



MASTER HUNTER ADVISORY GROUP

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Notes for MHAG Meeting #53
March 12, 2020 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Teams Meeting

MHAG Members		WDFW Staff	Guests
Region 1	Shawn Woodard (absent)	Dave Whipple, Hunter Education Division Manager	
Region 2	Carissa Craghead, Secretary	Kris Thorson, Hunter Education Division Specialist	
	Jim Hope		
Region 3	Jonathan Barr	Aaron Garcia, Region 3 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Wes Clogston		
	Kyle Smith		
Region 4	David Floyd (absent)	Steve Dazey, Region 4 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Jeff Larsen, Chair		
	John McAuliffe		
	Ian Stewart, Vice Chair		
Region 5	George Dennis	Amy Elliott, Region 5 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Keith Pfeifer		
Region 6	Michael Bartoldo	Bill Montgomery, Region 6 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Jim Gleiter		
	Thomas Woodruff		

Procedural Business

- **Call to order and announcements** (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)
- **Introduction of members and guests** (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)
- **Recognition of members whose terms are expiring** (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)
 - The members whose current term ends on April 1, 2021 are Shawn Woodard, Jim Hope, John McAuliffe, Ian Stewart, and Keith Pfeifer.
 - Thank you all for your service on MHAG.

New Business

- **MHAG recruitment debrief** (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)
 - There were 12 applicants to MHAG in 2020.
 - Three current members applied.
 - No Region 1 Master Hunters applied.
 - The recruitment was to fill seats in Region 1, 2, 4, 5, and one at large position.
 - The subcommittee met on March 3 to discuss the applicants.
 - The recruitment subcommittee was comprised of: Jeff Larsen, Carissa Craghead, George Dennis, Kris Thorson, and Dave Whipple.
- **2021 budget request and legislative news/update** (*David Whipple, 15 minutes*)
 - WDFW fared well in the governor's budget. The House & Senate budgets are being developed. The current legislative session will end in late-April 2021; the final budget bill will likely be passed late in the session. The state revenue forecasts are higher than what was projected in the middle of 2020.
 - The Pittman-Robertson (PR) apportionment for FY22 is about what WDFW expected. The fund recovered somewhat over last fiscal year, but not yet fully back to expectations given the increase in firearm and ammunition sales. This is partly due to deferred excise tax payments provided to manufacturers due to COVID impacts. Hopefully the fund will be stronger next fiscal year.
 - March ninth was the second cutoff date where a state legislative bill must be passed out of the house of origin to be considered still alive for possible legislative action. This does not include budget centric bills.
 - WDFW's agency request legislation looks like it is still moving through the legislative process. The WDFW agency request legislation bills are:
 - SB 5058: House-cleaning on the State Wildlife Account.
 - SB 5146: Allowing the Commission to indemnify the federal government as a condition of securing certain funds. Important for funding.
 - HB 1172: Rectifying legally incorrect statutes regarding treaty-reserved rights and state-tribal agreements in the management of salmon, trout, and steelhead.
 - SB 5159: Moving WDFW's payments in lieu of taxes for WDFW-managed lands to the State Treasurer's Office.
 - Some non-agency-request legislation of interest that is still alive and moving:
 - SB 1168 concerning forest health funding.
 - SB 5253 concerning implementing pollinator task force recommendations.

- SB 5452 concerning electric-assisted bicycles on WDFW & DNR managed.
 - HB 1261 concerning wildlife harvest reports did not make the cutoff to get out of the House, so is not proceeding this session.
 - MHAG had questions related to the purpose of increasing the non-reporting fee. This is not WDFW's bill. The purpose is to help increase reporting of harvest effort and success, to increase accuracy of wildlife population estimates, which can lead to increased hunting opportunity. Many other Western states have higher fees or prohibit future license purchases until harvest reports are completed.
 - More Information on current legislative bills can be found online at <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/> by entering the bill number in the search field.
 - WDFW implemented a 25-year strategic plan to help guide the agency's future. Part of the strategic plan includes a recruitment, retention, and reengagement plan for hunting and angling participation. License sales have showed an increase over last fiscal year. Sales in February were up compared to February last fiscal year.
- **WDFW reports and updates (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - Kris checked with the regional program managers who currently have the east vs west tag requirement for Master Hunter special permits for elk in place.
 - In region one's experience, sometimes it has been difficult to get a permittee to make the trip out to their region to help with these damage situations in a timely manner.
 - By requiring an eastside elk tag, we know the individuals who are committed to hunt elk in eastern Washington.
 - Region six has the same experience as region one.
 - They recognize that hunting opportunity is a secondary benefit of why we have these hunts and the main reason is to respond to private landowner damage.
 - We often need hunters that can be there as soon as possible and hunt the sites consistently.
 - The hunting pressure is just as important as a harvest or even more so.
 - Region five had similar experiences.
 - These hunts operate on a shorter timeline where damage elk are currently on a conflict property and a quicker response is desirable.
 - Michael asked if there had been a thought to allow Master Hunters who purchase an elk tag the option of hunting either side of the state.
 - Kris noted that WDFW currently has the multi-season elk tag that Master Hunters can purchase if they are drawn for the multi-season tag and this would allow them to apply for tags on either side of the state.
 - MHPP Participation statistics
 - As of March 1, 2021, we have 1,361 active Master Hunters.

