



The Outdoorsman

Bulletin Number 50

Sept-Nov 2012

Poor Attendance at “Idaho Wildlife Summit” Reflects Citizen Mistrust of F&G Refusal to Manage Wildlife

By George Dovel

To justify its “Idaho Wildlife Summit” held in Boise in late August 2012, IDFG officials used the same excuse they used to promote the “Idaho Wildlife Congress” 24 years ago. Both times they insisted public attitudes have changed and said they needed to find out how the public wants its wildlife managed.

But despite the agency’s massive campaign to get Idaho hunters to attend its elaborate sales pitch to join hands with environmental extremists and seek general tax funding, relatively few showed up.

Back in 1988, 855 people attended the two-day “Congress” in Boise, including 91 F&G employees and 764 registrants who paid \$10 each. In 2012 no fees were charged but, despite an unprecedented campaign to solicit attendance, an average of only 180 people (from 140 to 209 per day) attended the three-day “Summit” in Boise.

In 2012, IDFG also provided six satellite meeting facilities in the other six F&G regions, with an average of 250 attending those six satellite locations. Compared to the 764 participants who paid to attend the Wildlife Congress in 1988, the average of 430 (from 322 to 500) who attended all seven Wildlife Summit locations in 2012, with everything free including catering, indicates the change in attitudes toward wildlife managers.

Burley Meeting Eclipses Summit Attendance

Perhaps an even better illustration was an August 25, 2012 “Idaho For Wildlife” membership meeting in Burley after which an IFW Director reported the following:

“We had 320 folks show up and we spent next to nothing on advertising. They attended because they have faith in what we are doing for conservation and raising/releasing upland birds. We produce results and work hard to provide a product for sportsmen. Sportsmen also know we truly care about our hunting heritage and not just a blue bird watching heritage that IDFG is striving for and expecting funding to achieve.”

Despite IDFG paying thousands of dollars to guest speakers* intended to motivate sportsmen to align with so-called “conservation” groups, less than one-tenth of one

percent of sport license buyers in Idaho attended. In addition to the reported cost of \$133,000 for the three days, IDFG also spent tens of thousands of dollars promoting and advertising the Wildlife Summit over many months.

(* Shane Mahoney billed IDFG \$9,436.80 for his speaker fee plus airfare – others charged less.)

Most License Buyers Say Citizen Input Ignored

An investigation conducted in 2000 by the Idaho Legislature’s Office of Performance Evaluations revealed that F&G Commissioners did not act on citizen testimony indicating the biological need to reduce or close hunting seasons. OPE’s January 2001 report revealed that although the agency may have met legal requirements in the methods it used for receiving public input, most license buyers said their critical testimony was ignored.

Three of four (75%) said the Commission failed to consider public input once it was given, and 72% said neither the Department nor the Commission informed the public about how their input was used to make decisions.

Fish and Game Promise to Heed Public Input Ignored

The January 2001 F&G response to OPE, signed by Director Rod Sando and Commission Chairman John Burns, told OPE that some of its recommendations had already been adopted and assured that all of them would be adopted by Jan. 21, 2001. But less than a year later, their written promise to heed public input was ignored and they allowed thousands more animals to starve to death.

The same thing had happened during the 1992-93 winter in central and southern Idaho, and in the 1996-97 winter in northern Idaho. Those winter losses were even worse, yet IDFG officials and the Commission insisted the losses were less than occurred in a normal winter – until they were forced to admit the truth nearly two years later.

The ultimate outcome of the 1992-93 disaster was Legislative approval of IDAPA Rules 13.01.18., requiring each regional supervisor to stock feed ahead of time, and to begin feeding immediately if it was indicated – plus a written commitment by the F&G Commission to listen to sportsmen and women and farmers and ranchers.

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Poor Attendance at Wildlife Summit - *cont. from page 1*

In a 01-19-94 *Post Register* editorial titled, "Fish and Game Says It Will Listen to Sportsmen," Gene Fadness wrote the following comments:

"The testimony (seeking removal of IDFG Director Jerry Conley) has been unanimous that Fish and Game officials in Boise are convinced they know what's best for all the simpletons in the hinterlands." Fadness added that Region 5 acknowledged it was wrong not to initiate feeding programs earlier and he said Region 6 admitted it was wrong to illegally dump 400 elk that starved to death into an Upper Snake irrigation canal.

F&G Admission of Guilt Includes an Excuse

But he also included the IDFG excuse: "Six years of mild winters, which ballooned deer and elk populations, took everyone by surprise, including Fish and Game." Yet SW Region Supervisor Tracey Trent's quoted statement in the same editorial admitted the agency was aware of the need to begin emergency feeding early – but didn't do it.

In 1988 and 1989, multiple mule deer bag limits plus extended seasons allowed populations to be over-harvested in all four of the Regions across southern and central Idaho. Despite adding late either-sex deer seasons in 1992 because of drought, wildfires, and the malnourished condition of deer harvested in the early archery seasons, IDFG reported the deer harvest declined from 95,200 in 1989 to only 61,200 in 1992.

Although local residents across southern Idaho were strongly urging F&G to start feeding both deer and elk by Nov. 1, 1992, IDFG followed its new agenda* dictated by the International Assn. of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in Washington, D.C. in 1990.

(* emphasize wildlife watching rather than provide a sustained game harvest for hunters)

Even when Southwest Idaho residents brought in TV reporters to photograph starving deer and elk on the Payette River winter range, F&G turned it into a photo op, but fed only one-fourth of the deer pellets needed to fill the rumens of the starving deer at the single feed site.

And, like their counterparts in the Upper Snake Region, when dozens of starving elk began dying along the Garden Valley-Lowman road, F&G quickly hauled the elk carcasses to Danskin Creek and illegally dumped them in the creek bed in an area where they were hidden from the public.

Thousands of angry citizens signed a petition demanding Director Conley's resignation because he let most of Idaho's mule deer and thousands of elk starve to death. In that atmosphere, IDFG officials weren't about to admit they had deliberately violated Idaho laws to follow the new IAFWA agenda.

ISJ Letters, Op-ed Seek F&G Honesty

I've provided these facts as a background to explain the content of the following opinion published in the *Idaho State Journal* on August 22, 2012, and the

editorial published on Aug. 23, 2012. Permission to publish these was given by Mr. Peck and by Assistant Editor O'Donnell:

Problems with F&G meetings

Commentary by Harvey Peck

Harvey Peck, of Pocatello, has been an active sportsman for many years in Southeast Idaho. He has worked with state agencies and private groups to protect, preserve and expand wildlife habitat in the region.

Jennifer Jackson, regional conservation educator for the Idaho Fish and Game Department, recently wrote an article on reasons to attend the Idaho Wildlife Summit Aug. 24-26.

I'm turning 86 years old this month and I can say I've participated in every type of Fish and Game Commission and scope meeting imaginable. This pending summit has a few new technological twists, but the concept is not new.

The Idaho Fish and Game Department promoted a meeting held in Boise in November of 1988 called the "Idaho Wildlife Congress." About 850 people attended that meeting with 91 IF&G employees present. That meeting had a cost of \$62,851. Knowing the cost and not seeing an improvement in wildlife numbers from those meetings leaves me more than skeptical.

Sportsmen and women participation in meetings has declined over the decades as has the wildlife resource. I think the two are related in many respects. There are a number of reasons for less participation. This is just a perception but no matter what the agenda item, there is not going to be a single sportsman in the room who has more wildlife knowledge than a "biologist" working for the department.

The department always has a vision or a plan with little deviation. In the past, hundreds of sportsmen would assemble in auditoriums to discuss the region's deer situation and winter feeding. To this date the department would still rather chew nails than feed our animals – even with a dedicated winter feed fund available.

I believe the "Mule Deer Initiative," which came from another meeting, is in its fifth year. Has this initiative met its five year goals? Most of the time sportsmen never know the results of these meetings and ideas. It can only be gauged by the number of animals observed in the field.

A 15-year-old hunting today may come home and tell his mom, "I saw a lot of deer today and shot a buck." Twenty years ago he might have seen 32 deer and a 27-inch buck while today he would see eight deer and an 18-inch buck. It's all relative but success can be measured.

