

## **BCWF AGM - May 2019 - Fort St. John**

The 2019 BCWF AGM was attended by two delegates from our club. There were three full days of meetings, seminars and informational sessions...far too much information to be portrayed in a brief summary. However there were some good (and perhaps not so good) takeaways that we will endeavor to present in very succinct point form to get right to the crux of the matter.

Please keep in mind that a few presenters made mistakes during their talks and we may have heard something different than intended, but to the best of our ability, these are our takeaways.

### **Harvey Andrusak - President BCWF**

Harvey was not a listed speaker at this event; however in his opening statements he made these points.

1. Historically BCWF has gone from an 'Angling' organization where the hunters felt they were not proportionately represented to today where BCWF is viewed more as a 'Hunting' organization where the anglers feel that they are not being represented.
2. This was confirmed throughout the presentations for in the roughly 24 hours of seminars, only one fisheries expert attended with one half hour fishing related presentation scheduled. True, the focus was on Predator/Prey dynamics, but something that needs to be addressed.
3. Harvey did portray the difficulties in garnering the attention of the DFO as they seem to be married to the commercial fisheries only.

### **Virgil Moore - Director - Idaho Fish & Game**

Virgil was a captivating speaker and shows what can be done when an organization identifies its priorities and moves on them with intensity.

1. Idaho constitutionally protected their hunting, trapping and fisheries.
2. They are not subject to judicial challenge.
3. All decisions are based on science, not public and social media pressure, or political pressure
4. Special interest groups are severely limited by design
5. Idaho gets 120 MILLION dollars to fund their efforts on a population of 1.75 million people.
  - a. None of the funds come from General Revenue but from licence fees, which is in stark contrast to BC whereby license fees go to General Revenue with little directed back to conservation.
6. Virgil made a statement on the predator wolf explosion...as well to a lesser degree, the predator grizzly...and how it needs to be dealt with based on science, not emotion. But he also stated

that it needs all entities involved on both side to stop fighting and come together with a collaborative trust sufficient to get things done.

### **BCWF Board of Directors**

1. The Board made a statement after Virgil Moore's speech that they are in support of all license fees going to the support of conservation.
2. They also wished to include that all users of the landscape participate in the funding - hikers, bikers, ATVs, Hydro, mining and forestry.

### **Chad Day - President - Tahltan Central Government**

Chad's presentation was entitled 'Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation' but from what we saw never touched on it.

*Indigenous affairs is a runaway topic that came up throughout the event in bits and pieces. But every time it did, it was hushed down. Issues that were brought up were treaties that will give vast areas to the First Nations and limiting hunting/usage access to the rest of the population. It was stated that all discussions were being done in secret with not all stakeholders being invited and that it is not fair. Interestingly in keeping to the time schedule of the event, no question period was afforded after Chad's speech.*

One thing Chad did speak on at length was the Grizzly bear hunt. The Tahltan disagree with the Grizzly hunt stoppage. They believe that the numbers are a danger and have instructed their people to utilize their indigenous rights and take Grizzlies to help control the numbers.

### **Shane Berg - Executive Director - Deputy Chief Forester**

Shane's presentation was an attempt to show how difficult it is to manage BC's forest, but was taken to task in question period regarding the use of glyphosates to blanket spray clear cuts; and the decision to ensure 90-100% of forest replanting is monoculture pine with no consideration for having other species of growth in a healthy forest.

Unfortunately, in what seemed to be the defacto response from many bureaucratic presenters taken to task, it was a lot of political rhetoric and buck passing blame to 'someone else'. When pushed to identify which departments are responsible for the decisions and listing them, it was pointed out that all those departments work for the Chief Foresters Office...his office!

If the Chief Forester can't dictate what is used in good forest practice, who can?

### **Dr. Sophie Gilbert - University of Idaho**

The biggest takeaway from this presentation is that hunting closures are not based on science or actual numbers, but knee-jerk political reactions. And not just with wolves, but cougar and grizzly. In her area of study, 12 of 19 recorded kills were by cougar and in the monitoring of a 7 strong caribou herd, showed 18 grizzly in the same area. Not much hope unless the cougar and grizzly populations are managed properly as well as the wolves...but we haven't even got close to there yet despite overwhelming evidence as shown by Mike Bridger later on.

