



WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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October 29, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Rick King, Wildlife Division Chief

FROM: Jason Hunter, Lander Region Wildlife Supervisor

COPY TO: Edberg, Brimeyer, Schell, Gates, Kerr, Seeman, Mills, Stephens, Peckham, Nicolas, File

SUBJECT: Trapping Issues - Summary and Recommendations

In response to the trapping issues identified at the April Wyoming Game and Fish Commission (Commission) meeting, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Department) completed initial stakeholder discussions and gave an update at the June/July 2020 Commission meeting.

To further these discussions, the Department held a series of collaborative meetings around the state in early September. In-person meetings (attendee numbers in parentheses) were held in Rock Springs (11), Jackson (22), Sheridan (24), with in-person and virtual attendance in Laramie (14 in-person/37 virtual) and Lander (31 in-person/47 virtual). Mary Martin with the University of Wyoming Extension Office facilitated the meetings with assistance from Michelle Vigil for the Zoom portion in Laramie and Lander. Overall, approximately 186 individuals attended the meetings and we had assistance from 22 Department employees around the state. Participants included legislators, Wyoming Game and Fish Commissioners, trappers, non-trappers, public land users, hunters, woolgrowers, county predator management boards, and Wildlife Services.

These meetings were designed to discuss the merits of a focused set of ideas based on the information we received from open-ended questions during our preliminary stakeholder contacts. These meetings gave us the opportunity to further vet the ideas prior to developing recommendations for Commission and Department consideration.

These meetings were **NOT** to decide on a definite course of action or to collect official public comment on any potential ideas. The ideas discussed were not official proposals for regulations or statutes. Many items discussed are not at all or not fully within the jurisdiction of the Department. Rankings given by participants were **NOT** votes for or against any particular topic or ideas. They were only used to bolster our qualitative take on the level of support or opposition to the topic or idea.

Each meeting consisted of a short introductory presentation and then participants were broken out into small groups for discussions facilitated by Department employees to garner feedback on the following topics:

- Education and Awareness
- Regulations and Reporting
- Trails and Campgrounds

The small groups spent 30-40 minutes discussing each topic and provided their level of support at the end of each session. Notes were recorded and posted to the Department website (<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Get-Involved/trapping-in-wyoming>) after each meeting. At the end of the meeting, small group facilitators shared a summary of the discussions for each topic. Zoom participants were divided into their own virtual small groups and went through the same process. All groups (virtual/in-person) were together for the introductory presentation and meeting summary at the end.

While discussions at each meeting were varied, common themes were consistent regardless of meeting location. The top four topics of agreement/most support at each meeting were pet release workshops, public education, signage on Commission-owned lands, and redesigning the furbearing animal/trapping brochure. These were followed closely by conservation stamp requirements for trappers and other Wildlife Habitat Management Area/Wildlife Management Area (WHMA) land users, mandatory trapper education, and Commission-owned/administered land closures.

As a result of this public engagement process and internal, professional evaluation of the relevant issues, the Committee offers the following recommendations:

Pursue:

- **Mandatory Trapper Education**
 - Continue to use The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' online trapper education for now, with a Wyoming specific course in the future.
 - Start with online courses but work to incorporate internet field days and in-person classes as able.
 - Options (work with trappers to develop):
 - Required for those born on or after January 1, 2000 (21 and under to start).
 - Other states trapper education certificates.
 - Trapper mentor program - similar to hunter mentor.
 - Only applies to the take of wildlife with traps and/or snares (predatory and furbearer).
- **Public Education (website/signage)**
 - Create a specific trapping information landing page on the Department website for trappers and the general public and/or other recreationists.

