



MASTER HUNTER ADVISORY GROUP **WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

Notes for MHAG Meeting #54
June 11, 2021 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Teams Meeting

MHAG Members		WDFW Staff	Guests
Region 2	Ray Boone	Kris Thorson, Hunter Education Division Specialist Aaron Garcia, Region 3 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator Steve Dazey, Region 4 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator Amy Elliott, Region 5 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator Bill Montgomery, Region 6 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator Melia Devivo, Ungulate Research Scientist Brian Kertson, Wildlife Research Scientist	
	Carissa Craghead, Secretary (Excused)		
Region 3	Jonathan Barr		
	Wes Clogston		
	John McAuliffe		
	Kyle Smith		
Region 4	David Floyd		
	Jeff Larsen, Chair		
	Ian Stewart, Vice Chair		
Region 5	George Dennis		
	Keith Pfeifer		
Region 6	Michael Bartoldo		
	Jim Gleiter		
	David Ward		
	Thomas Woodruff (Excused)		

Procedural Business

- **Call to order and announcements (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
- **Introduction of new members (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
 - Ray Boone
 - Ray was part of the initial Advanced Hunter Education Program.
 - He was previously on the Hunter Education Instructor Advisory Committee.
 - David Ward
 - David has been an outdoorsman for many years.
 - He recently retired and now has time to devote to the MHAG.
- **Introduction of members and guests (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
 - The members gave a brief introduction of themselves.

New Business

- **Predator/Prey project update (*Melia Devivo and Brian Kertson, 60 minutes*)**
 - Kris introduced Dr. Melia Devivo and Dr. Brian Kertson.
 - The predator/prey project is ongoing.
 - The project looks at the whole of animal interactions because they do not occur in a vacuum and is looking at a large complex system of multiple predator species, multiple prey species, and habitat.
 - WDFW is collaborating with UW students on this project and five grad students exclusively working on the project.
 - The project's study areas are in northcentral and northeast Washington state that overlap with known wolf territories.
 - The project started captures of prey animals in the study areas in late 2016 and early 2017.
 - Whitetail deer mortalities have shown cougar predation and more human caused mortalities.
 - Elk mortalities in the northeast has been almost all human caused except some disease mortalities.
 - In the northcentral study area, the project shows the predation of mule deer was more diverse and more predation was documented.
 - In both study areas there are indeterminant mortalities which generally means when staff can reach the carcass there is no way to exactly determine the cause of mortality.
 - Pregnancy rates were high in the animals WDFW has captured and collared for study.
 - To capture cougar for the study, staff have used dogs to tree animals and other types of traps baited with road killed deer.
 - To capture wolves the department uses aerial darting to capture and collar wolves.
 - Data shows that the wolves and cougars have spatial overlap in areas but generally do not use the same areas at the same time.
 - Humans and other cougars are the main mortality cause for cougars.

- There have been no documented wolf killing of cougars however there has been a documented cougar predation on a collared wolf.
- The project is also using a noninvasive research method by using a camera grid to capture photos of target species.
- There were also audio recorders placed on the camera locations to monitor wolves.
- A UW student is looking at how mesocarnivores like bobcat and coyote are interacting with the cougars, wolves, and prey in Washington.
- For project updates the UW maintains the predator prey website predatorpreyproject.weebly.com
- Jeff Larsen asked if there is collaboration with other states that may have other projects that are like the predatory prey project.
 - Yes. Idaho, Oregon, and British Columbia all have similar projects going on.
- John McAuliffe had a question on how much the indeterminate causes were and why there were more indeterminate causes on deer vs elk.
 - The technology isn't perfect, and the mortality signal only is triggered when it does not move at all. There was an event where the maggots moving on the carcass was enough to stop the mortality signal from initializing.
 - The staff go out to the mortality signal but sometimes there is just not enough evidence to determine the mortality due to the decomposition, weather, or other factors like scavenging.
- John asked about the technology of having a camera on the collar to take pictures etc. and possibly getting predation events on the study animal.
 - The collars are getting better but the more the staff asks the collar to do the less battery life the collar has. Also, the larger the collar the heavier the collar and having a larger weight is harder on the animal wearing the collar.
- **MHAG recruitment debrief (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - There were twelve applicants for the five seats.
 - No region 1 Master Hunter applied to MHAG.
 - The three subcommittee members who served were Jeff Larsen, Carissa Craghead, and George Dennis.
 - Welcome back to MHAG
 - John McAuliffe
 - Ian Stewart
 - Keith Pfeifer
 - Ray Boone was appointed to fill the region 2 seat.
 - David Ward was appointed into an at large seat.
 - John McAuliffe was appointed to the region 1 seat since he moved to eastern Washington in the past year.
- **2021 budget request and legislative news/update (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
 - There is no budget or legislative news of note.