### **Chuck Zuckerman**

Chuck did a very quick presentation on Bill C-71 as he was a presenter to the Senate not too long ago. Unfortunately as we found out the next day in a meeting with MP Bob Zimmer, Bill C-71 has passed and will most likely be law by the time you read this.

### **Doug Bancroft**

Doug spoke briefly on lead remediation concerns, unfortunately his presentation was cut very short, thus we have requested his powerpoint to review and will follow up.

The points he was able to make were:

1. The hazardous waste management act stipulates all directors past and present are liable for cleanup.
2. Clubs are an extremely tiny risk but are subject to the rules of mines and factories, which is unbalanced.
3. There is a joint venture motion in place with the Ministry of Environment to address shooting clubs specifically.

### **Colin Peters - 1Campfire**

1Campfire is an offshoot project by the Wild Sheep Society but independently funded. It was given \$30,000 by the BCWF.

1Campfire's goal is to directly target via social media, non-hunters and hopefully anti-hunters to change the public's perception of hunters.

Please have a look at the 1Campfire YouTube channel and view their videos. Keep in mind they just launched in the last month.

### **Dr. Andrew Weaver - Green Party of BC**

Dr. Weaver feels that climate and wildlife funding is seriously low from all governments.

He supports the Grizzly bear closure despite the science that shows the numbers are too high and need to be controlled.

### **John Rustad - Liberal Party of BC**

Doesn't believe mass land protection and closure is the answer (ie Tweedsmuir), but rather believes that predator management is the answer.

Both speakers noted that the NDP could not be bothered to attend the AGM of a BC conservation society with 44,000 members.

### **Bob Zimmer - MP**

Bob is the 'firearms guy' in the Conservative Party.

We attended Bob's session to hear more about the fight around Bill C-71, however that appears to be a moot point now as he informed us that despite many recommendations made by the Senate review, it was passed the day before with ZERO changes. He believes that it will be law sometime in the next week or two. It will be by the time you read this.

The other interesting issue he brought up was the 'secret plans' of Justin Trudeau to propose an order in council firearm ban in the near future, as mentioned previously. It has since been denied by the PMO, so we will have to wait and see.

The one thing he did recommend to do was to call Bill Blair's Constituency Office directly and voice your concerns. His number is provided below.

### **James Steidle - Stop the Spray BC**

James' presentation was one of the most convincing with graphic imagery. Nobody could view the comparison images and come away thinking that mass glyphosate spraying of our forests is the answer.

Takeaways are:

1. Foresters are growing a 'crop' of conifers...everything else is 'weeds' including all low growing underbrush and deciduous trees....basically all the animal food! Everything is annihilated prior to planting.

2. Aspen is food for moose as well as being called the 'asbestos forest' as full foliage Aspen stands do not burn. Perhaps the real solution to our wildfires?
3. 40% of the moose dying in these sprayed areas are not dying from predation or indeed the spray itself, but from starvation. They don't starve in unsprayed cuts.
4. In the area of study, prior to glyphosate spraying there were 293% more moose
5. Canfor was the major sprayer in the PG area where Stop the Spray started. James announced at the AGM that he was informed that Canfor was going to stop their spraying practices, but the official announcement and rollout timetable was yet to be made.

Please go to Stop the Spray website and sign the petition. <http://stopthespraybc.com/>

### **Cait Nelson - Wildlife Health Biologist, FLNRORD**

Cait spoke extensively on CWD and was very informative.

