

Minutes of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee*
March 1, 2000
Senate Majority Caucus Room
Boise, Idaho

Co-chair Senator Marguerite McLaughlin called the meeting to order at 12:25 p.m. Committee members Senators Atwell Parry, Grant Ipsen, and Lin Whitworth, Co-chair Representative Debbie Field, and Representatives Robert Geddes, June Judd, and Margaret Henbest attended. Staff members Nancy Van Maren, Ned Parrish, Eric Milstead, Jim Henderson, Leslie Clement, Bev Nicholson, and Margaret Campbell also were present.

Co-chair McLaughlin opened the meeting by reminding the committee that the minutes from the 2/18/00 meeting had been circulated to members and approved by signature of a majority.

REPORT RELEASE: *A LIMITED SCOPE EVALUATION OF ISSUES RELATED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME*

Co-chair McLaughlin advised those present that JLOC was different from other legislative committees in that it did not take testimony; committee rules provided for the committee to hear from OPE and the agency only. She reminded the committee that the report could not be distributed to the public until it had been formally accepted. Ms. Van Maren presented a summary of the findings and recommendations of the report and, with staff, responded to questions from the committee.

Representative Geddes asked if OPE had reviewed JFAC minutes related to the department's use of the \$2 add-on funds, to see if there had been direction given as to when these funds could be used. Mr. Eric Milstead, Performance Evaluator, said he had not reviewed JFAC minutes, although he had reviewed legislative germane committee minutes related to the adoption of the \$2 add-on. Neither the department's appropriation nor statute provided authority to spend these funds for projects other than those specified, and both were silent on when the funds could be used.

In response to questions, Ms. Van Maren confirmed that the department had not put in place the mechanisms with which to compare the outcomes or costs of the two methods to estimate deer and elk harvests for 1998 and 1999, despite the commission's intent to compare the two. The department did have the numbers from both methods and, in many cases, the results for a given hunt unit were different, although this did not constitute an "error rate." Either method could provide accurate information, if properly implemented.

Senator Whitworth asked a number of questions about this and other issues related to the department. He said constituents had told him that although they had mailed their "report cards" on time, they received notice from the department that their report cards were late. Ms. Van Maren said the department had experienced some problems in implementing the hunter report cards and that department officials could explain further in their response, if asked.

In response to questions outside the scope of this report, Co-chair McLaughlin reminded the committee and those in attendance that a larger scope evaluation would begin after session. Senator

* As approved by a majority of members, Joint Legislative Oversight Committee (per attached signatures).

Whitworth said he could accept the report as long as additional concerns were addressed in subsequent evaluations.

Representative Henbest moved to accept the limited scope evaluation and Representative Geddes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Co-chair McLaughlin invited Mr. John Burns, Chairman, Fish and Game Commission, to respond to the limited scope evaluation. Mr. Burns said the evaluation was helpful and fair, and expressed the commission's appreciation to JLOC for requesting it. The commission concurred with the findings. In summary, he said: referring to the first section of the report, the department had worked to comply with Legislative Audit findings each year and would continue to do so; only one finding remained open at present. Regarding the \$2 fishing license add-on funds, the department had started the process of tracking the funds. Regarding the two methods of estimating deer and elk harvest, the commission was assessing public confidence and the timeliness of the information collected as well as cost to decide which method to use; the best option may not be the cheapest. Also, the commission agreed with the findings that further review was needed of the contracting and accounting practices related to the department's license system vendor.

In discussion about methods used to estimate deer and elk harvest, Mr. Burns said the difference between the number of harvest surveys returned last year (approximately 95%) and this year (approximately 80%) could be related to a change in the number of reminders mailed out. Representative Henbest asked if there had been any consideration given to combining the methods, e.g., using the hunter report, with telephone calls to non-respondents. He said this had been discussed informally, and that it "might work." Senator Whitworth said he thought the phone survey did not have the public's confidence. Mr. Burns acknowledged the department had gotten into using the hunter harvest report because of a lack of confidence in the phone survey, although the sample size relied on had since increased.

Representative Field reminded the committee that the report was limited in scope and OPE would continue to pursue members' questions in the broader evaluation of the department.

Co-chair McLaughlin asked if anyone from the department also wished to respond. Mr. Burns said Mr. Mallet, Interim Director, had indicated he had nothing to add.

Senator Ipsen moved to refer the evaluation to the germane Senate and House committees. Senator Whitworth seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously by voice vote.

Co-chair McLaughlin asked if there were any other items the committee wished to discuss. Hearing none, the meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.