

Minutes of the Meeting of the
Arizona Game and Fish Commission
Saturday, August 6, 2011
Arizona Game and Fish Department
5000 West Carefree Highway
Phoenix, Arizona 85086

PRESENT: (Commission)

(Director and Staff)

Chairman Robert R. Woodhouse
Vice Chair Norman W. Freeman
Commissioner Jack F. Husted
Commissioner John W. Harris
Commissioner Robert E. Mansell

Director Larry D. Voyles
Deputy Director Bob Broscheid
Deputy Director Gary R. Hovatter
Assistant Attorney General Jim Odenkirk
Assistant Attorney General Linda Pollock

Chairman Woodhouse called the meeting to order and lead those present through the Pledge of Allegiance. The Commission introduced themselves and Chairman Woodhouse introduced the Director and the Director's staff. This meeting followed an agenda revision #2 dated July 29, 2011.

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Awards and Recognition

Director Voyles presented Steve Sams, member of NWTF (National Wild Turkey Federation), with the prestigious WAFWA (Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Association) award for "Outstanding Citizen Wildlife Contributor for 2011." Each year WAFWA recognizes a select group of top contributors to wildlife conservation at their annual conference. This year Arizona's own Steve Sams was recognized. Steve Sams has been a member of the NWTF for 25 years, and has served as the president of the board for the Arizona State Chapter of NWTF for the past three years. Steve is a demonstrated leader in Arizona's Hunting and Angling Heritage Work Group. Through his work with NWTF, Steve has established himself as a leader in the protection, management, and enhancement of three subspecies of wild turkey in Arizona.

Steve Sams, on behalf of the Arizona State Chapter of NWTF, presented the Commission/Department with a check in the amount of \$7,440 which was raised by NWTF with the Special Big Game Turkey Tag that the Commission awarded to them.

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1. Legislative Engagement and State and Federal Legislation

Presenter: Anthony Guiles, Legislative Liaison

Mr. Guiles briefed the Commission on the current status of selected state and federal legislative matters. The Department provides the Commission with regular monthly updates and provided informational materials at this meeting (also available to the public). The briefing included the following updates:

- The Department is working on scheduling Legislative Tours: Sipe Wildlife Area (Mid to late September), Hart Praire Preserve (October 25-27) and Muleshoe Ranch (Mid November). Potential topics for discussion will be fire assessment, OHV decal program, Foster Ranch Shooting Range, and access
- The Rotenone Review Advisory Committee was held on June 26. It was a good turnout and discussion included an update by subcommittees, potential human health risks, alternative management strategies, recreation, economic, and social impacts, internal policy, public involvement, and best management practices. The next meeting is scheduled for August 30th
- The Department is working on collecting proposals for bills to run next session and will be presenting those to the Commission at its August 26 meeting
- The Senate AdHoc Task Force on Forest Management 2011 met on June 20. Several other meetings have also occurred. The House formed its own forest committee as well.

Sunset Review

The Commission was provided with a draft copy of the Department's 2011 Sunset Review report (also available to the public). This audit is a 10-year review of the Department. The last Sunset Review was done by the Auditor General. This time it is a self audit. The report is due to the Legislature (Committee of Reference) by August 22, meetings with Committee members will occur in September, and a public hearing will occur around October-November. By January 2012 the Chair will sponsor a bill to continue, revise, consolidate or terminate the Department and/or Commission. Hopefully, the Department will be recommended to continue for another 10 years.

Congressional Update

- Congress has recessed and will reconvene September 6
- The Department is reviewing some newly dropped measures (highlighted in Congressional update provided to the Commission and available to the public).

HR 2562: Arizona Wallow Fire Recovery and Monitoring Act (Sponsor: Rep. Paul Gosar).

SB 1344: Arizona Wallow Fire Recovery and Monitoring Act (Sponsor: Sen. Jon Kyl)

- Expedites the removal of hazardous, dead and dying trees in the community protection management areas in the Wallow Fire area in eastern Arizona
- Senators McCain and Kyl testified on Aug 3, 2011 to Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests
- Forest Service Chief, Tom Tidwell, testified in support and stated Forest Service is acting on Wallow Fire recovery ahead of legislation
- Rapid-assessment team is almost done with a report on how much salvageable wood is in the burn area
- Conducting ongoing Burned Area Emergency Response work as part of a comprehensive Wallow Fire recovery plan
- Crews are removing dead, standing trees along about 245 miles of roads
- More than 160,000 tons of wood will be removed by the time the work is done, and another 39 miles of power-line corridors and 350 miles of road are planned to be cleared after that.

Forum For Our Forest

- Congressmen Paul Gosar (AZ-01) and Steve Pearce (NM-02), Chairman of the Congressional Western Caucus will hold a meeting on August 10 in Eagar, AZ. Topics will include forest management and wildfires.

Sonoran Desert Wilderness Proposal

Representatives from the groups that have been working on the Sonoran Desert Wilderness Proposal Conservation Area Designations are planning make a presentation to the Commission at its August 26-27 meeting and ask the Commission/Department to work with them to construct language for the bill.