The big takeaways are:

1. CWD is caused by prions
2. There is no known cure
3. They don't believe it is naturally occurring
4. They are finding evidence of the prions in the soil which is being uptaken by plants that are eaten by the animals. It appears that these prions may not be able to be destroyed (opinion, not fact)
5. 3700+ animals tested in BC with ZERO infection, but the increased area spread all around us leads to an inevitable future conclusion unfortunately
6. Our opinion based on what was stated in the presentation, but if she is right on all these points and CWD is unstoppable, we may well be seeing an extinction level event for these animals

*Without being partisan we will include an interesting story that was told. New York state, which is more known for its liberal views and being influenced by social pressure in how it acts, had two confirmed cases of CWD.*

*The intriguing thing is that New York did not study, analyze or delay on this because the science is there and they knew their animals were at risk. So upon confirmation they dispatched air resources and 'depopulated' every at risk animal in with 10 miles of the diseased animals. This may sound harsh but CWD is decimating the numbers at an exponential rate.*

*This is an instance where a decision was made on science and logic and dealt with immediately; and not waiting for it to spiral out of control while it was studied or put forward for popular opinion.*

## **Mike Bridger - Wildlife Biologist, FLNRORD**

Mike was the no questions barred, identify the problem and take action presenter at the AGM. He may have truly been the only one...more to come on that.

His facts:

1. Wolf kill is 74% of the known cause of Caribou death in his geographical areas of management
2. Moose also makes up 58% of the wolf's diet
3. There was a 15-22% decline in herds per year in the test areas
  - a. These areas contained wolf populations of 15/1000km<sup>2</sup>
  - b. Culls of the wolves up to 80% resulted in the packs repopulating to 100% within the year
  - c. Wolf culls of 90-95% resulting in 2-3/1000km<sup>2</sup> resulted in increases to the caribou herds of 15-18% per year

Without going on further, this is what is wrong with our current systems. The issue has been identified. The solution has been found. The numbers don't lie and are exactly what we want. No more study is needed to set the optimum number of predators to prey, but there are still countless other divisions funded by government money still burning up funds instead of cutting Mike loose to enact these practices in all areas. It is simply bureaucratic insanity at its finest.

### **Presentations:**

Unfortunately the entirety of the presentations were not recorded, but to view the data presentations made by each speaker, please visit the BCWF YouTube playlist here <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEIL8GB2O2FTvG9DWx-Wgo2lullmg3At6>

### **In Conclusion:**

You may not agree with everything we state here, or anything for that matter, but if the presenters are right about the current wildlife situation, fisheries stocks; and firearms rights there may be nothing left to fight for if as a society we don't take action.

That is the one thing that we want to bring front and center is the extent of talk, meetings, and analysis done by these multiple experts with very little action.

The biologist presentations were very good, however there were numerous independent government agencies all 'studying' the same thing with no action taken. Even worse, at the risk of sounding offensive, in the eyes of the researchers most of the studies outcomes didn't end with an action plan,

but simply 'proof' to request more funding grants to do further studies. Insanity! No real world business could operate in this manner without failing.

It was actually amusing during a number of presentations to hear officials blame other government agencies for their inability to act, when those very agencies were on the agenda to speak. We had the leadership of two of the political parties in the room, the head of the Conservation office, numerous credited doctors, biologists and researchers, the head of forestry...you would think that putting these people in the same city in the same week, that you could actually get something accomplished, but alas, that doesn't seem possible.

It was very disheartening to be honest, and it is our view that left to the devices of these organizations there will not be a need for conservation in the future as there will be nothing left to conserve. There is even a saying that was bandied about consistently by many presenters as they blamed each other for 'Managing to Zero'.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. That the SAFGC should review sending representatives to the AGM every year and instead put those funds towards identifiable causes. Otherwise we are simply adding to the problem of money being spent holding meetings and committees when there are already good and sound identifiable causes to contribute to. We should support actual boots on the ground efforts with funding and volunteers ie, wolf predation, fisheries, conservation and education, donations of specialized equipment to Conservation Officers, etc.

Every three or so years, or when AGM's are held in the local Okanagan area it could be attended by one representative who can identify which causes need support.

2. Members and Leadership of the SAFGC should take action and support those actually doing something:
  - a. Stop the Spray...go and sign the petition
  - b. Send letters and emails to all BC MP's to bring back the Grizzly hunt as the biologist's statistics show 40% of the decline in Elk calves are attributable to Grizzlies. Wolves are the major predator of Caribou
  - c. Call Bill Blair's constituency office directly and voice your displeasure with Bill C-71 and any other restrictions the government is planning to put on law abiding firearms owners. He can be reached at: 416 261-8613