constitute almost half of the IDFG budget” and “the wildlife belong to you and I - to

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our kids held in trust. Consumptive users like hunters and anglers ought not be purchasing more influence over management when they purchase a license or tag, but instead purchase an opportunity at ‘take’ from public wildlife resources that belong to all citizens.”

Ertz added, “That ‘pay-to-play’ arrangement is fundamentally indicative of a corruption of the Public Trust – not a purchased right” and Moore apparently followed his lead when his Dec. 2011 Wildlife Summit notice to non-hunters (and anti-hunters) included the following:

“Purpose: the need to keep it (the current model of wildlife management in Idaho) relevant to the changing values, needs, and interests of Idahoans.

“Justification: IDFG finds itself struggling to address new and emerging wildlife conservation issues while retaining the core hunting and fishing programs.”

According to emails and various blogs, at least one F&G Commissioner and many sportsmen, including the President of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, were upset at what they perceived as IDFG ignoring their contribution to wildlife conservation and embracing their avowed enemies who contribute nothing. But what proof is there that our wildlife values are changing and what are the “new” conservation issues that must be addressed?

The sportsmen and women who quickly checked this out learned that the only people promoting these ideas, besides the “anti-resource user” radicals, were Fish and Game employees! In the Spring 2010 issue of *Management Tracks*, Organization of Wildlife Planners President Michele Beucler authored an article titled, “The Death of Wildlife Management?”

She included the following in her article:

“The vast and growing majority of Americans are, in effect, excluded from fish and wildlife management unless they become a hunter or angler. Recruitment and retention efforts are narrow, tactical fixes and may be distracting state fish and wildlife agencies from engaging a broader citizenry and strategically addressing real 21st century conservation challenges such as rapid growth and development in key habitats, climate change, and nature-deficit disorder.

“Are we courageous enough to say that traditional fish and wildlife management must die? Those are strong and alarming words! However, we can choose to consider this death as part of a natural evolutionary cycle, as transformation, and not something that disappears forever. Ultimately, state fish and wildlife agencies may not have a choice—the risk of inaction is death by ballot initiatives, lawsuits, and irrelevance.”

Longtime *Outdoorsman* readers may recognize Beucler as the IDFG “Planning and Human Resources” Specialist who used hunters’ and fishermen’s excise tax dollars to survey Western housewives to justify extended

nongame activities in *The Compass*. Using up to six million dollars of those dedicated tax funds to support non-hunting/fishing projects became legal when AFWA lobbied Congress to grant it the authority to even give that money, paid by sportsmen, to anti-hunting groups!

Beucler, Servheen Denounce Sustained Yield Concept

Two years earlier, on March 28, 2008, Beucler and IDFG Wildlife Program Coordinator Gregg Servheen conducted a workshop in Phoenix for the Wildlife Management Institute. Their presentation, titled, “Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Reflections from a Nonhunter,” cites the decline in hunters, both nationally and in Idaho, and describes the fact that hunting now costs too much money for half of the families in Idaho to participate.

They admit that hunters are not declining in the Idaho families whose total income per household is higher than the median. But they neglect to mention that IDFG has upped the cost of licenses, tags, and the applications for permits required for even a mediocre chance to harvest a big game animal, by far more than the rate of inflation.

They say that only 57% of hunter ed. graduates in Idaho buy a license to hunt the first year, and claim that percent steadily declines after that. Their unsupported claim; “Wildlife values are shifting away from wildlife use to wildlife protection,” ignores the reality that greedy state “managers” have destroyed the abundant wildlife that was available when I taught my sons to hunt and fish.

Instead of recommending that our wildlife managers start obeying the law requiring them to preserve, protect and perpetuate our renewable wildlife resource, these nonproductive IDFG employees repeatedly attacked Idaho’s official Wildlife Policy. They proposed changing the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation to embrace non-hunters and their pretense of “21st Century conservation” as follows:

“We believe it essential to revisit the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation – to understand its origins, successes, and limitations and to then adapt the Model for wildlife conservation in 21st century society.

“Wildlife management has been practiced using a mechanistic and agrarian approach to provide an optimal yield of game for hunting. Ecological outcomes of this have included persecution, reduction, and extirpation of predators; introduction of non-native and invasive species; habitat damage from an overabundance of herbivores; artificial propagation of game animals; and several others. Socioeconomic outcomes have included disenfranchised stakeholders such as non-hunters, landowners, and environmentalists.

