

REPORT FROM 91st ANNUAL AFGA CONFERENCE FEB 20-22

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Delegate

SHERWOOD PARK, ALBERTA

I would have to say that this conference embodied the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. The Sherwood Park F&G for some time now wanted to host a Conference real bad. Well I think they aced that one! Many of the hotel rooms had arctic ice water in the hot taps of the showers. the cards to unlock the room doors had to be taken down to the front desk where you could wait in line to get them re-programmed at least daily. The rear door to the parking lot to get to your vehicle would let you out but not back in. They took that lock off altogether after the first night...not much security after that but you could get back in again. No restaurant in hotel, just a small coffee shop that was only available for a short time in the morning then closed. Extremely poor acoustics in the conference room which left many wondering what was going on. Only two screens at front of room for use by presenters that from half way back in the room a bald eagle with binoculars wouldn't be able to read.

The discussions and presentations during the business part of the affair were quite good.

Travis Ripley, Executive Director Resource Stewardsip, Fish and

Wildlife talked about control of invasive aquatic species and how the proliferation of many of those species limit food sources for fish. Fish stocks are decreasing partly due to the fact there are now 250,000 licenses sold. (many are new Canadians). There were also 123,000 hunters out there.

There was considerable discussion concerning the requirement of having to obtain a Wildlife Certificate in order to enter a draw, even if you have no intention of hunting but rather just use the 999 option to increase future chances. In that scenario of just entering 999 for several years the actual accumulated cost of the tag could reach \$500 to \$600 over time.

Interesting questions arose about electronic licenses bought by use of an app. Apparently you do not need a hard copy of the license.....just a cell phone with an app, and even if phone service where you may be is nonexistent, or the battery goes dead??? That prompted the question of why not just go hunting and pack along your phone until you shoot something and then buy your tag? They claim they can control that but did not, or could not, explain how that would work.

That app thing perpetrated much rhetoric concerning Social Media. It seems the whole world is going berserk over this

media phenomonem. They talked about Facebook (I believe it should be called Farcebook) and Instagram, and Twitter, and God knows what. That could possibly be OK for Millennials, and young people, but as an old fart, that leaves me completely out of the picture! Maybe nobody else out there is as old or dumb as me but what the heck is wrong with a stub of lead pencil and a piece of paper?

There was discussion about fish stocking by Dr. Peter Aku, Senior Scientist and Manager of fish stocking lprogram, but the man had a severe accent, and with the lousy acoustics no one at the table could understand anything so I have to leave that one.

Then we got Karsten Heuer, Biologist, Management Adviser to Banff Buffalo Program. Spent a lot of time talking about trying to keep these critters within their allotted territory and repairing busted fences, and the fact that the herd has increased from 16 head to over 30 now. He certainly failed to convince me why government should be spending gobs of money on this project. Buffalo are certainly not a threatened species, there are herds all over the province which cost no government funds, and you can even purchase a piece of one in a bun at A&W! As the herd increases it will become unsafe for people to access a large area of the park, and every bite of grass a buff eats is a bite an elk, moose,deer, can't get. Buffalo

are not recognized as a Wildlife species and can be shot by anyone anywhere they have access.

Matt Besko, Director, Wildlife Policy, Alberta Environment and Parks. He gave a some short general comments about his work but had no big announcements that some folks may have expected. He said the department has good support from Government now, which was welcome news. He was available for advice whenever needed during the resolutions process.

Honourable Jason Nixon, Minister of Alberta Environment and Parks addressed the Conference. He said he is prepared to increase fish stocking in areas and species everywhere. Department will spend \$43,000,000.00 on hatcheries etc. There is a concern with several species of invasive carp, but especially Prussian Carp. They can live 24 hours out of water and steal eggs and sperm from other fish to create clones of themselves to further complicate the issue.

Rod Dyck talked about CWD and its implications. Basically it is fast spreading from east to west in the Province. There is no known cure, and it is always fatal. Attempts at control are difficult, and complicated by the fact there is just as great a

problem just east of the imaginary border with Saskatchewan.

On behalf of LFGA I presented our cheque of \$2,000.00 towards the building fund. The approximate totals of all the donations in the parade were as follows.

\$4,390.00 general fund

\$59,028.00 wildlife trust fund

\$27,570.00 building fund

\$6,300.00 narrow lake youth camp

\$5,000.00 bow program

\$5,000.00 youth program

\$112,208.00 Grand total (there were a few more misc. items there)

Our Lethbridge Club also recieved a plaque for the second highest membership increase for 2019 (389)

We also received recognition (and a large box of things) for having a membership increase 20% or greater.

I want to sincerely thank LFGA for sponsoring me as a Delegate and I hope the above gives everyone a glimpse of my take on the Conference.