

Minutes of the Meeting of the
Arizona Game and Fish Commission
Friday, August 7, 2015
Saturday, August 8, 2015
Little America Hotel
2515 E. Butler Ave.
Flagstaff, Arizona 86004

PRESENT: (Commission)

(Director and Staff)

Chairman Kurt R. Davis
Commissioner Edward "Pat" Madden
Commissioner James R. Ammons
Commissioner James S. Zieler
Commissioner Robert E. Mansell

Director Larry D. Voyles
Deputy Director Ty E. Gray
Assistant Attorney General Jim Odenkirk
Assistant Attorney General Linda Pollock

Chairman Davis called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and led those present through the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence in honor and remembrance of the 19 Granite Mountain Hotshots who gave their lives at Yarnell Hill two years ago, and in honor of the five U.S. service members killed by a gunman in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The Commission and Director Voyles introduced themselves and Director Voyles introduced his staff. This meeting followed an agenda revision #1 dated August 5, 2015.

Special Recognitions and Commendations

Commissioner Madden presented a Commission Commendation of Achievement to Coconino Sportsmen's Hunter Education Group for outstanding efforts in keeping the hunting tradition alive for more than five decades.

Chairman Davis presented Department employee Steve Rosenstock with a Commission Certificate of Appreciation in recognition for his outstanding work on federal land management planning processes.

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1. Call to the Public

Joe Miller, NLC Representative - AZ, Gila Trout Chapter, Trout Unlimited: Presented the Commission with an advance copy of the Lees Ferry Recreational Trout Fishery Management Recommendations, the voice of Lees Ferry Recreational Anglers, Guides, and Businesses. The document focuses on how to maintain and enhance a wild self-sustaining blue ribbon rainbow trout fishery at Lees Ferry that does not adversely affect the native aquatic community and to provide a dependable high quality recreational trout fishery that sustains local businesses and the economy of the area.

Bob Thorpe, Arizona State Representative, Flagstaff: Welcomed the Commission to Flagstaff; Expressed concerns about the Grand Canyon National Watershed and supports the

Commission's position regarding it; If it becomes a National Monument, management of those lands will be extremely difficult for the State of Arizona.

Mike Sorum, from Scottsdale, Arizona: Regarding the purchase of Apache trout eggs, he fully supports the expansion of native fisheries; suggested a voluntary fee with licenses to go towards native fisheries.

Ralph Baierlein, Flagstaff resident: Regarding the proposed boundary of the Walnut Canyon National Conservation Area and proposed legislation, requested the Commission discuss the matter at its September meeting; If the legislation is consistent with the Commission's goals, he recommended preliminary support for the legislation, subject to reconsideration after the bill has actually been introduced in Congress.

Tom Mackin, Flagstaff resident: Expressed concerns about growth issues adjacent to the existing Walnut Canyon National Monument; Encouraged the Commission to work closely with the supporters of the proposed legislation for the Walnut Canyon National Conservation Area.

Bobby Wright, President, Arizona Catfish Conservation Association (ACCA): The ACCA does not support any method of take on any sportfish in the State of Arizona other than rod and reel (no bowfishing).

Bill Reno, Vice President, ACCA: Reiterated Bobby Wright's comments in opposition to bowfishing; ACCA, along with other organizations, are doing research related to the potential effects of bowfishing; there is no catch and release with bowfishing.

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2. Consent Agenda

The following items were grouped together and noticed as consent agenda items to expedite action on routine matters, and/or they were previously presented to the Commission as a "first read" item. Director Voyles presented these items to the Commission and no items were pulled for discussion. The Commission took action on the following:

a. Cooperative Agreement Regarding Apache Trout Eggs between the Arizona Game and Fish Commission and the White Mountain Apache Tribe

Presenter: Chris Cantrell, Fisheries Branch Chief

The Department presented a proposed 10 year Cooperative Agreement with the White Mountain Apache Tribe, institutionalizing a partnership on recreational fishing and recovery through the annual transfer of Apache Trout eggs. Commission action is required under the provisions of A.R.S. § 17-231 B.7 to enter into agreements with other entities for the operation of wildlife facilities and the conduct of related wildlife management. The Department and White Mountain Apache Tribe (Tribe) have developed a framework to further institutionalize a long term cooperative recreational fishing partnership between the two agencies. The terms of the agreement are as follows:

- The Department will pay the Tribe Ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) annually for a 10 year period.
- The Tribe will supply 160,000 Apache Trout eggs annually to the Department for a 10 year period.

If executed, the agreement will bring to a close a multi-year effort of which the Department and the Tribe have sought to secure recreational and recovery fishing opportunities for Apache Trout into the future.

The Department recommends THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR, AS SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION, TO EXECUTE, AND AMEND AS NECESSARY A COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE COMMISSION AND THE WHITE MOUNTAIN APACHE TRIBE AS PRESENTED.

b. Approve License Agreement Renewal with the City of Show Low at the Fool Hollow Lake Wildlife Area

Presenter: Joyce Francis, Habitat Branch Chief

The Department presented a proposed renewal of a License Agreement with the City of Show Low for development and maintenance of a hiking trail at the Fool Hollow Lake Wildlife Area. The Commission currently has an agreement with the City of Show Low for the development and maintenance of a hiking trail located at the Fool Hollow Lake Wildlife Area and within the City of Show Low. The trail will be part of the White Mountain Trail System and will allow for more beneficial use of the area by residents and visitors to the area. The Department and City determined that maintenance and management of this trail can be more efficiently performed by the City since the trail will be within the City boundaries. Lack of funds precluded construction of the trail under the current agreement. The Department and City still feel it is a worthwhile project and would like to renew the agreement, which expires in September, so that the trail can be built should funds become available.

The Department recommends THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE RENEWAL OF A LICENSE AGREEMENT WITH THE CITY OF SHOW LOW FOR DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF A HIKING TRAIL AT THE FOOL HOLLOW LAKE WILDLIFE AREA, AND AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR, AS SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION, TO EXECUTE THE AGREEMENT AS RECOMMENDED OR APPROVED BY THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

c. Approve License Agreement Renewal with the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside for a Trail

Presenter: Joyce Francis, Habitat Branch Chief

The Department presented a proposed renewal of a License Agreement with the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside to maintain and manage a trail at the Pinetop Regional Office. The Commission currently has a license agreement with the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside (Town) for the management and maintenance of a trail at the Pinetop Regional Office. A license agreement is necessary for the Town to continue to maintain and manage the trail on Commission owned property. The original agreement began in 1994. The current agreement expires August, 2015.

Therefore, the Department is requesting authorization to renew the agreement. The terms and conditions would remain the same.

The Department recommends THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE RENEWAL OF A LICENSE AGREEMENT WITH THE TOWN OF PINETOP-LAKESIDE TO MAINTAIN AND MANAGE A TRAIL AT THE PINETOP REGIONAL OFFICE, AND AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR, AS SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION, TO EXECUTE THE AGREEMENT AS RECOMMENDED OR APPROVED BY THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

d. Approve License Agreement Renewal with the Federal Aviation Administration for the Purpose of Maintaining a Telecommunications Navigation Beacon

Presenter: Joyce Francis, Habitat Branch Chief

The Department presented a request to renew a License Agreement with the FAA for the purpose of maintaining a telecommunications navigation beacon on the Three Points Shooting Range. The Commission currently has an agreement with the FAA authorizing them to maintain a telecommunications navigation beacon and telecommunications facilities located on the Three Points Shooting Range located in southern Arizona. The Department has had an agreement with the FAA for this purpose since 1981. The current agreement expires in September of 2015 and the FAA has expressed a desire to renew it. Therefore, the Department is requesting authorization to renew the agreement. The terms and conditions would remain the same and the agreement has been vetted through the AGO, ADOA and the BLM.

