Welcome

- Hammer started the meeting at 6:00pm and went over the agenda.
  - Agenda items:
    - Public Meeting comment review
    - Recommendations for the Department
    - Final Report and letter to Department

Approval of Meeting Minutes from April 18, 2012

- Corrections:
  - Page 2, 1st bullet. Change “Fagan Woolley” to “Tim Woolley”.
  - Page 6, Hunt Area 58, 2nd bullet. Add Henrich to the YES votes.
  - Page 8, 2nd bullet, 3rd sub-bullet. Change last sentence to, “We are running out of time.”
  - Group approved minutes with corrections.

Review of Public Meeting and Input

- Comments from the group
  - Group members commented and agreed that Sanders did a great job with the meeting.
    - Hammer agreed. Stated he was very pleased.
  - Hammer advised 25-30 people attended.
    - Lineberger advised she thought she had counted 33 at one point during the meeting. She stated she thought more people would attend.
- Hammer passed out written comments received from the meeting and a couple of e-mail comments that came in to the group. Hammer asked the group to take 15-20 minutes to review comments and identify those comments that needed to be addressed by the group.
- After review of comments, group tossed out public concerns to be discussed.
  - Brock – Appeared that 8 comments were against the proposed recommendations as they were written, and 3 were in favor of changes.
o Sanders – There were several comments about the shortening of the general season in hunt areas 56/59. There were also comments about gathering better statistical information.

o Clouse – The public wants an improved way to check game animals, but does not want it to be used to catch poachers.

o Brock – A couple wanted limited quota seasons.

o Clouse – One comment suggested harvesting only 7 year old and older bulls.
  ▪ Hammer – In other words, having older age class bulls in the harvest.
  ▪ Bales – To harvest 7 year old bulls would mean harvesting only Boone and Crockett 350 point-plus bulls.
  ▪ Klebba – Advised group that Utah has a system similar to that, but it took a while to get there.
  ▪ Bales – Commented that historically hunting in those areas has not been like that. He suggested that it was not reasonable to manage for 300 point-plus bulls.

o McWhirter – There were some area 60 specific comments about archery versus rifle harvest.
  ▪ Lineberger – Commented that some were leaning toward point restrictions with rag-horns bulls excluded.

o There were comments about no late season hunting.

o Klebba – There were comments about the hunt area 61 population objectives and the Hunter Management Access Program. Concerns about going too far with harvest.

o McWhirter – There was a vote against hunt area 59 cow tags.

o Lineberger – There was a comment about where funding comes from.

Group discussion of specific concerns:

- Shorter Season in Hunt areas 56/59
  o 3 comments received did not want a shorter season off the wilderness.
  o Lineberger – Hunt area 59 was changed to match hunt area 56. Survey numbers do not indicate a need to shorten the season in hunt area 59.
  o Klebba – The shorter season limits hunters that do not have horses.
  o Brock – Hunt areas 56 and 59 need to be the same or hunters will all jump to the open area.
  o McWhirter – Is there a concern about crowding in the wilderness when the other parts of the area close? Will it crowd the off-wilderness hunt because of the shortened season?
    ▪ Lineberger – The 14 days off-wilderness will be crowded. Limiting hunting to the wilderness will cut opportunity.
  o Bales – The group is trying to manage elk, not hunters.
    ▪ We are trying to save a few bulls by limiting the general season.
    ▪ Those who choose to hunt general areas may find some crowding.
Fagan – Had argued before for leaving the general season as it was, but had voted with the group to make the change. Advised the areas can be monitored.
  ▪ Those commenting make a good argument for keeping opportunity.
Lineberger – Putting the season back to how it was would promote opportunity.
  ▪ Brock – The group needs to promote a healthy elk herd first.
Livingston – There won’t be crowding in the wilderness, but there may be crowding in the 14 day off-wilderness hunt.
  ▪ This is an opportunity to save some bulls.
Clouse – Stated he is ok with changing it or leaving it.
  ▪ The recommendation will force hunters to a two week season.
  ▪ There are a lot of hunters that have hunted there in the past.
Brock – A shorter season will reduce hunter opportunity, but so will a lack of bull elk.
  ▪ There are a lot of cow elk hunts available for opportunity.
Sanders – The group should leave the recommendation as it was presented to work to the benefit of the elk herd.
  ▪ The department can add the week back later if things look better.
  ▪ As far as crowding goes, there are other parts of the state that get a lot more hunters than here.
Bales – Part of the process was coming to a compromise and the recommendations are a work in progress.
  ▪ When looking at it from the public’s perspective, there can always be something in a recommendation to disagree with.
  ▪ Fagan – Commented that he did not hear any comments saying the recommendations will not work. Should give it a try for a few years to see what happens.
Clouse – Stated he had talked to one of the individuals who had made a comment, and advised that the group had tried to make recommendations for the benefit of the elk.
McWhirter – Could live with the decision either way.
Lineberger – The recommendation was a compromise with hunt area 59 being changed to match hunt area 56.
  ▪ Survey numbers in hunt area 59 do not indicate a need to shorten the season.
McWhirter – If some bulls are saved by a shorter season, it would be a benefit.
  ▪ How much weight do we give one comment?
Lineberger – There were some comments about losing the ability to combine a deer hunt with the elk hunt (hunt both species during the same time).
  ▪ Biologically there is no justification to reduce the opportunity in hunt area 59.
Brock – A limited quota season would allow longer hunts while reducing the harvest.
  ▪ The public does not want a two week elk hunt.
Clouse – The SFW does not like how the recommendation reduces opportunity.
- Lineberger – Commented that her gut says the recommendation should be changed back to a 3-week season.
  - Sanders – Does hunt area 56 need to be strong to help hunt area 55?
    - Hunt area 55 helps hunt area 56, but hunt area 56 does not backfill hunt area 55.
  - Clouse – Without better numbers – what we have and what we are harvesting – the hunt area should not be changed to limited quota licensing.
  - McWhirter – Is the public sentiment that two weeks is too short for an elk season?
    - Lineberger – It is too short, and the group moved the hunt to the least productive period. The hunting would be better later.
  - Livingston – The negative comments overall have been about the two week season and cutting the third week off.
    - Sanders – Commented that on the other hand, some wanted the hunt area to go to limited quota licensing.
  - Brock – The group needs to stay with what was proposed.
    - In a general license hunt area, the only way to reduce harvest is to shorten the season.
  - Bales – The huntable area outside of the wilderness is pretty small in the South Fork drainage of the Shoshone River.
  - Hammer asked the group to vote: Should the recommendation remain as it is?
    - NO – Lineberger.
  - The group decided to stay with the proposed recommendations in hunt areas 56 and 59.

- Better Statistical Information
  - Will be covered in the recommendations.

- Older Age Class Bulls in the Harvest
  - One comment suggested setting a trigger point of some kind.
    - Klebba – Setting a trigger point is not really possible without going to a limited quota season. In a general license area, it is hard to implement.
    - Fagan – It is good to use it as a tool, but it is not the only thing the department is going to look at.
    - Bales – The individual making the comment wanted to set criteria, but is managing for trophy bulls what the group wants to focus on? This has already been discussed extensively by the group.
  - The group did not support a trigger point addition to the recommendations.
• Hunt Area 60 Archery vs. Rifle
  o Klebba – Suggested a full month archery season.
  o Clouse – His group was for a full month archery season until he looked more closely at the numbers.
  o Sanders – Everyone at the table has some skin in the game. The group should leave it as it was recommended.
  o Bales – The group has already spent a lot of time on this hunt area and should move on.
  o McWhirter – Stated he was comfortable with the recommendation.
  o Hammer asked the group to vote: Should the recommendation remain as it is?
    ▪ NO – Brock
  o The group decided to stay with the proposed recommendation in hunt area 60.

• Point Restrictions
  o The group decided not to discuss it further.

• No Late Season Hunts until a Hunt Area is ready.
  o Lineberger – Believed the individual making the comment agreed with the group. No late hunting seasons until the hunt area could handle it.
  o This is what the group had recommended.

• Changing Herd Unit Population Objectives.
  o The group decided not to discuss it further.

• Hunter Management and Access Program (HMAP)
  o Bales – Suggested it would be nice to have outfitters doing this instead of the Department. It would save the Game and Fish a great deal of time and money.
    ▪ Livingston – Advised he had heard the same comment from the Wyoming Outfitters and Guides Association.
    ▪ Brock – Most resident hunters do not want to pay a guide for hunting a cow elk.
    ▪ Livingston – Suggested the department utilize outfitters for the HMAP.
      • Klebba – This could be one of the group’s recommendations to the department.
  o McWhirter – All available options need to be used to reduce elk numbers.

