

MINUTES
JOINT MEETING

**SENATE RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
HOUSE RESOURCES & CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

DATE: Wednesday, January 29, 2014

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Lincoln Auditorium

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Pearce, Vice Chairman Bair, Senators Cameron, Siddoway, Brackett, Heider, Tippetts, Stennett and Lacey

Chairman Denney, Vice Chairman Gibbs, Representatives Wood, Barrett, Eskridge, Raybould, Andrus, Shepherd, Wood, Boyle, Vander Woude, Gestrin, Miller, Pence, Erpelding and Rubel

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Representatives Moyle and Anderson

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CALL TO ORDER: **Chairman Pearce** called the joint meeting of the Senate Resources and Environment Committee (Committee) and the House Resources and Conservation Committee (Committee) to order at 1:35 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT: **Chairman Pearce** announced that following this joint meeting, the Senate Committee would reconvene, after a five minute recess, in WW55 to conduct some Committee business.

WELCOME: **Chairman Pearce** welcomed Chairman Denney and the House Committee, as well as the members of the audience and guest speakers. He then asked Senator Siddoway to provide some background information regarding today's presentation and to also introduce the speakers.

Senator Siddoway welcomed and introduced Jim Pehringer, District Supervisor of Wildlife Services in Cody, Wyoming and Dr. Jimmy Taylor, Research Wildlife Biologist and Project Leader of the National Wildlife Research Center at Corvallis, Oregon, to the meeting.

Senator Siddoway said that at a tri-state sheepherders meeting last November in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, he saw their presentation regarding sage-grouse and felt it was something that policy makers in Idaho should see. He invited them to present their program to the joint Committees.

SPEAKER: **Dr. Taylor** said he would talk about the methodology used in the research study, rather than statistics. This study was conducted in the Bighorn Basin in Wyoming and is referred to as the Bighorn Basin Sage-Grouse Predation Project (SGPP). He stated that it is one of 25 ongoing research studies related to sage-grouse in the state of Wyoming. In 2010, a proposed project to investigate predation was turned down by the Wyoming Game and Fish, but was later supported by the Conservation Districts of Area III at their annual meeting. In 2011, the Bighorn Basin Sage-Grouse steering committee was formed.

At first, the study of predation was focused on coyotes, but later it turned to ravens. Ms. Julie Young, Utah State University, and grad student Ms. Beth Orning, began research in 2011. **Dr. Taylor** said he joined the study last year (2013) and was collecting similar data like Ms. Young and Ms. Orning did on coyotes, but now he is more focused on ravens as a predator.

Cooperators of this project are very diverse. They are as follows:

- Bighorn Basin Conservation Districts
- Bighorn Basin Predator Management Districts
- APHIS/USDA/Wildlife Services
- Marathon Oil Company
- Fidelity Oil Company
- Animal Damage Management Board
- V Ranch
- Belden Ranch
- Park County Farm Bureau
- Wyoming Game and Fish Department
- Bureau of Land Management

Dr. Taylor listed the four goals of SGPP. They are: to understand sage-grouse/predator relationships; to determine if predator control is effective; to determine what levels of control are effective; and determine if those levels of control are feasible. The objectives of SGPP is to: identify sage-grouse predators; identify nest predators; conduct predator removal experiments; determine habitat usage; and to collect other baseline data. He stated that the most highly ranked unknown was the effect of predation on sage-grouse. Their research is sound, as well as active management going on across the landscape in the Bighorn Basin.

Dr. Taylor stated that they use several methods of field surveys, one being the capture of hens at Leks. Other methods are survival monitoring, predator abundance/density, scat surveys, scent stations/camera traps, mortality investigations (35 days later), nest depredation investigations and nest vegetation surveys. WS personnel monitor different leks throughout March to determine where to capture the sage-grouse. A method of capture is the rocket net, which is labor intensive.

Data collected during the processing of captured birds include health assessment, wing pictures, blood collection, feather samples, weight, and collar or leg band attachment. Over 200 birds that have been collared, only three have resulted in mortalities. Tracking is done by VHF or ARGOS and the batteries are solar charged.

Ravens steal eggs from the nests, carrying them intact in their mouths, until they have taken all the eggs. The hen abandons the nest and moves on. Coyotes also steal eggs, but they oftentimes kill the hens in the process. Badgers are also a threat, but are not as great a predator as the ravens and coyotes. Trail cameras have also revealed that weasels are predators to the sage-grouse. Golden eagles take the adult hens, which they are very proficient at doing. **Dr. Taylor** said they have a video of a bullsnake stealing eggs from a nest, with the hen dancing around trying to scare off the snake. However, the snake won.

With the vegetation surveys, they take into consideration the nearest man-made structures, recent grazing, specific nest shrub information, line intercepts, visual obscurity, grass height, and cover composition.

All of the hens that have had transmitters on for the last three years, approximately 35 percent were killed by predators. Of the nests found, about 49 percent were destroyed.

Dr. Taylor said they would continue collecting data and will publish the results. Their efforts will mainly be on the ravens; however, they will not abandon the other sources of predation. That concluded the presentation.

Time was allowed for a few questions before the Senate Resources Committee needed to reconvene in WW55.

- ADJOURNED:** **Chairman Pearce** thanked Dr. Taylor and Mr. Pehringer for all their work and research regarding the sage-grouse, and also for the presentation. He then adjourned the meeting at 2:34 p.m.
- CONVENED:** **Chairman Pearce** called the meeting of the Senate Committee to order in WW55 at 2:40 p.m. The first order of business was to approve some minutes.
- MINUTES AND MOTION:** **Senator Tippets** made the motion to approve the Minutes of January 17, 2014. The motion was seconded by **Senator Heider**. The motion passed by unanimous **voice vote**.
- MINUTES AND MOTION:** **Senator Siddoway** made the motion to approve the Minutes of January 20, 2014. The motion was seconded by **Vice Chairman Bair**. The motion passed by unanimous **voice vote**.
- MINUTES AND MOTION:** **Vice Chairman Bair** made the motion to approve the Minutes of January 22, 2014. The motion was seconded by **Senator Siddoway**. The motion passed by unanimous **voice vote**.
- PASSED THE GAVEL:** Chairman Pearce passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Bair so that he could explain the reason to make a correction regarding a rule.
- RULE:** **Vice Chairman Bair** said that during the rules review, the Committee had stricken two words from the pending rule, **Docket No. 26-0120-1302**, Department of Parks and Recreation, and those actions were not acceptable. The two words that were stricken (season and daily) were in the winter access program fee schedule, page 11, of the pending fee rules committee rules review book.
- MOTION:** **Senator Siddoway** made the motion to reconsider the actions taken on January 23 regarding **Docket No. 26-0120-1302**. The motion was seconded by **Senator Heider**. The motion passed by unanimous **voice vote**.
- MOTION:** **Senator Siddoway** made the motion to adopt **Docket No. 26-0120-1302** in its entirety. The motion was seconded by **Senator Heider**. The motion passed by unanimous **voice vote**.
- PASSED THE GAVEL:** Vice Chairman Bair passed the gavel back to Chairman Pearce.
- RS 22601:** **Chairman Pearce** stated that **RS 22601** would not be heard as the sponsor has withdrawn it.
- ADJOURNED:** **Chairman Pearce** adjourned the meeting at 2:50 p.m.

Senator Pearce
Chair

Juanita Budell
Secretary