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2. Shooting Sports Activities Briefing

Presenter: Jay Cook, Shooting Range Branch Chief

The August Shooting Sports Activities Briefing and written report will be provided to the Commission at the August 26-27 Commission meeting. There were no updates provided at this meeting and the Commission had no comments or questions.

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3. Information, Education and Wildlife Recreation Activities Briefing

Presenter: Ty Gray, Assistant Director, Information and Education Division

The August Information, Education and Wildlife Recreation Activities Briefing and written report will be provided to the Commission at the August 26-27 Commission meeting. There were no updates provided at this meeting and the Commission had no comments or questions.

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4. An Update on Current Issues, Planning Efforts, and Proposed Projects on All Lands in Arizona and Other Matters Related Thereto

Presenter: Josh Avey, Habitat Branch Chief

The August Lands Update written report and briefing will be provided to the Commission at the August 26-27 Commission meeting. There were no updates provided at this meeting and the Commission had no comments or questions.

Commissioner Freeman requested an update on the water issues related to Horseshoe Ranch and/or the Farm (used to be Young's Farm) that wanted to sever water rights.

Mr. Avey will provide an update in the August 26-27 Lands Update or before.

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5. Commission Discussion of Recreational Access Issues within Arizona.

Presenter: Larry Riley, Acting Assistant Director, Wildlife Management Division

Mr. Riley provided an update to the Commission. Since the workshop held on April 16, 2011, the Department continues to work on recreational access issues and challenges. Currently, the Department is working with the public to collect feedback which includes the following:

- Drafting of a potential mail survey for Sportsmen/Recreational Users and another for Private Landowners is ongoing and will be shared with Executive staff in August for possible approval
- On July 28, the Department conducted a meeting that mimicked the Commission Access workshop in April at the Annual Cattle Growers/LLSRC Meeting(s) to solicit input from landowners and agricultural producers
- The Department collected information on 15 western states' recreational access programs to determine what is being used in other states and see what might be components of alternative strategies
- The Director used the Summer WAFWA meeting as an opportunity to discuss higher level political aspects of public access issues with several other Directors.

Results from the public input and mail survey will be presented to the Commission in October. Fundamental Objectives and a plan of action will be developed. Department staff will bring recommendations to the Commission on actions that require Commission approval in November or December.

Commissioner Husted stated that the Cattle Growers' Association has some ideas about Unit 19B and asked the Department to check into what they are proposing.

Mark Weise, Development Branch Chief, stated that the Department will look into it.

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6. Consideration of Proposed Commission Orders 5, 6, 8, and 9, for Spring 2012 Hunting Seasons.

Presenter: Brian F. Wakeling, Game Branch Chief

The Commission considered Commission Orders 5, 6, 8, and 9 (spring turkey, spring javelina, spring buffalo, and spring bear) establishing seasons and season dates, bag and possession limits, permit numbers, and open areas. A detailed description of all proposals was provided to the Commission prior to this meeting for review and was available for public review at all Department offices. The following text describes Department recommendations for Commission Orders 5, 6, 8, and 9 for spring turkey, javelina, buffalo, and bear. An open house was held in each region where the public could review these hunt recommendations prior to the Commission meeting. The recommendations were also posted on the Department web site and press releases were provided to let the public know of their availability.

The Commission provided the Department with direction through the hunt guidelines approved in September 2009. The Department is recommending 2 spring turkey permits in Unit 13B North for Rio Grande turkeys; this translocated population is doing well and is the first hunt proposed for this unit. The Department is recommending a reduction of 6 Gould's turkey permits for a total of 28. A substantial reduction in permits is being recommended for Units 1 and 27 hunts due to influences from the Wallow Fire; Unit 1 is recommended to have a 775 permit reduction and Unit 27 a 1000 permit reduction. The Department is recommending juniors-only turkey hunting seasons that will be offered as over-the-counter permits in Units 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, 6B (except Camp Navajo), 7, 8, 10, and 12A. All juniors-only turkey hunts had less than 35% of the total spring harvest in those units. Units 3C, 6A, and 23 will remain as juniors-only permitted hunts. A Unit 1 and 27 hunt will be added to the permitted juniors-only season with 100 permits. Over-the-counter permits are recommended for archery spring turkey hunts in Units 1, 4A, 4B, 6A, 12A, 23, and 27.

Juniors-only javelina permits are recommended at 1,100 permits, which comprise 4.0% of the spring permits. Javelina seasons in metro units and in Units 1-5 and 7-9 are recommended as over-the-counter archery seasons.

The Department recommends that several units be offered as over-the-counter general or archery bear hunts during the March 23-May 3, 2012 season. A new spring bear season in Units 10, 18A, and 19B with a female harvest limit of 1 is recommended for the March 23-May 3, 2012 season structure.

Commission Order 5 – Spring Turkey

For spring turkey seasons in 2011, the Commission authorized 7,674 limited weapon shotgun shooting shot and over-the-counter juniors-only seasons in specified units. These draw hunts had 13,358 first choice applicants, 6,025 hunters that participated, and an average of 14% hunt success. These hunters spent 24,395 days hunting to harvest 846 turkeys. In spring 2011, preliminary data indicates 820 youth purchased turkey nonpermit tags and 733 went afield. These youth harvested 146 turkeys in 2,467 days of hunting for a 20% hunt success. For archery over-the-counter spring turkey hunts in 2011, preliminary data indicates 1,338 archers purchased turkey nonpermit tags and 168 went afield; only 38 of these hunters hunted in more than 1 unit. These archers harvested 0 turkeys in 637 days of hunting. Total harvest for 2011 was 992 turkeys, a decrease of 235 turkeys over spring 2010.

