

MINUTES
HOUSE RESOURCES & CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, February 17, 2014

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW40

MEMBERS: Chairman Denney, Vice Chairman Gibbs, Representative(s) Wood(35), Barrett, Moyle, Eskridge, Raybould, Andrus, Shepherd, Wood(27), Boyle, Vander Woude, Gestrin, Miller, Anderson(1), Pence, Erpelding, Rubel

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

GUESTS: The sign-in sheet will be retained with the minutes in the committee secretary's office until the end of the session. Following the end of the session, the sign-in sheet will be filed with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

Chairman Denney called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.

H 467: **Rep. Moyle** said this legislation will allow the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to issue permits for bears and turkeys through depredation tags. He said currently there are depredation tags for deer, elk, and antelope, but not for depredating bears and turkeys.

Sharon Kiefer, Director of Idaho Department of Fish and Game, indicated her testimony is contained in two handouts provided to the representatives prior to the meeting (see attached). She indicated there are no biological impacts for this bill.

MOTION: **Rep. Wood(27)** made a motion to send **H 467** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation. **Motion carried by voice vote.** **Rep. Moyle** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

H 470: **Senator Brackett** stated the legislative intent of **H 470** is to establish a governing board to allocate funds for depredating wolves in Idaho and for additional financial resources to be available for the management of wolves. He explained this fund will create a board made up of five members with one member of each group: Director of the Department of Agriculture, Director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, sportsman, livestock industry, and at-large public member. He indicated this legislation is to keep wolves de-listed, under state management, and to manage depredating wolves. He mentioned that wolves are classified as big game animals. He said a funding bill is necessary as the federal government no longer provides funding for the management of wolves. He explained the Wolf Depredation Control Board has specific objectives outlined in the legislation. He further explained the Idaho Department of Fish and Game maintains control of wolf populations. He said this board will oversee the wolf management plan to ensure wolf populations remain above federal levels so wolves will not be re-listed on the endangered species list. Senator Brackett wanted to be clear the legislation is not a wolf kill bill, but a financial allocation bill.

Rep. Miller raised concerns regarding current efforts to control wolves and the population continues to increase. Rep. Miller indicated his concern is if an end game exists.

Rep. Gibbs reiterated this bill will replace federal funding and has a five-year sunset for evaluation at the end of the five years. He said this fund cannot be used to pay livestock damage to ranchers.

Sharon Kiefer, Director of Idaho Department of Fish and Game, supports **H 470**. She said that regardless of a person's view on wolves, Idaho has a responsibility to manage wolves and Idaho supports the de-listing of wolves as an endangered species. She said the Idaho Wolf Conservation and Management Plan was developed and used for de-listing wolves. She claimed over \$1 million has been spent on scope of management for wolves in 2013. She asserted there is a cooperative agreement with the federal government which have kept costs down. Ms. Kiefer indicated the sale of tags brings in \$400,000 in revenue. She further indicated that the Idaho Department of Fish and Game has spent in 2013: \$729,000 in research, \$537,000 in monitoring, \$109,000 in administrative outreach, \$25,000 in enforcement, \$35,000 in harvest management, and \$135,000 for depredation (private livestock, wildlife, and human safety). She asserted that these figures do not include funds spent by Wildlife Services or Animal Control.

Suzanne Stone, Defenders of Wildlife, said the Idaho Department of Fish and Game have redefined the term "pack" which could relate to their assertion of an increase in pack numbers. She said the wolf population continues to fall and is concerned that Idaho wolves may drop below 150 wolves and return to protection under the Endangered Species Act. She indicated that re-listing the wolves under federal protection would mean that Idaho has failed.

Deb Lord, Idaho Fish and Game Advisory Committee, supports **H 470** and a funding mechanism for lethal control of wolves.

Karen Balch, veterinary doctor from McCall, Idaho, asserted this legislation is a thinly failed proposal to eliminate wolves. She suggested selling wolf tags instead of spending \$4,000 for each wolf killing.

Mark Bell, Idaho Native and Sportsman, is involved in giving back to sportsmen and is a member of the Sportsmen's Advisory Council. He explained the financial impact of losses from wolves in northern Idaho is devastating and supports this legislation to control the wolves in conjunction with cattlemen and ranchers.

Bill Chisholm, self, stated this legislation is a convoluted process and a funding mechanism for a war on wolves. He stated different views should be taken into account.

Scott Rigby, cattleman, supports this legislation and has experienced, first hand, the issues surrounding wolves. He further explained a pack of five wolves have been killing his calves.

Crista Werthy, supports hunting, she is a pilot, and has thirteen years of camping and hunting experience. She is a writer on travel and promotes Idaho. She addressed the issue on the claim the wolves reintroduced to Idaho are a different species as originally found in Idaho. She disagrees with others claiming these wolves from Canada are more aggressive. She further claims that hunters who are unable to locate and hunt elk are out of shape physically and unable to get to the backcountry where the elk are located.

Ken Cole, Western Watershed Project, opposes this legislation, he believes the wolf population has declined from 2009, and raised concern over the Idaho Department of Fish and Game redefining the definition of a breeding pair. He asserted under the new definition a breeding pair could be two male wolves.