Break 7:25-7:40
Group Recommendations to the Department

- Hammer cautioned the group about overreaching the boundaries of what the group was asked to do.
  - Sanders – Commented that the attention span of people is short. Suggested the group does not want to send fifteen pages of recommendations. The group needs to be concise if they want people to read their report.
  - Hammer – The group has a lot of insight to how the department manages elk. Don’t restate the obvious.

- The group had an extensive discussion on the list of recommendations submitted by individuals in the group. The purpose of the discussion was to narrow the list down to the final recommendations. Topics discussed included:
  - Tooth and blood collection
  - Harvest data
  - Hunter surveys
    - Date of harvest and location
    - Internet based surveys
  - Mandatory vs. non-mandatory hunter harvest reporting
  - Reopening the Cody Check Station
  - Trail cameras, GPS collars, pre and post-season flight surveys
  - Alternative funding for data collection
  - Job Completion Reports (JCR) modifications to accurately portray data
  - Reduction in the price of cow tags after initial draw
  - Increase in the price of bull tags
  - Create a Statewide Elk Management Plan
  - Predator control options
  - Nutrition/habitat research
  - Outfitter reporting to include size of bulls harvested
  - Landowner licenses and exploring other ways to improve relationships with landowners
    - Hunter Management Access Program
    - Tying landowner licenses to access
  - Changing Resident vs. Non-Resident license allocation
  - Minimize harvest on migratory elk and focus on non-migratory elk
  - Trigger points
  - Preference points for residents
  - Redefining the Cody Elk Herd
  - Wolf Management Plan
  - HB0010 to allow harvest of more than two elk in hunt areas 61 and 66 or wherever necessary.
  - An elk advisory group to interact with the public on elk issues
• Final Recommendations agreed upon by the group to be included in the report to the Commission:
  o Hunter Survey:
    ▪ Investigate a mandatory hunter survey.
    ▪ Improve current survey to include harvest data and harvest location.
  o Increase Data Collection:
    ▪ Increase use of GPS collars.
    ▪ Increase use of trail cameras.
    ▪ Explore alternative funding sources for data collection.
    ▪ Continue pre-season and post-season classification surveys.
    ▪ Implement nutrition and habitat research.
    ▪ Implement voluntary blood and tooth collection.
  o Modify the elk Job Completion Report.
  o Avoid January hunting seasons.
  o Investigate increasing cost of bull license and decreasing cost of cow license.
  o Investigate the development of a Statewide Elk Management Plan.
  o Consider and direct large carnivore management and control efforts at elk herd segments exhibiting impacts of predation.
  o Recognize the contributions of landowners, and explore options to improve landowner/sportsman/department relationships.
    ▪ Create incentives for landowners.
  o Where elk numbers exceed management goals, and to the extent possible, minimize the harvest of migratory elk and focus pressure on non-migratory elk.
  o Make changes every 3-5 years with bull oversight annually.
  o Utilize HB0010 in hunt areas 66 and 61.
  o Updates/newsletter on Cody Elk Herd for public information exchange.

Public Comment
• Ken Heinrich
  o Wanted to commend the group on the job it has done.
  o Commented he was impressed with the group.
What Does Success Look Like?

- Hammer read the list of items created by the group in the beginning that would represent success.
  - Klebba – The group met most of the list, but their recommendations do not manage for big bulls.
    - McWhirter – Big bulls may be a result of the work that was done.
      - Commented he was satisfied with the outcomes.
  - Fagan – Advised that working on elk management in the past was ugly. This group did a good job.
    - Commented that he applauded the group.
    - Advised there were some areas in the Cody Elk Herd that had big bulls.
  - Sanders – Stated he believed each member did an awesome job. We all compromised to do what was best.

Writing the Report

- McWhirter, Livingston, Lineberger, and Sanders agreed to write the report. Klebba had volunteered but now has conflicts. Any other members are welcome to assist with the writing.
- Once the draft report is complete, it will be sent to each of the members electronically for review and comment. Morris has computer problems and cannot receive e-mail. Weiser stated he would see that Morris gets a hard copy to review.
  - Sanders advised he would try to have the report sent out by Saturday, April 28.
- The group will try to hold to the May 1 deadline.
- The group will meet on May 1, 2012 to sign report and finalize the group.

Next Meeting:

- Tuesday, May 1, 2012, 6:00 pm, Irma Motel for signing of the final report and celebration of the group’s accomplishments.
- Brian Nesvik, Chief Game Warden has expressed an interest in attending.
- George Weiser, Tim Woolley, and Alan Osterland have also been invited to attend.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:10pm