For 2012, spring limited weapon shotgun shooting shot seasons are recommended as a decrease of 2,300 permits in all units. The majority of this reduction is recommended for Units 1 and 27 hunts due to influences from the Wallow Fire; Unit 1 is recommended to have a 775 permit reduction and Unit 27 a 1,000 permit reduction. Permits are recommended during stratified seasons occurring April 27-May 3 and May 11-24 or May 4-24, 2012.

Spring seasons are again recommended for Gould's turkeys in Units 29 and 30A, 31, 33, 34A, and 35A. The total number of permits recommended for Gould's is 28, a 6-permit decrease from last year. Units 29 and 31 are recommended for decreased permits, whereas Units 33 and 35A are recommended for increases. Unit 30A (north of AZ Hwy 80) has been recommended for addition to the Unit 29 hunt.

For the first time, the Department is recommending stratified seasons in Unit 13B (north of Wolfhole-Jacobs Well Road) for the Rio Grande subspecies with 1 permit in each hunt.

Nonpermit limited weapon shotgun shooting seasons for juniors-only are recommended in Units 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, 6B (except Camp Navajo), 7, 8, 10, and 12A. These permits would be unlimited in number and could be purchased over the counter. There were no units in 2011 for which greater than 35% of the total spring turkey harvest was attributed to juniors. The season dates for the juniors-only season are recommended to be April 20–26 and May 11–24, 2012.

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 11–24, 2012. No archers reported harvesting a turkey during these seasons in 2011.

The Commission discussed the data and methods used by the Department to analyze and develop the turkey hunt recommendations, and discussed the lack of turkey sightings in the Wallow Fire burn areas (Units 1 and 27) as well as some of the surrounding areas. Also discussed were the human dimension surveys conducted by the Department.

Commissioner Husted requested that the Commission be informed when the Department conducts surveys and that the Commission have the opportunity to provide input in developing human dimension survey question topics.

Public Comment

Scott Lerich, Regional Biologist for the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf): Turkeys rebound quickly so he does not see any biological reasons to have a serious decline in the spring turkey tags, especially in light of the reduction of the fall turkey tags. He is also a proponent of mandatory harvest surveys. All you need to know is if a turkey was taken and in what unit.

Steve Sams, State Chapter President, NWTf: Is at odds with the Department's recommendation for Units 1 and 27, and the Goulds turkey units; He believes the reduction in turkey tags is an over-reaction to the fire.

The Commission discussed the Department's recommendation process with Mr. Wakeling and with Region I Supervisor Jon Cooley (available by phone) and the wide variety of opinions on the reduction of turkey tags in the burned area for both the fall and spring seasons.

Mr. Cooley stated that even within the region there is a lack of consensus. The original recommendation of some wildlife managers in the area was to not hunt the Wallow Fire burn area at all during the fall because of habitat and access concerns. But the overall recommendation was ultimately reached based on the following three things: 1) that it is biologically sound based on the data available, 2) that it reflects appropriate and reasonable consideration of the access that the Forest Service will provide, and 3) that to the extent possible the recommendation will apply appropriate and reasonable consideration of hunting opportunity. So the Department felt they were achieving the objectives while still being very conservative with the recommendations.

Public Comment

Rich Williams, Vice President, AZ State Chapter NWTF: The junior hunts have been great. They have recruited new hunters, young and old. The over-the-counter tags and even the permit tags structured the way they are supports the goals of recruiting and retention that the Commission has set. We have found a formula that works and it's based on science, and we need to stick with that formula.

Commissioner Husted clarified with Mr. Wakeling how many spring turkey tags would be available for Units 1 and 27 and further recommended that the Department keep data on this fire so they have that for future reference. Additionally, the Commission should continue this discussion at the next meeting when they discuss the hunt guidelines.

Director Voyles noted that if there were no hunts in Units 1 and 27 then the Department would have no data. At least with a reduced hunt the Department will have data to evaluate the abundance of turkeys following the fire.

Motion: Freeman moved and Harris seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO ADOPT COMMISSION ORDER 5 – SPRING TURKEY, AS PRESENTED.

Commissioner Harris commented that these recommendations are developed from the guidelines created by the Commission in 2009 and the Department has made these recommendations according to those guidelines. The Commission will now be discussing and setting new guidelines at the next Commission meeting.

Commissioner Mansell commented that he will support the recommendation because it is based on the Commission guidelines, but he would like to talk about this at the next meeting, particularly the youth hunts, the draw, mobile unit hunting, and maybe look at the turkey youth hunts mirroring what is done with deer, elk and javelina.

Vote: Unanimous

Mr. Wakeling offered that if the guidelines were moved to the October Commission meeting the Department could work with the Commission to incorporate additional input from the Commission and rerun the survey on human dimensions for the hunt guidelines, however, the elk and pronghorn hunt recommendations would have to be based on the current Commission guidelines.