“Single species of game have been managed for optimum yield for hunters even when it has conflicted with the existence, sustainability, and conservation of other species and ecosystems as well as social values other than hunting.

“Somewhere along the way the agency-commission-hunter iron triangle decided that license

revenues will be used primarily for managing game species, further fostering the notion that wildlife is 'owned' by those who purchase hunting licenses.

"This undermines the Public Trust Doctrine, and leaves no room for breaking out to engage the non-hunting citizenry and broader wildlife conservation!"

Their claim that the "agency/commission/hunter iron triangle" decided that license revenues will be used primarily for managing game species illustrates Beucler's and Servheen's willingness to lie to promote their agenda. Anyone who is familiar with the recovery of wildlife in North America knows it was the federal Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937 that prohibited using hunters' license and excise tax dollars for anything but restoring wildlife.

The "Public Trust Doctrine" Excuse

Their presentation goes on to mention the alleged undermining of the Public Trust Doctrine four separate times (!), and was probably the source of Brian Ertz's claim three years later. Yet these claims all lack merit.

Like timber, forage and water, wildlife is an extremely valuable annually renewable natural resource when it is properly managed and utilized. The fact that a limited number of people are both qualified and choose to harvest any of these resources, does not limit the monetary return to thousands of others, or the aesthetic and/or recreational value and personal use by still others.

In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that the states' property right in game was to be exercised as a trust for the benefit of the people of each state. Although that ruling may appear to be "muddied" slightly by several subsequent treaties and the Lacey Act, the state legislatures – not fish and game agencies – are the sole authority over what is included in the Public Trust Doctrine.

Non-Productive Zealots Steer State Agendas

In the early 2000s the non-hunters and anti-hunters that were running AFWA convinced state game agencies to send their communications leaders to the *National Conservation Training Center* in West Virginia. Operated jointly by FWS and The Nature Conservancy, and funded in large part by the Doris Duke Foundation, it taught the use of sophisticated techniques to sell the lie that so-called "nongame" specialists like Beucler and Servheen would provide clean air and clean water and save the states millions of dollars by not having more species listed.

The hundreds of propaganda kits the Center sent to the states to use convincing their governors that these extremists must be put in charge of designating core areas and connecting travel corridors were successful. While frustrated hunters in Idaho and Montana were urging state biologists to halt big game declines, Servheen and his Montana counterpart worked with extremist groups to establish a "transboundary" system in both states to protect native predators and their parasites and diseases.

It is important to understand that Beuchler and Servheen are only a small portion of the non-productive

zealots who have infiltrated state game agencies and further sabotaged what used to be scientific management of our states' wildlife. When IAFWA made "nongame" and wildlife watching the number one priority of state game agencies in 1990, it did not expressly forbid maintaining a healthy ratio of predators to provide a harvestable surplus of wild game.

But the false claims published by Beucler and Servheen and repeated above (i.e. that managing wildlife to maintain *healthy* populations of game species for harvest destroys other species and the ecosystems they inhabit) could be "the final nails in the coffin" of public hunting.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies no longer even pretends its function is to help state agencies manage wild game. Instead, it uses part of the \$6 million in sportsman excise taxes it once lobbied Congress to let it administer, to fund its "Management Assistance Team."

At its "MAT" website, it candidly admits:

"We are part of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies – funded by a Multistate Conservation Grant and our offices are at the (FWS/TNC) National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Think of us as an internal consultancy and training resource on retainer for all fifty state fish and wildlife agencies across the country. We don't get into the critter side of things; the states' professionals are world class in that regard."

What MAT does "get into" is giving a workshop titled, "Change Essentials", teaching wildlife officials "how to turn resistance into contribution" and "how to create a new outcome from change that brings them something better." The urgency to complete those changes, including the man-made wilderness and wildlife corridors so they can halt or curtail increasing energy development, is now receiving top priority.

