

**Babcock Ranch Preserve  
Hunting User Group Workshop**

**February 24, 2009**

**Attendees**

Lyle McCandless, President, Big Cypress Sportmen's Alliance  
Joe Hope, Hydra Engineering  
Cathy Olson, Lee County Conservation 20/20  
David Miller, Babcock Ranch  
Casey Bruni, Babcock Ranch  
John Snow, Fish & Wildlife Conservation  
Craig Mitchell, Fish & Wildlife Conservation  
Jeff Rebon, Fish & Wildlife Conservation Law Enforcement  
Byron Maharrey, Everglades Coordinating Council  
Lee Taylor, Fish & Wildlife Conservation  
Jeff McGrady, Fish & Wildlife Conservation  
Nigel Morris, Quail Forever  
Bill Wilcox, Babcock Ranch, Inc.  
Mark Llewellyn, Genesis Group  
Joe Petrich, Genesis Group  
Marcus Carnegie Genesis Group  
Lora Silvanima, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
Jerrie Lindsey, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

**Meeting Notes**

1. Jerrie presented the scope and approach/introduction.
2. Discussed the need for ORVs.
3. Consider year round hog hunting – will increase the law enforcement support.
4. Need to provide feed to support the population. Consider liberated birds to add to the hunt/experience.
5. Will need to address predator control.
6. Quail – wild birds and pen-raised birds should be separated.
7. Fees should be plowed back into sustaining the population.
8. Consider wild bird strain repopulation.
9. No real squirrel population.

10. Historically really no duck hunting (very little duck hunting in Charlotte County).
11. Consider converting the farm fields in Lee County to water management area which might create duck habitat.
12. Long term there might be duck hunting opportunities.



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(J. Petrich - Notes)

**February 23, 2009**

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Lyle McCandless, President, Big Cypress Sportmen's Alliance  
Joe Hope, Hydra Engineering (GGI)  
Cathy Olson, Lee County Conservation 20/20  
David Miller, Babcock Ranch  
Casey Bruni, Babcock Ranch  
John Snow, Fish & Wildlife Con. (former wildlife officer/worked the preserve property)  
Craig Mitchell, Fish & Wildlife Conservation  
Jeff Rebon, Fish & Wildlife Conservation Law Enforcement (wildlife officer)  
Byron Maharrey, Everglades Coordinating Council (several sportsman associations)  
Lee Taylor, Fish & Wildlife Conservation (Dist. Biologist managing current hunts)  
Jeff McGrady, Fish & Wildlife Conservation (Regional Biologist)  
Nigel Morris, Quail Forever (quail hunger and enviro person w/Wilson Miller)  
Bill Wilcox, Babcock Ranch, Inc.(future board member)  
Mark Llewellyn, Genesis Group  
Joe Petrich, Genesis Group  
Marcus Carnegie Genesis Group  
Lora Silvanima, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
Jerrie Lindsey, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
Frank Deniger – Jet Port Club?  
Todd Hall – Sportsman

**Meeting Notes**

1. Future management needs for wildlife management and control:
  - a. Current opportunities relate to named and numbered roads (for vehicle use only).
  - b. Off highway vehicle – NO – not in management plan
    - Only for ranch operations
2. Joe Hope talked to Joe Bank who previously managed the ranch's hunting (formally was lease agreements).
  - Now – quota hunts are in play. Recently did a quota hunt for hogs.
3. Casey Bruni – “the ranch always utilizes QDM process relating to quality and management of game.” Proposes “not too much too fast is good approach”.
  - a. QDM – Determine what you have and base the hunts on supply.
  - b. Now have displaced hunters from the termination of leases.



4. Lee Co. – Cathy: Conservation is 20/20
  - South end of property potentially will foster quality hunt opportunities.
5. Some opposition to special hunt opportunities if permit transferability is option. However, FWC has eliminated this option.
6. Armed trespass? Misdemeanor vs. felony.
7. Joe lunch bucket security issues on east side.
8. Year round hog hunting is a concept.
9. David Milburn – Cattle foreman – several road sand trails are difficult to travel in wet seasons.