The Commission was in consensus to not move the guidelines to October, but recommended that the Department refine its processes and involve the Commission more in human dimension surveys and other processes that affect the hunt guidelines and recommendations.

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Meeting recessed for a break at 10:15 a.m.

Meeting reconvened at 10:38 a.m.

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In 2011, the Department issued about 98% of the 11,496 general permits authorized by the Commission, 79% of the 9,391 archery permits, 85% of the 5,545 handgun, archery, and muzzleloader (HAM) permits, and 82% of the 1,025 juniors-only permits. Last year, 9,518 general season hunters harvested 2,343 javelina for a 25% hunt success, 4,116 HAM hunters took 1,011 javelina for a 25% hunt success, and 6,542 archery hunters harvested 2,017 javelina for a 31% hunt success. For youth, 809 juniors-only hunters took 311 javelina for a 38% hunt success.

Department javelina permit and season recommendations are based on Commission direction, public comment, and hunt guidelines. In September 2009, the Commission directed the Department to equitably distribute permits according to statewide demand. Based on the 5-year average of application demand, the Department targeted about 41% general, 38% archery, and 21% HAM. Actual permits (percentages) recommended for spring 2012 include 11,555 (43.6%) general, 9,375 (35.4%) archery, and 5,545 (20.9%) HAM. This is a 75-permit increase for general and no change for HAM and archery. The Department also recommends 1,050 juniors-only javelina permits (25-permit increase from last spring), which comprises 4.0% of the total permits recommended. When considering the 850 fall juniors-only permits plus the 525 javelina companion tags to deer hunts authorized by the Commission for fall 2011, this brings the total allocation of juniors-only permits to 9.0% of the total permits recommended. This allocation is less than the 10% directed by the Commission, but exceeds the number of permits sold to juniors-only hunters in the last few years.

Archery seasons are recommended to occur during January 1–26, 2012, juniors-only seasons during January 27–February 5, 2012, HAM seasons during February 10–19, 2012, and general seasons during February 24–March 1, 2012. Over-the-counter permits are recommended for archery hunts in Units 1–5, 7–9, 11M, 25M, 26M, 38M, and 47M. Season dates for these units correspond with other archery season dates, specifically January 1–26, 2012.

Motion: Husted moved and Harris seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO ADOPT COMMISSION ORDER 6 – SPRING JAVELINA, AS PRESENTED.

Vote: Unanimous

Commission Order 8 – Spring Buffalo

During spring 2011, 14 spring permits were authorized for the House Rock Wildlife Area herd in Units 12A and 12B. All hunters participated and 11 adult bulls were harvested. The Department recommends 14 any buffalo permits again for spring 2012, with season dates that will run from January 1–June 14, 2012.

For 2011, 4 spring permits were authorized for the Raymond Wildlife Area herd in Units 5A and 5B. The Department recommends 6 permits for spring 2012: 2 adult cow-only permits during January 13–15, 2 yearling-only permits during February 3–5, and 2 yearling-only permits during March 2–4, 2012.

Commissioner Husted questioned whether the buffalo were moving onto the Grand Canyon National Park due to being hazed by the hunt structures (six month long season and continued pressure).

Mr. Wakeling stated that the Department can provide an update on the buffalo and the history that has brought the situation up to where it is today.

Leonard Ordway, Assistant Director, Field Operations, stated that the National Park Service has been doing an analysis and is getting ready to come out with a document. They have just recently begun to engage the Department again in discussions. Region II Supervisor Ron Sieg is currently working with the National Park Service and a briefing will be forthcoming to the Commission.

Motion: Harris moved and Freeman seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO ADOPT COMMISSION ORDER 8 – SPRING BUFFALO, AS PRESENTED.

Vote: Unanimous

Commission Order 9 – Spring Bear

Spring bear harvest is relatively low but has been increasing in Arizona. On average over the last 5 years, about 14 bears were harvested annually. In 2011, 4 female and 6 male bears have been taken to date. No bears were harvested during the March 18–April 28 season in which most hunts were nonpermit tags offered over-the-counter. The 10 bears were harvested during the permitted archery season that runs from April 29–July 31, 2011. Unit 35A/35B closed because the female harvest limit was met. For spring 2011, 667 nonpermit bear tags have been issued and another 923 nonpermit bear tags have been issued in conjunction with the sale of super conservation licenses. There were 390 applicants for the 285 spring bear permit tags offered in 2011.

The Department recommends 1 new general nonpermit tag spring bear hunt in Units 10, 18A, and 19B. There are no other changes to seasons or season structure, female harvest limits, or permits for spring 2012. 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 to offer over-the-counter permits during the March 23–May 3 season. On average, less than 5 bears have been harvested annually during this time period, with 1 or 2 being female bears. Generally three times more male than female bears are taken. 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.

One permitted general bear hunt is recommended in Unit 6B (except Camp Navajo) with 5 permits and a female harvest limit of 1. Permitted archery-only bears hunts are recommended in Units 3B and 3C, 4B, 22, 23N, 33, 34A, 35A and 35B (except For Huachuca), and Fort Huachuca. Total permits are recommended at 285. Over the last 5 years, about 12 bears were harvested annually during the later season, with one third of this harvest being female bears.