The Department recommends THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE RENEWAL OF A LICENSE AGREEMENT WITH THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAINTAINING A TELECOMMUNICATIONS NAVIGATION BEACON ON THREE POINTS SHOOTING RANGE AND AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR, AS SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION, TO EXECUTE THE AGREEMENT AS RECOMMENDED OR APPROVED BY THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

e. Approve Arizona State Land Department Grazing Lease and Sublease Renewal and Associated Cooperative Agreement Renewal at the White Mountain Grasslands Wildlife Area

Presenter: Joyce Francis, Habitat Branch Chief

The Department presented a renewal of an Arizona State Land Department grazing lease and sublease, and an associated cooperative agreement with MLY Ranch and X Diamond Ranch for grazing at the White Mountain Grasslands Wildlife Area. The Commission holds an Arizona State Land Department grazing lease and sublease for approximately 8,150 acres that were acquired with the White Mountain Grasslands Wildlife Area. The grazing lease is subleased to the MLY Ranch and X Diamond Ranch, (adjacent landowners), to operate and maintain through a Cooperative Agreement. The Agreement describes the terms and conditions of the day-to-day operations of the grazing lease lands including development and maintenance of fences and development of water for livestock and wildlife purposes. The primary goal is to manage the wildlife area for wildlife and wildlife habitat while at the same time cooperating with the MLY

Ranch and X Diamond Ranch on the grazing lease. These livestock operators own and share additional common land, land access, water rights and grazing resources.

The Department recommends THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE RENEWAL OF AN ARIZONA STATE LAND DEPARTMENT GRAZING LEASE AND SUBLEASE AT THE WHITE MOUNTAIN GRASSLANDS WILDLIFE AREA AND AN ASSOCIATED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT WITH MLY RANCH AND X DIAMOND RANCH, AND AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR, AS SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION, TO EXECUTE THE AGREEMENTS AS RECOMMENDED OR APPROVED BY THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

Motion: Mansell moved and Madden seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS A, B, C, D, AND E.

Vote: Unanimous

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3. Legislative Engagement and State and Federal Legislation

Presenter: Jorge Canaca, Legislative Liaison

Mr. Canaca provided a PowerPoint presentation and briefing on the current status of selected state and federal legislative matters. The presentation included the following updates and Commission action:

State Legislative Update

The Department is forming a team to review 2016 legislative proposals by Department staff and the Commission. In September, the Department will present the vetted proposals to the Commission for direction, and will present proposals to the Governor's Office for review. In October and November, the Department and stakeholders will work together to draft language. In December, the Department will make a presentation to the Commission for final direction and will work to secure sponsors.

Potential 2016 Legislative Proposals:

- Fair Chase Title 17 changes and rulemaking exemption
- In-lieu fee Endowment Authority
- Interstate Compacts UT/NM
- Donation of game meat
- Exemptions from Use Tax (Purchase of commercially-produced live fish; fish feed used to grow fish; FDA-approved drugs/therapudents used to treat fish).

Congressional Update

H.R. 3173 – Sportsmen's Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Enhancement Act

H.R. 3173 was introduced July 23, 2015, by the House Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus leadership for the purpose of “enhancing hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreational opportunities.” This bill is similar to the Bipartisan Sportsmen’s Act and the SHARE Act which the Commission has supported.

Provisions include:

- National Fish Habitat Initiative Sense of Congress
- Making Public Lands Public authorization
- Federal Lands Transaction Facilitation Act reauthorization
- North American Wetlands Conservation Act reauthorization
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation reauthorization
- Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act reauthorization
- Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program Act reauthorization

The Department recommends that the Commission vote to support H.R. 3173.

S. 286 – Department of the Interior Tribal Self-Governance Act of 2015

Title II of S. 286 empowers the Secretary of the Interior with ability to delegate authorities to tribal entities to manage state fish and wildlife resource trust responsibilities on public lands. Under S. 286, the Secretary may enter into an agreement with Indian tribes to manage fish and wildlife programs on National Wildlife Refuges, National Park Service lands or BLM lands. Nothing in S. 286 preserves State authority over fish and wildlife, nor directs the Tribes to cooperate with the state fish and wildlife agency in managing those lands.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies have been involved at the national level and have issued a letter of concern. The Department has also contacted Arizona Congressional Delegation members and expressed concerns as well.

The Department recommends that the Commission vote to oppose S. 286.

Public Comment

The following members of the public addressed the Commission in opposition to a bill titled Mexican Wolf Transparency and Accountability Act proposed by Representative Gosar:

- Edwina Vogan
- Roxanne George
- Mike Sorum

Motion: Ammons moved and Zieler seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO SUPPORT H.R. 3173, SPORTSMEN’S CONSERVATION AND OUTDOOR RECREATION ENHANCEMENT ACT.

Vote: Unanimous

Motion: Mansell moved and Madden seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO OPPOSE S. 286, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR TRIBAL SELF-GOVERNANCE ACT OF 2015.

Vote: Unanimous

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4. Key Systems Development Initiatives

Presenter: Doug Cummings, Branch Chief, Information Systems

Mr. Cummings presented an overview of key systems development initiatives using a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation included future functionality for the Customer Portal, Portal Operations, online draw, and the development of other related systems driving data integration and the ability to deliver additional functionality and content into the Portal. The following information was included in the presentation:

Online Fall Draw Processing

- Draw results published 7/22/2015
- 88.5% of all applications were submitted online (Up from 82.1% prior year)
- During the draw period 5,471 Portal accounts were established and 58 “I Support Wildlife” subscriptions were purchased
- 114,534 total 2015 online draw applicants (15% Increase) versus 99,469 2014 online draw applicants
- 2015 vs 2014 (Effect of early draw application incentive) 2014, 36% prior to final week versus 2015, 42% prior to final week (8% Shift)
- 2015 Deadline Day: 24,961 applicants for the day; 3,632 between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m; 6,158 between 7:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m.

Key Systems Initiatives Schedule

- Re-write the online draw application system – Launch in August 2015
- Re-write online license sales – Launch January 2016
- Re-write online watercraft registration – Launch May 2016
- New Leadership Communication Tools targeted for September 2015
- Portal 2.0 – Tag Surrender – Launch December 2015
- Portal 3.0 – Launch June 1 2016
- Portal 4.0 – Paperless/Dealer Sales – Launch November 2017
- Game Data Management (GDMS):
 - 1.0 – Surveys – Launch October 2015
 - 2.0 – Hunter Questionnaires – Launch January 2016
- Fish Information System (FINS):
 - 2.0 – Hatchery Management System – Launch October 2015
 - 3.0 – Surveys – Launch June 2016
- Other Key Systems Initiatives:
 - Mobile License Verification – Launch February 2016
 - Event Customer Relationship Management – Initial Launch August 2015

- Multi Agency Document Exchange – Launch December 2015
- Department Reporting Platform – Launch July 2016
- Integrate GIS Projects Into This Schedule by October 2015

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Meeting recessed for a break at 9:07 a.m.

Meeting reconvened at 9:16 a.m.

