



MASTER HUNTER ADVISORY GROUP
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091

Notes for MHAG Meeting #18

January 13, 2012 - 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Washington Cattlemen's Association Offices, Ellensburg

Procedural Business

1. Call to order and announcements – Chair Estes called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. Introductions: Chair Estes asked for self-introductions.

- MHAG member present:
Chair Mike Estes
Vice Chair Mike Britton
Craig Broadhead
Harold Costa
Jim Fitzgerald
Ron Poppe
Dennis Clay
Jim Zimmerman
Jim Reinbold
- MHAG Members Absent:
Tani Iwashita - excused
Richard Mathisen - resigned
Ted Wolkenhauer – appointment rescinded
Mike Ward - resigned
- WDFW Staff:
Captain Rich Mann
Sgt. Carl Klein
Sgt. Morgan Grant
Anthony Novack
Mike Kuttel
- Guests:
Walt Christensen – GMAC Chair
George Coulbourn – former MHAG member

3. Approval of Meeting #17 Notes from October 6, 2011- Mike Britton moved and Ron Poppe seconded a motion to accept the notes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

4. Reports from Committee Chairs

- Information & Outreach – Chair Estes reported that the electronic survey has been ready to issue to Master Hunters for nearly a year while the best method of delivery was being discussed. Questions about use of a WDFW group e-mail account, some concerns about the purpose of specific survey questions by Chief Bjork, and unavailability of WDFW staff support for issuing the survey and tabulating responses were not resolved so MHAG obtained a Google address in order to proceed. The Gmail account address is MHAGofWA@gmail.com. WDFW recently provided MHAG with the MH email list to enable us to communicate with Master Hunters but it is incomplete and some addresses are not current. It was suggested that the survey be delayed until after the March MHAG meeting so newly appointed members can be involved. A notice will be posted to the MHPP website this spring about the survey and the MHAG e-mail address. Master Hunters will be encouraged to provide MHAG with their current e-mail addresses by sending a message or the completed survey to the Gmail address so MHAG can develop an accurate distribution list. The possibility of granting one hour volunteer time for taking the survey was briefly discussed and deferred to the next meeting. Potential topics for future email communications with Master Hunters were discussed.
- Frequently Asked Questions – Dennis Clay asked whether the situational hunting scenarios offered by him and answered by Captain Mann were on the website yet. Mike Kuttel will work with Chair Estes to create a new section on the MHPP webpage perhaps titled “Situational Hunting Answers” or “Did You Know”.
- Ways & Means – Vice Chair Britton reported on potential ALEA grant application projects focusing on improved hunting access on private lands and improved landowner/sportsman relation. There has been little progress in obtaining specific projects from WDFW to strengthen the ALEA request which is due the end of February for the last fiscal year of the current biennium. There continues to be little interest on the part of WDFW to use volunteers due to workload, liability, and supervision/training requirements imposed by a 99 page volunteer policy manual. Chair Estes and Mike Kuttel will work together on a letter to Director Anderson as a follow up to the Director’s letter dated August 3, 2011, to ascertain the Department’s progress towards the commitments in that letter and suggesting that WDFW specifically focus on engaging Master Hunters in improving hunting access on private lands and in addressing game depredation issues. Mike Britton shared that 80% of the volunteer hours at Turnbull NWR are from Master Hunters. Nate Pamplin has created a new volunteer coordinator position in the WDFW Wildlife Program. Mike Kuttel suggested that MHAG propose an ALEA project with two pilots; one on the west side and one on the east side of the state if enough specific information can be collected by the application deadline. Mike Britton asked the group to propose projects.

ACTION ITEM 18-1 – Chair Estes work with Mike Kuttel to write a letter to Director Anderson expressing disappointment in not being able to identify specific ALEA projects, requesting a status update on WDFW efforts to identify meaningful volunteer opportunities, and requesting that WDFW specifically engage Master Hunters in improving hunter access to private lands and to address significant wildlife depredation issues.

ACTION ITEM 18-2 – Mike Britton prepare an application for improving hunter access to private lands and to address significant wildlife depredation issues before the February 29, 2012 ALEA grant application deadline.