- Mike Whorton, Region 1 Hunter Ed Field Coordinator is retiring in July.
- Mike has been with WDFW for many, many years.
- He retired as the region 1 captain and came back as the part time hunter ed coordinator for region 1.
- His position will be expanded to full-time and will mirror the other field coordinator positions by also coordinating volunteer opportunities, including Master Hunters.
- **WDFW reports and updates (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - MHPP Participation statistics
 - Currently there are 1,342 certified Master Hunters.
 - The 2019 applicants are still awaiting the testing to reopen for them to be able to take the test.
 - Of those applicants that took the test before COVID shut down the testing, three of 21 passed on their first attempt or 14 percent.
 - Seven applicants retook the test a second time and five or 71 percent passed.
 - Kris reminded the MHAG that the test is based off the updated materials that MHAG and WDFW completed in 2018.
 - The current deadline for the 2019 applicants to complete the requirements has been scheduled for November 15, 2021.
 - The department is planning on opening the application period on July 1 as scheduled.
 - Those applicants will have until May 15, 2022 to complete the requirements.
 - Renewals
 - Ninety-nine Master Hunters whose permits were set to expire in 2021 have renewed as of June 2.
 - There are 163 Master Hunters whose permits expire in 2021 that have not renewed their permit as of June 2.
 - Field coordinator reports
 - Aaron Garcia
 - Aaron has been working with various WDFW employees on upcoming projects.
 - He has a couple projects in the works like a wire removal project near Wenatchee.
 - Aaron is working with First Hunt Foundation on an upcoming deer hunting camp.
 - He is also in the planning stage with First Hunt Foundation and some other non-government originations for longer and more involved turkey camps.
 - Steve Dazey
 - Steve helped recruit volunteers for the Golden Doe wire removal that is sponsored by the Back-Country Hunters and Anglers.

- He helped recruit volunteers for a predator exclusion fence in Whatcom County.
 - Steve assisted two organizations looking to volunteer and match them with wildlife area managers.
 - He assisted a conflict specialist in region 1 to find volunteers for projects.
 - Amy Elliott
 - Amy has had some contact with Master Hunters about when projects may be coming up and clerical work.
 - She had a super urgent request to Master Hunters for two orphaned fawns to get moved to a rehab facility in Monroe.
 - Bill Montgomery
 - Bill had a project for five people to haze elk in Graham.
 - He also had 11 people sign up for a forest clean-up project on some Elk River private timberlands that are open for no fee hunting.
 - He is fielding a lot of questions from Master Hunters like when Master Hunter projects will be available and when can the applicants take the test.
 - Bill is working on a project for Master Hunters to construct 36 purple martin houses.
- **MHAG member updates and Master Hunter communications (*Jeff Larsen, 10 minutes*)**
 - Does anyone have anything to add?
 - Wes has had some questions on the Yakima training center information for hunting and why the hunting season has diminished.
 - Aaron reported that the base commander has changed, and the management objectives changed as well. Since the elk on the training center are not causing damage, they do not require Master Hunter harvest.
- **Conservation easement presentation (*Thom Woodruff, 30 minutes*)**
 - Thom requested this meeting agenda item be moved because he was not able to make the meeting date.
- **COVID related updates (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
 - WDFW is working on a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to allow proctors and WDFW staff to start proctoring the MHPP exam.
 - The proctors will have to complete the COVID Return to Work Checklist for Volunteers.
 - They will also have to follow the SOP for proctoring the test.
 - WDFW transitioned to online only for hunter education in April of 2020.
 - Before the transition, 960 hunter education online course students and 559 traditional hunter education course students were certified.
 - The online plus the virtual field day certifications in 2020 was 24,892 students.
 - The total hunter education certifications in 2020 were 26,411.
 - 2019 hunter education certifications were 9,901.