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5. Wolf Briefing

Presenter: Jim deVos, Assistant Director, Wildlife Management Division

Mr. deVos provided a PowerPoint presentation that included an overview of the Mexican wolf reintroduction program, the Department's involvement, and the current status of Department activities and accomplishments. This update is provided to the Commission on a regular basis and includes all actions the Department has taken since the last Commission meeting to accomplish the direction provided by the Commission at the August 5, 2014 Commission Meeting. The update included an overview of why the Department is involved, Department contributions, successes to date, the importance of wild born wolves, and the deployment of new cross-fostering. The update also included the following:

Legal Activity Update

State of Arizona v. Jewell:

- On June 8, 2015, the State of Arizona filed suit against Secretary Jewell and the USFWS
- Arizona alleges the USFWS has unlawfully failed to develop a new recovery plan for the Mexican wolf that complies with the Endangered Species Act.

Center for Biological Diversity v. USFWS

- Plaintiffs filed an amended complaint on March 23, 2015, adding new ESA claims
- The USFWS filed an answer to the amended complaint on April 22
- Arizona Game and Fish filed a motion to intervene on April 15. On May 12, 2015, the court ordered New Mexico case (CV 15-00179) consolidated with this case
- On May 12, 2015, the court granted Arizona's motion to intervene
- On May 26, 2015, Arizona filed motion to dismiss
- On June 1, 2015, court order setting case management conference for July 9, 2015
- On June 8, 2015, federal defendants filed response taking no position on Arizona's motion to dismiss.

NM Cattle Growers Assn. v. USFWS

- USFWS has filed a motion to transfer the case from New Mexico to Arizona and consolidate with CBD v. USFWS
- Court granted the motion to transfer the case to the district court in Arizona
- Cases have common factual and legal issues
- On May 12, 2015, the court granted motion to consolidate with CBD v. USFWS.

Legislative Monitoring

SB1466, Livestock loss board; compensation fund, establishes a 9-member Livestock Loss Board to address the depredation of wolves on livestock operations:

- To date, Board has not been established
- In considerable discussion with Farm Service Administration, it appears as if funding can be made available for compensation for loss and avoidance measures; Law includes pay for presence.

Public Comment

The following members of the public were present and addressed the Commission or submitted comments in support of Mexican wolf recovery in Arizona; most generally disagreed with the Department's involvement and activities regarding Mexican wolf recovery and believed the best available science was not being used; most also believed there should be a substantial increase in wolf populations and expansion of the Mexican wolf recovery area:

- Chris Adams, representing self
- Joseph Catalano, Sierra Club
- Deborah DeWolfe, Grand Canyon Mexican Wolf Recovery
- Kathleen Cheatham, representing self
- Rosalind Switzer, Great Old Broads for Wilderness
- Giovanna Santoro, Mexicangraywolves.org
- Mike Sorum, representing self
- Donna Cassano, Grand Canyon Wildlands Council
- David Lash, representing self
- Patrick Andrews, representing self
- Jean Myers, representing self
- Roxane George, representing 5,500 people that signed a petition to the Commission in support of Mexican wolf recovery (on file)
- Ray Lumkuchler, representing self
- Mack Davis, Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project
- Kathy Ann Walsh, Co-leader, Great Old Broads for Wilderness
- Alicyn Gitlin, representing self
- Ralph Hess, representing self
- Sandy Bahr, Chapter Director, Sierra Club – Grand Canyon Chapter
- Carole Piszczek, representing self
- Toni Prothero, Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project Inc.
- Brook Michalik, representing self
- Susan Ash, representing self
- Melissa Ewing and Kaela Morgan, Girl Scout Troup 934
- Emily Renn, Executive Director, Grand Canyon Wolf Recovery Project
- Esther Ceballos/Julian Henelle, representing self
- Edwina Vogan, representing self

The following members of the public were present and addressed the Commission in support of the Department and Commission's activities and involvement relating to Mexican wolf recovery:

- Don Martin, Mohave Sportsman Club
- Jim Parks, President, Coconino County Farm Bureau & Cattle Growers
- Mike Schacht, representing self (teleconferenced from Region I Pinetop)
- Jim O'Haco, President, Arizona Cattle Growers Association

- Wink Crigler, X Diamond Ranch owner
- Vicki Parks, representing self
- Al Medina, Senior Ecologist/Consultant

The following members of the public were present and addressed the Commission in opposition to Mexican wolf recovery in Arizona:

- Bob Metcalf, representing self
- Cheryl Nagiller, Nagiller and Son's Ranch
- Gary Watson, Mohave County Supervisor, District #1, Mohave County
- Dallas Howell, representing self

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Meeting recessed for a break at 10:54 a.m.

Meeting reconvened at 11:01 a.m.

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5. Wolf Briefing (continued)

Presenter: Jim deVos, Assistant Director, Wildlife Management Division

At Chairman Davis' request, Mr. deVos briefed the Commission on the science used by the Department in making decisions related to Mexican wolf recovery. Peer review science is the goal standard and the Department is deeply involved in using peer review science. The Department is comprised of scientists and understands the science, and interacts with those that have differing viewpoints on wolf management. The Department is continually involved in trying to determine the best approach for wolf management and is currently developing a team of top scientist to help the Department shape the future of the wolf program in Arizona.

Commissioner Zieler asked about the pair of wolves released in 2015, including one of them being raised in captivity, and asked for an accurate account of the results of that release.

Mr. deVos stated that one of the concepts in 2015 was pairing a wolf in the wild with a wolf raised in captivity for the purpose of increasing genetics. This pair was released and stayed together for about 10 days. The male wandered widely and was located in a housing development. It was reported to have 3 close encounters with people, with the last encounter being a young child. After considerable discussion and attempts to capture the wolf, a lethal removal order was issued. This was the third similar event in attempting to form pair bonds and all three instances failed.

Mr. deVos added that the Arizona Game and Fish Department is the national leader in recovering endangered species. The Department is approaching recovery criteria for Sonoran pronghorn, and has played a significant role in the recovery of California condors, Gila trout, Apache trout, and black-footed ferrets, so the Department's efforts and track record for contributions to Arizona's endangered species is unrivaled. The Department has 50 staff members in the nongame program that are active in the recovery of a multitude of species, and are actively involved in keeping common species common.

Chairman Davis read the following statement into the record: “In the past, the Commission has delegated the authority to the Director to authorize releases of adult wolves into the wild at the ratio of one wolf released for every wolf that has been illegally killed. After reviewing the growth rate data today, and based on Department staff discussions with the Fish and Wildlife Service wolf program leaders that the releases in 2014 and 2015 were focused on improving genetics and not numerically needed for recovery, and in light of the potentially disastrous result from the 2015 release, it is clear to me that a new approach to releases is essential. Cross fostering is a proven method of genetic rescue without the adverse impacts associated with release of naïve adult wolves. I believe that it is essential to direct the Director of the Arizona Game and Fish Department to not allow any adult Mexican wolf that has been reared in captivity to be released into the wild. The risk to the program and to human safety is too great given the potential use of cross fostering for genetic rescue; an approach that although difficult, has been proven effective in many species including the red wolf. In turn, however, in recognition of the importance of genetic diversity, I believe the Commission should modify the prior direction given by the Commission allowing only one wolf released for each wolf illegally killed and authorize the Director to allow the release for cross fostering purposes up to six Mexican wolf pups each year. This would reduce the conflict that has been seen repeatedly when naïve wolves are released, yet greatly bolster the ability to enhance the genetics of the Mexican wolf population in Arizona.”