5. Reports on Action Items (As shown below)

- ACTION ITEM – 17-1 – Chair Estes to check about creating a Goggle e-mail address for MHAG. - COMPLETED
- ACTION ITEM – 17-2 – Dennis Clay to write an article to post on the MHPP web page for the 20th anniversary of the Master Hunter Program. Dennis will attempt to contact Chuck Ray and Mik Mikitik to help with history. – CONTINUING
- ACTION ITEM – 17-3 – Craig Broadhead to review FAQ's with assistance from Chair Estes and Lt. Anderson. Craig reviewed the FAQ's and two new questions were submitted. Question 1: How are Master Hunter hunts and seasons determined? Question 2: Do Master Hunters receive special privileges or trophy-type hunts? Answers will be prepared and the new FAQ's will be posted to the web. – ONGOING

6. Hunt Behavior Study and MOU / Elk Area 3911 Partnership – Anthony Novack provided MHAG with a fully executed copy of the cooperative agreement between MHAG, Central Washington University, and WDFW for the Hunt Behavior Study. Anthony reported on the survey to be conducted on deer and elk hunters, both MH and general hunters. Two survey sessions were held at Cabela's Lacey store before Christmas. Other sessions will be conducted at various sportsman shows in the state. There have been 260 surveys completed thus far with only 14 MH participating. Early statistics were presented but too few to show any trends or results.

Captain Mann stated that there were more MH violations in Elk Area 3911 this year than in the past few years but mostly hunting out of bounds or wrong animals. There was some discussion on process of how Enforcement in Olympia is notified of MH violations. The MH Permit (yellow card) needs to be carried by the hunter while hunting in MH seasons. There was a question as to whether the card could be confiscated upon violation. There were different opinions offered by WDFW officials. MHAG thought that since the MHPP re-vamp, the card could (should) be confiscated at the time a citation was issued. Sergeant Klein will seek legal clarification on this point.

In GMU 3912, WDFW received several complaints about MH by local groups in that some elk fence gates had been reversed, fences cut and hay left outside the fence. There was also an ad for MH to hunt private property for a fee.

The WDFW reporting system harvest criteria does not allow for any detailed information about whether animals are taken during permit hunts or special hunts so wildlife staff has to manipulate the data to estimate MH harvest. Past suggestions to Licensing and the Wildlife Program have been ignored. It was noted that the purpose of the legislative order was to gather harvest data only in the hope that hunters would report honestly and accurately.

7. GMAC Interface: 12/10/2011 GMAC Meeting – Chair Estes, Ron Poppe, and GMAC Chair Walt Christensen reported on the meeting. The 2012-2014 Hunting Season

proposals were on the GMAC meeting agenda but were not discussed. Mr. Christensen stated that the GMAC allocation sub-committee has not met for some time.

8. Volunteer Opportunities - Status and Process – Chair Estes will write a letter to the Director as noted in Action item 18-1.

New Business

9. MHAG Vacancies – Appointment Recommendations – Chair Estes and Vice Chair Britton reported that they telephonically interviewed 16 applicants. Recommendations to fill vacant positions are as follow. Appointment periods will vary from one to three years to fill vacancies created by resignations and to maintain the annual rotation of one-third of MHAG members each year.

Region 1 - Jim Sutton (2015)
Wayne Ward (2015)
Greg Yonemura (2013)*
Region 2 - Robert Scoville (2013)
Jim Reinbold (2015)
Region 3 – No applicants
Region 4 - Roger Hurst (2015)
John McGlenn (2013)
Region 5 - Chris Brong (2015)
George Dennis (2014)
Region 6 - No applicants

* See Agenda Item 20 for additional information.

Mike Britton moved and Ron Poppe seconded a motion to forward the recommendations to the Director for appointments. Motion passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEM 18-3 – Mike Kuttel will prepare nine appropriate appointment letters, have them approved by Chief Bjork, and then have them signed by Director Bjork and distributed to the appointees. Mike Kuteel will order plaques for the three outgoing MHAG members and prepare Letters of Appreciation from Chief Bjork for several past members of the MHAG who remain actively involved.