In April of 2011, IDFG Director Moore sent the following message to MAT thanking it for showing him and his staff how to implement and expedite the changes:

"MAT participation in the Idaho Fish and Game's 2011 allemployee biennial In-service Training School was key to the successful awareness to the need for change and motivation of all staff in being part of planning the future. The ability to use knowledge from across the nation coupled with the presentation style captured the staffs attention and thinking for three days. Without MAT's assistance in this effort we would not have been successful"

If you have read the previously published facts in this article with an open mind – yet still believe you can force your state game agency to honestly manage the wild game they have been depleting, forget it. But if you have the wisdom to realize their deception will never cease, why not boldly expose the corruption to your local media and to your elected representatives at the state and county level?

Beware of another “Idaho Wildlife Congress”

By George Dovel

On Nov. 19-20, 1988, then IDFG Director Jerry Conley and the Idaho Wildlife Federation hosted a lopsided assortment of environmental activists and natural resource users in a two-day “Idaho Wildlife Congress”.

Then as now, the published excuse for the elaborate gathering was to give all of the stakeholders in Idaho’s wildlife the opportunity to provide input into future management. But those of us who attended representing licensed sportsmen, loggers, farmers or livestock owners soon learned we had walked into a stacked deck.

Following the introductory remarks, we were asked to sit at individual tables in small groups where we could discuss issues. But each consumptive resource user was carefully seated at a table with one or more outspoken environmental activists by IDFG “ushers”.

As soon as one of us began discussing the conservation and wise use of a natural resource, one of the activists quickly warned the others seated at our table that our comments indicated we were pursuing a private agenda which had nothing to do with conservation. With about 900 individuals attending the session, resources users were greatly outnumbered – even with IWF and other traditional IDFG sportsman support groups in attendance.

During the first afternoon, virtually all of the legitimate resource users headed back home in disgust. In the nearly nine years since Director Joe Greenley retired and Conley was hired to replace him, evidence of Conley’s non-consumptive agenda was everywhere.

“Project Wild” – A Tool to Discourage Hunting

He ignored the federal P-R and D-J laws requiring that license and matching excise tax dollars be spent only for wildlife restoration, and used the money to fund new publications including “Wildlife Express”, “Idaho Fish and Game News” and the “Outdoor Idaho” TV program. The controversial program, “Project Wild” adopted in 1983, taught thousands of Idaho teachers, and their students from kindergarten through their senior year, that killing a deer to provide food for the family may not be ethical or moral*.

(* See *Project Wild K-12 Curriculum...*, Chapter titled “The Hunter” in which students are required to read a 1930s fictional story titled, “The Twins”, and statements from pro and anti-hunting groups, and then make personal judgments about the appropriateness of hunting).

In the three decades since 1983, our children attending school and their teachers have been taught: “Animals are not resources like crops but living creatures that deserve our respect; young people exposed to hunting may learn to accept and live with the needless suffering and killing;” and, “killing animals, when necessary, should be conducted by responsible officials and result in instantaneous humane death.”

F&G Empire Built on the Backs of Hunters and Game

When our sons attended Garden Valley Schools, the opening day of deer season was a school holiday and mule deer were abundant. But many western state game managers, including Conley, were killing record numbers of mule deer to pay for their non-hunting programs, and the opening day mule deer harvest in that area has declined by more than 90%.

In fact, out of 115,503 General Season Deer Tags purchased by Idaho resident and non-res. hunters in 2011, general season deer hunters reported harvesting 12,846 whitetails and only 9,663 mule deer! Compare this 22,509* *reported* deer harvested statewide in general season hunts to the average of 113,350 deer harvested in 1988 and 1989 (most of them mule deer), and you will begin to realize what has happened to Idaho’s abundant wildlife that was rebuilt during the 1970s and 1980s.

(* the 22,509 does not include F&G’s *estimated* harvest of 7,682 deer from 16,565 purchasers of deer controlled hunt permits – or its grossly exaggerated [plus 51%] “estimate” of general season hunter kill.)

Even IDFG’s inflated estimate of the total 2011 elk harvest of 15,135 is the lowest in 28 years since back when shooting a cow or calf elk was illegal in most of Idaho.

From January of 1980 when Conley took over, until the “Congress” in November of 1988, total inflation was 54.63%. Yet Conley created millions of dollars in extra charges paid by hunters, resulting in an IDFG budget increase from \$10.3 million to \$26.9 million – an increase of 160 percent – three times the inflation rate of increase!