Motion: Davis moved and Zieler seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE CHAIRMAN DAVIS’ STATEMENT READ INTO THE RECORD TO MODIFY PRIOR COMMISSION DIRECTION THAT ALLOWS ONLY ONE WOLF RELEASED FOR EACH WOLF ILLEGALLY KILLED AND DIRECT THE DIRECTOR TO NOT ALLOW ANY ADULT MEXICAN WOLF THAT HAS BEEN REARED IN CAPTIVITY; AND TO AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR TO ALLOW THE RELEASE FOR CROSS FOSTERING PURPOSES UP TO SIX MEXICAN WOLF PUPS EACH YEAR.

Chairman Davis asked Mr. deVos for his thoughts on his statement.

Mr. deVos stated that the Department has seen successes with cross fostering and it has been key in recovering a number of species, including the red wolf. The Department’s experience in inserting two pups in cross fostering has been successful and those two pups are still alive. In comparison, introducing adult wolves into the wild the past three times has not provided any genetic rescue at all. The concept of cross fostering has sound basis in science. It will require a close working relationship between the USFWS and the Department to develop pups that are closer and more readily available. Cross fostering is the most effective tool for genetic diversity and recovery, and supports a sound wolf program in the American southwest.

Director Voyles agreed that cross fostering will be much more effective and manageable in being able to address genetic integrity.

Vote: Unanimous

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6. Annual Briefing on Research Branch Activities

Presenter: Esther Rubin, Research Branch Chief

Dr. Rubin provided a PowerPoint presentation and informational briefing on projects and activities of the Research Branch. The mission of the Research Branch is to conduct robust research and provide scientific information to inform and support the sound management and professional stewardship of Arizona's fish and wildlife resources, and to ensure the credibility of the Department's science. The Research Branch has three primary goals: 1) address the Department's programmatic management information needs with robust research, 2) inform wildlife management decisions by providing expertise, support, and data related to wildlife health, and 3) provide research findings, scientific expertise, guidance, and training to inform management decisions and activities, and sustain a skilled workforce. The Research Branch has three programs: Terrestrial Research, Aquatic Research and Wildlife Health. The Research Branch has twenty-four staff, six with MS degrees, five with PhD degrees and one with a DVM degree. This briefing included an overview of projects currently being addressed by the three programs as follows:

Terrestrial Research Projects:

- Biotic and Abiotic Factors Influencing Aspen
- Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Lions: A Study to Better Understand their Relationships
- A Framework for Estimating Elk Abundance in Arizona
- Habitat Use and Movements of Unit 12A Mule Deer
- Understanding Effects of Tree Group Size on Wildlife Abundance
- Protection and Improvement of Crucial Habitats on the Kaibab Plateau
- (New) Verde Valley Watershed River Otter Project

Aquatic Research Projects:

- Fate of Stocked Trout
- Razorback Sucker & Bonytail Chub Predator Recognition
- Camera-Based Angler Use
- Native Fish Rearing and Propagation
- Long-Term Fish Monitoring in the Grand Canyon
- Managing for the Blue Ribbon Trout Fishery at Lees Ferry
- Conserving Endangered Humpback Chub
- (New) An evaluation of factors that potentially influence hatchery trout survival and growth
- (New) An evaluation of mass production of native bait fish

Wildlife Health Projects:

- Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance Program
- Population Health Assessments
- Wildlife Mortality Investigations

The Research Branch is also very involved in transferring information through publications and reports, professional review of manuscripts, scientific review and input on Department products, training, assistance to other work units on monitoring and research design, participation in national and regional teams, workgroups, and associations, and collaboration with outside researchers.

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9. Approve License Agreement with Flood Control District of Maricopa County at Robbins Butte Wildlife Area

Presenter: Joyce Francis, Habitat Branch Chief

Ms. Francis briefed the Commission and requested approval of a License Agreement with the Flood Control District of Maricopa County (FCDMC) for placement of stream gages at Robbins Butte Wildlife Area. The FCDMC and US Geological Survey are using a new tool, Continuous Slope Area (CSA) stream gage, in conjunction with other new high-resolution tools, to advance the reliability and accuracy of traditional methods of measuring river flows for flood mitigation. To accomplish this, FCDMC will place CSA gages in various locations along the Gila River and has requested to place up to two gages on the Robbins Butte Wildlife Area. The gages are comprised of a sensor mounted on a pole that will protrude 18-24” above the stream bed, and be mounted four feet into the stream bed. Maintenance will be the responsibility of FCDMC. The study would last between two and five years. FCDMC will access the site to install and monitor the equipment via ATV from within the river bottom.

Motion: Madden moved and Mansell seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE A LICENSE AGREEMENT WITH THE FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT OF MARICOPA COUNTY FOR THE PLACEMENT OF STREAM GAGES AT ROBBINS BUTTE WILDLIFE AREA AND AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR, AS SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION, TO EXECUTE THE AGREEMENT AS RECOMMENDED OR APPROVED BY THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Vote: Unanimous

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10. Approve License Agreements at Tri-State Shooting Park and Usery Mountain Shooting Range

Presenter: Joyce Francis, Habitat Branch Chief

Ms. Francis briefed the Commission and requested approval of a Utility License Agreement for the operation and maintenance of electric power lines on the Commission-owned Tri-State Shooting Park and Usery Mountain Shooting Range. Electrical service or the extension of electrical service is necessary for operations at the Commission-owned Tri-State Shooting Park and Usery Mountain Shooting Range. UNS Electric, Inc. and SRP, respectfully, would enter into a license for construction, operation, and maintenance of electric poles and lines providing electricity at both ranges. The license would have a ten year term and be consistent and compatible with the operation of both ranges.

Motion: Mansell moved and Madden seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE A UTILITY LICENSE AGREEMENT AT TRI-STATE SHOOTING PARK AND USERY MOUNTAIN SHOOTING RANGE, AND AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR, AS

SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION, TO EXECUTE THE AGREEMENT AS RECOMMENDED OR APPROVED BY THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

Vote: Unanimous

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8. Request to Approve Final Rulemaking Amending R12-4-202, Disabled Veteran's License.

Presenter: John Bullington, Assistant Director Special Services

Mr. Bullington briefed the Commission and requested approval of a Notice of Final Rulemaking and Economic Impact Statement amending R12-4-202, Disabled Veterans License. The Department's Disabled Veteran's License was selected for the first wave of the Lean Transformation of Arizona State Government. The Department proposes to amend R12-4-202 to enact amendments developed as a result of working with the Transformation Office through the Permit Blitz process.

On April 7th, 2015, the Governor's office approved the Department's request to pursue rulemaking to amend R12-4-202 to allow the Department to accept a benefits letter issued by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or downloaded from their website as proof of eligibility and allow applicants to attest that application information is true and correct, instead of requiring a notarized signature. This proposed change will save both the applicant and Department time and resources.

The Commission approved the Notices of Rulemaking Docket Opening and Proposed Rulemaking at the May 2015 Commission Meeting. A public comment period occurred and no comments were received from the public. The Notice of Final Rulemaking and Economic Impact Statement were provided to the Commission prior to this meeting for review and consideration. If approved by the Commission and in accordance with the exemption authorized under item #4 of Executive Order 2012-03 State Regulatory Review, Moratorium and Streamlining to Promote Job Creation and Retention, the Department will submit the rulemaking to the Governor's Regulatory Review Council (G.R.R.C.) for review and placement on a future agenda.

Motion: Zieler moved and Madden seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE THE NOTICE OF FINAL RULEMAKING AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT AMENDING R12-4-202, DISABLED VETERAN'S LICENSE.

