

Corkill supports wolf-control efforts

Judd Wilson/St. Maries Gazette

Idaho Fish and Game Commissioner Brad Corkill thinks the department is doing the right thing in reducing the number of wolves in Idaho.

The department recently hired a professional trapper to reduce the wolf population in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness.

Mr. Corkill, a former St. Maries resident who owns Whiteman Lumber in the Silver Valley, was recently appointed to the commission.

"I think the elk herd down there is less than half of what it was 10 years ago, so something has to be done. I think the department's heading in the right direction," he said.

Mr. Corkill said the response of some to the wolf trapping has been extreme.

"The level of emotion that people have a tendency to express when referring to the wolves is just absolutely astounding. I've received emails that I don't even care to discuss. Oh boy," he said.

"You're killing their pet when they look at it. That's just silliness," he said.

Idaho Fish and Game Director Virgil Moore announced Jan. 28 that with nine wolves killed, the hunt had come to an end. According to the department's 2012 estimates, there are 680 wolves in Idaho.

The Fish and Game Department recently approved a plan to manage and improve the number of elk in Idaho. Mr. Corkill said that a number of factors have reduced their numbers, especially a drop in logging on Forest Service lands. Logging creates habitat for elk.

"In the '60s, '70s, and '80s when the Forest Service was at its peak in timber management, the elk herds in the Coeur d'Alene and St. Joe drainages were absolutely thriving. Those are two of the most heavily roaded forests in the entire country. Northern Idaho had what I believe was the last over-the-counter, either-sex general elk hunt in the country. And then logging stopped in national forests, we had two devastating winters in the '90s back-to-back that just really hurt the elk herd, and then the wolf appeared on the scene. It was a perfect storm to the detriment of the elk," he said.

To get their numbers back up, Commissioner Corkill said he'd like to see logging return to Forest Service land and get wolf predation down.

He added that the department will set the fall big game season dates in March. The public is invited to give input at an open house event held Feb. 27 from 4:30-7:30 p.m. at the Coeur d'Alene Inn located at the corner of U.S. Highway 95 and Appleway Ave. in Coeur d'Alene.

"I urge everyone who's a hunter to participate," he said.