- There are 244 Master Hunters whose permits expire between March 1 and December 31, 2021 and have not renewed as of March 1.
 - Thirty-three Master Hunters whose permits were set to expire in 2021 renewed between the December meeting and March 1.
 - Field coordinator reports
 - Steven Dazey
 - Steve sent out a call for volunteers to assist Kittitas county field and stream to pack and spread seed to revegetate the Evans Canyon fire burn area. The club was very appreciative of the quick response of the Master Hunters that enabled them to backpack seed sometimes over a mile to the revegetation site.
 - Amy Elliott
 - Amy talked with some Master Hunters on status of the program and she explained the challenges during COVID and how things are on hold currently but there is no plan to discontinue the program.
 - She sent out an opportunity with the Cascade Forest Conservancy who will be running approximately 10 multi-day events in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest (all in region five) in 2021.
 - Bill Montgomery
 - Bill worked with Steve on some Special Field Skills Evaluations with two in Marysville and two in Black Diamond.
 - He has talked with a couple prospective Master Hunter applicants.
 - Bill has been in contact with Lisa Randolph on some reseeding opportunities but like everything else they are waiting on department approval.
 - He is also talking with a lot of hunter education instructors.
 - Bill is working with the administration section of the wildlife program to help with the small game surveys.
 - Aaron Garcia
 - Aaron has a project coming up where Master Hunters can help prepare a state park for environmental education.
 - He is working on securing possible hosts for the sheep company road shooting range in Selah.
 - We are working on possible mentoring opportunities and how WDFW can facilitate the matching of mentors and mentees.
 - **MHAG member updates and Master Hunter communications (*Jeff Larsen, 10 minutes*)**
 - Does anyone have anything to add?
 - Kyle Smith had several contacts from Master Hunters.
 - One contact was about his volunteer hours and expiration date and Kris responded to the Master Hunter.
 - One other contact was regarding the 2020 game status and trends report and the possible opportunities for Master Hunter seasons.

- Kris will talk to the ungulate staff about the Master Hunter's ideas on how to possibly increase Master Hunter hunting opportunities on the firing center and the Rattlesnake Hills sub-herd of the Yakima herd.
 - Carissa has witnessed students graduating from the online only hunter education class who demonstrated firearm handling issues. She has helped those students with helpful information on how to improve their handling skills.
 - She has also been contacted by some folks she knows about signing up for a hunter education class and she has told them that the current online is their only option and she would be willing to go to the range with those folks as a friend.
 - Dave talked about the possibility of offering in-person classes to those folks who passed the online only class as a refresher or kind of like a clinic setting for firearm handling and proper hunting safety.
- **Peer to peer mentoring on damage hunts (*Keith Pfeifer, 30 minutes*)**
 - Keith has seen in recent years a shift from Master Hunter to other hunters like youth or disabled hunters.
 - A couple years ago Keith talked to Tammy Conklin, at that point region five conflict staff, about a possible mentoring program for peer to peer mentoring on damage hunts.
 - The peer to peer program would increase the perception of the program while increasing the efficiency of the damage hunts.
 - Keith thinks that the Master Hunter who would be the mentor should be incentivized with at least volunteer hours if not more.
 - George has mentored five people when asked by the regional conflict specialist.
 - Wes thinks the landowner relations may be the issue here.
 - George asked why there were less Master Hunter deployment in 2020.
 - Kris talked about the difficult nature of animal behavior, weather, etc. that drive damage.
 - Ian suggested we put together a possible program to shop to other conflict staff to see if they would have a desire for a program like this.
 - Dave thinks this may be a good idea and we will start pursuing the idea and then WDFW will take the idea to the conflict staff.
 - Jeff will work with Keith to get a subcommittee to work on a project proposal and we can try to get this on the next meeting agenda.
- **COVID related updates (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
 - WDFW is working on a way to get field coordinators out for tests during the current COVID timeline.
 - We have not moved to phase 2 style protocols yet.
 - The state will apparently be moving to phase 3 on March 22.
- **Virtual option discussion (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
 - The current reopening trend seems to be slower than previously thought due to COVID 19.

- The current virtual volunteer option has only been offered to those Master Hunters whose permits expire before June 30, 2021.
- Hunter education staff have discussed allowing Master Hunters whose permits expire before December 31, 2021 being offered the virtual option so they can complete their hours for renewal before their permit expiration date.
- The MHAG did not have any issues with offering the virtual volunteer to the Master Hunters with a 2021 expiration date.
- **2019 applicants discussion (Kris Thorson, 15 minutes)**
 - Currently there are 100 applicants that have not become Master Hunters or failed the test twice.
 - The department is working on how to safely allow applicants take the test and continue the process of becoming a Master Hunter.
 - The current date the applicants must complete their requirements is May 15, 2021.
 - Should we move the completion date to November 15, 2021 to give the applicants more than enough time to complete the requirements?
 - Carissa suggested we move the deadline to July 1.
 - Dave and George noted that there seems to be no downside to increasing the date to Nov 15.
 - The group agreed that the requirements deadline should be moved to November 15 to allow applicants enough time to complete their requirements.
 - The MHAG did not have any issues with offering the virtual volunteer option to the 2019 applicants.
- **2021 MHPP Annual Report (Kris Thorson, 15 minutes)**
 - The 2021 annual report will be published in April.
 - Kris has drafted the report and will send it to the MHAG members later today.
 - The members will have until Friday, March 26 to suggest any changes to the document before it is published in early April.

Conclusion

- **Recap action items (Carissa Craghead, 5 minutes)**
 - Report on Rattlesnake hills sub-herd
 - Peer to peer mentoring project proposal review
- **Agenda topics for next meeting (Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes)**
 - Kris has secured the predator/prey project staff as a presenter
 - Thom has also agreed to present on conservation easements
- **Good of the order (All; General discussion items by MHAG, 5 minutes)**
 - Next meeting June 11, 2021 via Teams.
- **Adjourn**