Female harvest limits total 16 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 2011. Annual female harvest limits have increased in Units 6B and Region 3 Units, and have decreased in Unit 34A.

Motion: Freeman moved and Husted seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO ADOPT COMMISSION ORDER 9 – SPRING BEAR, AS PRESENTED.

Vote: Unanimous

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7. Consideration of Amendments to Commission Orders 2–10 (big game), 11–18 (small game), 23 (trapping), and 26 (population management seasons) for 2011–2012 Hunting Seasons.

Presenter: Brian F. Wakeling, Game Branch Chief

The Commission considered amendments to Commission Orders 2–10 (big game), 11–18 (small game), 23 (trapping), and 26 (population management seasons) for 2011–2012 hunting seasons to incorporate changes to open areas as authorized by SB 1334. Due to the recent passage of SB 1334 by the Arizona Legislature, many areas within municipal boundaries previously closed to hunting will be open this year. The Department formed a team of employees to consider the implications of the legislation and assure that the opening of these areas benefits hunters, maintains public safety, and minimizes conflicts with the public. The amendments proposed also address any intergovernmental agreements that were voided by SB 1334. The Commission received a briefing on the influences of SB 1334 in June when the Dove Commission Order was presented.

Motion: Harris moved and Freeman seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO AMEND COMMISSION ORDERS 2–10 (BIG GAME), 11–18 (SMALL GAME), 23 (TRAPPING), AND 26 (POPULATION MANAGEMENT SEASONS) FOR 2011–2012 HUNTING SEASONS AS PROPOSED.

Vote: Unanimous

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7A. Evaluation of access issues that may influence elk seasons for fall 2011 in Units 1 and 27.

Presenter: Brian F. Wakeling, Game Branch Chief

Mr. Wakeling briefed the Commission and provided a Power Point presentation on access issues that may influence elk seasons for fall 2011 in Units 1 and 27. The briefing included an updated analysis of the burned area, wildlife populations, and access for hunting.

On June 25, 2011, the Commission was briefed on the status of the Wallow Fire in Units 1 and 27 in relation to wildlife populations, access into the burned areas, and the influence on fall 2011 hunting seasons. The fire resulted in a mosaic of burn intensities within much of Unit 1 and the northern part of Unit 27. The mosaic pattern of the fire provided wildlife refuges during the fire.

Most wildlife species, based on post-fire reconnaissance by Regional and Forest Service personnel, avoided direct mortality. Access was determined to be a critical issue. The Commission asked the Department to keep current on the influence of the Wallow Fire as related to access issues and fall hunting seasons.

Regional concern for the turkey population and recruitment was addressed in a telephonic Commission Meeting on July 8, 2011, where the Commission approved a reduction in fall 2011 turkey permits in Units 1 and 27. Again, at this meeting, the Commission was briefed on access discussions with the Forest Service.

Regional personnel have worked closely with the Forest Service to negotiate the access into the burned areas for fall 2011. Discussions are ongoing, and the amount of access has been increasing every few weeks. Presently, the Forest Service plans to open access to all but the high intensity burn areas. Maps delineating the intensity of burned areas overlaid with opened roads and suggested closure areas are being developed. Access into the burned areas of Units 1 and 27 appears to be adequate for the upcoming fall hunts.

Commissioner Husted stated that the Deputy Forest Supervisor indicated that by the end of this month all except for five designated severely burned areas would be opened. Commissioner Husted would like the Commission to discuss returning bonus points to hunters with a hunt in Units 1 and 27 who would choose to turn in their tag, by a time certain, because they feel their hunt has been ruined and their bonus points have been wasted.

Commissioner Harris commented that it would set a dangerous precedent. There have been many requests for good reasons to return bonus points and the Commission has consistently denied those requests.

Commissioner Mansell commented that he knows of some other states where a hunter can surrender his tag for any reason and get his bonus points back. It's a win-win because the Department keeps the money and the hunter salvages his bonus points.

Commissioner Freeman suggested that the Commission have extensive discussion on the topic in the future, but that the Commission not make any change today.

Commissioner Husted confirmed with Assistant Attorney General Jim Odenkirk that under the current rule, the Commission does not have the authority to reinstate bonus points. The only exception is for emergency response personnel or military personnel who had to respond to an emergency and could not use their tag. Regulation does not allow for any other circumstance except for where the Department has somehow caused an error in the denial or awarding of a permit.

Motion: Harris moved and Freeman seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO LEAVE COMMISSION ORDER 4 INTACT, AS APPROVED IN DECEMBER 2010, AND CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN REGIONAL COORDINATION WITH THE APACHE-SITGREAVES FOREST TO PROMOTE CONTINUING PROGRESS ON APPROPRIATE LEVELS OF PUBLIC ACCESS IN UNITS 1 AND 27 FOR THE DURATION OF 2011.

Vote: Aye - Woodhouse, Freeman, Harris

Nay - Husted, Mansell
Passed 3 to 2

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Meeting recessed for lunch at 12:03 p.m.

Meeting reconvened at 1:20 p.m.