Another problem with these F&G meetings is you can write until you're blue in the face on suggestions, but it's really not going to matter. For example, sportsmen for

years told the F&G that wolves were depleting our elk and deer populations. The department dismissed the claims for too long. If not for an opportunity to generate revenue, I'm not sure their views would have ever changed. You can buy five wolf tags this year.

Over the years I've had the privilege of knowing people who had common sense, practical knowledge of wildlife and were committed to preserving the resource. But, for one reason or another, their ideas were always shot down by the F&G Department. Some went out on their own and achieved success.

In 2001, F&G said turkeys couldn't live around Pebble Creek and Haystack because of habitat and weather. The local turkey chapter pushed the issues and we now have turkeys. From 1973-76, local sportsmen installed 75 goose nesting platforms along Marsh Creek and maintained them. Fish and Game said the platforms might not work. It is estimated that those platforms helped produce nearly 2,500 goslings.

In 1984, the Southeast Idaho Rod and Gun Club raised money to feed starving deer from Pocatello to Downey. Nearly 2,000 deer were fed that winter by volunteers. With sportsmen support, the Idaho Legislature approved a \$1.50 fee increase in license fees dedicated to winter feeding. Although \$10 million has been raised in that fund, less than 10 percent has been used for its original purpose of winter feeding.

Individuals and sportsmen's groups have also raised pheasants and released thousands locally to bolster the local population. None of these projects could have been done without the help of local landowners.

I hope this Wildlife Summit finds the Fish and Game Department more open to suggestions and takes note of past successes and failures.

It's going to be an uphill battle for the department to erase the perception of meetings holding little value for wildlife or sportsmen. Obviously the face of wildlife has changed a lot and so have the times. But there are dedicated people out there who have no hidden agenda, who have great ideas and insight and aren't "biologists".

Wildlife Summit Needs Honesty

By Michael H. O'Donnell, Assistant Managing Editor,
Idaho State Journal

Sportsmen and women in Idaho who haven't lost faith in the Idaho Department of Fish and Game will be participating in an Idaho Wildlife Summit in person or via video conferencing for three days beginning Friday.

Whether they are in person in Boise or at satellite sites in Pocatello, Idaho Falls, Twin Falls, Salmon, Lewiston or Coeur d'Alene, they will want their voices heard — and not ultimately ignored. After a welcome from Gov. Butch Otter, those participating will listen to a review of Idaho's wildlife management from the past to the

future from F&G Director Virgil Moore. Attendees will also be introduced to new ways to share opinions electronically and instantly with the Fish and Game Department.

New technology and means of communication are wonderful, but they are only useful if those who make policy concerning the state's wildlife resources listen.

And a number of longtime residents with a love for hunting, fishing and all things outdoors say that is something that has not happened in the past. Suggestions have fallen on deaf ears.

Director Moore served as director of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for a short stint before returning to Idaho to serve as deputy director of field operations for Idaho's department. He became the head Fish and Game guy in the Gem State last year. His primary background is in fisheries.

There are those in the ranks of hunters in Idaho who feel too much emphasis in Idaho Fish and Game has been focused on the state's fishery. For example, they're convinced that hand-wringing over protection of native Yellowstone cutthroat trout in Eastern Idaho has eclipsed efforts to acknowledge and rebuild a vanishing mule deer population. Some hunters think Idaho Fish and Game turned a blind eye to the growing wolf population as elk numbers declined drastically.

All sportsmen and women understand the importance of fisheries and maintaining fishing opportunities, but they feel hunting may have taken a back seat in the future wildlife resource plans.

Wildlife management is crucial to Idaho from an economic standpoint as well as providing a critical reason for residents to love this state. Hunting and fishing generate big bucks.

According to the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting & Wildlife-associated Recreation done five years ago, 259,000 resident hunters and anglers in the state of Idaho spent an average of \$1.6 million per day for a total of \$598 million. This ranked Idaho 37th in the nation. But the plentiful outdoor opportunities also attracted outside money. Back in 2009, Idaho brought in 144,000 non-resident anglers that ranked 20th in the nation and 65,000 non-resident hunters that ranked Idaho 12th in the nation. This generated another \$598 million in expenditures — money that rolled over into the Idaho economy.

Of course a deep national recession put a dent in the out-of-state numbers for both hunting and fishing since those figures were compiled. Something else may have put a dent in the active pursuit of hunting and fishing by Idaho residents, according to many disgruntled sportsmen.

That something is poor wildlife numbers, especially for elk and deer.

Anyone who has been a resident of Southeast Idaho for more than 20 years remembers when the success

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Poor Attendance at Wildlife Summit - *cont. from page 3*
rate of deer hunters coming through the Fish and Game check station at Inkom on opening day was measured in strong double-digits. Those days are long gone with the once plentiful herds.

Studies and more studies have been done by the state to find answers to bringing numbers back up. Although winter feeding was suggested as one way to help herds rebuild, F&G has rejected the practice. Other suggestions about closing more areas to permit hunting only have gone ignored.

A climate of skepticism when it comes to wildlife management by the state has settled in. Let's hope the pending Wildlife Summit climbs out of the fog of distrust and clears the way for honest give and take with an honest goal of improving wildlife conditions in Idaho.

The following letter to the editor, sent to a number of newspapers and sportsman magazines, was published on August 24th, the first day of the Wildlife Summit, in the *Idaho State Journal*. It reflects the view expressed by many concerned citizens when they donate to support The Outdoorsman's publication of facts.

WILDLIFE SUMMIT

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game sponsored "Wildlife Summit" is little more than a continuation of the grandest case of fraud ever committed in this country. To accomplish IDFG's goal of bringing in environmental groups and animal rights groups to have a say in wildlife management is a violation of the agency's mandated mission.

And worst of all, it is a stab in the back of the Idaho sportsmen who have supported and funded that agency for more than seven decades.

The so-called "Wildlife Summit" already has thousands of sportsmen up in arms, and the gasoline is beginning to fly. It will take a very small spark to ignite the powder keg. If those on the IDFG Commission and at upper level management within IDFG think that the sportsmen of Idaho will idly allow this to happen, they are even bigger fools than they appear to be.

You might want to have photographers and cameramen at each of the "summit" locations. Gov. Otter and his IDFG crew are now treading on sacred ground for a few hundred thousand Idaho sportsmen – and angers are most definitely going to flare.

Toby Bridges
LOBO WATCH

U.S. Hunter Numbers Increased 9% in Past Five Years

The recent claim by IDFG Director Moore and his spin doctors that a national decline in the number of

hunters and fishermen and the nationwide recession are the reasons IDFG needs other sources of income was not true. Moore had already received the preliminary report from the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation before the Wildlife Summit was held and he briefly admitted hunter numbers had increased, but did not say by how much.

These Surveys are conducted every five years and the 2011 survey showed unprecedented national increases of 9% in hunters, 11% in fishermen, and 10% in those who both hunt and fish since the 2006 survey!

Non-Sportsman Wildlife Watchers Actually Declined

Because 52% of fishermen and 57% of hunters also reported they were wildlife watchers, the extra sportsmen in 2011 should have increased the total number of wildlife watchers by an additional 2.3 million people (3.2%). Instead the increase was less than one percent reflecting a decline in non-sportsmen wildlife watchers.

Previous *Outdoorsman* readers are well aware that the data from this survey concerning the money spent by wildlife watchers is *grossly* exaggerated. For example, when my wife and her sisters drive to western Oregon to visit a sister who lives there for a week, if they report spending part of a day whale watching or stopping to look at sea lions, all of the expenses of their entire trip (vehicle, meals, lodging, etc.) may be charged to wildlife viewing by the Survey although they observed wildlife only briefly.

The Wildlife Watching Lie Exposed

Once again I'll cite Forest Service statistics which prove how the FWS biologists and spin doctors who redesigned the former national hunting and fishing survey deliberately add non-related information to the survey in order to promote their non-consumptive wildlife agenda.

The *USFS* five-year *Visitor* survey for FY 2007–FY 2011 reports that only 1.9% of National Forest visitors claim that watching wildlife was a primary reason for their visit and that they spent an average of only 4.1 total hours observing wildlife on that visit! One-third of Forest visitors said wildlife watching was just one of a number of incidental aspects of their visit, and two thirds said they did not watch wildlife on their visit!