- This is an increase of 16,510 students from 2019.
- So far in 2021, there have been 7,376 hunter education certifications.
- **Master Hunter expectations refresher (*George Dennis, 15 minutes*)**
 - George noticed that nine of the members that are on MHAG were not on the group when the original expectations were created.
 - In 2018 George and Keith got an email about Master Hunters that were not holding themselves to the highest standards and the conflict staff may move to other tools to address damage.
 - George and Keith met with conflict staff to discuss the situation and decided to create an expectations document to help address the behaviors.
 - The genesis was the expectations document that current Master Hunters are sent when they are drawn for a damage permit.
 - George and the peer to peer group asked the conflict staff if the expectations document was working to address the situation.
 - He received mixed reviews based on the contact with conflict staff.
- **Master Hunter hoof disease special permits (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - New permits were added to the Master Hunter elk special permit category in 2021.
 - These permits are part of a pilot project to evaluate the how hunters can reduce the prevalence of treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD).
 - There are two options in this pilot program.
 - Option one, hunters who harvest an elk displaying signs of hoof disease (abnormal hooves) and submit those hooves to WDFW will have a chance to draw a premium elk tag the following license year.
 - Option two are permits are offered under the Master Hunter special permit category as second elk opportunities valid only for antlerless elk displaying signs of hoof disease - like a limping gait or abnormal or overgrown hooves.
 - Master Hunters that harvest an elk under this permit will use their Master Hunter 2nd elk transport tag.
 - The Master Hunter must submit the hooves from their harvested elk to WDFW for inspection.
 - If the hooves display signs of hoof disease and the Master Hunter has an unfilled general season tag, WDFW may issue another permit with the same conditions that allows the harvest of a diseased elk using the Master Hunter's unfilled general season tag, with approval from a local biologist and not to exceed two elk harvested within the same calendar year.
 - The ungulate section will provide more information in late summer or early fall.
- **Peer to peer subgroup report (*Jeff Larsen, 30 minutes*)**
 - The subgroup contacted the conflict specialist for their respective regions to discuss the current issues they are seeing with Master Hunter deployments.
 - The group found that the landowners have started to move to youth, disabled, or veteran hunters.
 - The most common responses from the conflict specialists identified by the subgroup are as follows:

- Specialists are not having as many issues with Master Hunters on damage hunts because most landowners request youth, disabled, or veteran hunters instead due to past issues with Master Hunters.
 - Some Master Hunters want to “negotiate” the start date of their hunt.
 - Some Master Hunters are upset they were passed over since they did not answer their deployment call.
 - Some Master Hunters expect an “easy elk” and are unprepared or unwilling to work for an elk.
 - Some Master Hunters haven’t sighted in their rifle and are unprepared to field dress and pack harvested game.
 - Some Master Hunters ignore landowner instructions.
 - The subgroup identified potential solutions to Master Hunter issues identified by the conflict specialists:
 - Remove problem Master Hunters from the program.
 - Master Hunters who violate the program’s expectations should not be permitted to apply for a damage permit for a year or two.
 - Provide training to Master Hunters related to landowner ethics.
 - Have Master Hunters subscribe to OnXHunt so they have property boundary information as well as annotations provided by the specialist.
 - Provide opportunities for Master Hunters to ask questions and request assistance when needed.
 - The subgroup also found that some of the conflict staff already use mentors for these kinds of hunts when possible.
 - The subgroup also proposed recommendations to the department to help curb some of the negative behaviors that have been experienced by conflict staff in the past.
 - WDFW will review the Peer to Peer Mentoring Subcommittee Report document to determine if there are actions WDFW can take to implement this possible project.
 - After the review, the department will discuss next steps at the August meeting.
- **Election of new officers (*Kris Thorson, 10 Minutes*)**
 - Kris thanked Jeff Larsen for his service as the MHAG chair and Ian Stewart for his service as the MHAG vice chair.
 - Kris opened the floor for nominations for chair.
 - David Floyd nominated Jeff Larsen
 - Ian seconded the nomination
 - The group unanimously approved Jeff as chair.
 - Kris opened the floor for nominations for the vice chair.
 - Dave Floyd nominated John McAuliffe.
 - Ian Stewart seconded the nomination.
 - The group unanimously approve John McAuliffe
 - The new chair and vice chair will be in their roles at the August 20 meeting.

Conclusion

- **Recap action items (*Carissa Craghead, 5 minutes*)**
- **Agenda topics for next meeting (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
 - Conservation easements from Thom Woodruff
 - Peer to Peer Mentoring Subcommittee Report review discussion
- **Good of the order (*All; General discussion items by MHAG, 5 minutes*)**
- **Adjourn**