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(Lora Silvanima - Notes)

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Jerrie Lindsey, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

**Meeting Notes**

1. Bryon – Does the recreation activities need to be self sustaining in terms of just the rec. itself or self sustaining in terms of supporting the short falls for the ranch?
2. Jerrie – ranches operate on a small margin Lost money this year.
3. Jeff – LE – profit stays in the ranch.
4. Lyle – area where hunting is allowed needs to be sustained by hunting licenses.
5. Mark – There is an over lap of uses. Complex issue to figure out finances.
6. Mark – hunting is not used to make up for shortfall in the ranching business.
7. Nigel – is the 17,000 acres set in stone as the only hunting opportunities? Answer - No.
8. Bryon – how much of the revenue from hunting will go towards supporting the ranching operation?

9. Bill W. – revenue from hunting will go into supporting hunting. Fish and Wildlife jumped in with both feet to support hunting. Financially supporting hunting on the area.
10. Jeff – LE – this area is a drain on the LE forces. LE need to have a crew dedicated to this area alone. Money used to support LE staff.
11. Jerrie – this discussion is out of scope.
12. Lyle – for a typical hunting season, is cattle on the property when you’re hunting?
13. Joe – Geneses – Ranch staff have reported to us that there is no conflict with cows and hunters on the same area.
14. Nigel – cows are not a problem for quail hunting.
15. Casey – historically, 17,000 acres managed in the past with guided hunting. Always booked. Not a conflict with the cows. Number of the cows not so great in that area.
16. Lyle – what type of game are on the 17,000 acres?
17. Casey – typically quail, deer, hogs. At Jacks Branch, also turkey.
18. Lyle – ORV use?
19. Jerrie – no – disallowed in the purchase. Not flexibility on this issue.
20. Bryon – Don requested a delay in quail hunting to figure out the biology.
21. Nigel – can’t effectively hunt quail without using buggies. Need to carry dogs and other equipment. Where buggies are used on other WMAs, use is restricted to fire lanes and food plots and does not cause a problem. Buggies are used on just disturbed grounds only.
22. Bryon – hunting is about access. Hunters have got to have access to hunt.
23. Joe P. – use overlap, thought on the physical parameters of how this will operate. How do folks see different types of recreation use on the area?
24. Bryon – encourage simultaneous operating (same time, same space) of different recreation uses.
25. Joe – types of animals to hunt?  
Deer, hogs, turkey – large game  
Deer hunting – proposed by FWC - lottery draw system limit the number of hunters.
26. Bryon - Quota hunt like the rest of the agency. Now a fair system. Quota system works well for everyone.

27. Casey – hunting leases had a quality deer management program. Maybe trophy area for deer hunting?
28. Lyle – has research been done as to what the area would sustain in terms of number of hunters?
29. Jeff – quota – short durations, low number of quota.
30. Bryon – do you know how many quota hunts will be offered? Jeff – no
31. John – read the proposed regs, which said the season but not how many quota hunts will be permitted.
32. Bryon – final approval in April for hunting regs? Didn't seem like this was brought up in the previous Commission meeting.
33. Jerrie – my understanding is this will be for final approval.
34. Lyle – Make your initial rules and guidelines as flexible and possible to allow adaptive management process so rules can be adapted and changed as needed.
35. Casey – If we don't do something too soon too fast this could be a model for other circumstance like this one. Consider more and have a good thoughtful plan.
36. Nigel – Set things up from the get go with careful game management. Need adaptive management for quail in all wildlife areas. We need to know what we got and how to manage it.
37. Bryon – problem - out of about 151 management areas in the state, 36 have manned checked station. Don't have the data to accurately understand the health of the heard and population. We need data. Is there good data on the ranch from previous hunts?
38. Casey – had a QDM for doe management and kept up with the does. Don't know where this data is and whether it has been stored. Camp with 6 hunters was given 2 buck tags, QDM rack size, not everyone filled their tags every year.
39. Bryon – this data would be very valuable information for management.
40. Joe – to summarize deer issue. Quota system is preferred. Get some sort of quality deer management.
41. John – can we have quality deer management on one part of the area and hunting on lower point bucks in the 17,000 acres?
42. Nigel – am I hearing that we will continue as self sustaining opportunities? Good idea to have special opportunities hunts on other parts of the property.