Vote: Unanimous

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14. Approve Memorandum of Agreement with Wind Cave National Park for the Translocation of Bison to Raymond Wildlife Area.

Presenter: Craig McMullen, Regional Supervisor, Flagstaff

Mr. McMullen provided the Commission with a PowerPoint presentation and request to approve a Memorandum of Agreement between the Department and Wind Cave National Park for the purpose of establishing a partner Bison Conservation Herd on Raymond Wildlife Area. The goal of this Memorandum of Agreement is to facilitate the establishment of a Conservation Herd of Wind Cave National Park (WICA) lineage bison at Raymond Wildlife Area (RWA). Like the current RWA bison herd, the WICA lineage at RWA would provide intrinsic value to Arizonans as well as hunting and wildlife viewing recreation.

Evidence suggests that additional conservation and management efforts are needed to ensure the long-term health of the Plains Bison as a species. Generally, bison herds are threatened by small herd size and cattle gene introgression. There is currently a multi-partner effort to expand the effective breeding population of the WICA bison lineage to a level that will be genetically viable. The WICA lineage is currently managed at more than one geographically separate location. By managing a portion of that herd, Arizona can contribute the national Plains Bison conservation effort. Bison at WICA are considered to be of a particularly valuable genetic lineage. The WICA lineage contains high levels of genetic variation and is among only four public herds known where there is a good probability of genetic purity. Periodic transfers of small numbers of individual bison between the WICA and RWA herds would facilitate genetic exchange and promote long-term conservation of the species.

Upon approval of this Memorandum of Agreement, the Department would manage toward removal of the existing bison through hunting at RWA prior to the fall of 2017. The Department would then work with WICA to facilitate the translocation of approximately 60 live bison to RWA during the fall of 2017. This Agreement will facilitate cooperative work to expand and disperse the extant known genetically diverse bison genome within the original range of Plains Bison and meet Commission goals for management of bison in Arizona. The objectives of the Commission would be to 1) to maintain bison populations at levels which provide maximum and diverse recreational opportunities while avoiding adverse impacts to the habitat, 2) to establish an ecologically restored Conservation Herd at RWA using WICA Plains Bison as the source herd, and (3) to support the long-term conservation of genetically diverse bison of the WICA lineage.

RWA has the infrastructure necessary to manage WICA bison without threat of interbreeding with bison from other lineages or cattle. The Department plans to use its Commission-owned and state-leased grazing capacity to manage the herd size at RWA within the habitat capacity.

The bison currently managed at RWA provide intrinsic value to Arizonans as well as hunting and wildlife viewing recreation. They are considered native wildlife within their historic range. They are characterized by high cattle gene introgression. Their value to Arizonans is not diminished by the degree to which cattle gene introgression has been detected. Replacement of the current RWA herd with bison of the WICA lineage is logistically and financially feasible, will enable the Commission to contribute to the national effort to conserve the WICA lineage, and will provide the same intrinsic and recreational values to Arizonans and the public at large.

Commissioner Zieler asked if we would be losing anything of value with the harvest of the Raymond Ranch herd if we were to go forward with this.

Mr. McMullen stated that all lineages are valuable and the lineage at the Raymond Ranch is the same lineage as the House Rock herd. Arizona's current bison lineage chronicle an interesting element of the history of bison conservation. At the same time, while managing the herd at House Rock, we have this opportunity to contribute to the national bison conservation effort through the conservation of the exceptional WICA lineage. In the end, the Department will be able to provide the same intrinsic values to the State of Arizona, the same recreational opportunities, and we will have two pointed stories about bison conservation in the country and in Arizona.

Public Comment

Kit Metzger, Flying M Ranch, neighbor to Raymond Ranch: Thanked the Department for being good neighbors, but also expressed concerns about herd health; she would like to be reassured that there are no health issues and that quarantine measures, if necessary, are adhered to, and that the infrastructure at Raymond Ranch will be strong enough to hold them.

Mr. McMullen stated that the Department has built a 100-acre holding pasture with an electric fence to hold the incoming bison. Disease testing will be done by the state veterinarian and the Department veterinarian, and certificates of inspection will be provided for transport.

The Department will provide Ms. Metzger with copies of the health inspection documents.

Motion: Zieler moved and Madden seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE A MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT AND WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK FOR THE PURPOSE OF ESTABLISHING A PLAINS BISON CONSERVATION HERD AT THE COMMISSION-OWNED RAYMOND WILDLIFE AREA IN NORTHERN ARIZONA.

Vote: Unanimous

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17. Executive Session

The Commission voted to meet in Executive Session in accordance with A.R.S. § 38-431.03 (A)(3) and (4) for the purpose of discussion and consultation with legal counsel.

Motion: Madden moved and Mansell seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION.

Vote: Unanimous

The Commission had a working lunch during Executive Session

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Meeting recessed for lunch at 12:15 p.m.

Meeting reconvened at 1:45 p.m.

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7. Sonoran Desert Tortoise Briefing

Presenter: Mike Rabe, Nongame Wildlife Branch Chief

Mr. Rabe provided a PowerPoint presentation and briefing on the current status of the proposed listing of the Sonoran desert tortoise. The Sonoran desert tortoise is due for a proposed listing decision by September 30, 2015. Currently, the Department is awaiting the final Species Status Assessment (SSA). The Department provided comments on the draft SSA in July, 2015. The SSA does not directly address listing. Included in this presentation was a briefing on Conservation Agreements for Candidates for listing. The Department has recently entered into a Candidate Conservation Agreement for Sonoran desert tortoise (2015) with multiple state and federal agencies to further advance the conservation of the Sonoran desert tortoise. Maps of prime Sonoran desert tortoise habitat and distribution, and Arizona lands covered under the Candidate Conservation Agreement were provided.

* * * * *

15. Hearings on License Revocations for Violation of Game and Fish Codes and Civil Assessments for the Illegal Taking and/or Possession of Wildlife

Presenter: Gene Elms, Law Enforcement Branch Chief

Record of these proceedings is maintained in a separate minutes book in the Director's Office.

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Meeting recessed for a break at 3:25 p.m.

Meeting reconvened at 3:45 p.m.

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16. Rehearing Request Regarding Previous License Revocation/Civil Assessment.

Presenter: Gene F. Elms, Law Enforcement Branch Chief

Mr. Elms briefed the Commission on a rehearing request by Samuel Cummings regarding the revocation of his license privileges. On December 9, 2014, Mr. Cummings was convicted in the Williams Justice Court for discharging a firearm within ¼ mile of an occupied structure, take wrong sex (Bull Elk) and possess unlawfully taken wildlife (Bull Elk). On April 10, 2015, the Commission revoked Mr. Cummings's hunting, fishing and trapping licenses for a period of five years, imposed a civil assessment of \$1,500.00 and further required him to complete a Hunter Education Course before obtaining any license(s) to take wildlife in the State of Arizona. Mr. Cummings has requested a rehearing of this matter and decision because he feels as though his inexperience and lack of hunter education/safety helped lead to his poor choices that were made that day. Mr. Cummings was notified of this re-hearing by certified mail. The Commission was provided with all documents related to this case for review and consideration.

Mr. Cummings was not present, but sent a letter to the Commission stating that he was unable to attend and requested leniency in that his revocation time be reduced.

Motion: Madden moved and Zieler seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO DENY SAMUEL CUMMINGS' REHEARING REQUEST.