Out of 28 activities listed as primary reasons for the Forest visits, the top five were: 1) hiking/walking; 2) downhill skiing; 3) relaxing; 4) fishing; and 5) hunting. Watching wildlife was number 14.

The five highest total number of hours spent in each activity were: 1) developed camping; 2) downhill skiing; 3) relaxing; 4) hunting; and 5) hiking/walking. Viewing natural features and fishing were numbers 6 and 7 but watching wildlife was a distant number 17.

FS Visit Surveyors personally interview thousands of respondents to make sure other nature activities and their costs are not lumped with wildlife watching. But the FWS survey and state game managers pretend scenic and even some business trips are wildlife watching trips.

Unlike the Forest Service Visitor Survey mandated by a President Clinton executive order, university and other government agency surveys of forest visitors lump all “nature-related” activities with “viewing wildlife”, including “viewing natural features”, “nature study”, “visiting a nature center” and “viewing forest”. “Viewing natural features” is the primary reason for more than seven times as many forest visits as “viewing wildlife” is, so even if you consider only those two activities, the number of “wildlife watchers” is falsely multiplied by 800%!

More Lies Promoted 15-Year Plan “The Compass”

In 1990 IDFG and every other state wildlife agency officially replaced wild game management for sustained harvest with non-consumptive wildlife recreation in the form of bird watching. They soon added bat, reptile and butterfly watching, and also added bird feeding, scenic landscape photography, mushroom identification and wildflower walks as part of their nongame/watchable wildlife agenda.

In 2004, Idaho’s F&G Dept. used the housewife survey, conducted by Colorado and funded by MSCG excise taxes paid by hunters and fishermen, to justify a 15-year management plan titled, “The Compass”. It was soundly rejected by license buyers in Dec. 2004 because it proposed so-called “management” of native plants, flowers and nongame species – without adequate funding.

But Commissioners Nancy Hadley and Gary Power said all it needed was a little “tweaking”, which resulted in adding the following two paragraphs:

“The Department’s main funding source comes from one segment of the population – hunters and anglers – primarily through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. This money has been – and will continue to be – used to manage fish and wildlife for hunting and fishing.

“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.” (emphasis added)

“Tweaking” and Vague Testimony from F&G’s Biodiversity Leader Satisfied Commissioners

Two promises; 1) not to use any license fees, and 2) assurance from IDFG CDC Biodiversity Program Leader Rita Dixon that her group had secured adequate funding outside IDFG for the newly required 100% match to receive State Wildlife Grant money, convinced the F&G Commission to ignore sportsmen testimony and approve “The Compass” in 2005.

Dixon failed to tell the Commissioners that IDFG was already misappropriating hunters’ and fishermen’s license dollars to provide even the 33% match that was required while it was still writing the so-called “State Action Plan” to “manage” nongame species. But once Idaho’s plan was approved, IDFG had to come up with three times as much money to match Idaho’s share of the annual appropriation from Congress.

Yet not even one Commissioner asked Dixon for proof of who had agreed to donate what amounts. And two years later, Commissioner Wayne Wright told Legislators, in a July 3, 2007 ad hoc alternate funding committee meeting, that IDFG had only 25% of the nongame money it needed to match the federal appropriation!

During that meeting, Director Groen confirmed they were using sportsman license fees to match the federal nongame dollars, and he told the Legislators it had caused reductions in law enforcement and fish stocking during the previous 15 years! He said F&G needs to protect traditional hunting and fishing dollars so they are spent for hunting and fishing.

That meeting was on the 3rd day of Fiscal Year 2008 and IDFG Administrative Bureau Chief Jim Lau misappropriated \$427,534 of P-R and D-J federal excise taxes paid by sportsmen and used it illegally* as a match for nongame funds in FY 2008. (*Outdoorsman No. 40)

More Examples of Exaggerating Wildlife Watchers

A full 81% of the 71.8 million people classified as “wildlife watchers” in the FWS survey qualified for that classification by feeding wildlife – although 7.8 million of those reported they did not observe wildlife. Of the wildlife feeders, 74% were feeding “around the home” which means at home or less than one mile from home.

Trips from home to “a public park or other natural area less than one mile from home” qualified another 12.3 million people as around-the-home wildlife watchers. Maintaining plantings or “natural areas”, including a lot full of weeds, that benefit wildlife less than a mile from home qualified another 13.4 million.

Boise has a “Greenbelt” – a mostly-paved 27 mile long trail along the Boise River which, along with rafting in the summer, qualifies thousands of away-from-home wildlife watchers who either travel 12 or more city blocks to get to the trail, or travel six city blocks and then travel along the trail by biking, skate-boarding, jogging, walking or by wheel chair for at least another half mile.

These “wildlife watchers” spend very little money but their *average* expenditure is jacked up by the 1% of wealthy “watchers” who purchase expensive motor homes, trailer houses, campers, RVs, and boats, and charge the entire purchase price to wildlife watching. If the purchase price for one item exceeds \$60,000, it is “flagged” to prevent being listed twice, but no documentation that its primary use is wildlife watching is required.

By including many tourists and others who rarely participate in wildlife watching, relatively few “birders” have found ways to increase their ranks by millions of people. Yet, over the years, those hunters and/or fishermen who either do not spend the minimum amount per trip or fail to take at least three trips per year are not even included in the FWS survey results.

This false inflation of wildlife watchers remains the sole “proof” of the alleged change in public attitudes.

“Judgment at Nuremberg”

It's Time to Tell Our Elected Officials to Watch That Movie and Remove Their Blinders

By George Dovel

Nearly a year ago, University of Idaho Professor Emeritus Ashley Lyman sent letters to the two elected federal officials from Idaho who have reputations of being staunchly conservative. The letters expressed Dr. Lyman's concern about the adverse impact of rapidly expanding wolf populations since they were first transplanted from Canada in 1995.

Congressman Labrador's Response

Rep. Raúl Labrador was the first to respond and his Dec. 9, 2011 letter contained the following comment:

“Many people value animals for their beauty and their contributions to local biodiversity as well as for the legitimate purposes of food or traditional sporting activities. All related activities should be done in such a fashion that does not damage the overall population.”

Congressman Labrador also added:

“I understand that states and their wildlife management divisions are best prepared to determine species management on a case-by-case management rather than federal bureaucrats.”

Senator Crapo's Response

The response from Senator Crapo, dated Jan. 4, 2012, included the following comment:

“I remain committed to ensuring that wolf management is conducted in a way that benefits both the species and Idahoans, by balancing the interests of the wolf, livestock owners, sportsmen and our big game herds.”

Sen. Crapo's response also included a brief history of wolf introduction in Idaho, ending with passage of the Simpson rider, and the concern that it still must be finalized by the Secretary of Interior by June 14, 2011. Because Crapo's response was dated seven months after that deadline passed, it was obviously a form letter written many months earlier and never updated.

On Feb, 7, 2012, Dr. Lyman circulated an email expressing his disappointment at the two political replies, apparently designed to appeal to extremists as well as to citizens who deal in facts. My email answer pointed out that former Representative Crapo's extended hearings to determine the cause of the Clearwater elk decline resulted in legitimizing the false claim that it was lack of habitat.

My email was forwarded to Crapo's natural resource advisor who responded with a vitriolic claim that I was attacking his boss. He said he agreed completely that the problem was predation – not habitat – yet he defended the Senator who does not even mention controlling predators to restore depleted game herds, or using salvage logging to restore healthy forests, because of threats from environmental extremists and their allies in the media.

Crapo's letter referred Dr. Lyman to the FWS Rocky Mountain Wolf website for more information about wolves, and both his and Labrador's letter also referred Lyman to their respective websites for more information. Both referrals ignored Dr. Lyman's expertise.

Labrador's Website Doesn't Even Mention Renewable Natural Resource Use by Rural Counties

Under “Natural Resources and Energy” Labrador states: “Carbon-neutral biomass from the Northwest is an abundant resource that I hope will grow like our wind and solar industries. We must invest in various forms of clean energy to help increase competition among energy suppliers making it more affordable for all Americans.”