43. Kathy – encourage hog hunts on the Lee County property. Needs help with getting this through.
44. Joe – what can be charged for the special hunts?
45. Bryan - \$50 on other WMAs
46. Jerrie – this is a unique area so the prices could vary.
47. Lyle – what do you anticipate in terms of the extreme environmentalists getting in the way of hunting on this area?
48. Jerrie – the constraints we have is around working with the ranching operations
49. Kathy – hunting is part of both legal documents
50. Lyle – just need to keep an eye on this because it is a problem elsewhere.
51. Bryon – I am apposed to special opportunity hunts for pay. In the last 3 or 4 years FWC has not offered in new special opportunity hunts.
52. Jerrie – You mentioned that FWC has lessened the % of out of state folks being eligible to get the special opportunity hunts, does that ease your concern?
53. Bryan – not for new Special Opportunity Hunts. Hunters pay enough already, should not have to pay more at a later date. QDM – three things that grow horns. Nutrition, age, genes. Age - point restriction, food plots. Genes have become adaptive to low nutrition rates, and south Florida does not grow big antlers. Need data to see if quality antlers are going to come along.
54. Kathy – Lee County supports both the special opportunity hunts as funding resources, and the hunts that are available for hunters that don't have money.
55. Jeff M. – FWC will not be managing the hunting on BRP. The ranch operation will be. There needs to be low dollar hunts and high dollar hunts to be available to make up for loss of hunting lease revenues.
56. Bryon – 1930 – 1940 killed off deer and then restocked with Texas and Northern deer. Common thought is that these deer did not survive.
57. Joe – To summarize: quota hunts is a good place to start.

## **Turkey**

1. Currently, two weekends a year that you can hunt turkeys. 15 quotas.
2. Lyle – is this written in stone no matter how many turkeys are on the area?

3. Bryon – FWC is starting conservatively.
4. Jerrie – remember that the way FWC sets up the quota hunts is an interim measure, not necessarily the way that the Ranch will set up its hunts.
5. Lyle – Dianne Eggman convinced me that the lunch-bucket guy will have a better shot with the current quota hunts.
6. Casey – turkey management has not been happening since the leases have gone away. Poaching can be a problem on the road.
7. Jeff – LE – armed trespass on BRP is a felony.

### **Hogs**

1. Casey – employees control hogs on the rest of the area but not in the 17,000 acres.
2. Joe – can we expand hog hunting for trouble areas.
3. Casey – would be better for the 17,000 acres only.
4. John – farms fields in the south is excellent for hog hunting.
5. Casey – also good for turkeys.
6. Kathy – Lee County will be ending the agricultural fields leases away in 2011 on the Lee County portion of the property.
7. Bryon – what has been done in the south region to put hogs into the small game season?
8. Joe – why do we have a season on hogs? Why is the state not acting the same as private property where you can hunt the year round?
9. John – turn hogs into a game species would be better.
10. Joe – could allow year round hunting on hogs in BRP? Good revenue stream and potentially less law enforcement issue. Jeff – yes
11. Everyone seemed to support year round hog hunting.
12. Casey – only in accessible area. Will be a law enforcement issue because it's happening all the time and it will be hard to control people and keeping them from leaving designated area. Have to increase the LE presence if you increase hunting.
13. John – Not have hog hunters just coming in year round. Need to have control over the hunts so you can manage properly.

14. Bryon – from hunters’ standpoint you need to have some control over it so you don’t harvest it down below some sustainable level to where you can continue to have hunts.

## **Quail**

1. Nigel – quality hunts. Set number of hunt days, based on last year’s hunter’s success. Don’t set a quota of on number of hunters - Quota hunt a day. Mirror how it’s done at Webb. Show up at the beginning of the season, first come first serve basis. Similar to how it’s done on Webb. Quail in south Florida are smaller. Soil is not as good. Habitat loss a problem for quail. You have to provide management in the form of feed to keep the populations health. \$25 a day people would be willing to pay if the money would be going back into management of the quail, feeding them.
2. Casey – historically offered released birds as one of the hunting opportunities. Never solely hunting the wild populations. Perhaps there could be liberated birds to help.
3. Nigel - most of hunters in his group are wild bird hunters. Do not want to hunt the released birds. But there are people who would from a different groups of hunters.
4. John – what about predator hunters?
5. Kathy – not mutually exclusive in terms of released bird and wild bird hunters.
6. Casey – The 17,000 acres is good for quail hunting. The historic lease was for hunting released quail. Where they had the youth hunt may be a good place for quail hunting.
7. Lyle – what do you anticipate on the quail end, is there was a plan to introduce released birds. Will food plots be on-going?
8. Casey – food plots are still being planted in the quail area.
9. Nigel – no birds are released on Webb.
10. Bryon – no problem with user pay if the money goes back into food for the quail.
11. Nigel – can have release birds if they are separate from the wild populations where wild bird hunting is happening. Farm raised quail resist introduction unless they are from a wild strain.

