

ACTWS – Conservation Committee – August 2013 Newsletter

August and the days grow longer as do the demands for wildlife conservation! Members of the Conservation Committee include: Mark Boyce, Larry Roy, Matthew Pyper, Lorne Fitch, Blair Rippin and Tammy McMillan. **Additional members are welcome!**

In addition to addressing compelling wildlife conservation issues, ACTWS has representation on 5 external committees: **Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division Regulation Change Advisory Group** – Evelyn Merrill, Larry Roy; **Alberta Committee on Species-At-Risk** – Doug Collister, Kirby Smith; **Alberta Fisheries Management Round Table** – Ken Crutchfield, **Alberta Pacific Forest Industry (Alpac) Landscape Advisory Group (LAG)**- Kristie Derksen, **North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance** – Ken Crutchfield. An update on activities follows:

1. **Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division Regulation Change Advisory Group** – Committee met May 29th - key items arising from meeting:
 - Sandhill Crane hunting season not a go for this year. Decision made at MLA level. If you wish to weigh in on this issue, please provide emails to your MLAs to either support or refute a hunting season for this species.
 - No bison season due to high calf mortality from harsh winter
 - Increased WMUs on draw for antlered mule deer archery and rifle combined
 - New elk season in parklands
 - Two areas closed for goat
 - Coyote season on public land now open from fall start of big game season to end of spring bear season
 - Other minor changes
 - Discussed updating Mule Deer Management Plan
 - Overall goal which blend of conservation, recreation and aboriginal use?
 - Which compromise between hunting opportunities and agricultural damage?
 - Population goals by ecosystem, region, or WMU level?
 - Maximum sustained yield or Quality Deer Management?
 - Which compromise between user groups (bow, rifle, residence, non-resident, outfitters, and disease management)?
 - Obtaining accurate population estimates was identified as a significant problem.
 - Further consultation meetings to occur with all parties participating.
 - Discussed special licence draw system
 - Opportunities are decreasing as Alberta population is increasing and populations of game are decreasing.
 - Many draws such as trophy antelope and some Bighorn sheep would require over 100 years to be drawn if one applied today.
 - Should we change the draw system for hard to get tags from priority to random, once in a lifetime, or increasing odds system.
 - Upcoming federal regulation changes.

- Moving to using Lincoln Index to estimate goose populations. Goose populations continue to grow therefore both a spring and fall hunting season and white goose limit to 50 per day. No Ross or Lesser Snow goose restrictions. White Front goose limit up to 5 per day. New white paper confirmed that possession limits do not influence harvest therefore no possession limits on waterfowl in the future.
 - Minor discussions on proposals for this fall's meetings
 - Mandatory hunter harvest questionnaire
 - Eligibility for Resident hunter status
 - Separate archery draw for antlered mule deer
 - Legal weapon definition
 - Group youth licenses
 - Mourning dove season
2. **Alberta Committee on Species-At-Risk** – planned June 25th was cancelled. Next meeting likely in October. Items likely presented for discussion include:
- Membership and procedures of the Scientific Subcommittee
 - Status Evaluation for Hare-footed Locoweed
 - Status Evaluation for western Grebe
 - Draft Conservation Action Statement for Hare-footed Locoweed
 - Draft Conservation Action Statement for Western Grebe
 - Stonecat Recovery Plan
 - Whitebark Pine Recovery Plan
 - Shortjaw Cisco Recovery Plan
 - Status Report Priorities and Review Process
3. **Alberta Fisheries Management Round Table** – April 13th meeting. Key items:
- Memorandum of Agreement between Alberta Conservation Association and Environment Sustainable Resource Development
 - Alberta Fisheries Management Policy – to be reviewed over next two years
 - 3rd party review of the science used in the management of commercial fisheries – Colby Report (now available on website)
 - Barbless hook regulation no longer in effect
 - Fish Suitability Index developed that will be the basis of evaluating fish status across the province that gives insight into productive capacity, habitat threats etc. It will be the basis of fisheries management planning across the province.
 - 2014 Sport Fishing Regulations
 - Changes to Fisheries Act – Canada
 - Recommended changes to provincial licensing that will include licensing of seniors (over 65 years, currently no license is required)
 - committee meeting notes and materials are publicly available at: <http://srd.alberta.ca/FishWildlife/FisheriesManagement/AlbertaFisheriesManagementRoundtable.aspx>