He did not mention the fact that federal subsidy of wind and solar electrical generation and the ethanol added to our fuel have substantially increased – not decreased – the overall cost of the energy we are forced to use.

Nor did he mention the harvest of wild game and fish, timber and forage – or using water along with naturally occurring chemical compounds to grow crops and livestock feed. Use of these renewable natural resources, plus extraction of minerals and fossil fuels, represented the prosperity of rural counties and rural states until excessive federal and state regulation began to hurt – not help – them.

Sen. Crapo – “Abundant and Healthy Wildlife”

An Oct. 1, 2012 news release from Crapo at his website says he grew up camping, hunting and fishing and shared this heritage with his sons and daughters. But then he cites the highly inflated figures from the FWS Survey, which falsely claim that wildlife “watching” generates billions of dollars more revenue than either hunting or fishing.

Finally, Sen. Crapo's news release states:

“Hunters, fisherman and outdoor recreation dollars help pay for wildlife management which produces abundant and healthy* wildlife populations.”

(*The use of politically correct clichés is no substitute for telling how hunting and fishing excise tax dollars have been illegally used for everything from transplanting Canadian wolves into Idaho and Montana to providing an illegal match for federal nongame funds. Not using these dollars properly to provide abundant and healthy mule deer and elk herds for hunters, has resulted in the lowest reported harvest of both species in Idaho since seasons were shortened and female harvest was halted during the late 1970s-early 1980s.)

Facts Caused Angry Retorts

In a series of emails, Crapo's advisor lambasted me and called me ignorant because I dared to point out the disappointment Crapo's caving in to extremists' pressure

caused among Clearwater citizens. He listed several beneficial bills the Senator had sponsored but said he supported my point of view “despite my many detractors.”

Yet far fewer people would disagree with the facts I and others publish if our elected officials in Washington, D.C. would tell the whole truth instead of substituting the self-serving propaganda provided by bureaucrats or other lobbyists. How can a politician ever convince others to join in abolishing or seriously amending the ESA unless he or she arms themselves with facts and makes those facts available to everyone – instead of keeping them secret?

The “Blame It on Conley” Excuse

On Feb. 7, 2012 I received emails from several concerned citizens containing a criticism by Idaho Rep. Marv Hagedorn for their blaming IDFG for problems that began 18 years ago. Rep. Hagedorn’s 460-word post, reportedly on the Lobo Watch Facebook blog, included the following opening paragraph:

“Remember, the people that were involved in this are gone (Connelly died a few years ago, but was out as the Director soon after this happened). Continuing to blame the people that are in the department now for deeds done by others 18 years ago isn’t the answer to fixing the problem.”

Conley did not die until Oct. 5, 2012 and continued to influence game management from his return to Idaho until shortly before his death – see IDFG photo below:

Birds of a Feather



2010 photo of Jerry Conley with then Director Cal Groen and Idaho Statesman Environmental Reporter Rocky Barker.

Cal Groen was taught his duties as Director of the Nature Conservancy’s Idaho Conservation Data Center, and hired by Conley in 1990 to assume those duties. IDFG Staff who supported Conley’s illegal Agreement and Permit to FWS to transplant larger Canadian wolves into existing territory of smaller native wolves, included Groen, Lonk Kuck, Steve Huffaker Virgil Moore and many others.

While it is true that Conley left Idaho for Missouri as part of an alleged agreement not to be fired, in 2008 his former IDFG accomplices, including Cal Groen as Director, quadrupled the minimum number of wolves IDFG agreed to maintain. That illegal wolf plan, which

was never approved by the legislature as the law required, was sent to FWS by Idaho Gov. Otter, along with exhibits and his letter promising to manage for more than four times as many wolves as had been approved by FWS.

Even after our repeated publication of this illegal activity forced Gov. Otter to stop supporting this debacle in Dec. 2010, IDFG officials refused to kill enough wolves to halt the mule deer and elk decline.

Promises F&G Had No Intention of Keeping

In Feb. 2009 Research Biologist George Pauley promised hunters in both Idaho and Montana that IDFG would use Wildlife Services to kill 80% of the Lolo Zone wolves each year for five years – leaving only 20-30 remaining wolves in 3-5 packs each year. In March 2010, after a helicopter census found the Lolo Zone elk had declined by another 57%, Director Groen’s op-ed news release said: “Fish and Game will do what it takes to restore the health of the Lolo herd.”

In his May 17, 2011 “Business Plan” new Director Virgil Moore promised the Commission and Idaho big game hunters that F&G would *also* initiate wolf control in other zones in 2012 “where wolf predation is known to be preventing achievement of ungulate goals.”

Wolf Estimate Indicates Removing 80-100 Wolves

On Dec. 16, 2011, IDFG estimated there were from 75-100* resident wolves and at least seven packs in the Lolo Zone. Only three of those packs were actually counted and they totaled “at least” 31 wolves – less three wolves that were later killed.

(* includes estimated wolves that were not part of packs – but does not include wolves in 6 of the 8 border packs that hunt in both states, but are claimed by Montana)

If Idaho added even one-third of the shared wolves in Montana’s border packs and their non-pack members to its 75-100 Lolo Zone estimate, the estimated wolf total would have increased to 100-125. The combined 80% kill by hunters, trappers and Wildlife Services would then be 80-100, leaving 20-30 wolves as planned.

By mid-February 2012 when the Wildlife Services helicopter gunner crew was called in to remove the wolves, hunters and trappers in Idaho had killed only 22 wolves in the Lolo Zone. More than half of those were killed before the year-end estimate of 75-100 wolves was calculated and published on Dec. 16th, and would not have changed that estimate.

From mid-February, during the remaining month and a half of trapping season and 4-1/2 months of hunting season, only six more wolves were killed in the Lolo Zone by hunters and trappers. Even if we ignore the wolf kill that occurred *before* the end-of-year December 16th population estimate, subtracting the entire 28 killed from the 80-100 (80%) that should have been killed would still have resulted in Wildlife Services having to kill between 52 and 72 wolves.

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“Judgment at Nuremberg” – *continued from page 7*

Instead, Deputy Director Unsworth told Wildlife Services to stop killing wolves on the third day, after it had killed only 14. Killing only 42 total wolves in the 2011-12 season protected the rest of the wolf population, including all of the 2012 pup increase, from humans.

Although only 14% of the Lolo Zone is wilderness and the wolf hunting and trapping seasons are 10 months and 4-1/2 months long, the fact that hunters were only able to kill 12 wolves and trappers only 16 is more evidence that the restrictions placed on sport hunting and trapping make it impossible to make a dent in the wolf population.

What Could Have Been – But Isn’t

Biologists’ 2008 plan to reduce Lolo wolf numbers by 80% and maintain ~25 wolves per year for five years meant killing about 105 wolves initially. But it also meant that an estimated 3,600 or more of the 5,110 Lolo elk that were counted in 2006 would still be alive.

If bears and lions were strictly controlled, the ratio of 25 wolves to 3,600 elk – one wolf for at least 144 elk for the next five years – would have allowed enough elk calves to survive to get a good start at rebuilding the declining Lolo elk herd. Instead, the 2011 Lolo Zone elk harvest was down **95%** from the highs of 1989 and 1995!

The biologists’ repeated failure to recommend a legitimate wolf control action and their years of false promises, posturing, and misrepresentation of facts, should make it obvious to everyone that IDFG officials have no intention of controlling wolves to restore healthy game populations in the Lolo Zone, or anywhere else.

Instead they spent thousands of dollars of sportsmen license fees trying to convince hunters to attend the “Wildlife Summit” and then ask elected officials to fund their anti-hunting agenda with general tax revenues.

Increasing Wildlife Destroyers’ Role, a Slap in the Face

Probably the biggest slap in the face to families of hunters in the West, who are watching their once bountiful harvest of wild game to feed their families being deliberately destroyed, was the Western Governors putting these natural resource destroyers in charge of energy exploration and virtually every other beneficial activity on both public and private lands.

With help from the *Nature Conservancy* and other radical groups who profit from the acquisition of private land or so-called “Conservation Easements”, our state game biologists have already designated thousands of square miles as proposed core wilderness areas and wildlife corridors. Yet the only wildlife these areas will protect are apex predators, including wolves, and theoretically one token species – the sage grouse.

