

ALBERTA
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT*Office of the Minister
MLA, West Yellowhead*

April 28, 2014

Mr. Gordon Poirier, President
The Alberta Fish and Game Association
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Dear Mr. Poirier:

Thank you for your March 18, 2014, letter forwarding the resolutions passed by members of the Alberta Fish and Game Association at your 2014 annual conference. It was a pleasure to address your conference and have the opportunity to meet with your members.

As requested, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development is providing the enclosed specific responses to each resolution passed at your conference. Our department always appreciates your invitation to provide feedback about these important matters.

Department staff look forward to continuing our discussions on many of these resolutions and other topics at the Alberta Fisheries Management Round Table and the Alberta Game Management Advisory Group.

Sincerely,

Robin Campbell
Minister

Enclosure

cc: Shannon Flint
Environment and Sustainable Resource Development

Martin Sharren, Executive Vice President
Alberta Fish and Game Association

**ALBERTA FISH AND GAME ASSOCIATION
2014 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
PASSED RESOLUTIONS FEBRUARY 22, 2104**

FISHERIES RESOLUTION NUMBER F-1-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development initiate a limited harvest for bull trout in watersheds that can sustain a harvest; CARRIED as submitted with no opposition (100%)

RESPONSE: A provincewide assessment of the sustainability of bull trout fisheries was undertaken earlier in 2014. This information will be used to review and update the management plan for bull trout. If a new plan is required, it will be developed in consultation with Albertans. This plan will prescribe effective angling regulations to achieve desired outcomes for bull trout conservation and management. Regulatory options to provide harvest opportunities will be explored in the management planning process.

FISHERIES RESOLUTION NUMBER F-2-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development change current regulations to allow for harvest of rainbow trout in flowing waters of ES1 that are currently closed to harvest; CARRIED as submitted with no opposition (100%)

RESPONSE: Alberta's native westslope cutthroat trout are listed under Alberta's *Wildlife Act* as threatened, and this listing has also been recommended under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*. A provincial recovery plan has been initiated for this species.

Changes in sportfishing management are required to continue supporting recreational fishing opportunities, while still promoting the recovery of populations. Consequently, catch-and-release regulations (zero limit) were broadly implemented in 2013 for westslope cutthroat trout. A complication is the presence of non-native rainbow trout in many of the streams supporting westslope cutthroat trout populations. This results in hybridization and makes it difficult for many anglers to accurately differentiate between the species of fish caught. While desirable from a conservation perspective, allowing harvest of rainbow trout in such waters puts native cutthroat trout at an unacceptably high risk due to misidentification and unintentional harvest. Consequently, a zero bag limit for all trout in specified streams in the Oldman and Kananaskis river watersheds was also implemented for 2013. However, the reduction of rainbow trout and the hybridization and competition with westslope cutthroat trout in these watersheds are desired conservation outcomes.

Discussions are taking place to find ways to reduce the risk due to species misidentification by anglers and provide opportunities for low-risk, targeted rainbow trout harvest. Any proposed management initiatives, including angling regulation changes, will be implemented in consultation with Albertans.

FISHERIES RESOLUTION NUMBER F-3-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development to regulate the majority of Northern Pike populations with the current Provincial standard of a 3-fish harvest with no size limit for the purpose of regulation simplification; CARRIED as submitted with 98 in favour and 4 opposed (96.1%)

RESPONSE: The current provincial management plan for northern pike prescribes that the majority of pike fisheries will be managed as stable recreational fisheries. As a result, the corresponding provincial standard regulation applied is a minimum size limit of 63 centimetres, with a bag limit of one to three fish, depending on fishing pressure. A minimum size limit is required to maintain adequate recruitment of pike by protecting young adults long enough to allow them the opportunity to spawn two or three times. This will remain the provincial standard until the provincial management plan is revised and an alternate approach is identified. A provincewide assessment of the sustainability of pike fisheries was undertaken in 2013 and will be completed in 2014. Subsequently, a review of the pike management plan will be conducted and revised as required, in consultation with Albertans, to ensure desired outcomes are achieved.

