

MINUTES
HOUSE RESOURCES & CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

- DATE:** Thursday, March 15, 2012
- TIME:** 1:30 p.m. or Upon Adjournment
- PLACE:** Room EW40
- MEMBERS:** Chairman Stevenson, Vice Chairman Shepherd, Representative(s) Wood(35), Barrett, Moyle, Eskridge, Raybould, Bedke, Andrus, Wood(27), Boyle, Hagedorn, Harwood, Vander Woude, Gibbs, Pence, Higgins, Lacey
- ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None.
- GUESTS:** Forrest Goodrum, Ada City Fish & Game League; Bryan Moore, Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation; Neil Crescenti, Bob Brammer, Dept. of Lands; Wally Butler, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation; Sharon Kiefer, Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game; Benjamin Davenport, Risch Pisca; Jim Nunley, Self; Burk Mantel, Self.
- Chairman Stevenson** called the meeting to order at 2:44 p.m.
- MOTION:** **Rep. Lacey** made a motion to approve the minutes of Tuesday, March 13, 2012. **Motion carried by voice vote.**
- SCR 125:** **Sen. Brackett** encouraged the Committee to support the Governor's effort to create a sage grouse task force. He said this is a result of a resent court decision and the Governor understands the devastation that would occur if the grouse are listed. He said the purpose of the task force is to create a management plan. Sen. Brackett said the plan will provide a mechanism to preclude the need to list the species. He also said if the grouse are listed it will provide a mechanism to manage the species. He said the plan will be built on efforts provided by the working groups. He said he hoped the Committee will endorse and encourage the Governor's efforts for the task force and the management plan.
- MOTION:** **Rep. Wood(35)** made a motion to send **SCR 125** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Wood(35)** will sponsor the bill on the floor.
- S 1271:** **Sen. Brackett** declared a possible conflict of interest, he said he does have a state land lease and ownership in a business that has state land leases. He said he is bringing this legislation on behalf of Owyhee Cattlemen and the Idaho Cattle Association. He said this legislation will correct a Rule problem. He said people were not comfortable with the Rule revision that required a grazing management plan. He said when the Rules were publish, the section was not there. Sen. Brackett said this legislation restores legislative intent and puts the section back in the Rule. He agreed this requirement makes a positive statement for grazing requirements.
- Bob Brammer**, Assistant Director, Dept. of Lands, thanked Sen. Brackett for working with the Department on the language in the bill. He said the legislation would clarify the document submitted with the application is a proposal, not the management plan. He said during the application process the Department will go through the proposal and make sure the concerns on the parcel are addressed.
- Wally Butler**, Idaho Farm Bureau, said he has been involved in the task force that put together the Rules. He said the Idaho Farm Bureau supports this legislation.
- MOTION:** **Rep. Andrus** made a motion to send **S 1271** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Andrus** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

S 1256:

John Watts, representing Doug Sayer, said this legislation relates to the Governor's Wildlife Auction Tag proposal. He said it does several things and gave a general overview of the bill and what it does. He said there is new language regarding the proceeds from big horn sheep tags. He said this bill allows for the Fish and Game Commission to make the decision if they want to issue up to three deer, three elk, three pronghorn antelope, one moose, one mountain goat, or one big horn sheep tag. He said the point of the legislation is to create an ongoing alternative perpetual income for the Department. He said it also places solely in the hands of the Commission the dates and areas where the tags can be used.

Mr. Watts said the tags will all be taken from the non resident pool and will not reduce the hunting opportunity for resident hunters. He said the tags will be handled in the manner already used by the Department. He said this bill helps determine how these revenues are used. He said revenues could be used for hunter access, wildlife habitat or wildlife habitat management, or research and management activities approved by the Commission. He said this will give the Commission flexibility and responsibility to manage wildlife in the state. He said the funds cannot be used to acquire grazing permits or land, and prohibits the planting of additional big horn sheep in southern Idaho.

Mr. Watts gave a history of the issues heard over the last few years. He reviewed how the public was involved and how they met with sportsmen groups. He said the fiscal impact would be a positive revenue stream. He also said the revenue will fluctuate because the tags will be sold for various amounts. He said this will give the Department the opportunity to raise more revenue and will be a benefit for Idaho wildlife.

Sharon Kiefer, Deputy Director, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, said the Fish and Game Commission has discussed this issue. She said they have taken a policy position, on a close vote, to not support the legislation. She said they have also encouraged sportsmen to contact their Legislators on this issue. Ms. Kiefer gave a history on the issue and said many sportsmen were critical of the approach. She said that not all auctioned tags have created more hunting opportunity. She said the proposal is consistent with standing statute. She said they do agree with the revenue forecast if all tags are auctioned. She explained which funds the proceeds from the auctioned tags are allocated to.

