

## Panhandle Forest Collaborative

### "Electronic" March Meeting Record

<https://www.nationalforests.org/collaboration-resources/panhandle-forest-collaborative>

[On Monday, March 16 the Panhandle Forest Collaborative (PFC) meeting scheduled for Wednesday, March 18 was canceled due to COVID-19 concerns. The Chair and Vice-chair had decided to hold an "electronic" meeting, whereby a Word document was circulated to the speakers scheduled for the day so that they could fill in the information they wished to convey to the PFC. PFC members could then ask questions or respond on the same document. That document could then serve as this "electronic" meeting record.]

**Approve January meeting record** [Members, please review the January meeting record and enter your amendments and vote below].

- Phil Hough votes thumbs up

**Other Announcements** [Members and technical advisors, please add your announcements for the PFC not covered in following agenda items.]

- FSPW has launched a new Podcast series: "**Your Wild Place**". Designed to be a weekly podcast, *Your Wild Place*, will feature stories, essays, nature and fun by and for lovers of wild places of all ages. You can listen the link below. It's also available from your favorite sources for podcasts. <https://www.scotchmanpeaks.org/podcast/>
- **Chronic wasting disease update**
  - Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) has not detected Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Idaho since testing began in 1997. CWD is a contagious and always-fatal neurological disease that affects deer, elk, and moose.
  - CWD is caused by mis-folded proteins, called prions, which enter the brain and cause neurological damage. The threat of CWD is a serious concern because there is no cure for this fatal disease and CWD could impact Idaho's elk, deer and moose populations. CWD prions cannot be removed from the natural environment however, equipment such as knives can be disinfected soaking them in a 40% bleach solution for 10 minutes.
  - Transmission most commonly occurs through direct contact between animals, as well as shed in urine, feces, saliva, blood, and antler velvet from infected animals. Carcasses of infected deer, elk, or moose may serve as a source of environmental contamination as well and can infect other deer, elk or moose that come into contact with the carcass.
  - While deer, elk, and moose affected by CWD can be healthy-looking, animals showing clinical signs can appear very thin with drooping head and ears, excessive salivation, and exhibit unusual behaviors such as a loss of fear towards humans and a general lack of coordination.
  - The Center for Disease Control advises that there is no strong evidence that humans can acquire CWD. However, it is recommended to have deer and elk tested if they were harvested in a known CWD-positive area, and to not consume meat from CWD-infected animals.

- Montana, Utah and Wyoming have confirmed cases of CWD in animals close to the Idaho border. Most recently, in the summer and fall of 2019, white-tailed deer and moose sampled near Libby, Montana tested positive for CWD. Through increased surveillance, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks documented CWD in 61 white-tailed deer, 1 mule deer, and 2 moose in the Libby area. In the town of Libby, 13% of deer were CWD positive compared to 4% CWD positive within a 10 mile radius of Libby.
- To conduct our scheduled CWD surveillance during the fall of 2019, IDFG asked for voluntary sample submissions from hunters that harvested white-tailed and mule deer in the region. Biologists operated check stations around the region to collect samples. Freezers were available in Sandpoint and Bonners Ferry for hunters to leave deer heads for sampling. Road killed deer were also sampled. Samples are collected by removing the lymph nodes located near the base of the deer or moose's jaw or the brain stem of an elk.
- The goal of IDFG surveillance is to sample enough animals to be able to detect a 1% prevalence rate with a 95% confidence across the entire sampling area. The Panhandle Region sampled 319 white-tailed deer, 26 mule deer, 4 elk, and 3 moose. The majority of samples (209 white-tailed deer) came from Unit 1 (from Sandpoint to the Canadian border). All animals had negative CWD results. Currently we can say with 95% confidence that we have less than a 1% prevalence rate of CWD in Unit 1 as well as within the entire Panhandle. Due to the proximity of CWD positive animals in the Libby, Montana area, it is likely that the Panhandle Region will be conducting annual CWD sampling.
- For more information, check out the IDFG website: <https://idfg.idaho.gov/cwd> or contact Laura Wolf at [laura.wolf@idfg.idaho.gov](mailto:laura.wolf@idfg.idaho.gov).
- [See attached map]

**Policy updates** [Representative Sage Dixon, Mitch Silvers, Karen Roetter, Terri Seymour, Clinton Daniel, Ken Till, and Marc Kilmer, please add any policy updates you wish to share with the PFC below.]