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8. Consideration of Proposed Commission Order 21–Waterfowl and Commission Order 22–Snipe for the 2011–2012 Hunting Season.

Presenter: Mike Rabe, Small Game Program Supervisor

Mr. Rabe presented the Commission with Commission Order 21 (Waterfowl) and Commission Order 22 (Snipe), establishing seasons and season dates, bag and possession limits, and open areas. A detailed description of all proposals was available for public review at all Department offices and was provided to the Commission prior to this meeting for review. A Power Point presentation was provided that included charts, graph, historical data, and the following information:

Commission Order 21 – Waterfowl

A total of 6,000 Arizona duck stamps were sold in 2010-2011, a 7% increase over the 5,593 duck stamps sold the previous year.

Ducks

Abundant water on the prairies and good conditions in most of the Intermountain West forecasts strong waterfowl populations this year. Production of mallards in the coastal regions of the Pacific Flyway was also strong. Because of this, the prescription for the Pacific Flyway is a liberal duck season for the flyway and Arizona.

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.

Despite good conditions overall for ducks, the long-term average population size for pintail and scaup remain below the goals outlined in the management plans for both species. American wigeon populations were also below the long-term average. Management plans for pintail, scaup, and canvasback prescribe bag limits and seasons for those species separate from the above frameworks. This year's season for pintail is a 2 bird bag for the entire season, scaup is an 86 day season with a 3 bird bag, and canvasback is a full season with a one-bird bag. Redheads will be the same as last year, 2 birds per day.

Geese

In 2002, the Pacific Flyway Council requested that the Service include geese in the duck framework extension as well. This was approved, allowing duck and goose seasons to run the same number of days. To assure that Canada goose reproduction in Northern Arizona is not disrupted, goose seasons within Units 1, 22, 23, and 27 start later than goose seasons in the rest of the state.

The Department recommends a liberal package for Arizona, with restricted bags for pintail, scaup, canvasback, and redhead ducks. The scaup season is 86 days. The waterfowl season has different season opening and closing dates for the mountain and desert zones; it is most advantageous to hunters to open the season earlier in the mountain zone because birds arrive in mountain waters earlier than they do in the desert, and winter storms or freeze-up often drive those birds to the desert part of the state late in the season. In the desert zone, the season should be open as late as possible because birds typically remain in that zone through February. Federal frameworks do not allow the general waterfowl season to extend beyond January 29. However, junior hunts may occur into February.

Liberal Package

	<u>Mountain Zone</u>	<u>Desert Zone</u>
Juniors-Only	Oct 1 – Oct 2, 2011	Feb 4 – Feb 5, 2012
Falconry-Only	Oct 3 – Oct. 6, 2011	Jan 30 – Feb. 2, 2012
General Duck	Oct. 7, 2011 – Jan. 15, 2012	Oct. 21, 2011 – Jan. 29, 2012
Scaup	Oct. 22, 2011– Jan 15, 2012	Nov 5, 2011 – Jan 29, 2012
General Goose	Oct. 7, 2011 – Jan. 15, 2012	Oct. 21, 2011 – Jan. 29, 2012
Restricted Goose Hunts	Nov 15, 2011 – Jan. 15, 2012 (Units 1 and 27) Nov. 15, 2011 – Jan. 29, 2012 (Units 22 and 23)	

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.

The Department recommends adoption of the federal bag limit of seven ducks (including mergansers) per day, with no more than two female mallards, two redheads, two pintails, three scaup, and one canvasback taken in any one day. Recommended possession limits for ducks are 14 after opening day, with no more than four redheads, four pintails, six scaup, and two canvasbacks. Recommended goose bag limits are no more than six white geese (snow, including blue and Ross' geese) and three dark geese (Canada and white-fronted). Recommended goose possession limits are no more than 12 white geese and six dark geese. The Department recommends that the Commission adopt the species bag limits as prescribed by the Service for the 2011–2012 waterfowl season.

The Department recommends continuation of the allowable framework extension for the Liberal package. The use of mountain and desert zones is intended to offer mountain hunters the opportunity to hunt ducks and geese when the birds are in those areas. Likewise, the later opening and closing dates for the desert zone allows hunters to hunt as late as possible. Birds

arrive earlier in the mountain areas of the state and leave as the waters freeze. In desert areas, many birds arrive later than in the northern areas and stay throughout the winter. Both zones receive the maximum allowance hunt days under both the Liberal and Moderate packages.

Under the Liberal package, there are 107 total hunt days allowed. In the Liberal recommendation above, 101 days are devoted to general waterfowl, four days are a Falconry-Only season and there is a weekend Juniors-Only season in each zone. Federal frameworks require that the youth hunt be on weekend days within 14 days of the General season, but may be outside the General season frameworks. The bag limits for the Juniors-Only hunts will be the same as during the General season.

Arizona and California are required to coordinate seasons along the lower Colorado River region. California is required to match their season along the Colorado to the Arizona season dates.