Vote: Aye - Madden, Ammons, Zieler
Nay - Davis, Mansell
Passed 3 to 2

Chairman Davis explained for the record that he was willing to rehear the case because the Commission had a hearing earlier today related to shooting within a quarter mile of a building and was fairly lenient by comparison.

* * * * *

11. Update on Tonto National Forest Travel Management Planning

Presenter: Tim Holt, Field Supervisor – Region VI

Mr. Holt provided a PowerPoint presentation and update regarding the current status and the Department's involvement with the Tonto National Forest travel management planning process. The presentation provided a summary of travel management across federal lands in Arizona, including a comparison of the current planning status, motorized big game retrieval, dispersed camping, and overall motorized access. The presentation included the following:

There are four primary concerns of the Commission and Department:

- The level of Department involvement in the planning process
- Reasonable level of motorized big game retrieval
- Reasonable motorized access (defined as within one mile of a designated road) across a particular planning area such as a national forest
- Reasonable motorized dispersed camping opportunities.

Current status of motorized dispersed camping on Forest Service lands:

- Camping corridors range from 30 feet to 300 feet
- Camping corridors include all roads, some roads, one side of some roads, and portions of other roads
- Designated spur roads/areas, designated spur roads with corridors
- Percentage of a particular Forest open to dispersed camping ranges from 25% – 95%.

Current status of motorized dispersed camping on BLM lands:

- All Field Office have camping corridors of 100 feet from designated roads
- Four of eight field offices include designated spur roads in addition to the 100 foot camping corridor.

The Tonto National Forest Model:

The Department assisted the Tonto National Forest by identifying a technological advancement for geospatial mobile data collection on smartphones – the Collector App from ESRI. The

Department mobilized personnel to assist the Forest to collect motorized dispersed campsite data over approximately nine months. Data was collected and transmitted entirely on smartphones, downloaded into GIS geodatabase, analyzed, interpreted, and given to the Forest. The 100 foot corridor captured approximately 60% of existing campsites, which shows 100 foot it is not adequate to meet existing recreational demand. The 300 foot corridor included approximately 90% of inventoried sites, but essentially, the public would be allowed to travel 300 foot (cross-country travel) from every road and motorized trail for camping purposes.

The Camping Corridor Problem:

- Neither the 100 foot or 300 foot camping corridor included enough existing campsites to meet the request of the Department
- Camping corridors essentially allow cross country travel within that corridor, the opposite intent of the Travel Management Rule
- The USFWS has concerns with potential negative effects to T&E species and the Sonoran desert tortoise (candidate species)
- The Forest and State Historic Preservation Office has expressed concerns with cultural clearances for such large tracts of land.

A Possible Solution from the Tonto National Forest Model:

The Department and the Tonto National Forest discussed that a solution may be to eliminate the 300 foot corridor, maintain the 100 foot corridor for camping/parking, and designate spur roads to existing campsites beyond the 100 foot corridor for camping. The data shows that this would result in approximately 94 additional miles of spur roads added to the road system (instead of 336,000 acres affected with 300 foot corridor). Each spur road would be designated open on the map and signed open on the ground and likely on smartphone motor vehicle use map. This would be more acceptable to resource specialists from the Forest and USFWS and minimal change to the existing condition. It would also likely meet one facet of the overall Commission travel management policy.

The Commission was in consensus for the Department to move forward in discussions with the Tonto National Forest Model of 100 foot with spur roads, and to pursue this model with the other National Forests, with the understanding that the other components of an effective travel management plan are still on the table.

* * * * *

12. Approval of Revised Commission Policy A2.18, Multiple-Use Management of Public Lands.

Presenter: Kent Komadina, Special Assistant to the Director

Mr. Komadina briefed the Commission on revised Commission policy A2.18, Multiple-Use Management of Public Lands. The policy has been revised to increase clarity and understanding.

The Commission was in consensus to place this on the consent agenda for the next regular Commission meeting.

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13. Approval of Amended Commission Policy A2.29, Undercover Operations Outside of Title 17 and Title 5

Presenter: Jim Hinkle, Assistant Director Field Operations Division

Mr. Hinkle briefed the Commission on the amended Commission policy A2.29, Undercover Operations Outside of Title 17 and Title 5. The policy is amended to update language relating to requests for special operation assistance outside of Title 17 and 5. In addition, the procedures contained within the policy were moved to the Department's Law Enforcement Manual.

The Commission was in consensus to place this on the consent agenda for the next regular Commission meeting.

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18. Litigation Report

Assistant Attorney General Jim Odenkirk addressed the Commission in regards to an action item that came out of Executive Session at this meeting today that needs Commission approval. There was a lawsuit filed on July 2, 2015 by the WildEarth Guardians and other groups against Director Ashe and the USFWS. The lawsuit is a challenge to the Mexican wolf 10(j) revised rule. The rule is a product that the Department and Commission support and the lawsuit challenges many aspects that the Department was actively involved with including into the final rule. The recommendation is for the Commission to vote to approve the intervention into that lawsuit on behalf of the USFWS.

Motion: Ammons moved and Madden seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO DIRECT LEGAL STAFF TO INTERVENE ON BEHALF OF THE USFWS IN THE LAWSUIT BY WILDEARTH GUARDIANS AND OTHER GROUPS VS. USFWS REGARDING THE MEXICAN WOLF 10(J) REVISED RULE.

Vote: Unanimous

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19. Approval of Minutes and Signing of Minutes

Motion: Madden moved and Zieler seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM JUNE 12-13, 2015.

Vote: Unanimous

The Commission signed the minutes following approval.

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20. Director and Commissioner Comments

The Commission was in consensus to waive this agenda item.

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35. Executive Session (continued)

The Commission voted to meet in Executive Session in accordance with A.R.S. § 38-431.03 (A)(3) and (4) for the purpose of discussion and consultation with legal counsel.

Motion: Madden moved and Zieler seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION.

Vote: Unanimous

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Chairman Davis adjourned this meeting for the day.

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Meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

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Meeting reconvened Saturday at 8:00 a.m.

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Chairman Davis called the meeting back to order and led those present through the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by introductions.

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1. Call to the Public

There were no requests from the public to speak.

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2. Consideration of Proposed Commission Order 21 and 22 for the 2015–2016 Hunting Season.

Presenter: Anis Aoude, Small Game Management Supervisor

Mr. Aoude presented the Commission with a PowerPoint presentation and briefly reviewed the Department’s recommended changes for Commission Order 21 (waterfowl) and Commission Order 22 (snipe), establishing seasons and season dates, bag and possession limits, and open

areas for 2015–2016. A detailed description of Department proposals were provided to the Commission prior to this meeting for review and consideration and were available for public review at Department offices and online. The information provided included the following:

Commission Order 21 – Waterfowl

Robust waterfowl populations are forecast this year due to good carryover from last year and favorable water conditions on the prairies and in most of the Intermountain West. Production of mallards in the coastal regions of the Pacific Flyway remains strong. Because of this, the prescription for the Pacific Flyway is a Liberal season.

Season frameworks for the Pacific Flyway are:

1. Liberal, 107 day season, 7 bird bag limit;
2. Moderate, 86 day season, 7 bird bag limit;
3. Restrictive, 86 day season, 4 bird bag limit.

Management plans for pintail, canvasback, redhead, and scaup prescribe bag limits and seasons for those species separate from the above frameworks. Despite good conditions overall for ducks, the long-term average population size for these 4 species remains below the goals outlined in their management plans. There was no change in frameworks from last year; pintail, redheads and canvasback will have a 2 bird daily bag limit. Scaup will have a 3 bird daily bag limit and an 86 day season.