Ms. Kiefer explained the tags are reallocated from the non resident pool which is limited to 10% of all tags for certain species. She said this is not a concern when the pool for non residents is large but does become a huge concern for non residents when numbers in the pool are small. She spoke about the tag proceeds and how the proceeds can be used on things different from what currently exists. She said the Commission can still adopt a policy to designate that the proceeds will go to specific programs. She said there may be some unintended consequences from the reallocation of tags from non residents, who do pay a higher price. She said these auction tags will create revenue for wildlife programs and is not unique to Idaho. She said this has created an active market for these types of tags and allows those with financial means to purchase hunting opportunities for wildlife in Idaho.

Forrest Goodrum, Ada County Fish and Game League, **spoke in opposition** to the bill as a matter of principal. He said he did not believe auctioning tags to the highest bidder is appropriate. He said he moved to Idaho for a lifestyle change, namely hunting and fishing, and a more open environment. He said he finds this objectionable because of the principal involved. He said he didn't want to see the principal compromised.

Brian Moore, Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation, said currently the organization auctions one tag. He said they have problems with the bill because it does not specifically give the funds from the auctioned tags to wild sheep. He said he would want to amend the legislation so that the funds from the wild sheep tag go specifically to wild sheep.

Jim Nunley, Self, said allowing the Department of Fish and Game to provide tags for auction to the highest bidder will not satisfy anyone he knows. He said the wildlife in north America are considered the property of the people and the management of game needs to be met. He said just because someone can outbid others does not meet the criteria of wildlife management. He said the sportsmen he has talked to, do not support this bill. He said wildlife belongs to the people and everyone has a vested interest. He said the Department of Fish and Game shouldn't be run like a business. He said the Department doesn't want to alienate their support group and producing tags that are sold to the highest bidder will alienate sportsmen. He said sportsmen believe in equal opportunity and this bill would give special tags to people with the most money.

Burk Mantel, Self, gave some history of this issue. He said originally the Fish and Game Commission was opposed to this type of tag. He said later they became neutral on the issue and are now back to opposing it. He said he agrees with the amendment for the legislation. He said the revenue projections are flawed because the tags could be sold for less. He said he has not seen any support for the bill by sportsmen groups. He said there is an opportunity at the wildlife summit for discussion of this issue to see if the sponsors can get more support. He urged the Committee to hold the bill and get support from sportsmen.

In response to Committee questions, **Mr. Mantel** said he supports preserving the wild sheep auction tag but not the other auction tags because it can start to get out of hand. He said he doesn't want to see any more tags being available for sale at auction in Idaho, and doesn't think sportsmen do either. In further response to Committee questions, Mr. Mantel said in the beginning there was overwhelming support from sportsmen organizations, now that has changed in the last 25 years. He said sportsmen have seen what has happened in other states and they don't like it. He said he is not opposed to the number of sheep tags currently being sold but is opposed to auctioning off any more tags for big game species.

Benjamin Davenport, representing the Outfitter and Guides Assoc., said the outfitters and guides do have concerns, but understand the dynamic. He said the majority of their customers come from non residents, who don't have a problem with three tags being taken from deer, elk and antelope. He said the problem is with the tags for big horn sheep being taken from the eight available tags for non residents. He said Idaho has been responsible when it comes to these types of tags and replacing "shall" with "may" in the amendment is appropriate. He said the Association has no position on the bill at this time.

Angela Rossmann, Idaho Wildlife Federation, said it would have been best to have had a public comment period with the Commission. She said she would like the public to weigh in on this issue.

John Watts said this is current policy in Idaho, not something new. He said this will create additional revenue for the Department of Fish and Game. He said the Commission has the option to determine the number of tags to use and it "may" be up to three for some species. He said there has been opportunity for the public to voice their opinion on the issue. He reviewed the schedule of how the concept became the legislation. He thought the issue has had a very thorough briefing. He urged the Committee to send this legislation to General Orders so the amendment could be attached.

MOTION: Rep. Hagedorn made a motion to send **S 1256** to General Orders. **Rep. Wood(27)** seconded the motion. **Motion carried by voice vote with Reps. Wood(35), Barrett, and Shepherd voting NAY. Rep. Moyle** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 4:14 p.m.

Representative Stevenson
Chairman

Susan Werlinger
Secretary