Group members in attendance: Curt Bales, Jim Klebba, Chip Clouse, Tim Fagan, Barney Henrich, Theresa Lineberger, Lee Livingston, Doug McWhirter, Steve Brock, Dan Morris, Justin Sanders, and Jim Yockey.

Absent: None

Facilitator: Dennie Hammer

Notetaker: Dan Smith

Welcome
- Hammer started the meeting at 6:00pm and went over the agenda.
  - Agenda items:
    - Trigger Points
    - Public outreach meetings
    - Hunt Area 56
      - Boundary Change
    - Hunt Area 55

Ice-Breaker
- The group was asked, “Have you been able to block this work out of your mind?”

Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 17, 2012
- Corrections:
  - Page 9, 3rd Bullet, 3rd sub-bullet, 4th sub-bullet. Scratch first sentence of Bales statement. Keep second sentence.
  - Page 7, 1st bullet, 3rd sub-bullet. Change to read, “Clouse – Could say yes to a September 20 opening date on draft proposal but still prefers September 24.”
- The Group approved the meeting minutes with above changes.

Trigger Points Discussion
- McWhirter – The idea of trigger points is something the Department already does in some ways.
  - Biologists constantly look at data, and look for information that would indicate a change is needed.
    - Do not have specific triggers
  - Triggers can be used both ways; to be more conservative or more liberal in season setting.
• Bales – The group should continue on to hunt area discussions because trigger points would apply to the entire herd unit.
• Livingston – The Department is already using triggers.
• The group agreed to continue with hunt area discussions.

Public Outreach
• Scheduled Presentations
  o Chamber of Commerce – April 23, 2012 at 12:00pm – Cody Club Room
  o Public Meeting (tentative) – April 23, 6:00pm-9:00pm – Holiday Inn
• Clouse – Advised he had talked to one of the County Commissioners. They will try to attend the Cody Chamber of Commerce meeting, but if unable to attend, asked for a short presentation at Commission Meeting.
• Objective of the meeting is to share information from the group.
• Sanders agreed to take the lead on the presentation.
  o McWhirter will assist.
• Hammer suggested a short PowerPoint presentation.
• Bales – Asked why there was a need for a specific meeting for the Chamber of Commerce, and not just a public meeting.
  o Sanders – Chamber of Commerce specifically requested it. It would be good to have two meetings, one for the business leaders (Chamber of Commerce) and one for the general public.
• Hammer – Will the public meeting be the same as the Chamber of Commerce meeting?
  o PowerPoint presentation.
  o Moderated question and answer session.
  o Entire group should try to attend the public meeting to be available for questions.
• Public meeting
  o Game and Fish will do a press release for the meeting and supply equipment for meeting.
  o Handouts:
    ▪ Copies of draft hunt recommendations.
    ▪ All classification information
    ▪ Posters
    ▪ Flight information
• Group should continue to give it more thought.

Recommendation Document
• Draft writers:
  o Sanders, Livingston Klebba, Lineberger, and McWhirter.
  o Coordinated by Sanders.
• Entire group will critique and word-smith draft.
Hunt Area 56 Discussion (continued from last meeting)

- Livingston – In order to keep things moving, offered a proposal to the group:
  - No boundary change in hunt area 56.
  - Change hunt area 55 to limited quota licenses.
  - Keep hunt area 56 in general license hunting.

- Brock – Suggested splitting the South Fork part of hunt area 56 off, making it the old hunt area 57 again.
  - North Fork of the Shoshone River is all one herd.
    - Lineberger – Stated she doesn’t agree the North Fork is all one herd. Part is fed from the Thorofare area, and part is fed from Yellowstone National Park.
  - Brock – The South Fork has more private land issues, and more brucellosis issues.

- Livingston – If hunt area 55 changes to limited quota, fewer elk would be harvested during the migration.
  - Brock – What would keep hunters from killing them all in hunt area 56?

- Bales – There is a need to go limited quota in hunt area 55. There is also a need to reduce pressure in hunt areas 56 and 59 because of the reduced number of general hunting areas.
  - Suggested a shorter season.
  - Brock – Why not go limited quota in hunt area 56, and have a longer season?
  - Bales – Does not want to leave hunt areas 59 and 60 as the only general areas in the basin.
    - Suggested the season should open on October 15 instead of October 1 cutting the season in half.
    - Need to leave some general hunting opportunities in hunt area 56.
      - Brock – What will keep hunt area 56 from declining due to a general season?

- Klebba – General license elk hunting in hunt area 56 is better in the South Fork. It’s pretty tough hunting in the North Fork.