Brad Higgins, Idaho Cattlemen's Association, from Cottonwood, he is raising four children and a cow population. He believes the wolves create a significant threat to his family and livelihood. He said his cattle that are turned out to graze do not return. He states the cattle industry must keep the wolves under control for the industry's survival.

Ron Marguart, self, does not support this legislation and encourages usage of nonlethal methods for wolves.

Carl Lufkin, Rancher and Idaho Cattlemen's Association, lived in Lemhi County when the wolves were reintroduced in Idaho. He has seen the havoc that problem wolves have created on friends and neighbors. Ranchers want help to control animals that are ruining their livelihood. He said wolves are elusive, difficult to hunt down, and he has tried flashing lights made for predatory animals to no avail.

Gretchen Cotrell, self, opposes the legislation. She grew up on a dairy farm in Montana. She believes the country is in trouble from the world destroying wildlife. She further asserts that ranchers are raising animals that destroy the world and we have a responsibility to the earth and future of the world.

Russ Hendricks, Farm Bureau, spoke on behalf of 70,000 Farm Bureau members and supporters of **H 470**. Mr. Hendricks said the wolf count is an estimate and will unlikely be reduced by **H 470**, but perhaps will provide stability in the wolf population. Mr. Hendricks claimed each wolf eats sixteen elk per year and herds are dwindling, so wolves turn to livestock. Mr. Hendricks stated there are increased incidents on private property and the federal government won't provide assistance. Farm Bureau members are willing to spend more to help address the problem with wolves.

Juanita Hepler, self, opposes the legislation and believes there are more humane ways to manage wolves and address the issues of ranchers.

Wyatt Prescott, Idaho Cattlemen's Association, supports this legislation in reducing the wolf population in an effort of necessity and sustainability.

Matt Thompson, livestock producer, fully supports this legislation. He asserts wolves have chewed 40 of his calves, it was devastating and very emotional. He informed Wildlife Services and, as a result, seven wolves were killed in one day. He claims the problem stopped, but the livestock producers need tools and assistance in addressing this problem.

Zachery Jones, self, is a fifth generation Idahoan, a hunter, and pro-wolf. He spends time in the woods with his two-year-old child, raising the child to be respectful of wildlife, and to cherish what we have in Idaho. He doesn't think wolves are a problem. He urges representatives not to pass this legislation.

Fauna Tomlinson, self, believes that hate and killing are not the answer. She asserts the wolf population is down 30%. She offered to provide LED lights to scare the wolves away from livestock areas and to add nonlethal methods in the program. She claims that Idaho has a hate state reputation. She said Idaho is 47th in education and the money could be better spent.

John Robinson, self, grateful to have the opportunity to testify today and he is with the Idaho Conservation League. He stated he has a long history with wolf management and feels a new board is redundant and referred to the Animal Damage Control Board. He expressed his concern regarding a specific board designed to target an individual species. He believes that sportsmen are effective at reducing wolf numbers. He said he opposes **H 470**.

Sean Gould is from McCall, Idaho and opposes **H 470**. He believes Idaho is taking a step backwards in centralizing the wolf war.

Dar Olberding, Fish and Game Advisory Committee, said he has spent years in this process towards legislation and this legislation provides compromise between livestock and sportsmen. He feels the federal government is responsible and should pay for the damages to ranchers from the wolves.

Morgan Zedalis, raised in Idaho and works for the Forest Service. She believes there are healthy elk herds and funding for this legislation does not represent her interests.

Stan Boyd, Idaho Wool Growers Association, applauds **Sen. Brackett** and **Rep. Gibbs** for their efforts to provide balance in this issue. He states he is willing to raise taxes on himself to fund management of the wolf population as it is now a cost of doing business for him. He believes the federal government left the state with a problem and he supports this legislation.

Anne Hausrath, self, opposes this legislation as she believes it does not target the problem.

Larry Schoen, Blaine County Commissioner, has experienced wolves on a personal and professional level and had the second largest depredation claim. He opposes this legislation as he believes we should pursue and promote nonlethal management practices rather than the reactive approach of chasing down wolves after they have killed livestock.

Stephen Goodson, Governor's Special Assistant, supports **H 470**.

Jennifer Pierce, self, opposes the legislation and encourages coexistence. She stated wolves may not be responsible for the elk decline and would like a study performed. She recommends spending the money on education.

Larry Thorngren, wildlife photographer, needs wild wolves to photograph. He indicated he markets his photos worldwide and has received requests from *National Geographic*.

Leroy Atwood, Fish and Game Advisory Committee, stated federal money is declining and Idaho needs to maintain the funding level.

MOTION: **Rep. Raybould** made a motion to send **H 470** to the floor with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

ROLL CALL VOTE Roll call vote was requested. **Motion carried by a vote of 14 AYE and 4 NAY.** **Voting in favor** of the motion: **Reps. Gibbs, Wood(35), Barrett, Moyle, Eskridge, Raybould, Andrus, Shepherd, Wood(27) Boyle, Vander Woude, Gestrin, Anderson and Chairman Denney.** **Voting in opposition** to the motion: **Reps. Miller, Pence, Erpelding and Rubel.** **Rep. Gibbs** will sponsor the bill on the floor.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

Representative Denney
Chair

Jennifer Smith
Secretary