## **Squirrels**

1. Not much of a population on BRP

## **Waterfowl**

1. Curry Lake- more for birding not good for duck hunters.

2. Casey – historically not very good duck hunting on the area. Not many ducks.
3. Nigel – finest duck hunting is in agricultural areas. More nutrition in the soil on those areas.
4. Cathy – storm water retention areas could possibly be created on Lee County land to create a duck hunting area. This would also work well for birders. Hunters and birders cooperate quite well together.
5. Nigel – hydrological study by DOF could look at this, put into the study the idea about storm water retention areas and duck hunting and birding. Let's look into putting in some duck ponds.
6. Jeff – ranch will operate all of the hunting opportunities on the preserve. FWC is doing hunts only as an interim measure.
7. Bryon – is the money being used to supplement the operation of the ranch or will it go to hunting?
8. Kathy – need to think about this as a whole system. If you have poor roads that affects access for everyone. If you have invasive exotic plant species that affects the wildlife populations and could reduce the quality of the hunting opportunity.

**Notes while out at the map.**

1. Sporting clays
2. Nigel – why was the sporting clay area closed down?
3. Casey – established in 1996. Difficulties with partnerships and money so it was closed down. Was an issue with clean up. At the time it was on the cusp of making money but not making much at the time. I think today it would be huge. If we were to get it up again it might be a revenue generator.
4. Reasonable road for the access to the 17,000 acres?
5. Jeff – proposed to be 2-wheel drive accessible.
6. Kathy – new land that they purchased will not be added to BRP proper but could allow public access to south portion of preserve through ARGO ranch.
7. Bill – who's paying to upgrade of the roads?
8. Jeff – FWC is putting up the money for this through the interim management money.
9. Lyle – where can street legals be run?

10. Lee – everyone is restricted to name and number road, except the LLC folks. For the hog hunts we opened up passable roads that were not a problem for the ranch. They could stop access at any time if the road was being torn up. Improvements will be completed by the 09-10 hunting seasons.
11. Lyle – when would there be a map produced for the public?
12. Mark – public information meeting scheduled April early May. Maps would be available by April.
13. Bill – when will fish and wildlife withdraw from managing the hunting?
14. Jeff – stumbling block with liability for private ranch. Need to resolve this issue before we can move forward.
15. Bill – if fish and wildlife don't take charge to move forward, the ranch will not be able to put in the needed resources.
16. Jeff – Ranch has the flexibility to recoup money through super high quality hunts that subsidize the management. With high priced quota hunts. If they were year to year that would help with the liability issue. The hunters would carry their own insurance.
17. Lyle – concern about the 17,000 acres not being able to be expanded.
18. Jerrie – Hunting may be able to be expanded but what is being considered is a tiered system, 17000 for hunting in a similar format to what's being offered now as well as the format Jeff talked about.
19. Bryon – is there anything in the legal document that would prohibit FWC from being the lead manager.
20. Jeff – nothing in the legal documents, but the legislature made its intent understood that the ranch would be the managers. No money coming to FWC to manage the property.
21. Jerrie – they can be getting grants now and FWC, Lee County and DOF is helping BRP. to get grants to help with the cost of managing the property.
22. Lyle – Big Cypress Preserve mess is because FWC has not been involved like they should have. Better to have FWC have a big stake in this. What's the possibility that FWC could be a lead manager?
23. Jeff – the reason why the 17,000 acres were chosen because it is an area that does not conflict with the ranching activities. Other areas on the property may not as easily accommodate the hunting both for access and for conflict with ranching.
24. Bill – need to take engineer to drive the road FWC is proposing to enhance. Be sure you're picking the best roads in terms of the topography and access.

25. Jeff – the road enhancement will happen soon. Probably next week it will begin. Jeff and Lee will go out and drive this afternoon.