He built a bureaucratic empire by exploiting the wildlife he took an oath to perpetuate – and dramatically increased the cost to hunters in order to fund the non-hunting activities. Despite the propaganda photos, most general season youth hunters in Idaho we talk with never have the opportunity for a decent shot at a mule deer.

The Idaho Wildlife Council – IDFG Damage Control

The final outcome of the 1988 Wildlife Congress was creation of a citizen damage control group for IDFG run by Don Clower. A former Postal Service employee from Texas, he offered special favors to Department critics in return for not publicizing F&G’s illegal activities.

A typical example of this occurred on February 17, 1994, when our Boise County Wildlife and Endangered Species Committee had scheduled testimony before Chairman Golden Linford’s House Resources Committee to discuss deer and elk winter losses resulting from the Department’s refusal to feed properly. Either Rep. Linford, or someone privy to his information, apparently directed Clower to set up an appointment with our Committee just prior to the hearing.

As Chairman of that Committee I and Vice Chair Sandy Donley accepted the invitation and met with Clower in Eagle shortly before the hearing was scheduled to begin. Clower told us his group represented 20,000 IWC members and said they were powerful, with the authority to resolve our problems if we were willing to cooperate with IDFG and “not air their dirty linen in a public hearing.”

A month earlier, in his *IWC Update* newsletter, Clower had lied about the two top officers in the largest sportsman group in Idaho, with over 3,000 paid members. In an effort to discredit their testimony with the legislature and other officials who received his newsletter, Clower fabricated outrageous lies and falsely claimed that neither man represented anyone but themselves.

Clower was also appointed to the powerful Fish and Game Advisory Committee and to the Idaho Wolf Oversight Committee, along with Legislative Resource Committee Chairmen Rep. Linford and Senator Laird Noh. When the 1994 legislature created Winter Feeding Advisory Committees to prevent another feeding disaster, the legislation authorized IWC (Don Clower, who does not support emergency feeding) to select prospective Feeding Committee members and submit their names to the appropriate F&G Commissioner for formal approval.

“Nothing Wrong With Lying to the Public”

Although preventing massive starvation losses in the future and replacing Director Conley were hunters’ primary concerns, I was also concerned about the impact exaggerated deer and elk numbers could have on Congress approving the wrong wolf recovery option. I asked Clower if he and the other Wolf Oversight Committee members were aware that the elk and deer populations provided to FWS were exaggerated by six times the actual number.

Clower responded that they knew the figures were highly exaggerated, but said the high numbers provided by Jon Rachael were necessary to support the rapid build-up of wolves that would occur in the “Nonessential Experimental” recovery option. Clower told us that when he worked for the Post Office, postal officials often lied to the public to further their agenda and said he saw nothing wrong in lying to support the Committee’s agenda.

Less than three weeks after we met with Clower, Jack Lavin, Co-Chair of the Wolf Oversight Committee, sent a letter to FWS wolf promoter Ed Bangs containing the following statement exceeding Committee authority:

“We would prefer wolf introduction with experimental status to no wolf introduction.”

More efforts to get the Wolf Committee to admit the bogus elk and deer numbers, resulted only in a couple of words being changed. Six months later, with the Committee’s full knowledge, Director Conley unlawfully agreed to the extreme FWS wolf plan and issued a permit allowing FWS to bring Canadian wolves into Idaho.

Although the Legislature never approved the plan and Conley was forced to resign in 1996, Clower kept promoting the biologists’ exploitation of game and their anti-predator control, anti-resource user agenda while hunters paid more to harvest less. The only thing the average hunter got out of the Wildlife Congress was being robbed of another \$62,851.03 in license fees to pay most of the \$80,637.49 cost of the two-day event.

We would never have known that except Idaho legislators ordered an audit and then demanded the money be restored in the Fish and Game account. Of course it never was, like additional millions of dollars that were later “borrowed” from dedicated funds and never repaid.

But several of the same legislators who expressed anger then, did not even bat an eye when I exposed the F&G theft of nearly half a million dollars in sportsman excise taxes to pay non-game employees’ wages and expenses in FY 2008. It’s as if legislators become immune to the agency’s misuse of funds and its failure to obey the law, the longer they are exposed to the corruption.

