



They Came to Talk; F&G Came to Listen

The Idaho Wildlife Summit was a watershed event for the future of wildlife conservation in our state.

Idaho Fish and Game convened the Wildlife Summit in late August and facilitated a conversation among Idaho hunters, anglers, trappers and other wildlife conservationists.

With the use of Internet streaming and other technologies, we were able to gather input simultaneously from participants in seven locations throughout the state. At the peak on Saturday, August 25, 500 people attended, and 3,000 others watched and participated on-line. This makes the Idaho Wildlife Summit one of the largest public participation events in Idaho's history.

The total participation in seven cities across Idaho was 469 on Friday and 322 on Sunday. In addition, people from 33 other states and six foreign countries watched online.

Discussions and presentations covered the current status and direction of wildlife management in Idaho, the need to keep it relevant to the changing values, needs, and interests of Idahoans, and to hear and understand what they expect from their state wildlife management agency.

Participants heard presentations by Jim Posewitz, of

Orion: The Hunters' Institute; Toni Hardesty, The Nature Conservancy – Idaho; Tara Teel, Colorado State University; and Shane Mahoney, Conservation Visions. The speakers shared messages about the important role wildlife conservation has played in the history of our state and our nation.

Participants provided input throughout the Summit at informational booths – “Trading Posts” – which allowed face-to-face conversations with Fish and Game staff members; during the “Idaho Café” conversations with other participants, in polling sessions using keypad polling devices, on evaluation forms, and by participating in live “chat” discussions online.

“The Idaho Wildlife Summit was the beginning of what I firmly believe will be a long-term discussion about improving wildlife conservation in Idaho. A goal of the Summit was to build enthusiasm, and we certainly accomplished that. Now we need to use this enthusiasm as we work together for wildlife conservation,” Fish and Game Director Virgil Moore said in his introduction to a report summarizing the input provided by the Idaho Wildlife Summit participants.

The report is available online at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/about/?getPage=320>.



Hundreds of people came to listen and to discuss wildlife conservation issues during the three-day Idaho Wildlife Summit this past August.

IDFG photo by N.S. Nokkentved

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Participants Exchange Ideas and Find Common Ground

The “Idaho Café” provided an opportunity for Summit participants to have time to talk about what mattered to them.

This technique featured conversations among four people per table about compelling questions. After each question, participants moved to a new table with different people, allowing



Summit participants record their ideas during the Idaho Café. *IDFG Photo*

participants to talk to folks from new and different perspectives.

The technique helped people discover how much they shared with other participants.

Participants were invited to record on butcher paper what they shared in responding to each of five questions.

The first three questions were goal-oriented, while questions 4 and 5 focus on what is needed to achieve these goals.

1. What did you want to talk about when you decided to attend this summit?

Many participants expressed a desire to discuss issues such as wildlife conservation, preservation of the hunting and fishing heritage, connecting youth to

the outdoors and funding Fish and Game. Many were concerned about the status of big game herds in Idaho.

2. What wildlife legacy do you want to leave for future generations?

Participants shared their visions and their aspirations for what future generations will inherit as a result of shared efforts at wildlife stewardship.

at wildlife stewardship.

3. To leave the wildlife legacy that you think is appropriate for the future, who needs to be included in the conversation?

Participants reflected on who needs to be engaged to

accomplish shared aspirations.

4. How can we engage that diversity of perspectives in conversations that matter?

Participants made creative suggestions about how to engage all the parties from an admittedly diverse range of perspectives.

5. What can all of us do, individually and collectively, to benefit wildlife conservation in Idaho?

Participants said things people could do – individually or collectively – that would

make a difference to wildlife, include finding new funding sources, supporting habitat projects, mentoring youth in the outdoors, supporting education programs and public outreach, and preserving the hunting and fishing heritage.

The Idaho Café produced a feast of insights – more than 1,000 statements for each question. Fish and Game entered these statements into a database, available on the Fish and Game website.