Coots and Common Moorhens

Commission Order 21 includes bag limit and season structure for coots and common moorhens within the general duck season frameworks. The Department will continue to recommend the full Federal framework and bag limit on coots and moorhens which is 25 per day, either singly or in the aggregate. Possession for coots and moorhens is 25 in possession, either singly or in the aggregate. Although an Arizona State Waterfowl Stamp is not required for harvest of these species, hunters taking coots or moorhens must have in their possession an Arizona Migratory Bird Stamp that registers them for the Harvest Information Program. Harvest of these species is typically incidental to waterfowl hunting.

Commission Order 22 – Wilson’s Snipe

The Department recommends that the Commission approve a general snipe season consistent with the total allowable season days and bag and possession limits allowed by the Service for Pacific Flyway states. In Arizona, the allowable bag is 8 Wilson’s snipe per day with a possession limit of 16 after opening day. Seasons for Wilson’s snipe are recommended to run concurrent with the general waterfowl seasons in each of the state's zones.

Motion: Husted moved and Harris 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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9. Hunt Permit-Tag Application Schedule for Spring 2012 Hunts

Presenter: Lizette Morgan, CFO, Business & Finance

Ms. Morgan provided the Commission with a brief presentation relating to the hunt permit-tag application schedule for the spring 2012 hunting seasons. The application schedule (attached)

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: Freeman moved and Mansell seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE THE APPLICATION SCHEDULE FOR THE SPRING 2012 HUNTS.

Vote: Unanimous

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10. Call to the Public

There were no requests from the public to speak.

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11. Law Enforcement Program Briefing

Presenter: Gene Elms, Law Enforcement Branch Chief

The August Law Enforcement Program Briefing and written report will be provided to the Commission at the August 26-27 Commission meeting. There were no updates provided at this meeting and the Commission had no comments or questions.

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12. Request to Approve the Notices of Docket Opening, Proposed Rulemaking and Economic Impact Statement amending R12-4-422 to ensure compliance with amendments made to federal sport falconry regulations.

Presenter: Jennifer Stewart, Rules and Risk Branch Chief

Ms. Stewart provided the Commission with an overview of the Rule Review and Rulemaking processes followed by a presentation on the Department's request for the Commission to approve the Notice of Docket Opening, Proposed Rulemaking and Economic Impact Statement to amend R12-4-422. The presentation included the following information:

On October 8, 2008 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) amended federal regulations governing falconry, transferring falconry permit administration to the individual states pending certification. Federal regulations require states to have statutes and rules that comply with amended federal regulations, an effective permitting and tracking process and USFWS certification by July 2013 in order to continue to allow the sport of falconry using Migratory Bird Treaty Act species. It is important to note that on January 1, 2014, the federal falconry permitting program will cease to exist and if the Department has not received USFWS certification prior to June 30, 2013, falconers will not be able to practice sport falconry in this state.

On July 8, 2010, the Department received permission from the Governor's Office to proceed with this rulemaking. In August 2010, a Task Team was formed to ensure the Department's ability to become USFWS certified, including revision of the rules, forms, and all implementation policies. The existing rule is written to complement the previous federal regulations; however, the elimination of the federal permitting system requires a complete rewrite of the existing rule. The Department proposes to amend R12-4-422 to ensure compliance with the new federal regulations by:

- Reducing the age requirement for all sport falconry levels
- Increasing take and possession allowances
- Expanding the species of raptors that may be possessed
- Clarifying acquisition and transfer requirements and allowances
- Clarifying capture requirements
- Clarifying banding and microchipping requirements
- Establishing hacking requirements and allowances
- Clarifying facility requirements
- Establishing reporting requirements, including paperless reporting
- Establishing disposition requirements for recaptured, injured, or deceased raptors.

There are other amendments the Department recommends for R12-4-422, however, these items are outside of the scope of the exemption authorized by the Governor's office. While the Department is not pursuing these items at this time, amendments the Department may consider during a future rulemaking include:

- To offset costs associated with administering the falconry program:
 - Increasing the sport falconry license fee
 - Establishing a raptor capture stamp
 - Establishing raptor draw tag fees for specific species
- To assist in the tracking of raptors, requiring banding or microchipping for all raptors taken from the wild.

The Team met with members of the Arizona Falconer's Association (AFA) and/or the Arizona Audubon Society on multiple occasions to share and discuss the proposed rule language. Several suggestions from these meetings were incorporated into the proposed rulemaking package.

If the Commission approves, the Notices will be submitted to the Secretary of State's Office for publication in the *Arizona Administrative Register*. The Department must file the Notice of Docket Opening at the same time to formally initiate the rulemaking process. The Department will accept public comment for 30 days after the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking is published. Once the public comment period has passed, the Department will present the Notice of Final Rulemaking and Economic Impact Statement to the Commission for their consideration.

Eric Gardner, Nongame Branch Chief, provided a Power Point presentation on the potential future sport falconry rule modifications, which included raptor identification and new and increased fees to cover program costs, and discussed these with the Commission.

Public Comment

Charlie Kaiser, President, Arizona Falconers Association: Recommended the Commission approve moving forward with this rulemaking.

Motion: Freeman moved and Harris seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO APPROVE THE NOTICE OF DOCKET OPENING, NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING, AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT AMENDING R12-4-422.

Vote: Unanimous

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13. Department Sunset Review Briefing

Presenter: Anthony Guiles, Legislative Liaison

This briefing was included in item #1, State and Federal Legislation.