Moore Changes Agenda from Hunting Emphasis

On June 16, 2011, IDFG Director Moore held a press conference and announced his intention to hold another “Wildlife Congress” in August or September of 2012. “Hunting has become a minority activity and it needs to be returned to an important and traditional activity,” Moore said.

But six months later when he sent out his invitations to environmental activist groups, everything including the name had been changed. It is now called the Wildlife “Summit” and the purpose has been changed to ask the majority, who don’t hunt or support conservation with their dollars, what they want the agency to provide.

It doesn’t require rocket science to understand that you can’t let “native” predators, parasites and diseases continue to destroy the game and still recruit more hunters. Until IDFG abandons the myth of ecosystem management, halts the killing of females and juvenile deer and elk in every unit that does not meet or exceed management goals, and effectively reduces excessive predator densities wherever they exist, hunters must resist the effort to keep funding this insanity.

How to Get Elected Officials to Listen

Insist that Director Moore provide you state and federal Code Sections that allow him to facilitate a “wish list” from citizens who do not pay for the non-consumptive freebies they already enjoy. Even a temporary injunction to halt the Summit might make IDFG and your elected officials think twice about letting them steal more money intended to restore wildlife – not destroy it.

Frequently remind urban newspapers and radio and TV reporters that a Feb. 18, 2009 report from Assistant IDFG Director Kiefer to Sen. Schroeder admitted declining elk numbers were costing Idaho up to \$24 million in lost annual revenue just from fewer nonresident elk hunters.

Important 2012 Idaho Legislation Passed

News and Interpretation By George Dovel

HJR 2 - RIGHTS TO HUNT, FISH AND TRAP - Proposing a new section to the Constitution of the State of Idaho to provide that the rights to hunt, fish and trap, including by the use of traditional methods, are a valued part of the heritage of the State of Idaho and shall forever be preserved for the people and managed through the laws, rules and proclamations that preserve the future of hunting, fishing and trapping; to provide that public hunting, fishing and trapping of wildlife shall be a preferred means of managing wildlife; and to provide that the rights set forth do not create a right to trespass on private property, shall not affect rights to divert, appropriate and use water, or establish any minimum amount of water in any water body, shall not lead to a diminution of other private rights and shall not prevent the suspension or revocation, pursuant to statute enacted by the Legislature, of an individual's hunting, fishing or trapping license.

The first version of this 2012 legislation was sponsored in the Senate by Senator Lee Heider as SJR 106, and passed by a vote of 34-0 (with only 34 Senators in that body at that time) On Feb. 27. The problem was that management of the so-called "rights" was left up to whatever laws rules and proclamations the state happened to come up with.

The National Rifle Association declined to endorse SJR 106 for that reason and it would undoubtedly have passed the House without any "teeth" until a long-time friend in the NRA called me and suggested I intervene. After phone conferences with NRA officials and others, Sen. Heider agreed to new language in the House version and it was introduced as RS 21337 and approved for printing as HJR 2.

It was subsequently amended so the right would not interfere with the suspension or revocation of an individual's hunting, fishing or trapping license according to statute enacted by the legislature, and passed the House on Mar. 22, by a vote of **63-4-3**.

The four representatives voting "Nay" were: Jaquet, Killen, King and Ringo.

The three representative absent and excused were: Black, Henderson and Smith (24), and the floor sponsor was: Boyle

HJR 2 passed the Senate on March 27 by **31-3-1**.

The three senators voting "Nay" were: Bilyeu, Stennett and Werk.

Absent and excused was: Sen. McKenzie and the floor sponsor was: Heider.

The language stops short of saying that wildlife will be managed to provide a sustained yield for hunters, fishermen and trappers, but that is some of the language that prevented similar proposals from passing during the

past decade or more, and would have prevented its passage again by the required two-thirds majority in both houses*.

(* Too many legislators and the governor still approve whatever the IDFG [which is answerable to no one else] asks for - rather than address concerns about the welfare of the constituents who voted them into office.)

If approved by a simple majority of voters on November 6th, HJR 2 does require the state to pass laws, rules and proclamations that preserve the future of hunting, fishing and trapping, including by the use of traditional methods. It also establishes hunting fishing and trapping as a preferred means of managing wildlife, assuming that the agency returns to obeying the laws and rules that are already in the Idaho Code and the Administrative Code.