10. Liaison Report – Mike Kuttel reported on the 2011 MHPP annual report. The report has been approved by the Chief but needs to go through a review process before it goes to the Commission and is posted to the MHPP web page. Issues in the report for future consideration are:

- Develop administrative criteria for “Hotspot” and “Ranked List” hunts.
- Develop a communication system between MHAG, GMAC, and WDFW regions and divisions.
- Monitor the Hanford Reach elk hunt administration of access and game management.
- Study Hunter Education trends from 2005 through 2011 to see how the hunt tradition is faring. Attempt to identify what is needed to continue the hunting tradition. Perhaps less emphasis is needed on recruitment but rather focus on

retention. Need to focus on additional skills of hunting, survival, tracking, outdoor adventure, etc. It was suggested that the MHAG work cooperatively with the Instructor Advisory Committee (IAC) to develop a new Advanced Hunter Training (AAHT) program similar to one now underway in California. The idea is to provide continuing education to all hunters regardless of age in the areas of tracking, outdoor survival, care of game meat, handling and firing of most legal hunting implements, building shelters, fire starting, outdoor first aid, finding access to hunting, how to read the hunting regulations, etc. One big factor in hunters leaving the ranks deals with their inability to pick up the necessary skills to enjoy and be successful hunters.

Also discussed were Master Hunter membership trends and changes in Master Hunter membership by Region. This information will be posted on the MHPP webpage.

Mike Kuttel was also asked to research whether Master Hunters that lost their certification for life since 2008 were from the former AHE era or from the new MHPP era.

CORT will continue to be required for MHPP enrollees for 2012. Difficulties about scheduling and holding classes as scheduled during the past few years were discussed as well as the minimum class size and the requirement for a WDFW Enforcement officer to teach the class. Sgt. Grant strongly suggested that an officer be present during the training for the public relations benefit. It was decided to invite Kyle Winton, Eyes In the Woods president, to the next MHAG meeting to offer the assistance of the MHAG in improving service reliability for Master Hunter applicants.

ACTION ITEM 18-4 – Chair Estes invite Kyle Winton to the next MHAG meeting.

Open enrollment for the MHPP will conclude on February 15. Only 63 applicants have registered to date.

11. Vision for MHAG and MHPP – Sgt. Klein reported that he has been with the WDFW for 8 years and has been assigned to manage the Hunter Education and MHPP programs. His supervisor is Lt. Crown. He stated that Mike Kuttel will probably serve as staff liaison to MHAG. He stated that there have been some progress with working with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials in identifying hunting violations and violators but there is not a joint system between the state and feds. There are reciprocity programs between the states but not with the feds. WDFW only tracks RCW Title 77 violations. It was suggested that the MHAG work with WDFW to identify areas of the current MHPP RCW and WAC that need to be strengthened, such as inclusion of federal fish and wildlife violations.

12. MHAG Response to Proposed MH Hunt Guidelines – Chair Estes gave a brief background on the request for a response from Dave Ware on the MH Hunt Guidelines. Most member of MHAG had responded to Chair Estes' request for review. Chair Estes compiled the reviews and forwarded them to Mr. Ware who incorporated the suggested changes in draft Version 2. Chair Estes asked MHAG members for any additional input on MH Hunt Guidelines V2. No additional suggestions were offered.

13. Region 1 GMU 130 Discussion – Chair Estes briefed the group on the issues being posed from Master Hunters about proposed changes to Region 1 MH hunts, with particular interest and concern about the GMU 130 elk hunt. MHAG had no knowledge about the WDFW proposed changes until after the October 2011 MHAG meeting when Master Hunters began asking questions based on their conversations with WDFW Region 1 staff. MHAG members attempted to obtain answers from Dave Ware and Region 1 staff and were notified by Dave Ware on November 7 that staff is planning to eliminate the Region 1 MH elk and deer hunts. It was noted that the proposed changes were not discussed at the 2012-2014 hunting package meeting in Spokane in August and there has been no forum for collection of public input. WDFW has told Master Hunters that the changes were recommended by MHAG, which is not true. Walt Christensen said that the proposed changes were also not discussed with GMAC. Although the MHAG has no role under Commission Policy C-6005 in making recommendations about Master Hunter hunting seasons, Big Game Program Manager Dave Ware has specifically asked for feedback for certain season recommendations. Chair Estes briefly discussed how he planned to respond to the request.