FISHERIES RESOLUTION NUMBER F-4-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request from Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development that regulation changes on lakes and water courses requiring special Northern Pike limits be established when specific biological information supports either relaxed or more restrictive regulations; CARRIED as submitted with 84 in favour and 1 opposed (98.8%)

RESPONSE: The current provincial management plan for northern pike prescribes that pike fisheries will be managed according to their status category, with assessment of status done on a fishery-by-fishery basis using standardized criteria. This approach provides a good balance between the competing trade-offs of increasing regulatory complexity and the effectiveness of angling regulations in managing fisheries to achieve desired objectives. Where appropriate, angling regulations will continue to be applied as prescribed according to the current management plan for northern pike.

A provincewide assessment of the sustainability of pike fisheries was undertaken in 2013 and will be completed in 2014. Subsequently, a review of the provincial management plan for pike will be conducted and revised as required, in consultation with Albertans, to ensure desired outcomes are achieved. Environment and Sustainable Resource Development has been given a mandate to simplify angling regulations, and this will be a focus in the ongoing development of the management plan for pike.

FISHERIES RESOLUTION NUMBER F-5-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development to regulate the majority of Yellow Perch populations with the current Provincial standard of a 15-fish harvest with no size limit for the purpose of regulation simplification; CARRIED as submitted with 99 in favour and 4 opposed (96.1%)

RESPONSE: The current provincial maximum daily and possession limit for yellow perch is 15 fish. No provincewide minimum size limit is in place. Deviations to this general provincial regulation are in place for specific fisheries, where required, in order to restore or sustain perch populations in the face of high angling pressure or production constraints. A provincewide assessment of the sustainability of perch fisheries is planned. After that, a management plan for perch will be developed and implemented in consultation with Albertans.

FISHERIES RESOLUTION NUMBER F-6-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request from Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development that regulation changes on lakes requiring special Yellow Perch limits be established when specific biological information supports either relaxed or more restrictive regulations; CARRIED as submitted with 101 in favour and 1 opposed (99.0%)

RESPONSE: A provincewide assessment of the sustainability of perch fisheries is planned for 2015. After that, a management plan for perch will be developed in consultation with Albertans. This plan will prescribe a suite of effective regulations to achieve desired outcomes for perch fisheries.

FISHERIES RESOLUTION NUMBER F-7-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development only change Lake Sturgeon angling restrictions after additional public consultation; CARRIED as submitted with 95 in favour and 4 opposed (96.0%)

RESPONSE: Environment and Sustainable Resource Development undertook a provincial assessment of the sustainability of lake sturgeon in 2013, along with an update to the provincial population estimate. This information will be considered as it relates to the approved recovery plan and the management of angling activities for this species. Proposed regulation changes for lake sturgeon will be subject to the regulation review and approval process, which involves consultation with Albertans.

FISHERIES RESOLUTION NUMBER F-8-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request from Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development that if restrictions to Lake Sturgeon angling are required, that they only influence the methods used to catch Lake Sturgeon and should not restrict angling of other fish species; CARRIED as submitted with 95 in favour and 1 opposed (99.0%)

RESPONSE: After the completion of the provincial assessment of the sustainability of lake sturgeon populations in 2013, angling regulations will be reviewed considering the objectives developed in the approved species recovery plan. Proposed regulations will be subject to a review and consultation process. While it is preferable that proposed regulations should not affect angling opportunities for other species, it will depend on the nature of the regulation itself, the consultation following the proposal, the intended ecological effect, and an evaluation of alternatives. At times, trade-offs between opportunities may need to be evaluated by considering a desired future outcome of species recovery.

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-1-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development establish a limited entry hunt for grizzly bear in any portion of the Province where a population exists to sustain a harvest; CARRIED as submitted with no opposition (100%)

RESPONSE: Management of grizzly bears in Alberta is currently guided by a recovery plan, which includes specific criteria that must be met before a hunting season can be considered. Currently, the department is focused on reducing human-bear conflicts and human-caused mortalities of grizzly bears, as well as a number of other initiatives that are recommended in the plan. Hunters have an important role in helping to ensure that recovery criteria are met, and the department welcomes the Alberta Fish and Game Association's assistance in communicating with hunters about ways to reduce unnecessary grizzly bear mortalities.