Sage Grouse – the New “Spotted Owl”

Unable to drive farmers and ranchers off of their land in agricultural areas with wolves, the sage grouse has become the new “spotted owl” to destroy rural livelihoods. But instead of going through the time-consuming process

of holding months of hearings on a federal Sage Grouse Plan and having the states file countless objections, FWS and its radical groupies wrote their plan and gave it to each state governor to “tweak”.

Wyoming, which for years had the reputation of providing the best big game hunting in the West, accepted federal grant bribes and, after excluding its existing oil and mineral extraction, copied the bulk of the “sample” FWS Sage Grouse Plan which places severe restrictions on all new development. This includes not only energy exploration, but building new fences, developing stockwater tanks and a host of other activities that may ultimately destroy many small, family-size operations.

The governor of each state with sage grouse populations, used Wyoming’s finished plan as a model and exempted certain established practices or even core sage grouse areas in their state. That plan requires that millions of acres of improved land be converted back to sagebrush habitat to promote new sage grouse nesting areas, leks, etc.

In Idaho a thriving sage grouse area in Washington and Adams Counties was exempted to protect the rural communities and surrounding farms and ranches. But people who live in the rest of the 10 million acres in Idaho designated as “Core” or “Important” sage grouse habitat were not given that option.

Under CHZ *Wildfire* ii., the Plan Otter submitted, states: “Only human safety and structure protection shall take precedence over the protection of sage-grouse habitat.”

That means that, no matter whether it’s a few or hundreds of big game animals and/or livestock on public or private land that are threatened by wildfire, federal, state, and local firefighters must first protect any threatened sagebrush in Idaho’s 5.7 million acres of Core Habitat Zones – even if this results in the valuable animals and *their* habitat being destroyed.

“Judgment at Nuremberg”

The four elected officials I named in this article have all backed recent legislation supporting states’ rights and all four received NRA endorsement for their support of our right to own, carry and use firearms. Marv Hagedorn, now an Idaho Senator, strongly supported making hunting a Constitutional right, and provided a PC and contributed his time and PC skills to help me continue publishing facts.

But like the German officials and citizens who ignored the “criminal behavior” of the Nazis in the movie “Judgment at Nuremberg,” these four elected officials, and many others like them, choose to ignore the unlawful behavior of our natural resource managers.

Although it is a crime to squander our states’ natural resources, the lack of specific penalties for state employees allows them to pretend, as the Nazis did in Germany, that they are only accountable to one person. If they convince that person (the Governor) they are doing their job, state legislators must start doing their job.

More Examples of State Officials Ignoring the Destruction of Our Rural Livelihood and Lifestyles

By George Dovel



Author and great-granddaughter, Tiana, returning from a ride observing antelope in the foothills above the Jerusalem Valley in September 2012.

When my great-granddaughter Tiana, now a multi-talented senior at Vallivue High School in Caldwell, turned 12, she was an enthusiastic graduate of IDFG Hunter Ed. Her mother gave me a call and asked if I would take her hunting on the mountain where most of my sons grew up and killed their mule deer on opening day.

I explained to her that my wife and I had recently hunted mule deer there, both on horseback – and afoot as my sons had. But the influx of wolves plus hordes of hunters cruising the mountainside on four-wheelers, prohibited the chance to enjoy a pleasant hunt – with a possibility of a standing shot on a mule deer at a reasonable range for a first time deer hunter.

Instead, I suggested she hunt with one of her uncles in a unit where taking her first deer would be easier.

But as happens with most youngsters in Idaho, despite her abilities and desire, and hunting several years with experienced hunters, she has only shot one small yearling buck in Owyhee County three years ago.

On our recent ride, she described seeing the antelope up close as a really neat experience. Yet the odds of her applying for and receiving a coveted permit allowing her to hunt before experienced archery or rifle hunters have scattered the spooky mule deer are very remote.

How North American Model of Wildlife Conservation Was Quietly Destroyed by State Wildlife Managers

The three large Owyhee County units where IDFG offers 15 days of October general season mule deer hunting for two-point bucks only, had an estimated 2011 harvest of

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928 two-points, plus 168 females by youth hunters*. With 28.5 % hunter success, it required an average of 10.8 days of hunting for each two-point buck or female mule deer killed. (* youth general season for females ended in 2011)

Although these units are touted by IDFG as being one of the better opportunities for juveniles to harvest a mule deer, they are actually proof of the lousy odds for the average juvenile hunter. How does a youngster manage to miss school for up to 10 days in mid-October for three years in order to hunt the average of 11 days each year for the chance to kill just one small buck in 3-1/2 years?

When I pointed this out to an IDFG official, he responded that the real value of hunting these units was the special draw hunt for “big” bucks during the November rut. If you entered the lottery drawing for the 195 Unit 40 buck permits in 2005, there were 2,690 applicants and the odds of drawing were 1-in-14 (the average wait was 14 years before you drew a permit).

But seven years later, in 2012, there were 4,299 applicants for the same 195 permits and the average wait has increased to 22 years. If you started drawing in 1994 when Conley implemented the special late buck hunt in Unit 40, the odds are you probably won't draw a permit until 2016.

But by 2016, as bucks become increasingly scarce, the drawing odds will be much higher and the *only* group that benefits from this will be IDFG. Discouraged young hunters, and others who do not support the IDFG scheme to charge still more money to harvest even fewer animals, will simply quit hunting.

In his widely circulated September 7, 2012 op-ed response to the Wildlife Summit criticisms published in the *Idaho State Journal*, F&G Commission Chairman Randy Budge wrote; “The purpose of the Wildlife Summit was not to change the (North) American Model of Wildlife Management (Conservation)...” Of course it wasn't.

Wildlife Becoming “Playthings for the Wealthy”

Budge and his fellow Commissioners, including those who preceded them in recent years, have already destroyed several of the seven provisions of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. As Canadian big game expert Dr. Valerius Geist so eloquently explained in a “*Bugle*” interview a decade ago:

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

“There is a tendency afoot today in North America to follow the European pattern, where wildlife become

playthings for the wealthy and powerful. Under such a system, game is protected from the public in favor of the privileged few.

“I personally can't stomach the idea that my grandchildren might not be able to buy a license and go hunting on public land and enjoy the great privilege of putting wild meat on the table, as we have always done.”

“Liberal” Harvest Regulations Destroyed Idaho Deer

Although my grandchildren and their children can still buy a license and go hunting on public land in Idaho, putting wild meat on the table is no longer an option unless they are either wealthy or lucky. When IDFG changed to what I&E Chief Martel Morache called “liberal” harvest regulations in 1988 – F&G included multiple antlerless mule deer harvests – and hunters were told it was because there were too many deer for their natural food supply.

Yet six years later, general season antlerless mule deer hunting had been replaced with limited special draw antlerless permits, which continued to harvest fewer deer but generated several hundred thousand *more* dollars in extra application and license revenue. In 2001, juvenile hunters were given the opportunity to kill mule deer does or fawns during the general buck season in all but the outfitter units and that remains in most units today.

But hunting scarce deer that have been pursued by archery hunters for 32 days and by hordes of rifle hunters in the same October season, rarely offers a decent chance for a one-shot kill. Most youngsters with no experience at hunting small game or “varmints”, either miss a running or long range shot, or hit the animal outside of its vital areas.

IDFG's Michele Beucler Objects to Widespread Recruitment and Retention of Hunters

In her presentation titled “Mirror, Mirror on the Wall; Reflections from a Non-hunter,” IDFG Human Dimensions Specialist Michele Beucler cites statistics from 2001 when only 57% of hunter ed. graduates bought a hunting license. And after that first year, the number who bought a license steadily declined.

Beucler cited a 2007 national study showing that declines in hunter recruitment or retention between 1990 and 2005 occurred only in the nearly half of Idaho households where family income was below \$40,000. Some of the youths and parents she questioned said that IDFG should change seasons that intimidated them, and also make hunting cheaper.

But instead of recommending IDFG return to obeying Idaho Wildlife Policy in I.C. Sec. 36-103 (i.e. to provide continued supplies of wildlife for hunting, fishing and trapping) Beucler brazenly ignored the law and insisted this Policy had destroyed nongame species, damaged ecosystems and undermined Idaho's Public Trust Doctrine.

