

FISH AND GAME COMMITTEE

January 27, 1977

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m., with all members present.

House Bill 268 was discussed. Rep. Moore, chief sponsor, said the bill puts fish and game licensing procedures back to what they were before 1975. He believes that the fish and game of Montana belong to the residents, to be used for their enjoyment. The fees were changed last session and resident fees were doubled. Rep. Moore feels this was not right. License sales are down this year. Therefore the department did not get much more money out of doubling fees. What they did was halve the number of people in the field. He said he resents this, it is a sport and people ought to be able to go out without having to pay so much. He asked why Montanans should not get a bargain in the price of licenses. He also said he has no objections to changing the number of out-of-state hunters listed in the bill.

Opponents were Dr. Wambach, Wes Woodgerd, Ralph Holman and Jennifer Cody. Their statements are attached. Mr. Woodgerd answered several questions as follows. The total number of law enforcement personnel is 96 FTE; 64 or 65 field wardens. There are 77 FTE biologists. The mule deer population is severely down all over the west. There have been many interstate meetings to try and find out why, but so far no one knows. He also said the Fish and Game Department is a pilot agency for Planned Program Budgeting Process. They have consolidated 7 divisions into 4 programs - Administration, Wildlife, Fish and Parks. Law enforcement is in each of these programs. The general fund money appropriated was for law enforcement work in the Parks program. It was felt that fish and game license fees should not pay for something unrelated--Parks.

Mr. Woodgerd also said that in order to lessen the population of coyotes, due to their high reproductive rate, you would have to kill more than 60% of them each year. Also, it is difficult to identify how many people are in the field because of multiple licenses.

Chairman Staigmiller left the meeting. Rep. Baeth assumed the chair.

House Bill 299 was heard. Rep. Ellison, chief sponsor, explained that the bill would prevent using unfair and unsportsmanlike methods to locate and shoot game or find fish. Use of these methods deprives true sportsmen of a chance to get the same animal. John Hollow mentioned that citizen's band radios need to be in the title of the bill, because they are added to the statute in the body of the bill.

Wes Woodgerd and Ralph Holman and Francis Burger testified as proponents of the bill. Their testimony is attached.

In closing Rep. Ellison said only flights in to established airports or on private property would be permitted. He asked the committee to think about this bill to see if it is practical. Mr. Woodgerd said that page 3, line 2, the words "game birds" should be deleted. He said this law would be hard to enforce-- the present statute is sometimes difficult to enforce.

The Committee went into Executive Session.

Rep. Baeth said he has thought about amending House Bill 126 to allow individuals to kill dogs even on federal land. Rep. Ellison wants to amend it to allow a private citizen get permission to kill the dogs. Rep. Seifert moved that House Bill 126 DO NOT PASS. There was no second. Rep. Ellis moved that the bill DO PASS. Reps. Baeth, Courtney, Johnston, Manuel, Tropila, Barrett, Ellis voted yes, Rep. Ellison abstained, Reps Seifert and Conroy voted no, and Rep. Staigmiller was excused. The motion passed.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12.20 p.m.

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JOHN B. STAIGMILLER, Chairman