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-2-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development leave the common draw code the same as the special general draw for that species and that WMU when instituting draws for archery; CARRIED as submitted with 66 in favour and 21 opposed (75.9%)

RESPONSE: Consultation is ongoing, and the association's support for the current system is noted.

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-6-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development release to the public an annual summary of all landowner permits, including species, class, and WMU; **CARRIED** as submitted with 101 in favour and 1 opposed (99.0%)

RESPONSE: Once the data-gathering system in licensing is set up so this information can be collected effectively, the department will post an annual summary on My Wild Alberta, along with the draw statistics and hunter harvest survey results.

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-7-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development release to the public an annual summary of all Non-resident Canadian and non-resident alien license and certificate sales, including special license sales by draw code, species, class, and WMU; **CARRIED** as submitted with no opposition (100%)

RESPONSE: See the response to the previous resolution.

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-8-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development release to the public an annual summary of all big game outfitter license allocations and harvest results, by Species Management Area (SMA), for all big game species and a breakdown of WMU's included in each SMA; **CARRIED** as submitted with no opposition (100%)

RESPONSE: See the response to Resolution Number W-6-2014.

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-9-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development submit an application for an Alberta Mourning Dove hunting season to the Canadian Wildlife Service; **CARRIED** as submitted with 57 in favour and 24 opposed (70.4%)

RESPONSE: The association can raise this issue at the Alberta Game Management Advisory Group for a discussion with hunting stakeholders. Changing the status of mourning dove from non-game to game bird would require additional consultation and consideration. Before this matter could be presented for a wider consultation, the department would need to assess the status of mourning doves in Alberta. A change of this kind also requires a ministerial order.

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-10-2014

Amended Resolution now reads:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development change the current regulations restricting the use of ATV's to allow hunters who are paraplegic or quadriplegic, or have permanent spinal injuries that confine them to a wheel chair, to hunt any big game throughout the non-motorized Public Land Use Zones (PLUZ's), still referred to as Forest Land Use Zones (FLUZ's), along the East Slopes Region of Alberta with the use of a "side- by-side" ATV; CARRIED as amended with 101 in favour and 2 opposed (98.1%)

RESPONSE: The requested resolution already exists. Please review the criteria for obtaining an off-highway vehicle permit at www.mywildalberta.com/BuyLicences/HuntingLicencesFees/LicencePermitsHuntersWithDisabilities.aspx

Off-highway vehicles are defined under Section 117 of the *Traffic Safety Act* as follows:

- (a) "off-highway vehicle" means any motorized mode of transportation built for cross-country travel on land, water, snow, ice or marsh or swamp land or on other natural terrain and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes, when specifically designed for such travel,
- (i) 4-wheel drive vehicles,
 - (ii) low pressure tire vehicles,
 - (iii) motor cycles and related 2-wheel vehicles,
 - (iv) amphibious machines,
 - (v) all terrain vehicles,
 - (vi) miniature motor vehicles,
 - (vii) snow vehicles,
 - (viii) minibikes, and
 - (ix) any other means of transportation that is propelled by any power other than muscular power or wind, but does not include
 - (x) motor boats, or
 - (xi) any other vehicle exempted from being an off-highway vehicle by regulation.

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-11-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development align all hunting draws that do not use the draw priority system, so that all drawn applicants are not allowed to apply in future years (once in a lifetime opportunity); CARRIED as submitted with 98 in favour and 7 opposed (93.3%)

RESPONSE: This matter is currently under consultation. If it is accepted, this request will be in place for the 2015 hunting season. This would be the same situation as for mountain goat and would apply to bison and bighorn sheep (in Wildlife Management Unit 438).