The Department recommends adopting the Liberal package with a daily bag limit of 7 ducks and mergansers, including no more than 2 female mallards, 2 pintails, 2 canvasback, 3 scaup, and 2 redheads. For scaup, the season length is 86 days, which may be split according to applicable zones/split duck hunting configurations approved for Arizona. Recommended goose bag limits are no more than 10 white geese (snow, including blue and Ross' geese) and 4 dark geese (Canada and white-fronted). Recommended possession limits for waterfowl 3 times the daily bag limits. The waterfowl season has different opening and closing dates for the mountain and desert zones. Federal frameworks do not allow the general waterfowl season to extend beyond January 25. However, junior hunts may occur into February.

Liberal Package

	<u>Mountain Zone</u>	<u>Desert Zone</u>
Juniors-Only	Sep 26– Sep 27, 2015	Jan 30 – Jan 31, 2016
Falconry-Only	Sep 28 – Oct. 1, 2015	Jan 25 – Jan 28, 2016
General Waterfowl	Oct. 2, 2015 – Jan. 10, 2016	Oct. 16, 2015 – Jan. 24, 2016
Scaup	Oct. 17, 2015 – Jan. 10, 2016	Oct. 31, 2015 – Jan. 24, 2106

The Mountain and Desert Zones in Arizona are defined by unit within the Federal Register as follows: Desert (South) Zone: Those portions of Units 6 and 8 in Yavapai County, and Units 10 and 12B–45. Mountain (North) Zone: Units 1–5, those portions of Units 6 and 8 within Coconino County, and Units 7, 9, and 12A. Essentially, the North Zone is in the mountainous, high elevation areas of Arizona; the South Zone is in the lowland, desert areas.

Commission Order 22 – Common Snipe

The Department recommends that the Commission approve a general snipe season with the 101 days and limits of 8 snipe per day and 24 in possession as allowed by the Service for Pacific Flyway states. Seasons for snipe are recommended to run concurrent with the general waterfowl seasons in each of the state's zones.

Motion: Madden moved and Zieler seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE, SUBJECT TO FINAL FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS, COMMISSION ORDER 21 – WATERFOWL AND COMMISSION ORDER 22 – SNIPE AS PRESENTED.

Vote: Unanimous

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3. Consideration of Proposed Commission Orders 5, 6, 8, and 9, for Spring 2016 Hunting Seasons.

Presenter: Amber A. Munig, Big Game Management Supervisor

Ms. Munig presented the Commission with a PowerPoint presentation and briefly reviewed the Department's recommended changes for Commission Orders 5, 6, 8, and 9 (spring turkey, spring javelina, spring buffalo, and spring bear) establishing seasons and season dates, annual bag limits, permit numbers, and open areas for spring 2016. A detailed description of Department proposals were provided to the Commission prior to this meeting for review and consideration. The recommendations were also posted on the Department website and press releases were provided to let the public know of their availability. The information provided included the following:

The Commission provided the Department with direction through the hunt guidelines approved in September 2013. The proposed Commission Orders were formulated in accordance with that guidance and any deviation is noted in the species-specific summaries below.

Commission Order 5 – Spring Turkey

For 2016, spring limited-weapon-shotgun-shooting-shot seasons are recommended to increase by 192 permits statewide for a total of 5,016. Units 1 and 27 again experienced high hunt success, indicating healthy spring turkey populations following the 2011 Wallow Fire. Most spring seasons permits are recommended during stratified seasons occurring April 22–28 and May 6–19 or April 29–May 19, 2016.

Spring seasons are recommended for Gould's turkeys in Units 29 and 30A, 31, 32, 33, 34A, 35A, and 35B. Gould's turkey permit numbers are recommended at 63, a 1-permit increase from last year. Unit 33 is recommended for the permit increase. Unit 33 is split into a north and south hunt; the Unit 33 North hunt would continue as a stratified season with 5 permits in each hunt. The Unit 33 South hunt is recommended as an archery only hunt from April 22–May 19, 2016 with 2 permits (an increase of 1).

The Department recommends no change to permits in the stratified seasons in Unit 13B (north of Wolfhole-Jacobs Well Road) for the Rio Grande subspecies at 2 permits in each hunt.

Nonpermit limited-weapon-shotgun-shooting-shot-seasons for youth-only are recommended in Units 1, 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, 7, 8, 10, 12A, and 27. These permits would be unlimited in number and could be purchased over-the-counter. Unit 6B youth harvest exceeded 35% of the total spring turkey harvest; Unit 6B is recommended as a permitted hunt with 60 permits. For permitted spring juniors-only seasons, the Department recommends 370 permits in Units 3C, 6A, 6B, and 23. This is a 60-permit increase from last year. Season dates for the juniors-only season are recommended to be April 15–21 and May 6–19, 2016.

Over-the-counter permits are recommended for archery spring turkey hunts in Units 1, 4A, 4B, 6A, 12A, 23, and 27. Archery seasons are recommended to occur May 6–19, 2016. Preliminary data indicates 0 turkeys were harvested during the archery over-the-counter season in 2015.

Commission Order 6 – Spring Javelina

The Department recommends continuing the annual bag limit of 2 for javelina in 2016. The recommended bag limit would allow for only 1 javelina to be taken with a permit for a given hunt number; subsequent permits would only be issued for a separate hunt number.

Permits (percentages) recommended for spring 2016 include 11,455 (41.6%) general, 5,480 (19.9%) HAM, 9,450 (34.3%) archery, and 1,145 (4.2%) youth-only. This is a 25-permit decrease for general, 60-permit increase for HAM, 50-permit decrease archery, and no change for youth-only. When considering the 780 fall youth-only permits plus the 645 javelina companion tags to deer hunts authorized by the Commission for fall 2015, this brings the total allocation of juniors-only permits to 8.9% of the total permits recommended.

Archery seasons are recommended to occur during January 1–21, 2016, youth-only seasons during January 22–31, 2016, HAM seasons during February 5–15, 2016, and general seasons during February 19–25, 2016. Over-the-counter permits are recommended for archery hunts in Units 1–5, 7, 9, 11M, 25M, 26M, and 38M. Season dates for Units 1–5, 7, 9, and 11M correspond with other archery javelina season dates of January 1–21, 2016. For Units 25M, 26M, and 38M, the season is recommended to overlap the January and December archery deer over-the-counter seasons and run from January 1-31, 2016 and December 9-31, 2016. A yearlong general season with over-the-counter permits is also recommended for January 1–December 31, 2016 in the Mohawk Valley Hunt Area in Unit 41.

Commission Order 8 – Spring Bison

The Department recommends 30 any bison permits for the House Rock herd for spring 2016, with season dates from January 1–June 30, 2016. The Department also recommends 4 Limited Opportunity seasons with a total of 20 permits. The House Rock Wildlife Area is excluded from the open hunt to provide this area as an alternate and preferred refugia for bison instead of the Grand Canyon National Park.

In 2015, 8 spring permits were authorized for the Raymond herd in Units 5A and 5B, with all 8 hunters being successful. The Department recommends, for spring 2016, 7 hunts for a total of 22 permits (4 bull or any bison, 5 cow only, and 13 yearling only). The Department may replace the current Raymond Wildlife Area herd with bison of the Wind Cave National Park (WICA) lineage to contribute to the national effort to conserve the WICA lineage. The recommendation for the Raymond herd provides the initial step in this replacement.