4. **Alberta Pacific Forest Industry (Alpac) Landscape Advisory Group (LAG)-**

(<http://alpac.ca/corporate-responsibility>) Expectations of the LAG as outlined by Alberta Pacific – “ Alberta-Pacific organizes a Forest Landscape Advisory Group, which includes representatives from Aboriginal communities, municipalities, government agencies, as well as hunting, trapping, forest industry and conservation groups from within and around the Al-Pac FMA area.

Members of the group have taken in field-tours of harvest and silviculture areas, forest industry mill sites, energy sector infrastructure sites, research program plots on the FMA area and selected ecologically significant areas. The group also gets timely briefings from key team members about initiatives and updates about the direction our company is going.

Keeping an open dialogue is not only necessary to meet regulatory and environmental guidelines but it is also key to being a good neighbour to the communities and people close to our operations.”

Meeting held March 14. June 27th cancelled due to high water. Next meeting is September 6th. Kristie Derksen took over ACTWS representation from Blair Rippin. Only notes from the March meeting are available. Key items addressed:

- Forest Management Plan 2015 – Values Assessment
- Community Stewardship Report
- Al-Pac’s Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Update
- Knowledge menu presentation - Natural Disturbance in the Boreal Forest

5. **North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance –** (<http://www.nswa.ab.ca/>) *Annual General Meeting* July 17th. ACTWS rep was elected as Vice Chair (2 yrs) Key items:

- North Saskatchewan River Water Mgmt Plan (available on website-)
- Vermillion River Water Mgmt Plan (available on website)

6. **Stakeholder Engagement - National Code for the Introduction and Transfer of Aquatic**

Organisms – Alberta meeting occurred May 16th. Outcome of consultations remains unknown. Wildlife professionals should be aware of this code. “*The Code applies to the intentional introductions and transfers of live fish, aquatic plants into Canada, between provinces and territories, or within provinces and territories to fish habitat and fish-rearing facilities. The Code excludes deliberate movements of organisms specifically for the aquarium and water garden trade, live fish for the food trade, and bait; and the unintentional movements such as those associated with the transportation and shipping industry; recreational and commercial boating; and, canal and water diversions. Code renewal was required to account for the phasing in of the CFIA’s new lead federal disease management role under the National Aquatic Animal Health Program; to avoid recognized overlap in mandates accorded under the Fishery Act and the Health of Animal Act as it relates to movement of fish; and, to refine and modernise certain elements of the Code. The Renewal Task Group has completed a 3rd draft of the 2013 Code that lays out the renewal way forward that is ready to be shared with key stakeholders for review and comment.*” <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/enviro/ais-eae/code-eng.html>

7. **Government of Canada – devolution of PFRA pasture lands to provinces** – on-going dialogue – significant discussion and consultation continues to take place in Saskatchewan. ACTWS continues to support the Canadian Section TWS on this matter while encouraging interested ACTWS members to pursue on an individual basis.

8. **Muzzling scientists** – ACTWS has received no response to letter sent to federal privacy commissioner. Following link to the University of Victoria letter to commissioner calling for the investigation - http://www.elc.uvic.ca/press/documents/2012-03-04-Democracy-Watch_OIPLtr_Feb20.13-with-attachment.pdf

To ACTWS MEMBERS.....likely there are a variety of other groups where it would be beneficial to the member as well as the Chapter to raise the public profile of ACTWS as a professional yet objective voice for competent fish and wildlife management. If you are aware of any instances which might benefit from ACTWS representation and you want to be that person!..... contact me. It is intended that subsequent newsletters will have an update on committee work as events dictate.