SB 1321 - AMENDING SECTION 36-111, IDAHO CODE, TO REVISE PROVISIONS RELATING TO THE USE OF MONEYS IN THE WINTER FEEDING ACCOUNT.

(Abbreviated) Not less than 75 cents of each \$1.50 collected from the sale of each antelope, elk and deer tag sold shall be placed in the feeding account and shall be used exclusively for the purposes of actual supplemental winter feeding of antelope, elk and deer. Moneys shall be used solely for the purchase of blocks, pellets and hay for such winter feeding purposes.

The balance of moneys realized from this source, which were not deposited in the feeding account, up to a maximum of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000), shall be used for the control of depredation of private property by antelope, elk and deer and control of predators affecting antelope, elk and deer. Any balance in excess of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) shall be transferred to the feeding account.

The department shall submit a yearly report to the senate resources and conservation committee and the house resources and environment committee of the legislature on or before the 31st day of July, detailing how funds in the feeding account have been expended during the preceding fiscal year.

For the first 80+ years of its existence Idaho F&G used its F&G fund to pay for all emergency big game feed, transportation, storage and labor that was not donated. The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson) Act of 1937 authorized the USFWS to provide states 75% of the funding for wildlife restoration from an excise tax paid by hunters - but stipulated the funding could only be used to restore wildlife populations.

Yet in 1984, IDFG Director Jerry Conley told a SE Idaho Sportsman group that F&G no longer had the funds necessary to respond to a feeding emergency. He did not tell them that although he had doubled the F&G budget in the four years since he took over from retiring Director

Joe Greenley, he was spending several million license dollars on pet projects that did nothing to restore wildlife.

He convinced the sportsman group to support 1984 legislation to add \$1.50 to each antelope, elk and deer tag, which produced about \$440,000 per year in additional feeding revenue. But competing special interests amended the bill to also pay for predation control, predator control and winter range improvement.

For many years the Department spent almost none of the money for emergency big game feeding and spent nothing for predator control or winter range improvement. FY 1993 included the second worst Idaho winter in 50 years yet Conley refused to authorize feeding until it was too late to save more than half of the mule deer and several thousand elk in south central Idaho.

Petitions with thousands of signatures were presented to a 1994 joint Legislative Resource committee hearing demanding Conley's resignation and the Legislature ordered IDFG and the Commission to submit a set of IDAPA Rules to prevent such a disaster from ever happening again. The Rules, adopted by the Legislature *with full force of law* in April 1995, delegate the authority to the IDFG Manager in each Region to stockpile feed on location every year before snow falls and begin feeding immediately when any one of four criteria exist.

Yet, except for an elk herd from the Wood River Valley that it maintains with artificial feeding every year in violation of F&G Commission policy, IDFG Regional Supervisors have never stockpiled the feed or began feeding timely as required by the law since it was adopted in 1995. (see **13.01.18 Rules Governing Emergency Feeding of Antelope, Elk and Deer of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission**).

In his lengthy winter feeding presentation to the Senate Resources Committee on February 3, 2012, IDFG Wildlife Bureau Chief Jeff Gould stated that the IDFG Director sometimes overrules decisions by a Regional Supervisor to feed. If the law says that authority has been delegated to the Regional Supervisors by the Director and the Commission – and the law has not been amended – by what authority does the Director halt the feed storage and feeding and misuse the dedicated money?

I was asked to testify before the Committee and pointed out that in the 28 years since the feeding money was appropriated, IDFG has spent less than one-tenth of it on feed. Three times the Legislature has passed legislation attempting to force IDFG to obey the intent of the law but the misappropriation continues.

Restricting expenditure of the dedicated fund to the purchase of wildlife blocks, pellets or hay and requiring a report on exactly how the money was spent each year may be a small first step to halt the misuse of license funds.

SB 1321 passed the Senate on March 8, 2012 by **25-8-2**. The eight Senators voting "Nay" were: Andreason,

Bilyeu, Bock, Broadsword, LeFavour, Schmidt, Stennett and Werk.

The two Senators absent and excused were: Davis and Malepeai, and the floor sponsor was: Pearce

SB 1321 passed the House on March 21, 2012 by **40-30-0**. The 30 Representatives voting "Nay" were: Anderson, Bateman, Bell, Bolz, Buckner-Webb, Burgoyne, Chew, Cronin, Ellsworth, Eskridge, Gibbs, Guthrie, Henderson, Higgins, Jaquet, Killen, King, Lacey, Nessel, Patrick, Pence, Raybould, Ringo, Rusche, Shirley, Smith(30), Smith(24), Stevenson, Trail and Wood(27).