MHAG will support elimination of the MH late season elk hunt in GMU 130 to enable WDFW to perform a three year trial involving the Columbia Plateau Wildlife Management Association but does not support elimination of the MH elk hunt in other Region 1 GMUs or elimination of the MH antlerless whitetail deer hunt in Region 1 GMUs, all of which have existed for more than a decade, without empirical or scientific data that substantiates a need to eliminate the hunts. If bull escapement is a significant issue in the MH elk hunts, MHAG would support a change to an antlerless only regulation.

14. MH “Hot Spot”/“Ranked List” Criteria, Guidelines, and Processes. Sgt. Klein distributed copies of the current policy and procedures for Hot Spot Permits. Perceived differences between current practice and the proposed “ranked list” concept were discussed. MHAG cannot support implementation of the “ranked list” concept before the concept is fully explained, hunt criteria are identified, and a detailed process is in place. MHAG believes that implementation of the “ranked list” concept for 2012 would be premature and inappropriate. MHAG is willing to participate with WDFW staff in developing the concept, criteria, and process. Such a concept should be phased in so that it’s effectiveness can be verified.

ACTION ITEM – 18-5 – Chair Estes is to prepare a response to Dave Ware including discussions and recommendations concerning Agenda Items 12, 13, and 14.

15. MHAG Engagement in WDFW Regional Communications Plans (Kuttel) – noted in Annual Report and discussed under Agenda Item 10, Liaison Report.

16. Other Topics

- Harvest Reporting Issues; Impact to accurate harvest data – discussed briefly under Agenda Item 6.
- Potential for MHPP move from Enforcement to the Wildlife Program – briefing provided by Sgt. Klein.

- Web page updating and monitoring - Mike Kuttel and MHAG members to continue to monitor and provide suggestions.
- MHAG Engagement in WDFW Regional Communications Plans – part of annual report discussion. Discussion to continue at next meeting.
- Master Hunter program 20th Anniversary Recognition Events – partially covered under review of Action Item 17-2. Additional recognition activities to be discussed at March meeting.
- Loss of Master Hunter points when drawn for a hunt but not called to participate – will be discussed as “ranked list” permit hunt concept is developed.
- Continuing education concepts for all hunters (Advanced Hunter Training) – mentioned in annual report –discussion will continue at future meetings.

Conclusion

17. Recap Action Items - Secretary Reinbold reviewed actions items as noted:
 Action Item 18-1 – Chair Estes, with assistance from Mike Kuttel, write a letter to Director Anderson with formal request for volunteer projects.
 Action Item 18-2 – Mike Britton submit a grant application for improved hunting access to private lands and addressing game depredation issues.
 Action Item 18-3 – Mike Kuttel submit MHAG recommendations for appointment to Chief Bjork and Director Anderson.
 Action Item 18-4 – Chair Estes invite Kyle Winton of EITW to next meeting to discuss the CORT program.
 Action Item 18-5 – Chair Estes draft a proposal to Dave Ware concerning MH Hunt guidelines, MH Hunt opportunities and MH Hot Spots/Ranked List.
18. Agenda Topics for March Meeting (All) – See Item 16 above.
19. Next meeting Date and Location –**Friday, March 23** from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Washington Cattlemen’s Association Offices in Ellensburg. Meeting room reserved by Jim Zimmerman.
20. Good of the Order – Chair Estes read a letter from member Tani Iwashita concerning his lack of attendance at MHAG meetings for personal reasons and offering to step down. The group after much discussion suggested that Sgt. Klein talk with Tani and accept the offer to step down but with the possibility of reapplying in the future. Mike Britton moved and Harold Costa seconded that Greg Yonemura from Region 1 be appointed to the vacant position as an at-large position. Motion passed unanimously.
21. Adjourn – meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.