- Bales – There were 46 bulls taken in hunt area 56 last year during the general season.

- Fagan – The Department has made changes in all these hunt areas over time.
  - Hunt area 56 has not responded much to changes.
  - Elk tend to travel through hunt area 56 in the spring and fall.
    - There are some resident elk, but there has never been a lot.
  - Hunt are 56 has never grown a lot of bull elk.
  - For the South Fork, Fagan does not want to see a large resident herd. The current number is where we want to be.
    - Bales – Agreed with Fagan. The last count was 1,250 elk – right at the objective.
      - Concerned with leaving a long general season in hunt area 56 if hunt area 55 is changed to limited quota.
  - Fagan does not want to see a large increase in resident elk.
During the preseason flight, approximately 200 elk were observed, which is not a lot of elk.

- Brock – Would like to be more conservative in the North Fork.
- Fagan – For non-migratory elk in the South Fork, changes to hunting seasons in hunt area 56 have not really affected the elk numbers.
- Bales – Agrees the resident herd should not be allowed to build in number.
- Hammer – What is the concern?
  - Bales – An increased number of general license hunters in hunt area 56 because of the change of hunt area 55 to limited quota.
    - The shift in hunters will result in an increase harvest of bulls in hunt area 56.
  - McWhirter – Prior to October 21, the harvest focus would be on resident elk.
  - Bales – Doesn’t see a lot of elk in hunt area 56 in the summer.
  - Brock – If the increased harvest is on migratory bulls, aren’t we trying to reduce the harvest on those bulls?
  - Clouse – Sportsman for Fish and Wildlife (SFW) does not want limited quota hunt areas.
    - SFW wants to maintain hunter opportunity.
    - Already lost some opportunity in hunt area 60.
    - If hunt area 55 goes to limited quota, it will affect hunt areas 56 and 59.
    - Limited quota will hurt hunter opportunity.
    - Limiting the season on a general license may do what is needed.

- Brock – Should we discuss a boundary change first?

**Boundary Change for Hunt area 55 and 56 Discussion**

- Brock – In the existing hunt area 55, the elk hunting season needs to be limited. In a year with an early migration hunters could have a big impact on the herd.
- McWhirter – Thinking about boundary changes, and the unintended consequences that can occur, leads to a quagmire that can’t be predicted.
  - It becomes so complicated.
  - Suggested discussing season with the boundaries as they currently are.
  - The group can make decisions without further complicating the issue with boundary changes.
    - Hammer – What does the rest of the group think?
    - Lineberger – Agree w/ McWhirter
    - Henrich – Make boundary changes in conjunction with limitations. Put north of the river in to Hunt Area 55.
    - Morris – Leave the boundaries as they are.
    - Bales – Leave the boundaries as they are.
    - Livingston – Leave the boundaries as they are
    - Sanders – Leave the boundaries as they are, but agrees with Henrich.
    - Yockey – Leave the boundaries as they are.
- Brock – Likes Henrich’s idea of putting north of the river in to hunt area 55.
- Fagan – Leave the boundaries as they are. It will complicate things to make a change, and it’s a good boundary as it is.
- Klebba – Leave the boundaries as they are.
- Clouse – Leave the boundaries as they are.
- Livingston – Addressing Brock’s concern about an early migration; the migration would be after the October 21 closure of the general hunting season in hunt area 56. For the opportunity the general hunting season offers in hunt area 56, the risk to the elk is low.
- Bales – Does it make sense to put the area north of the river in to hunt area 55? Is there any reason not to?
  - Livingston – It would reduce the general hunting opportunity.
- Klebba – Is there still a resident herd in that part of hunt area 56 north of the river?
  - Yes.
- Clouse – Has the Department ever had a one week elk hunting season?
  - McWhirter – Not that he can recall.
- McWhirter – Looking at the two hunt areas as they currently exist, hunt area 55 and hunt area 56 are two separate “beasts”.
  - Hunt Area 55 – Lowest harvest, low number of elk surveyed, and low calf numbers.
  - Hunt Area 56 – Killing more elk, success is high, effort is lower, and calf ratio is good when compared to good years.
  - If you try to grow elk in the front country of hunt area 56, you are going against the grain. Elk want to go from hunt area 56 to other areas.
    - Don’t want to encourage resident elk.
- Bales – Would it be bad to have a shorter general season in hunt area 56?
  - Fagan – Does not want to do anything to build elk.
    - Right now, current management is working.
  - Bales – Appears the number of bulls in hunt area 56 is going down, but there are no changes to protect bulls in hunt area 56.
    - Already seeing an increase in the number of hunters because of the loss of general seasons in the Clarks Fork herd unit.
    - Need to save some bulls in hunt area 56 by going to a shorter general season, or changing to a limited quota season.
  - Fagan – Should not expect big increases in bull numbers because it has not happened in the past – from 1988 to 2010.
- Hammer – Any more discussion on boundary change? Should the boundary be changed?
  - Brock – The area in hunt area 56 north of the river should be changed to hunt area 55.
  - Fagan – Leave it as it is. No Change.
  - Klebba – Agrees with Brock. Change area north of the river.
  - Clouse – Leave it as it is.
  - McWhirter – Leave it as it is. No change.
• Lineberger – Leave it as it is. No change.
• Henrich – Agrees with Brock. Change area north of the river.
• Morris – Leave it as it is. No change.
• Bales – Leave it as it is. No change.
• Livingston – Leave it as it is. No change.
• Yockey – Leave it as it is. No change.
• Sanders – Agrees with Brock. Change area north of the river.