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14. Call to the Public

There were no requests from the public to speak.

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15. 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: Freeman moved and Harris seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION.

Vote: Unanimous

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Public meeting reconvened at 2:20 p.m.

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16. Litigation Report

There were no updates and the Commission had no comments or questions.

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17. Approval of Minutes and Signing of Minutes.

There were no minutes for approval at this time.

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18. Director's and Chairman's Reports

Motion: Freeman moved and Mansell seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO HEAR THE DIRECTOR'S REPORT BUT TO DISPENSE WITH THE CHAIRMAN'S AND COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS.

Vote: Unanimous

Director Voyles reported the following activities:

- Represented the Department at the Governor's Office's request. The Department played a central role in discussions of post-fire needs. The Governor requested and obtained national funding for emergency response that they had not been able to get before
- Met Jim deVos and Steve Clark along with Brian Wakeling to discuss primarily game management issues. Also discussed the importance of the Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports in terms of building best management practices and being able to develop data that validates when recruitment and retention efforts are working
- Participated in the final selection process for the new Executive Director of the Council to Advance Hunting and Shooting Sports in Washington DC
- Met with Congressman Gosar at his request to discuss conservation issues that he was interested in
- Met with the leadership of one of the larger litigious NGOs to discuss the impacts they were having on conservation
- Attended the Safari Club International Banquet in Tucson
- Attended the Landowner/Lessee Sportsman Relations Committee in Prescott
- Toured Rogers Lake with Coconino County and discussed some of their concepts and ideas
- Attended the summer WAFWA; the following Department staff received awards: Kirk Young was recognized as the WAFWA Professional of the Year, Terry Johnson received an Honorary Lifetime Membership to WAFWA and was honored with the Phillip-Snyder Lifetime Achievement Award for his lifetime contributions, and Jim Heffelfinger received WAFWA's Walmo Award for excellence in mule deer management.

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19. Commissioners Reports

The Commissioners' did not give reports at this meeting.

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20. Future Agenda Items and Action Items

Mr. Broscheid reported on the following future agenda/action items captured in this meeting:

- Pursue an agenda item in which the Arizona Wildlife Federation will make a presentation to the Commission on potential federal legislation relative to special land designation areas
- Provide a briefing on the history of the Department's bison management approach
- Develop and implement a private landowner outreach strategy for hunting within the municipalities

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Motion: Mansell moved and Harris seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO ADJOURN THIS MEETING.

Vote: Unanimous

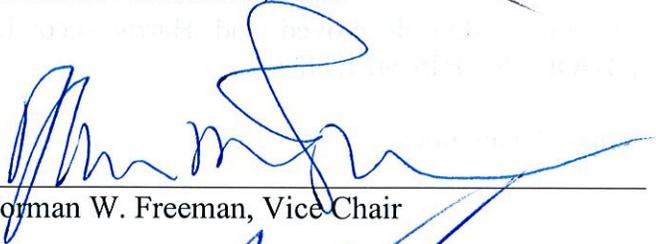
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Meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

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Robert R. Woodhouse, Chair



Norman W. Freeman, Vice Chair



Jack F. Husted, Member

John W. Harris, Member



Robert E. Mansell, Member

ATTEST:



Larry D. Voyles
Secretary and Director

Hunt Permit-tag Application Schedule – Spring 2012

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

Drawing					
	ACCEPTANCE DATES¹	CORRECTION PERIOD²	DEADLINE DATES³		
HUNT	Applications accepted on or after:	Deadline 5 p.m. (MST) in Department offices	Deadline 7 p.m. (MST) in Department offices on:	Hunt permit-tags mailed out by:	Refund warrants mailed out by:
Spring Turkey	(See note 1)	Sept. 23, 2011	Oct. 11, 2011	Dec. 2, 2011	Nov. 28, 2011
Spring Javelina	(See note 1)	Sept. 23, 2011	Oct. 11, 2011	Dec. 2, 2011	Nov. 28, 2011
Spring Buffalo	(See note 1)	Sept. 23, 2011	Oct. 11, 2011	Dec. 2, 2011	Nov. 28, 2011
Spring Bear	(See note 1)	Sept. 23, 2011	Oct. 11, 2011	Dec. 2, 2011	Nov. 28, 2011

First Come⁴		
	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. 28, 2011	Dec. 5, 2011
Spring Javelina	Nov. 28, 2011	Dec. 5, 2011
Spring Buffalo	Nov. 28, 2011	Dec. 5, 2011
Spring Bear	Nov. 28, 2011	Dec. 5, 2011

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.
- If a paper Hunt Permit-tag Application that is submitted contains an error and is received by Sept. 23, 2011, the Department will make three attempts within a 24-hour period to notify the applicant by telephone (if a phone number is provided).
- Department offices at Flagstaff, Kingman, Mesa, Phoenix, Pinetop, Tucson and Yuma will close for business at 5:00 p.m. (MST); completed applications will be accepted at these locations until 7:00 p.m. (MST) on deadline days. No applications will be accepted after this time regardless of the postmark. If applicable, 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.
- 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. A listing of leftover permits is available online at www.azgfd.gov 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.