Commission Order 9 – Spring Bear

The Department recommends no changes to most seasons, season structures, female harvest limits, and permits for spring 2016. General bear hunts (Units 10, 18A and 19B, 17A, 17B, 18B, 20A and 20B, 19A, 22, 23N, 24A, 27, 29 and 30A, 31, 32, 34A, and 35A and 35B [except Fort Huachuca]) and archery (Units 3B and 3C, and 33) are recommended as over-the-counter permits for the March 18–April 28 season. The Department recommends adding a season for Units 1, 2A, 2B, and 2C with a female harvest limit of 1 to this structure. The Department also recommends extending the season length for the Unit 27 hunt to close May 19, coinciding with the closing date for spring turkey. This will allow for additional opportunity in Unit 27 and may help address nuisance bear issues; however, this recommendation is outside of guidelines. On average, less than 6 bears have been harvested annually during this period, with few being female. Each hunt will have a female harvest limit, and any female bears taken during this time will apply to the annual female harvest limit that if met would close subsequent hunts.

Permitted general bear hunts are recommended in Units 6B (except Camp Navajo) and 33 with 5 permits and a female harvest limit of 1 in each unit. Permitted archery-only bears hunts are recommended in Units 3B and 3C, 4B, 22, 23N, 33, 34A, 35A, and 35B (except Fort Huachuca), and Fort Huachuca; total permits are recommended at 275. Over the last 5 years, about one third of the bears harvested during this later season are females.

Female harvest limits total 19 for general hunts and 14 for archery hunts (Fort Huachuca harvest limits are a subset of Unit 35A). This is an increase of 1 from 2015. Annual female harvest limits are recommended to increase by 1 in Unit 3C.

Motion: Zieler moved and Madden seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDERS 5, 6, 8, AND 9 FOR SPRING 2016 AS PRESENTED.

Vote: Unanimous

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4. Hunt Permit-Tag Application Schedule for Spring 2016 Hunts

Presenter: Debra Rittenback, Revenue Unit Supervisor

Ms. Rittenback presented the Commission with the hunt permit-tag application schedule for the spring 2016 hunts for approval (attached). The application schedule identifies proposed acceptance dates and deadline dates for all hunts associated with the draw process. In addition, the proposed dates for when hunt permit-tags and refund warrants will be mailed are also

identified, along with information relating to the first-come/first-serve process for any permits that may still be available.

Motion: Madden moved and Ammons seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE THE APPLICATION SCHEDULE FOR THE SPRING 2016 HUNTS.

Vote: Unanimous

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5. Future Agenda Items and Action Items

Mr. Gray captured the following future agenda items and action items from this meeting:

- Provide health documents to the neighbor at Raymond Ranch and ensure the health of the new incoming bison herd
- The Department will report to the Commission the number of policies that were repealed in the last year or so.

* * * * *

17. (continued) Executive Session

The Commission voted to meet in Executive Session in accordance with A.R.S. § 38-431.03 (A)(3) and (4) for the purpose of discussion and consultation with legal counsel.

Motion: Madden moved and Mansell seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION.

Vote: Unanimous

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Chairman Davis adjourned this meeting.

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Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

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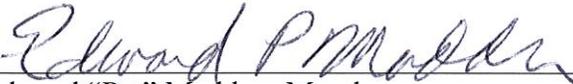
6. Tour of Raymond Wildlife Area.

The Commission did not participate in the tour of Raymond Ranch Wildlife Area.

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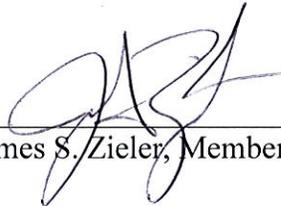
Kurt R. Davis, Chairman



Edward "Pat" Madden, Member



James R. Ammons, Member

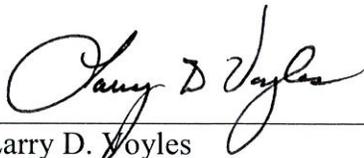


James S. Zieler, Member



Robert E. Mansell, Member

ATTEST:



Larry D. Voyles
Secretary and Director

Hunt Permit-tag Application Schedule – Spring 2016

Hunt permit-tag applications will be accepted and processed in accordance with R12-4-104 and R12-4-114 and this schedule.

Drawing

	ACCEPTANCE DATES ¹	DEADLINE DATES ²		
HUNT	Applications accepted on or after:	Deadline 11:59 p.m. (MST) in Department offices on:	Refund warrants mailed out by:	Hunt permit-tags mailed out by:
Spring Turkey	(See note 1)	Oct. 13, 2015	Nov. 30, 2015	Dec. 7, 2015
Spring Javelina	(See note 1)	Oct. 13, 2015	Nov. 30, 2015	Dec. 7, 2015
Spring Buffalo	(See note 1)	Oct. 13, 2015	Nov. 30, 2015	Dec. 7, 2015
Spring Bear	(See note 1)	Oct. 13, 2015	Nov. 30, 2015	Dec. 7, 2015

First Come³

	Applications accepted by mail on or after 8:00 a.m. (MST):	Permits available for purchase at all Department offices after 8:00 a.m. (MST):
HUNT	ACCEPTANCE DATES	ACCEPTANCE DATES
Spring Turkey	Nov. 30, 2015	Dec. 7, 2015
Spring Javelina	Nov. 30, 2015	Dec. 7, 2015
Spring Buffalo	Nov. 30, 2015	Dec. 7, 2015
Spring Bear	Nov. 30, 2015	Dec. 7, 2015

Online Applicants⁴

Deadline for updating your credit or debit card information online by 11:59 p.m. (MST)

Thursday, Nov. 5, 2015

Notes:

- The Department will accept Hunt Permit-tag Applications for big game listed above as soon as the applicable year's hunt information is available on the Department's Web site (www.azgfd.gov), or from any Game and Fish Department office or license dealer, unless otherwise noted in the Hunt Permit-tag Application Schedule.
- Department offices at Flagstaff, Kingman, Mesa, Phoenix, Pinetop, Tucson and Yuma will close for business at 5 p.m. (MST); completed applications will be accepted at these locations until 11:59 p.m. (MST) on deadline days. No applications will be accepted after this time regardless of the postmark. Deadline dates and times will apply to online as well as paper applications. Deadline dates may be extended in the event of a Department-related system failure that prevents the public from submitting an application within the deadlines listed above. The online system slow down due to heavy traffic is not considered a Department-related system failure and may not result in a deadline extension. Applicants are encouraged to apply early to avoid the last minute rush. Application assistance can be obtained Monday through Friday (8 a.m.–5 p.m. MST) by contacting the Department. Only on deadline day, from 5 p.m. to 11:59 p.m., after the close of normal business, the Department can be reached at 623-236-7424 for online application assistance.
- First come permits are issued if available and will sell very quickly. Applicants are advised to check with the Department before submitting an application for leftover permits. No person, including Youth, may submit more than one valid application per genus for the First Come process, with the exception of javelina (see the javelina bag limit description). A listing of leftover permits is available online at www.azgfd.gov under "Big Game Draw" or at any Department office. To submit first come applications by U.S. mail only, please send to: 5000 W. Carefree Highway, Phoenix, AZ 85086, ATTN: DRAW/FIRST COME.
- Online applicants are encouraged to keep their payment information current. If your payment is rejected at the time of the draw, your application may be rejected. The Department will attempt to contact the payee and/or applicant A three times within two business days to accept an alternate payment method if a phone number and/or email is provided.