“We think that some degree of recruiting citizens into hunting is good business. However, we also feel that it has become misdirected and overemphasized. As a result, recruitment and retention efforts may be ineffective and

may be distracting state wildlife agencies from engaging non-hunters and broadening wildlife conservation.”

Her False Claim That Wildlife Values Have Shifted

Beucler then said that states should reduce recruitment and retention efforts because they are a symptom of the need for wildlife managers to adapt to changing public attitudes. She insisted wildlife values have shifted from wildlife use to wildlife protection.

That may be true in Washington, D.C. but it's certainly not true in Idaho. After more than a dozen years of IDFG using one underhanded trick after another to stop the legislature from allowing Idaho citizens to vote on making it a Constitutional right to hunt, fish and trap, it was finally approved by both houses and placed on the ballot in 2012.

Despite environmental activist Rocky Barker's *Idaho Statesman* article, quoting a retired IDFG employee falsely claiming that our right to hunt is not threatened, Idaho citizens passed it by an overwhelming 77% of those who voted! Following Barker's effort, "Right to Hunt..." still received 66% of the vote in Ada County, and passed by 77% of the vote in neighboring Canyon County – the second highest county population in the state!

Predictably, the only Idaho County where it failed to pass was the wealthy population in Blaine County where it only received 47% of the vote. A media campaign to defeat it because it also protected trapping may have contributed to its defeat by the small margin.

Her False Claim That Hunters Are Declining

Beucler and her bedfellows in state fish and game agencies ignored recent industry surveys showing an increase in the number of hunters nationwide. After presenting her "Mirror, Mirror" attack on hunting to the Wildlife Management Institute Annual Workshop in Phoenix in 2008, and the Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society meeting in Moscow in 2009, Beucler authored an article in the Spring 2010 issue of *Management Tracks* titled, "The Death of Wildlife Management?"

Published by the Organization of Wildlife Planners with Beucler serving as its President, her article states:

"For some time now, I've heard the siren call of 'declining participation in hunting and fishing' and what it might mean to the future of fish and wildlife management. Yet, despite a plethora of recruitment and retention efforts, annual participation rates continue to decline across much of the nation, and state fish and wildlife agencies are struggling to address 21st century conservation challenges such as rapid growth and development in key habitats, climate change, and nature-deficit disorder.

"Hunting and fishing will remain important threads of the American tapestry *regardless of how many people participate* – it is too much a part of human DNA, too much a symbol of American freedom, bounty, and wildness to fade away. Are we courageous enough to say that traditional fish and wildlife management must die?"

"...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."



IDFG Project Manager for Idaho Wildlife Summit Michele Beucler wears many hats, claims managing wildlife to provide continued supplies of game for hunters, fishermen and trappers undermines the Idaho Public Trust Doctrine (Facebook photo).

IDFG leadership has been working closely with Michele Beucler for several years and Director Moore quietly appointed her as Project Manager for the recent Idaho Wildlife Summit. She and her co-conspirators have worked behind the scenes for years while reasonable harvest opportunity was removed from grassroots hunting families and given to wealthy hunters.

Wealthy Hunters versus "Second Class Hunters"

One of the schemes IDFG uses is selling lottery chances for what it calls "superhunts", which permit the "lucky" few who draw the permits to hunt in any open hunt for that species in Idaho. When my three oldest sons began hunting, all they needed to hunt small game, upland birds, predators and deer anywhere in Idaho was a hunting license and a deer tag - total cost \$5. If they also wanted an elk it cost \$3 more.

IDFG presently charges both adults and youngsters \$117.25 for a "Sportsman's Package" to hunt the same animals they could hunt for \$8 in 1969. That is more than double the total inflation since then and still does not allow the hunters to participate in hunts with better odds of harvesting. Instead, IDFG encourages big game hunters to

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buy multiple chances for the superhunt permits so the rich hunter can buy dozens or even several hundred chances to improve his odds of drawing a permit.

He can also afford to pay people to locate a trophy animal, monitor its movements with fixed-wing or helicopter, and pay the guide who arranges the opportunity to shoot it. If the antler score is high enough, he may pay tens of thousands of dollars total to the state F&G agency and all the people who helped him kill the illegal “trophy”.

And like the auction tags, sometimes referred to as “Governor’s Tags”, establishing such extreme values requires that the “second class” general season hunters be limited to mid-October seasons. Even for an experienced hunter, the “Indian Summer” seasons are usually the most difficult time to locate and outsmart an older male animal.

Trophy Hunts Cause Overcrowded Hunters

But even if you beat the superhunt lottery odds of up to 1-in-2000 and receive a permit, it is no guarantee that you will harvest an elk or a mule deer with a large rack – much less a bona fide trophy. Although the IDFG website shows elaborate color photos of two bucks and two bulls taken by hunters with superhunt tags in recent years, none of them scored high enough for listing in the Boone & Crockett “Records of North American Big Game.”

The move throughout Idaho to further restrict the ability to harvest an animal in general season hunts, and then add so-called late-season “trophy” hunts in one or more units in each region, is forcing thousands of hunters who don’t draw a permit to either move to other already overcrowded general season units – or else give up hunting. No wonder these exploited license buyers are referred to as “second class hunters.”

The 2012 Panhandle Region Crisis

For the first time in its history, predation has reduced elk calf survival in the Panhandle Region so much that the Region’s wildlife managers have eliminated all general season cow elk hunts. Shortening the “any elk” seasons dramatically did not stop the decline for the 18,880 A and B tag purchasers in 2011, so in 2012 it offered them the chance to compete for 900 either-sex elk tags in units 1, 2, 3 and 5, plus 50 late antlerless tags in a part of Unit 5.

That meant that only five percent of hunters who had some opportunity to kill antlerless elk in the Panhandle in 2011 had a similar chance this year. Each of the four units now include a limited-participation 25-day Sept. archery season, followed by a 15-day mid-Oct. rifle season, plus a Dec. cow/calf season for the portion of Unit 5.

Unlike the southern Idaho F&G employees who travel to the Panhandle to hunt either-sex elk and/or either-sex whitetails, my great-granddaughter Tiana and her cousins lack the wherewithal to make that trip. Yet by offering a reasonable chance to harvest in an area close to home *only* to those hunters who pay them extra money, F&G forces the youngsters to forget harvesting game.

The “Sacred Cow” in the State Sage Grouse Plans

Every legitimate scientific study of the multiple causes of sage grouse declines has implicated predation as a major factor causing the decline. Yet the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sample Sage Grouse Plan does not include Predation as a direct cause of grouse decline and the plans approved by the various state governors do not address predator control.

Instead they blame human activity such as building roads, fences, windmills, transmission lines or other potential predator perches, operating landfills and clearing sagebrush to grow crops for the decline. *Outdoorsman* readers may remember when FWS Rocky Mountain Wolf Project Leader Ed Bangs published the claim in the Federal Register that wolves and other predators are never the primary cause of prey declines.

The article on Pages 13-14 of this issue titled, “The Introduction of Agriculture and its Impact on Sage Grouse,” is the second article I have published by Nevada Assemblyman Ira Hansen. It provides historical facts to counteract the unsupported claim by FWS and non-governmental groups that water development and livestock grazing are destroying sage grouse populations.

The article was provided to *Reno Gazette-Journal* reporter Jeff DeLong, who, in a July 18, 2012 article, said that some (people) insist ravens are causing sage grouse declines. He said the experts at Nevada Department of Wildlife admit ravens are an issue – but not a big one.

NDOW Sage Grouse expert Shawn Espinosa admitted the 500-600 percent increase in raven numbers throughout the West has created a problem but said the raven increase is caused by human activity. Wildlife Services is removing 2,000 ravens each year But Asm. Hansen reportedly said that is not enough to reverse the damage.

NDOW Director Ken Mayer was critical of Hansen, saying the Service (USFWS) has not identified predation as a threat and said, “Focusing on the predator issue now could be dangerous when attention must focus on the key issues such as the impact of wildfire and invading vegetation on habitat. Those issues are generally recognized as the most important ones when it comes to loss and fragmentation of sagebrush landscape in Nevada.

