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## **Op-Ed: Fish & Game Commission Process Should Be Protected**

**By Commissioners Fred Trevey (chairman), Mark Doerr (vice-chair), Brad Corkill, Blake Fischer, Lane Clezie, Kenny Anderson and Will Naillon**

There appears to be a misperception among some Idaho lawmakers that the Fish and Game Commission has ignored prior legislative directives to raise revenue and improve habitat and access. These directives include allowing hunters to pay an extra fee to improve their drawing odds for controlled hunts (bonus points), making tags available to land owners for private sale, and auctioning big game tags to highest bidders.

We certainly respect the Legislature's role in setting wildlife policy but the Commission has considered all these issues in recent years and vetted each of them with hunters, anglers, trappers and the general public. In all three cases, a majority made it clear to us they were opposed and we acted accordingly. The Commission continues to explore these and other options and to visit with sportsmen and women about them. However, we have heard and are concerned these directives could become legislative mandates linked to our proposed license revenue bill.

The Commission-supported "Price Lock" revenue legislation – House Bill 32, is being held in a House Committee while some lawmakers are said to be working on their own version with these mandates included. If this new version of the bill emerges, it in our view, overrules the Commission process of using science and input from the public as the basis for implementing wildlife policy.

The 1938 citizens' initiative that created the Commission established nonpartisan fish and game management. If lawmakers proceed and attempt to bypass the Commission and implement these measures through legislation, they are compromising the spirit of that initiative by overruling extensive sportsmen involvement and thoughtful Commission deliberations.

As Commissioners, here are some common themes we often hear:

- Manage wildlife for the good of all Idahoans, not just a privileged few.
- Keep hunting, fishing & trapping opportunities available and affordable for everyday Idahoans.
- Reward landowners for supporting wildlife habitat or public access without sacrificing state ownership of wildlife.
- Keep politics out of wildlife management.

For 76 years, the Commission, along with sportsmen and women have worked together to create the tremendous wildlife resources and heritage we have in Idaho today. We ask the Legislature to pass the Commission-supported revenue bill without compromising the Commission's integrity and its management role.