Break 7:25-7:40

Boundary Change for Hunt area 55 and 56 Discussion (continued)
• Hammer – Who wants to interpret the results of the vote before the break?
  o Livingston – not consensus.
• Hammer – If the group wants to make a boundary change, then there is more talking to do.
  o Livingston – If the boundary changes, and hunt area 55 changes to limited quota, it reduces the opportunity for elk hunters. One of the goals of the group was to maintain opportunity.
  o Hammer – In order to move forward, eleven members of the group have to be in favor of the change, otherwise it stays the same.
  o Sanders – It didn’t pass. Suggested leaving the boundaries as they are and moving forward.
  o Brock – Reword the question, and then vote again.
• Hammer – Do you want to change the hunt area 55/56 boundary?
  o YES – Brock, Henrich, Sanders
  o NO – Bales, Klebba, Clouse, Fagan, Lineberger, Livingston, McWhirter, Morris, Yockey
• The boundaries will remain as they currently are with no changes.

Hunt Area 56 Discussion (continued)
• Livingston – Hunt areas 55 and 56 are so tied together that one affects the other.
• Clouse – Are there still limited quota cow hunts in hunt area 56? Should the number stay the same?
  o McWhirter – For the 2012 season, the proposed hunt area 56 season recommendations for cows (antlerless and cow/calf) are:
    ▪ Type 4 – November 1-15 – 50 licenses (reduced from 150) valid in the South Fork of the Shoshone River drainage.
      • Unused Type 4 – November 16-December 23 – Valid in entire area.
    ▪ Type 5 – November 1-December 23 – 100 licenses (increased from 50) valid off national forest.
    ▪ Type 6 – November 16-December 23 – 100 licenses (no change) valid in the South Fork of the Shoshone River Drainage.
Thoughts for 2013?

- McWhirter went through some slides on numbers for the hunt areas (ratios, hunter success and effort, bull harvest, trends).
- For 2012 the hunt recommendations are aiming to reduce cow harvest on the North Fork, but not as much in the South Fork.
- Bales – Not that long ago, there were a lot of elk doing damage on grass in the South Fork.
  - Need to maintain elk numbers and leave some cow harvest in hunt area 56.
  - Questioned the need to maintain the type 4 license. Should it be converted to type 6 and valid in both drainages?
- Clouse – Do any elk go from hunt area 56 to hunt area 61?
  - McWhirter – Not very likely.
- Fagan – In the interest of moving forward, can the group agree to do hunt area 55 first, then finish hunt area 56?