Overwhelmingly, participants told Fish and Game that they care deeply for Idaho’s wildlife, and that they are willing and anxious to do what they can to ensure a vibrant future for wildlife in Idaho.

Education was a theme in almost every conversation and question. Participants see wildlife education as important, especially for youth.

They want to see more youth connect to the outdoors, through traditional hunting and fishing experiences, and in terms of wildlife watching and appreciation and outdoor recreational opportunities. They want to see Fish and Game make all this happen, and they said they are willing to help.

Participants recognized that ensuring conservation costs money, that wildlife and its associated recreation are worth the cost, and they are willing to pay more.

They recognized the importance of expanding the diversity of perspectives and finding common ground among all Idahoans in decisions, opportunities and responsibilities related to wildlife.

And participants listened to each other.



Fish and Game employees pore over written statements from the Idaho Café. *IDFG Photo*

Idaho Fish and Game News
 Fish and Game Commission:
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 Director: Virgil Moore
 Published by Idaho Fish and Game
 600 South Walnut
 P.O. Box 25, Boise, ID 83707
 (208) 334-3746
 E-mail: idfinfo@idfg.idaho.gov
<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov>
 Volume 24, Number 11



Handheld and Online Polling Devices Give Instant Results

The “Fishing Poll” clicker polling was a near instant success.

A total of 500 keypads were handed out at all seven sites, and 631 people participated. Some participants used smart phones or logged their answers online. Some answered the questions on paper later.

The facilitator, Wendy Green Lowe of P2 Solutions, asked a question, and participants punched in their answer on the keypad numbers, in about 20 seconds. A graph instantly came up on the screen summing the answers. The poll was designed to generate interest among the participants and to provide insights to Fish and Game and the Idaho Fish and Game Commission on strategic issues, and on the willingness to expand funding for wildlife conservation.

Earlier this year a survey of 1,059 randomly selected Idaho residents was conducted for the Idaho Fish and Game to gauge their opinions on wildlife management and wildlife-related recreation, and to assess attitudes toward Fish and Game. Many questions were asked on the Fishing Poll as well.



The first series of questions sought demographic information, such as age, children, gender, participation in wildlife-based recreation and engagement in conservation organizations.

It turned out that participants tended to be older, 55 percent 55 or more, than the general public.

- 73 percent male, 27 percent female.
- 61 percent reported hunting in the past two years.
- 75 percent reported fishing in the past two years.

- 7 percent reported trapping in the past two years.
- 90 percent reported watching or photographing wildlife around the home in the past two years.
- 82 percent have purchased a hunting, fishing, or trapping license in Idaho in the past two years.

Nearly all participants said they were interested in fish and wildlife, and it was important for them to know that fish and wildlife exist in Idaho and that they are managed properly. Most also considered wildlife one of the most important reasons to live in Idaho.

Participants were asked about their reactions to the four presentations.

Jim Posewitz, founder of Orion: The Hunters Institute, talked about the history of the conservation ethic in this country.

Toni Hardesty, director of The Nature Conservancy-Idaho, talked about the scope of wildlife conservation – game, nongame, public and private lands – and a sense of willingness to collaborate in protecting wildlife habitat.

Tara Teel talked about participants’ wildlife value orientations, and how well those perspectives are considered in making wildlife policy decisions.

Shane Mahoney talked about his concern and his sense of urgency for the future of wildlife and about the changing role of state and federal governments in wildlife conservation.

Most support Idaho Fish and Game’s strategic plan, with some exceptions.

About 68 percent of the participants support Fish and Game spending money from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, tags and permits to fund conservation or management of species that are not



Clicker poll moderator Wendy Green Lowe explains the remote polling devices. *IDFG Photo*

hunted, fished or trapped.

Fewer than half said they contribute money to support Fish and Game’s Nongame Program through the check-off on the state income tax form or through the purchase of wildlife vehicle license plate. Only 3 percent said they donated directly to the Nongame Trust Fund

Three fourths said Idaho should invest more in protecting fish and wildlife habitat, land, and water over the next two years. Yet only half the participants said Idaho should invest more in protecting species that are not hunted.