“The Carpenters of the world could actually facilitate the listing of the bird. We don’t have the time and the resources to focus on things that are not driving the listing process for the Fish and Wildlife Service.”

(Back when Idaho’s wolf oversight committee ignored reality and approved IDFG copying the FWS Wolf Plan without addressing predator control, Idaho Legislators refused to consider their plan for another 10 years. But now that the governors have adopted the FWS Sage Grouse Plan, which also fails to address predator control, the state legislators are silent and appropriate millions of dollars to implement a plan that will not restore sage grouse.-ED)

The Introduction of Agriculture and its Impact on Sage Grouse

By Nevada District 32 Assemblyman Ira Hansen

By all accounts, sage grouse were rare when Europeans first entered the Great Basin, as I documented in two earlier reports.

However, the populations of sage grouse in Nevada rapidly increased following the introduction of agriculture and livestock in the mid to late 19th century. "Clouds" of birds, creating "thunderous" noise as they concurrently rose into flight are recorded by the 1880s.

For example, from interviews of "old timers" published by the Northeastern Nevada Historical Society: "Sage chickens (sage grouse) were so plentiful in the 1890s...they clouded the sky...the birds were always thick in the meadows. As I passed by, they would rise up like a bunch of blackbirds...oh they were thick." (George Gruell interview of Syd Tremewan, 1964).

Another: "When we lived on Gance Creek (around 1900) there were lots of sage hens. I have seen them fly up the mountain right behind our house...they sounded like thunder...I am not exaggerating, there were thousands." (George Gruell interview with George Nelson, 1966).

For a more scientific documentation of this huge rise in sage grouse during this time frame, Robert "Bob" McQuivey, a 30 year NDOW biologist, by literally reviewing all of the early newspapers, journals and laws passed in Nevada, has documented this population explosion. I have read some of his extensive research, which I am currently attempting to get published. In a nutshell, it confirms the above observations.

So, what caused this dramatic change, from almost nothing to abundance?

1. Habitat manipulation and expansion, especially meadows and man-made hayfields.
2. The mechanical removal of sagebrush and pinyon/juniper trees for primarily fuel.
3. The introduction of non-native plants, especially common dandelion, alfalfa, and other forbs.
4. Livestock grazing.
5. Stable supplies of water in areas previous dry or intermittent.
6. Predator control.

It should be noted none of the man-made changes were done intentionally to benefit sage grouse. It was simply coincidental.

HABITAT CHANGES. As settlers started to quickly dot the Nevada landscape, one of their first acts was to create a meadow of sorts for their domestic animals. For large ranches it was to primarily grow hay and expand lush grazing areas. Yet even the smallest start-up ranch had horses and generally a milk cow or two. By fencing an

existing meadow, finding a level piece of sagebrush covered ground, damming the local spring or stream, and irrigating, meadows were both expanded and created new.

As is well documented, sage grouse have a symbiotic relationship to meadows. They especially relish certain forbs (most of us would call them "weeds"), and insects common on meadows.

However, when meadows are not basically "mowed down", sage grouse avoid them. Livestock usage, by eating the plants, actually increases sage grouse usage. For example, from "The Relationship of Cattle Grazing to Sage Grouse", a thesis done at UNR by Carol Evans in 1986: "Klebenow (1982) found that birds tended to avoid meadow areas of dense rank vegetation, but would use the areas once they were "opened up" by grazing. Oakleaf (1971) reported that heavily grazed meadows...were utilized by sage grouse, while succulent areas of ungrazed meadows...were not used as feeding areas. After cattle grazed and left a meadow, sage grouse were observed to concentrate there in greater numbers than before the grazing..." (DeRoucher, 1980)."

This flies in the face of the common misconception that grazing harms sage grouse. As Evans noted: "During the last three surveys, observed use of grazed meadows was significantly higher than expected."

Why? "Grazing by cattle prior to the cessation of plant growth...increases the quality of the food forb resources for sage grouse. Grazing increases the succulence of forbs by interrupting and delaying maturation. New leaf tissue is higher in crude protein...than mature tissue. Sage grouse appeared to seek sources of succulent forbs by selecting for meadows grazed by cattle."

NEW PLANTS: non-native plants can be harmful, like cheatgrass, or beneficial. Common dandelion, just like the ones you find in your lawn, is not native to Nevada. The good news: sage grouse love to eat it. Food studies of sage grouse show it to be a primary and dominant dietary item today. As Evans noted: "A study of this unique forb (dandelion) might yield important insights into how the environment for sage grouse has changed and how sage grouse have responded...the distribution of dandelion is closely tied to grazing...it increases with grazing and is noticeably less abundant in communities protected for long periods...dandelion unlike other forbs, retained its succulence long after maturation...dandelion is an exotic and not native to sage grouse habitat..."

Other plants introduced include alfalfa, which also is highly attractive to sage grouse as are the insects these new man-made meadow complexes attracted. All in all,

the huge increase in meadows or meadow-like fields and hay producing areas were the primary catalyst for sage grouse expansion, all done together with livestock grazing.

MECHANICAL REMOVAL OF SAGEBRUSH, primarily for fuel, also benefited sage grouse by removing older less productive plants and allowing younger more succulent plants to grow. As recorded in 1877: "Sagebrush is about the only fuel in this timber-less country and hundreds of thousands of cords of it are annually consumed...like the grand forests of the Sierras, the wild sage of the Great Basin is rapidly disappearing and as it is a plant of exceedingly slow growth, it is not improbable that it may ultimately become extinct..." (from the "Tuscarora Times Review" as quoted in McQuivey's work).

This also helps explain why areas recorded by the early explorers as vast seas of sagebrush were later described as grass dominated by the 1890s. The fear of sagebrush going extinct was obviously grossly exaggerated, and its rapid recovery was a boon for the sagebrush-eating sage grouse, as the younger plants and re-growth were much more productive in the leaves they eat, especially in winter. The removal of Pinyon/Juniper trees over much of Nevada during this same time frame had much of the same effect.

WATER DEVELOPMENT, allowing livestock to graze areas otherwise off limits due to an absence of consistent drinking water, was also a boon for sage grouse. Windmills, stock ponds, spring improvements, earthen dams in strategic spots to catch run-off, and irrigation of formerly sage covered flats converted to hay meadows all greatly expanded habitat availability for sage grouse.

PREDATOR CONTROL also likely boosted sage grouse production. For example, the early Mormons, only two years after arriving in the Great Basin, "...sponsored a contest to kill off the 'wasters and destroyers'. About 800 wolves (coyotes), 400 foxes, 2 wolverines, 2 bears, 2 wildcats, 37 mink and several thousand hawks, owls, eagles and crows were killed in the hunt. One dollar in tithing was offered on a continuing basis for each wolf or fox skin." (From Arrington, "Great Basin Kingdom", page 59).

Virtually every cowboy, shepherd, rancher and ranch boy carried a firearm and shot every predator they crossed. While today condemned to a certain extent, this action likely contributed strongly to the rapid expansion of sage grouse into its newly enhanced habitats.

All in all, agriculture and ranching in the Great Basin was the catalyst for the noted huge increase in sage grouse in Nevada. As the small ranch complexes were slowly eliminated from Nevada by economic conditions, as well as the Taylor Grazing Act and other government actions, the smaller man-made meadows dried up as well.

Grazing, predator control and maintenance of various related stock water developments also declined. Declined, yes, but not eliminated entirely. (At least not

yet). Much of these agricultural improvements remain that still greatly enhance sage grouse habitat, and although down in number compared to the highs described, sage grouse are still significantly above the historic low numbers noted by the first explorers. While attending a [Nevada] Governor's Sage Grouse Conservation Team meeting, I asked de-facto leader, Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) biologist Sean Espinosa what in his view is the best sage grouse success story in Nevada since the team was formed in 2000. He stated: "Smith Creek Ranch."

Considering the fact that many government people have made it clear they feel the livestock industry is the cause of the sage grouse decline, the irony is huge. Smith Creek Ranch in central Nevada is a working cattle ranch and has been for almost a century and a half. (Incidentally, I agree wholeheartedly with Espinosa's opinions: Smith Creek Ranch is loaded with sage grouse. I have personally seen several hundred birds there myself.)