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-12-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development change the trophy sheep special license draw in WMU 438 and 444-446, which is not on a priority draw, to a draw where applicants once drawn, are not allowed to reapply in future years (once in a lifetime opportunity only); **CARRIED** as submitted with 102 in favour and 3 opposed (97.1%)

RESPONSE: Wildlife Management Unit 438 is not a priority draw and is addressed in the previous resolution. Wildlife Management Unit 444-446 is a priority draw and does not apply to the comments in this resolution.

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-13-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development open a Sandhill Crane hunting season Province wide in conjunction with the other migratory bird seasons; **CARRIED** as submitted with no opposition (100%)

RESPONSE: The department will consider this request for the 2015 hunting season.

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-14-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development extend the antelope seasons in the combined WMU's of 160, 162, 163, 164, and 166 to include the WMU's of 200 and 234; **CARRIED** as submitted with no opposition (100%)

RESPONSE: Environment and Sustainable Resource Development has a good antelope season system that requires annual aerial surveys to set immediate permit numbers. This is the most proactive system for hunting in Alberta. Most species allocations depend on surveys done in the winter of that year or several years earlier. Our department has explained the consequences that would result to antelope management from greatly extending the area for a small population that may not be there during antelope season. These consequences include extra cost for surveys, calculation of permits changes, and directing people to hunt in an area where the species may not be available.

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-16-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development remove the bow hunting License and the fee that goes with it; **CARRIED** as submitted with 71 in favour and 29 opposed (71.0%)

RESPONSE: This licence is used to track bow hunters. A stakeholder discussion is needed to determine the value of tracking bow hunters and if there are alternate ways to do so. This could also have financial implications for the Alberta Conservation Association because it receives a portion of the licence fees for conservation work. The association needs to be engaged in any discussion about removing this licence.

The Alberta Fish and Game Association can start this process by raising this matter at the Alberta Game Management Advisory Group.

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-17-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development make public the state and the works of the "Caribou Recovery Program", including data on the caribou herds and areas they are in, the population of each, and the status of each herd and the habitat they are in; CARRIED as submitted with 104 in favour and 1 opposed (99.0%)

RESPONSE: Information on the status of Alberta's caribou populations and habitat can be found in the 2010 Status of Woodland Caribou report available at <http://esrd.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/species-at-risk/species-at-risk-publications-web-resources/mammals/default.aspx>. A short summary on caribou recovery efforts is expected to be available on the same website by summer 2014. Information on caribou management, including range planning occurring in response to the Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou, Boreal Population in Canada, is available at <http://esrd.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/wildlife-management/caribou-management/default.aspx>.

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-19-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development establish a deer and elk hunting season on the Wainwright Dunes Ecological Reserve (David Lake); CARRIED as submitted with 99 in favour and 3 opposed (97.1%)

RESPONSE: The reference to hunting in the management plan for the Wainwright Dunes Ecological Reserve conflicts with the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act* that legislates ecological reserves. Management in ecological reserves will be discussed in the upcoming public consultations for the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan. The Alberta Fish and Game Association is invited to participate in these discussions once they are scheduled to contribute its ideas.

WILDLIFE RESOLUTION NUMBER W-20-2014

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Fish and Game Association request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development instate a Primitive Weapon season in the last two weeks of October for all Whitetail Deer and Mule Deer in all those WMU'S where it is mandatory to submit deer heads for CWD testing; CARRIED as amended with 74 in favour and 27 opposed (73.3%)

RESPONSE: The two-week primitive weapon season was implemented as part of a strategy to increase harvest and decrease deer density in chronic wasting disease management areas. After the 2010 hunting season and an assessment of deer populations, the primitive weapons seasons and other hunting strategies were discontinued in these areas. The request for a two-week primitive weapon season as outlined by the Alberta Fish and Game Association and supported by the resolution is primarily intended to increase hunting opportunities. Environment and Sustainable Resource Development believes that the suggestion about expanded hunting opportunities for primitive weapons and the implications of extended seasons need to be discussed with a broader range of stakeholders.