- Develop a more formalized information campaign similar to the Bear Wise Program promoting safe recreation for all users.
- Develop simple/concise signage for Commission-owned and administered lands and work with other public land agencies for posting at trailheads, parking lots, boat ramps, etc.
 - Work with trappers and other user groups to develop language.
 - Signs could say something as simple as, “Trapping, hunting and fishing occur on WGF Commission owned/administered lands and Wyoming public lands. For more information, scan the QR code below or visit the Wyoming Game and Fish Department Website.”
- **Pet Release Workshops**
 - Pet release and non-trapper education workshops around the state using a variety of instructors with Department involvement.
- **Conservation Stamp**
 - Recommend as mandatory for furbearer license holders **and** all users of WHMAs
OR
 - Develop a messaging campaign for other public land users encouraging the voluntary purchase of conservation stamps to support wildlife management.
 - Highlight funds from conservation stamps used for wildlife and habitat conservation projects, education, and access.
- **Redesign the Furbearer (trapping) Brochure**
 - Larger brochure
 - Include recommendations/best management practices.
 - Ethics and common violation examples similar to the big game brochure.
 - Species ID
- **Commission-owned and Administered Land Closures**
 - Determine areas and seasonality of high recreational use.
 - Closures may not be appropriate or necessary in some areas.
 - Consider trap type restrictions instead of complete trapping closures.
 - Several examples of “dog-proof” traps.
 - Most concern over snares and quick kill traps.
 - May be appropriate to restrict other uses during certain times of the year:
 - Whiskey Basin WHMA/wintering bighorn sheep.
 - Require dogs on leash and/or no dogs allowed.
 - Consider leash requirements outside of bird/small game hunting seasons on WHMAs (exceptions for lion dogs).

- **Furbearer Working Group**
 - Create an internal Department furbearer working group similar to our current pronghorn, mule deer and moose working groups.

- **Trapping Setbacks**
 - Pursue setbacks from open recreation areas (boat ramps, picnic areas, trailheads, and parking areas) and open campgrounds.
 - A place in the trapping brochure to highlight recommended setbacks from trails and reasons why.
 - Monitor trails after other measures implemented to determine if there is an issue with capturing non-target animals or not.
 - Trapping setbacks may not be required for all traps. Consider placement when developing definitions (water sets and sets placed off the ground).
 - Further develop definitions.

Re-evaluate/Collect Additional Information:

- **Reporting of Non-target Captures**
 - Add a place on the Department website to report dogs/livestock that have been caught in traps.
 - Will require follow-up by Department personnel to verify and collect more information from the reports.
 - Voluntary reporting of species other than those already required.
 - Mandatory reporting already required for dead/injured big game animals/raptors/furbearers out of season.
 - Include information in the redesigned brochure and provide examples of how reporting will be a benefit (nongame program).
 - Define non-target species
 - Exclude species that can be legally trapped or animals an individual may be contracted or otherwise legally authorized/directed to remove (i.e., other furbearers, predators, or feral dogs).
 - Monitor after other measures implemented to determine if further action is warranted.

- **Trap and Snare Check Periods and Type Restrictions**
 - Add a place in the brochure to recommend shorter check periods for better fur quality.
 - Monitor and document snare equipment use and prevalence.
 - Monitor after other measures implemented to determine if further action is warranted.
 - Will require public/trapper reporting and Department documentation/follow-up

No Further Action Needed:

- **Tools at Trailheads**
 - Would likely be ineffective and cost too much.
 - Offer for sale at regional offices and on Department website.

Our committee also considered the next steps in the process and felt many of the recommendations could be implemented immediately with Commission/Department support, but some will require statutory and regulatory changes prior to implementation. Recommendations not requiring statutory or legislative change include:

- Public education (website and signage)
- How to release your pet workshops
- Furbearer brochure redesign
- Voluntary reporting of non-targets
- Internal furbearer working group

The following items will require legislative and regulatory changes prior to implementation:

- Mandatory trapper education
- Conservation stamp
- Trapping setbacks
- Commission-owned land closures (regulatory only)

Finally, the Committee recommends re-evaluating the implementation of any of the above recommendations after a period of 3-5 years to determine the effectiveness of the change and whether further adjustments are warranted.

JH/jh/sbn