Most said they would support efforts to identify new revenue sources to fund Fish and Game, and they also would support efforts to identify a new revenue source specifically focused on funding conservation of species not hunted.

Most said they were interested in participating in the dialogue that began with this Summit.

Idaho Fish and Game Policy

Idaho wildlife management policy is set by seven volunteer commissioners. The Idaho Fish and Game Commission’s policy decisions are based on research and recommendations by the professional staff of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and with input from the governor’s office, the state Legislature, hunters, anglers and the public.



Trading Posts



Participants in the Wildlife Summit were encouraged to visit information booths, called “Trading Posts,” distributed throughout the seven venues.

These informational booths allowed face-to-face conversations with Fish and Game staff members.

The Trading Posts were on display during the course of the three-day Summit and consisted of display posters with information about the duties and work activities performed by Idaho Fish and Game and programs that support the objectives in Fish and Game’s strategic plan, *The Compass*.

Comment forms at each of the Trading Posts solicited feedback from participants. Each of the seven regions had five booths. A total of 89 comment forms were received statewide.



Summit participants meet and talk with Fish and Game employees at a variety of “Trading Posts.” *IDFG photo*

Live Chat Online

Using Internet-based live chat capabilities, people unable to participate in the Idaho Wildlife Summit in person were able to offer comments throughout the three-day event.

Here’s a breakdown:

	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total
Participants	45	404	799	1,248
Comments	287	529	824	1,640



Fish and Game employees monitor the live online chat discussion during the Summit.

IDFG photo

An additional 363 participants were able to review chat transcripts after the event closed.

In general, the conversation within the chat followed the speakers and events. Participants discussed points made by the speakers in real-time. The chat dialog appeared next to the video presentations on participants’ computer screens.

The comments ranged from discussing ideas for generating additional funds for wildlife conservation to predator and prey management.

Much of the discussion centered on finding common ground and various segments of Idaho’s wildlife heritage, including hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing.



What’s Next?

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game are eager to build on the momentum of the Wildlife Summit and to work with Idahoans to ensure abundant, diverse wildlife and a rich outdoor heritage for future generations.

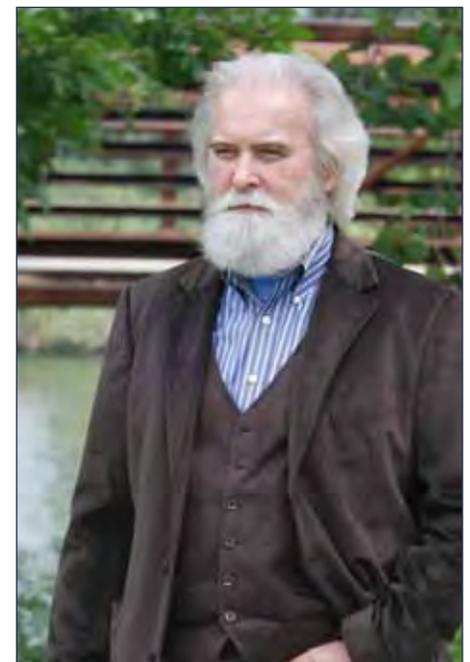
Shane Mahoney is also interested, and Fish and Game is working to enlist his help in the process of moving forward.

Some online input was not available in time to include in the recently released report. But it will be incorporated, as applicable, in Fish and Game’s analysis of the volume of comments received during the Summit.

Information from online participants and polling results and comments are posted on the website at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/about/?getPage=320> as they become available.

Anyone who was not able to attend the Summit is invited to review the report on the Fish and Game website listed above.

In the coming weeks and months, Fish and Game will provide information on the website and through other outreach programs to let the public know how to participate in the future for Idaho’s wildlife.



Shane Mahoney

IDFG photo