

Paxson Fish and Advisory meeting minutes of January 31, 2013

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Meeting was called to order by chair, John Schandelmeier at 6:30 pm at Paxson Lodge.

Members in attendance; John Schandelmeier, Gary Alcott, Mark Schlenker, and Lee Harper. A quorum was present.

Members absent; Alan Echols; reason unknown. Alternates Greg Swope and Jim Murray were both in Seattle on personal business.

Also present was a member or the public; Trey Hollidaay, and representatives from Glennallen ADF&G; Becky Sw Swanke and Frank Robbins.

Mr. Schandelmeier outlined the Fish stocking plan for the lakes of concern in the area.

There was some discussion concerning numbers of char and pressure on Dick Lake. (m.p. 173 Richardson) All members felt the proposed 500 fish was adequate, but elected to ask for 700 in 2014 and 2015 if ADF&G felt the lake system could handle those additional fish.

Rapids Lake, (m.p. 225 Rich) proposal was accepted as is, with Lee Harper commenting that the Lake gets a fair amount of military pressure from the training facility near there.

14-Mile Lake. (m.p. 14 Denali Highway. Gary Alcott expressed frustration at the stocking program which added Lake Trout in past years to this once trophy Rainbow trout lake. He indicated that the L.T. had mostly taken over the system. He also questioned the need and desirability of stocking grayling in 14-mile since grayling are naturally present in every roadside pond in this area. Schandelmeier and Harper concurred. The committee voted to oppose grayling or L.T. stocking in 14-mile Lake.

Next discussion concerned Federal proposals and rural guidelines for Federal game management, also the MOU from the Feds. General discussion by all members felt that this was a non-issue at this time. No Federal proposals were brought forth. Becky Schwanke brought up the issue of the "rural" determination for the town of Cantwell and our committee agreed to draft a letter concerning the present rural boundaries for that community. Many of the Cantwell residents have close ties to the population in the Copper River Basin.

Schwanke and Robbins discussed the status of the ongoing browse studies in unit 13B, caribou population estimates, management objectives for both moose and caribou.

Moose status and hunt pressure in 13B was discussed in length by the committee.

Paxson Fish and Advisory meeting minutes of January 31, 2013

Also there was considerable discussion on the caribou population. Discussed were the objectives for the Nelchina herd and how to achieve them.

Schwanke indicated we had 7000 Tier I hunters and an additional 3000 drawing permits. The objective was to be 5000 animals taken. It will not be achieved this season.

Paxson F&G advisory supports (unanimous) an increase in bag limit to 2 caribou per household in the Tier I hunt. The 2 caribou per household limit should be applied whenever the harvest objective is over 5000 animals. All members felt that this has the potential to increase the harvest without deteriorating the quality of the hunt. We recognize that the caribou hunt is tied to many things. It affects moose numbers, and also small game numbers. Capping the Tier I permits at the current level was discussed and tentatively rejected. A unanimous vote indicated that if the caribou limit was raised to 2 caribou per household then it should not be tied to the moose hunt.

Paxson advisory unanimously opposes requiring a caribou hunter to also only hunt moose in Unit 13. Our original proposal concerning this was to limit moose hunters to a reasonable level and in no way tie moose hunters to any other hunts.

Much of the area business during hunting season is from the hunters that come into this area. The present number of hunters is manageable; more might tip the balance. The balance is hunt quality, local business opportunity, trail deterioration, and the effects of too many hunters on other species. (fox, ptarmigan, etc.)

A two caribou per household bag limit might also reduce the hunters in the not-so-pretty Oct. road hunt?

Predator control/ moose pop. Objectives took a couple hours of detailed discussion. Past populations of both wolves and moose were brought forth. Gist of this was that the moose pop. objective for Unit 13B, and likely unit 13 as a whole is too high. The objective is higher than has ever been achieved. We do not know if the browse would support such a number and feel that by backing the pop. objective down, we would have a much healthier population of moose. This can be achieved in several ways. Mark Schlenker brought forward the idea that since the current moose population has been achieved by predator control, that a lower pop. objective should also be achieved in the same manner. The present I.M. program needs to have a trigger that allows in to go on and off as necessary to aid in achieving moose/caribou pop. objectives.

Paxson Advisory feels that a spring wolf pop. objective of 220 is a very good number. Past predator population at this level seemed to drop the moose population by approximately 4% annually----recognizing that there were other factors also. Hunt pressure, winter kill etc. The advantage of using predators to achieve desired moose population is obvious. Wolves take moose across the board--

Paxson Fish and Advisory meeting minutes of January 31, 2013

-they don't target bull moose, they take a variety and they do it all season long. This achieves a better population balance.

A healthy predator population contributes greatly to the health of the entire ecosystem as they also target other species including small game.

A critical provision of ungulate population control in this area is the I.M. program. It must stay in place and game managers must have the ability to turn it on and off as necessary to maintain population and harvest objectives.

John Schandelmeier will draft a handout outlining our position to Game Board members.

Mark Schlenker was authorized to attend the B.O.G meeting.

An election meeting was tentatively scheduled for late March or April.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 pm.