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**Shared Stewardship update** [Peg Polichio and NRCS, please add your updates below]

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**Project timeline and status update** [District Rangers, IPNF SO staff, Forest Projects Subcommittee, please add your updates for the following programs and projects. If I missed a project or program, do not hesitate to add it to the list below.]

- **CFLRP**
- **Buckskin Saddle**
  - The PFC sent a comment letter to the Forest Service on February 7<sup>th</sup> regarding the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Buckskin Saddle Project. The comment letter asked the Forest Service to drop about 238 acres of timber harvest units and about 2.6 miles of roads. These units and roads were identified because they would require new roads to be constructed across stream channels. In response, the Forest Service decided to drop

about 2.3 miles of road construction and approximately 100 acres of timber harvest. One of the roads listed in the PFC comment letter was mistakenly identified as having a live water crossing, when in fact, the draw has no evidence of an active stream channel. Thus, the 0.3-mile difference between what the Forest Service decided to do and what the PFC recommended. As for the acreage, the Forest Service figured out how to use yarding techniques to treat most of the acreage identified without having to build so many roads.

- **Chloride Gold**
- **Honey Badger**
  - A lot of work has been done on recreational trails and a list of trails the IPNF hopes to construct or improve through the Project has been developed. The IPNF has been working with trail groups and I went over for a meeting a couple of weeks ago. The IPNF is expecting to collect scoping comments on the Project in April.
- **Bottom Canyon**
- **Kaniksu Community Project**
- **Potter's Wheel**
- **Scattered Schoolhouse**
- **Kaniksu Winter Travel Plan**
- **Bog Creek**

The Center for Biological Diversity, Idaho Conservation League, The Lands Council, and Selkirk Conservation Alliance recently filed a legal complaint, seeking to overturn the Bog Creek Road Project.

- **Hughes Creek footage**
- **5-Year Action Plan**

### **Public Comment**

- Stan Myers
  - I was not able to attend the January meeting, but the comment about public input in the January minutes is pertinent to a suggestion I have for the Collaborative. I have been on the mailing list for a few years, read through the past minutes of the meetings and attended the meeting last November. I believe that the collaborative needs to have more public involvement. The collaborative makes recommendations, gives input to the USFS regarding the Forest, yet, in my opinion, does not necessarily represent the public of the panhandle or the majority of forest visitors. Most members, consistent attendees are employees of state and federal government, paid special interest groups or industry. One member of the Bonner County Commission consistently attends, which is good, but he was not elected to represent the panhandle of Idaho on matters related to the Forest. This may be a flaw of many collaboratives, but obviously, the more public attendance, input into collaborative topics, the better!
  - I see a couple of ways I believe would improve public representation in the meetings: 1) advertise the meetings on social media sites, emails to leaders or boards of various groups that represent diverse forest visitors (recreational, hiking, horse, atv, snowmobiles, mountain biking, sportsman, conservation, environmental, etc) and 2) where possible, hold the meetings in areas closest to some of the major topics that are being discussed in the meetings. For example, in November, the principal topic of the meeting was the forest

management project near Priest Lake. It would have been ideal to hold that meeting at Priest Lake, Nordman or Priest River, to encourage more local and interested public attendance. I understand that the Collaborative is not intended to be a public debate of the topics or projects. But if the goal of the Collaborative is to make recommendations on the forest that are to serve the public, the Collaborative has to involve more of the public. Under the current USFS Administration, solutions to forest issues are clearly encouraged to be more local. Public comment can be controlled by time limits, protocols and format, but it needs to be more encouraged and accommodated in the meetings, in order to get more public involvement and to insure that recommendations of the Collaborative more closely align with the desires, needs of the public of the Panhandle.

# Idaho Fish and Game 2019 CWD Sampling