SB 1321 was delivered to Gov. Otter on March 28 but he has not signed it on March 31 as this issue goes to the printer.

HB 641 – APPROPRIATION DEPT. OF FISH & GAME – Appropriates an additional \$7,589,600 to the Department of Fish and Game for FY 2012 increasing the total budget to \$84,800,100; appropriates \$93,068,800 for FY 2013, caps the number of full time equivalent positions at 567, and provides guidance for employee compensation.

Although the \$7.6 million increase for FY 2012 reportedly includes only \$1.7 million in dedicated funds, it is money that was not originally budgeted and which license purchasers will undoubtedly be forced to provide. When FY 2012 was nearly half over several months ago, Deputy Director Unsworth began announcing that services to hunters may have to be cut.

In its zeal to support additional funding and expansion of the agency that has lost sight of the statutory reason for its existence, a majority of legislators appear to ignore the terrible economic impact the lack of harvestable game is having on rural counties and communities. If declining numbers of nonresident elk hunters alone was costing Idahoans \$15-\$24 million in lost annual revenue three years ago as reported by Hegbon and Kieffer, the total cost of giving IDFG free rein is mind-boggling.

The 18 Representatives who voted "Nay" on the massive IDFG budget increases were: Andrus, Barbieri, Barrett, Boyle, Hart, Harwood(DeVries), Lake, Loertscher, McGeachin, McMillan, Nielsen, Nonini, Palmer, Schaefer, Simpson, Sims, Wood(35) and Mr. Speaker.

In the Senate the vote supporting the Fish and Game Appropriation was unanimous. The measure was delivered to the Governor and signed by him on March 27, 2012.

The number of bills that failed to pass in one house or the other by a handful of votes because IDFG quietly opposed them, serves as proof that their lobbying using your money is defeating your interests. Until the urban public becomes well enough informed to be able to ask their elected officials to represent them instead of the bureaucrats, it is doubtful things will change.

Dear Outdoorsman Donors/Subscribers

The volume of current interesting and factual information that I originally included in this issue, but then removed and replaced with information I have published in previous issues, was my effort to enlist your help. It is obvious to me that many readers are spending hours every day in a series of Facebook and other restricted blogs preaching to the choir.

Every time you exchange information with concerned outdoorsmen and women who already know what is happening, both you and they could be educating the urban public. If you live in rural Idaho, that public outnumber you by several hundred to one and the only way you will ever get the attention of most elected officials is to educate the citizens they represent.

That large segment of the public has the ability to determine what is happening and demand a change from those they elect, providing they see or hear brief undeniable facts often enough. Each letter you and your friends write to an editor, each conversation you and your friends have with a radio talk show host, and as you gain experience, each press conference you have with a TV reporter will help make the difference.

The thousands of hours I spend researching and especially verifying information provides a lot of material

from which you can select a single subject and cover it thoroughly in one or two paragraphs. Don't make it long and DO NOT write or say anything that you are not thoroughly familiar with or that has not been thoroughly researched by someone with the experience to separate fact from opinion.

To my many friends who feel compelled to win an argument with a Fish and Game employee – Don't. All bureaucrats are experts at the propaganda game and even when you make a convincing point you are supplying them with the answers they need to put them on the offensive, rather than be forced to defend against a statement that appeared in the media somewhere.

It requires a bit of courage initially to speak out publicly rather than continue complaining from the privacy of a limited blog or email list. But if recognized experts like Dr. Geist can risk the threat of being singled out for threats and intimidation in order to spread the truth, why not summon the courage to help them?

In order to provide timely information to the good people who support this publication with their donations, I recently made a difficult decision to delay internet publication of The Outdoorsman for one or several months until after the next copy is printed and mailed. This has cost money and decreased overall circulation

I take this opportunity to quietly thank those of you who have been able to contribute a bit more than the cost of printing and mailing in order to help keep this publication afloat. Without your continued support it would not happen and you have my sincere gratitude for helping to make it possible.

What Does a Subscription Cost?

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