

**Wyoming Public Lands Initiative
Gardner Mountain / North Fork
Red Wall Community Center, Kaycee
February 7, 2017**

MINUTES

Present: Johnson County Commissioner Bill Novotny; Johnson County Commissioner Linda Greenough; Anita Bartlett-Conservation; Nolan Davis-Ag/Ranching; Brock Hanson-Ag/Ranching, David Stoetzel-Non-Motorized Recreation; J.D. Petty-Sportsmen; Rob Davidson-Conservation; Chris Brock-General Public; Kelly Norris-WY State Forestry Division;

Speakers: Gregory Cowan-WCCA, Dan Thiele, Wildlife Biologist, Game & Fish; Tom Bills, BLM; Chris Durham, BLM; Bill Ostheimer, BLM

Public: Kenny Graves, Jodi Petty

Minutes –The committee voted to accept the November 11, 2016 and the January 10, 2017 minutes with corrections. All voted yes.

**Gregory Cowan
Staff Attorney, WCCA**

WPLI is a priority with WCCA and we value the work that the Advisory Committees are doing. Why WPLI? We need to look at what the local users want to accomplish out on the landscape and this needs to happen through a process that is modeled in the Wyoming Public Lands Initiative. That is a locally led, organic effort that is inclusive of myriad interests, transparent and substantively based. You are substantiating what you will recommend to the Board of County Commissioners to endorse.

There are 8 other WPLI that are doing a similar exercise. Some counties started in June 2016, on their 8th meeting, recently concluded their charter and are in the information gathering phase. Others just named their committee today so they haven't had a meeting. A couple are still contemplating whether they want to participate in the WPLI. The rest are following along just as WCCA had envisioned. Time is of the essence, but you still have time because we want you to exercise due diligence as you go and make the recommendations.

1. Process Identification. This is the WCCA Principles and Guidelines. If the constitution of the United States is the supreme law of the land; this is the constitution as it relates to WPLI. These are the broad parameters in which all county led processes are routed. We wanted to keep this vague and broad because we wanted each county to be able to go out there and identify a process that will work for their county. The process is set up for each WPLI to work their will first. Each WPLI will put together a product that adheres to their own internal processes and that they can identify in a charter and the WPLI Principles and Guidelines.
2. Information Gathering. Other counties have mixed process identification and information gathering. As users of these landscapes some of you have rights and privileges that are immediately affected by some of things that occur out there. You have a base knowledge that is at a different place than some other counties. Your process will speak to the progress you make

along the way. At a bare minimum you look at the WSA that exist within your jurisdiction, form an advisory committee, get informed, advance a recommendation, and submit it to Congress. There might be something outside of the WSA that you want to pursue or there might be an issue that you might want to see resolved. You are going to define what the context of the Johnson County WPLI is, not anyone else. The goal is to see something introduced in Congress in January 2019. To reach that goal WCCA would like to see draft options occur by late fall and through the winter. By next spring you should be moving into recommendation development.

3. Recommendation Development. There is a public outreach component on the recommendations. You understand constituencies that you are responsible for and make sure that outreaches are recurring. You then will come back together as a committee with knowledge and information, with a process that guides your deliberations.

A member of the Advisory Committee asked how they advance the deliberations if they don't have consensus.

Mr. Cowan answered that their charter will have to provide them that information. With the principal and guidelines the WCCA likes consensus and a durable document and a recommendation. There are different definitions of consensus. On the WPLI information hub there is a tool box for advisory committees and he recommends that this committee look it over. There are a number of things that talk about consensus based decision making and collaboration. You need to identify a process that is going to be inclusive, fairly represent those interests, and when it comes to any vote taking the parameters are identified in your charter. There are various levels of consensus. The Advisory Committee needs to advance a recommendation that it will be hard for anyone to say no to, this runs through the County Commissioners and up to enactment of the document. Beyond enactment we have to implement the law that you are trying to create. BLM will be the Advisory Committee's partner as you get to the point of interpreting the law.