Hunt Area 55

- Hammer – Should hunt area 55 change to limited quota?
  - YES – Bales, Klebba, Fagan, Henrich, Lineberger, Livingston, McWhirter, Brock, Morris, Sander, Yockey.
  - NO – Clouse.
  - Consensus with 11-1 vote. The group agreed to change hunt area 55 to limited quota seasons.
- Bales – In 2011 there were 23 bulls harvested in hunt area 55.
- McWhirter – For the 2012 season the proposed recommendation is for a general season and limited quota type 9 licenses (20 licenses).
  - Usually use the estimate of 50% harvest success.
- Bales – Does it make sense to have an early season for the resident bulls, and then a late season to take advantage of the migrating bulls?
  - Livingston – There was a split season at one time.
    - Having a season in October for two weeks would accomplish saving some bulls.
  - Bales – Missing hunter opportunity by protecting Yellowstone National Park bulls.
    - Not doing any good for the population to save Park bulls.
    - McWhirter – Agrees with Bales. Should take advantage of the opportunity if it exists.
      - More opportunity on the south side of hunt area 55 than the north.
  - Bales – Suggested having some licenses early in the first part of October, then some licenses in December.
    - Would like to take advantage of some Park elk.
- McWhirter – If the group wants to make sure we don’t kill more than 20 bulls, then suggest maybe 50 licenses.
• Lineberger – What about the migratory elk?
  ▪ Klebba – Suggested 30 licenses in the early season, then 20 in the late season.
• Bales – The seasons need to be cautious in the first few years. Game & Fish can adjust later as needed.
  ▪ Livingston – Make the late season license valid only south of the river.
• Brock – The group didn’t make a lot of changes in hunt area 60, so we need to be cautious in hunt area 55.
• Hammer – Is the group going to use the 50% harvest success rate?
  ▪ YES
  ▪ Then 50% of what?
• Livingston – Suggested also placing a 6-point restriction on hunters.
• McWhirter – The group is in agreement on limited quota, but there has been a lot of different discussions on how it will look:
  ▪ 2 weeks, 3 weeks, split season, point restrictions
  ▪ Where are we (the group) at?
    ▪ Lineberger – Suggested October 1-14 for the first season.
    ▪ Livingston currently does 7-day hunts.
    ▪ McWhirter – Suggested no split season the first year acknowledging that is where the group would like to go in the future.
    ▪ Lineberger suggested October 1-21 (one season).
      ▪ McWhirter suggested 50 licenses.
      ▪ Livingston suggested 60 licenses.
• How many licenses?
  ▪ 50 licenses – Bales, Klebba, Clouse, Fagan, Henrich, Lineberger, McWhirter, Brock, Morris, Sanders, Yockey.
  ▪ 60 licenses – Livingston.
• Type 9 licenses
  ▪ Livingston – Suggested an increase from 20 licenses to 30 licenses.
  ▪ McWhirter – Average success has been about 20%.
  ▪ Lineberger – Non-resident hunters would get about 5 licenses.
  ▪ Sanders – Suggested 20 licenses to remain conservative.
  ▪ How many type 9 licenses?
    ▪ 20 – Brock, Fagan, Klebba, McWhirter
    ▪ 25 – Henrich, Morris, Livingston, Yockey, Sanders, Bales, Clouse
    ▪ 30 – Lineberger
    ▪ After more discussion the group agreed to recommend 25 licenses.
• The groups hunting season recommendation for Hunt Area 55:
  ▪ Type 1 – October 1-21 – 50 licenses any elk with recommendation of a late season in the future.
  ▪ Type 9 – September 1-30 – 25 licenses any elk.
Hunt Area 56 Discussion (continued)

- Bales – Suggested a 14-day general season – October 1-14.
- Livingston – Suggested leaving the season as it currently is. A 21-day general season – October 1-21.
- Lineberger – Advised she likes the 2012 season recommendation of October 1-21 with changes to the cow seasons.
- Brock – Advised he still wants to be cautious. Agrees with Bales on a 14-day hunt.
  - There is not the ability to adapt with a general season as there is with a limited quota season.
- Bales – Advised he would like to see a late season taking advantage of the opportunity to harvest Yellowstone National Park bulls.
  - Suggested a limited quota season in December – December 1-10.
  - Fagan – Did count a lot of bulls this year. The hunt would need to be conservative, but could have a season.
- Should there be a 14-day season?
  - Some yes, some no, some maybe.
- Livingston – Advised he is not sold on the 14-day season. He needs more time to consider it.
  - Bales – Suggested a season with 14 days off wilderness, and 21 days on wilderness.
- Group decided to stop discussion, and give it more thought.

Information on Wilderness Use “Pool”- Lineberger

- Lineberger met with Rick Taylor, Bridger Ranger Station, Bridger-Teton National Forest.
  - There is no “pool” yet.
  - Prior to 2008, outfitters could petition for more use days.
  - Since 2008, no “pool” days.
  - Taylor advised no outfitters have gone over their permit use, and no outfitters have petitioned for more days.
  - Thorofare outfitters requested that no additional permit days can be used for elk hunting in hunt area 60.
  - All of the Thorofare outfitters have agreed not to ask for additional days for elk hunting in hunt area 60.
    - Non-elk use only.

Public Comment

- No public comment.

Next Meeting

Thursday, April 5, 2012, 6:00pm – 9:00pm, Big Horn Federal.
Future Meeting  Wednesday, April 18, 2012, 6:00pm – 9:00pm, Big Horn Federal.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:10pm