The ranch, as so many Nevada ranches once did, has a man-made reservoir and irrigates about 1200 acres – a man-made meadow complex. I have spent a great deal of time there, and seeing several hundred sage grouse on this meadow is not uncommon. NDOW has documented more than 500 sage grouse on this man-made meadow at one time. When the ranch was purchased by the current owner in the late 1990s, the meadow was "dirt". By irrigating, a hay/grazing meadow it was soon home to hundreds of sage grouse (and cattle), at a spot you would have been lucky to see a dozen birds a decade or so earlier.

Consider: multiply this creation of a meadow and grazing it (to stimulate plant production; gardeners call this "pruning"), as early Nevada ranchers did, in nearly every canyon with some water starting in the mid 19th century, and you will begin to understand why the populations of sage grouse went from next to nothing to "clouding the sky" in only a few decades. Think of it as Smith Creek Ranch on steroids.

Agriculture and livestock bad for sage grouse? History says otherwise.

(NOTE to new readers: Five years ago, a massive state-by-state propaganda campaign initiated by FWS and the Nature Conservancy at their National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia, convinced western state governors and Canadian provincial leaders to put their wildlife agencies in charge of everything from climate change to oil and mineral exploration, construction of power lines, and control of all human activity.

Following an order from Idaho activist Judge Lynn Winmill for BLM to place sage grouse above humans, FWS agreed to have plans in place to restrict human activity in states with sage grouse, by Sept. of 2015. The Plan agreed to by Idaho Gov. Otter places 149 restrictions on human activities but ignores predator control. – ED)

Extinguishing the North American Model

By Dr. Valerius Geist

There is a long history to wildlife management, especially in Europe, and one learns from its examination that periods in which "the public" had possession of and access to wildlife have been short. Invariably the rich and mighty abrogated wildlife for their own use and enjoyment, but also let "the public" bear the cost of keeping and maintaining wildlife.

There was always at least some rebellion against the mighty by the dispossessed and subservient who often elevated poachers to public heroes and celebrated such in stories, poems, songs, even operas (i.e. Rainer Maria von Weber, *Der Freischuetz* (free-shooter = poacher). When rebellions broke out, "the public" took it upon themselves to emulate their superiors and mercilessly slaughtered the hated wildlife. Wildlife was hated as it stood as a symbol for the elite.

What we learn is that wildlife is highly desired and that the rich and mighty will stop at nothing to get it under control - till dispossessed by revolutions. The North American situation, in which wildlife is in the public domain and in which the public, until now, has possessed wildlife *de facto* and *de jure*, is a bright exception.

I warned years ago that this is an unstable situation, vulnerable to clever attacks by the rich trying to get control over wildlife. Looks like Utah is leading the way. Our model of wildlife conservation thrives only if there is a large participation in the harvest by the public, and such harvest can be reduced drastically by letting the private sector in on reducing public access while profiting from it.

Another factor is the scarcity of wildlife brought about by heavy predation by large predators. Put the two together, Utah's embracing of privatizing wildlife and burgeoning predator population and there is precious little to hunt for by the common man.

The economic miracle of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is predicated on a very high rate of participation by the public in the wildlife harvest. That's where the money lies! Studies in Wyoming long ago showed that the state got a lot more revenue from every elk killed by unguided hunters than by guided hunters.

Not the few rich, but the many average hunters generated the commerce retail giants in hunting and fishing make their money from. Conversely, you want a six-point bull? The cheapest way to get it in the long run is to hire a guide!

As to predators: hunters in British Columbia harvest about 8,000 moose annually. There are also 8500 wolves in British Columbia. The hunter harvest of moose in BC represents one week's worth of feeding wolves.

Please, do your arithmetic. Already in BC there are conflicts by native and non native hunters over the scarcity of moose. And BC has some 16,000 grizzly bears. Well, that's another 32,000 moose worth annually.

Cheerful thoughts!

Idaho F&G Commission Deserves a "Thank You"

For fifteen years the Fish & Game Department and their allies in the Idaho Attorney General's Office have manufactured excuses to keep either two-thirds of our Representatives or our Senators from allowing voters to vote on an effective Right to Hunt, Fish and Trap amendment to our Idaho Constitution.

Few people realize the combined effort it took to convince lawyers from the two major national hunting organizations to agree on wording that will have some teeth and still pass. A lot of effort from a lot of people allowed this to finally get on the ballot and the voters didn't let us down.

This is the first time the Commission has endorsed the Joint Right to Hunt Resolution and not changed their minds and many people are grateful. But the amendment requires IDFG to obey the laws that are already passed so all of us need to hold their feet to the fire and destroy their efforts to change the law and secure tax money from the general fund.

Wildlife Management Institute Exaggerates Idaho Wildlife Summit Participation

The WMI September 2012 Wildlife News Bulletin carried the optimistic headline: "Idaho Fish and Game Engages Thousands in Idaho Wildlife Summit." The news article said that about 500 people attended in person at the seven regional locations and approximately 3,000 people tapped into the summit online, with an average of 100 people participating in the chat room at any given time.

However the average daily attendance figures provided by IDFG Communication Bureau Chief Mike Kleckler for all seven locations, totaled 430 and his spreadsheet of online participants totaled 932, of which about 100 regularly participated in the chat line.

Considering the large number of environmental organizations that were invited and the number who announce their intent to attend on various chat rooms months before the event, attendance was considered low.

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Summit Participation Exaggerated – cont. from page 15

Wolf advocates from as far away as Australia were solicited by groups like the Northern Idaho Wolf Alliance and publicly boasted about anti-hunter comments they provided in the online chat room. Yet after three months, none of those comments have been published by IDFG.

IDFG Chief Continues To Promote Changes in Public Trust Doctrine to Benefit Non-Hunters

On March 27, 2013, IDFG Director Virgil Moore is scheduled to attend a special Wildlife Management Institute Session at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, Virginia. He will explain what a state agency must do in order to provide non-hunters and non-anglers special status under that State’s Public Trust Doctrine.

Five years earlier, this same group was told by Michele Beucler that all non-hunters are entitled to special access to wildlife management provided by the Public Trust Doctrine. Yet whether they want to buy a license and harvest wild game, or just view and photograph it for free, all citizens already have equal access to wildlife and to the Commissioner who represents their District.

They also have equal access to public hearings to provide the Commissioners with factual information to help them determine whether seasons and/or bag limits should be reduced or closed in order to maintain healthy viable wildlife populations. In fact the IDFG Director often provides extra time to non-hunting friends to present their opinions rather than factual information.

Instead of restoring wild game populations to their former healthy abundance as required by law, which would restore millions of dollars in license income, these agencies plan to recruit non-hunters to convince elected officials to support their lack of management with general tax dollars.

Their intent is to continue to allow multiple protected predators and their parasites and diseases to drive more valuable game populations into a predator pit from which they cannot recover. At the same time, they are deliberately forcing all but the wealthiest hunters to pay even more money for a remote chance to harvest scarce game that was painstakingly restored in the 1970s and 1980s.

Their national organizations and their Western Association are determined to destroy our heritage of harvesting healthy wild game for our families, and charge both hunters and taxpayers for the destruction. If you continue to pretend this isn’t really happening you deserve to lose your rights.

But your children and grandchildren don’t deserve to lose their proud heritage of harvesting game and fish as Val Geist described in his article in this issue. If you read the November 2012 issue of *Petersen’s Hunting* and the comments by the Founder/Publisher in the July-Aug 2012 issue of *Muley Crazy* you’ll find they are not afraid to “Tell it like it is.”

As you approach this Christmas season, why not give an *Outdoorsman* subscription to your loved ones and hunting companions? Use the subscription blank below, or a separate sheet of paper to print each name and mailing address. A donation of \$25 will still pay most of our costs of printing and mailing six issues to one recipient and you don’t even need to fill out a gift card as we will notify them of your gift with the first issue they receive – and send reminders throughout the year. An extra donation in any amount will help us pay the cost of printing and mailing hard copies to the elected officials and others in your state who need factual information in order to properly manage wildlife which is their responsibility. Please do it now!

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