4. Timeline and Oversight. WCCA would like to have recommendations by late spring or early summer of 2018. WCCA will take all the recommendations throughout the state and compile them into one legislative package. We are going to take your recommendation and translate it into legalese of legislation. We want you to know what that translation looks like so that down the road if there are any proposed changes you know exactly what that means. We are trying to introduce this to Congress in January 2019. At that point you will become lobbyists and defend your work out in Washington, D.C. There was some discussion on how all of the recommendations get put together and sent to Congress. WCCA would like to see the recommendations presented in final form for consideration in a few months span early spring 2018 to early summer 2018. WCCA will take the endorsed recommendation and begin the county specific translation exercise. A representative will meet with the Advisory Committee and help create the new legislation.

On March 23rd in Lander all the groups that are engaged in the WPLI will meet. The advisory committee is encouraged to go and take part in the sessions. WCCA's website is www.wyo-wcca.org.

**Dan Thiele, Wildlife Biologist
Wyoming Game and Fish**

Wyoming Game and Fish started the mule deer initiative for the Upper Powder River herd which is Areas 30, 32, 33, 163 and 169. We made some season changes by reducing the non-resident tags based on concerns about buck quality and hunting pressure. Wyoming Game and Fish pulled teeth on harvested

bucks in the year 2015, looked at that data and then pulled teeth on harvested bucks from this last hunting season. We are waiting to get that information back from the lab. We will look at age structure from the hunt area and then look at antler spread and antler structure based on age structure. They will combine the information from 2015 and this hunting season. The fawn ratios are still favorable; they were adequate to maintain the population barring any significant mortality events. Buck ratios are still solid; overall the average was 40 bucks for every 100 does that were counted. There is a good age structure of bucks in the population. Yearling bucks are solid and have been for the last 3 years which is an indication of fawns surviving the winter into the yearling age stage. Game & Fish will get their harvest back on Thursday, February 9 we will get an idea of what our harvest is compared to past years. With MDI they have been working on habitat projects getting some on the ground work done in a number of areas. We have had a lot of comments in our public meetings on highway mortality. This is being looked at state wide. They are looking into alternative fencing along some of I-25. The only problem is that highway fencing needs to be planned well in advance and it is very expensive. There has been a lot of emphasis on migrations and we don't have information on what happens with migration in this part of the country. We know there is some upper elevation migration to lower elevation migration on the mountain. There is going to be a Mule Deer Workshop in Pinedale in mid-April that will look at migration and highway mortality. The area North of Kaycee is a hotspot for Mule Deer highway mortality, by Buffalo it is more White Tail Deer.

A member of the Advisory Committee asked how much mortality is affected by weather.

Mr. Thiele said that it was a combination of things when you look at the number of animals entering into the population. Research has shown that every doe is pregnant with 2 fawns. By the time the deer have their fawns and get to their post season classifications in the winter time we are at 60-80 fawns per every 100 does. The more fawns you have hit the ground and keep alive the better things will be. To be considered entered into the population they need to survive the first winter. If there are 66 fawns for every 100 does after the hunting season that should sustain the population if you have average mortality. Weather has played a part in mortality this winter in some parts of the state.

A member of the Advisory Committee asked if there is any data specific information for the Gardner Mountain North Fork. Mr. Thiele said that they typically look at a herd or hunt area basis at a smaller location. We do have location information. When we do our surveys we are not getting up in the North Fork that is higher than most of the deer will be at that time. We have looked at the lower elevation of Gardner Mountain.

BLM

Bill Ostheimer, Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist

Duane Spencer, Field Office Manager

Tom Bills, Natural Resource Specialist

Mr. Bill Ostheimer said that there are a couple of ways to get the information to Congress for BLM to follow. One is the traditional way that WSA are released and then the BLM goes back into land use planning process which includes you and the stakeholders to determine management use for the WSA. The other one is legislative process which management has prescribed for these lands based on the legislative that comes out of Congress. Two processes would result from this one being the land use process and also the process of interpretation and implementation of the law.

The group went into an extensive question and answer period on the definitions and designations and how they relate to Gardner Mountain and North Fork.

The Advisory Committee will go over the Model Charter at their next meeting. Also the 3 questions for the 5-Minute Presentation for Lander 2 will be addressed at the next meeting.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 14, at 6:00 p.m. at the Red Wall Community Center.

A recording of the meeting is available.