

#### 4. WAC 232-12-073 Master Hunter Program – Rule Action

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**“GREEN SHEET”**

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**Meeting dates:** January 11-12, 2008  
**Agenda item:** Master Hunter Program – Rule Action  
**Staff Contact:** Mik Mikitik, Administrator, Hunter Education Division  
**Presenter(s):** Bruce Bjork, Assistant Director, Enforcement Program

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**Background:**

At the October 12-13 and December 7-8 Commission meetings, Enforcement briefed the Commission on the Master Hunter Program and the proposed rule. The Commission took public comment at each of these briefings on the rule proposal.

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**Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:**

Revisions to WAC 232-12-073 that would address long-standing deficiencies in the requirements to be a Master Hunter and the penalties for unethical or unlawful behavior by Master Hunters.

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**Public involvement process used and what you learned:**

The public was invited to testify at the October and December 2007 Commission meetings. The comments supported the staff’s and the Commission’s consensus that the proposed changes are needed and long overdue.

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**Action requested:**

Adopt the rule.

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**Draft motion language:**

I move to adopt this rule.

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**Justification for Commission action:**

The Master Hunter program is important to the agency, hunters, and landowners. The current rule does not give the Department the tools and authority it needs to properly qualify Master Hunters, nor does it allow the Department to penalize these hunters if they fail to uphold the high standards of the Master Hunter Program.

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*Form revised 10/24/07*

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending Order 02-298, filed 12/13/02, effective 1/13/03)

**WAC 232-12-073 Master hunter program.** (1) In order to effectively manage wildlife in areas or at times when a higher proficiency and demonstrated skill level are needed for resource protection or public safety, the department establishes the master hunter program.

(2) The master hunter program emphasizes safe, lawful, and ethical hunting practices. Two of the program's goals are to improve the public's perception of hunting and to perpetuate the highest hunting standards. Master hunters actively participate in controlled hunts to eliminate problem animals that damage property and/or threaten public safety.

(a) The cost of applying for the master hunter program is twenty dollars. The department will determine the program's prerequisites and curriculum. The department may establish an advisory group to assist the agency staff in developing the prerequisites and curriculum.

(b) Master hunter candidates who successfully complete the master hunter program will receive a certificate, a master hunter patch, and a master hunter identification card. The master hunter identification card is valid for five consecutive years from the date of issuance. The card will be renewed for an additional five years if, during the period of validity, the

master hunter completes forty hours of additional master hunter program requirements as determined by the department.

(3) Master hunters are held to the highest ethical standards because these hunters are ambassadors for the department and are role models and mentors for the hunting community and for the public at large. As such, applicants must submit to a criminal background check. Applicants who have prior wildlife or trespassing-while-hunting convictions within the last ten years, or prior felonies prohibiting the possession of firearms, or hunting-license suspensions in another state, cannot apply for the master hunter program.

(a) Individuals who successfully complete the master hunter program must obey all laws and regulations. Master hunters will be required to sign and abide by a hunter code of ethics in addition to all department laws and regulations.

(b) Persons who successfully pass the master hunter program and maintain the requirements set forth in this section are entitled to participate in special hunts. These hunters must possess a valid master hunter identification card while participating in the hunts. Master hunters who are convicted of wildlife misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors, or felonies; trespassing while hunting; or reckless endangerment involving hunting weapons, will be removed from the ~~have their~~ master hunter ~~privileges suspended program~~ for life. Master hunters who commit wildlife infractions may be removed from the ~~have their~~ master hunter ~~privileges suspended program~~ for up to a five-year period.

(c) The department's master hunter coordinator will maintain open communications with landowners and the community to investigate complaints about master hunters or the master hunter program. If a master hunter ~~commits~~ is charged with a wildlife or trespassing violation that does not result in a conviction, or an ethical violation that does not rise to a criminal law or regulation violation, a master hunter peer review committee, selected by the advisory group, will evaluate the behavior to decide whether it was egregious. If the committee deems the behavior egregious, the department may suspend the violator's master hunter privileges for any amount of time, up to and including life.

(d) Any person who has his or her master hunter privileges suspended under this subsection has the right to an administrative hearing to contest the agency action. Such hearing will be held pursuant to chapter 34.05 RCW, the Administrative Procedure Act.

(e) "Conviction," as used in this section, is defined in RCW 77.15.050.

(4) It is unlawful for any person to participate in a hunt restricted to master hunters if such person has not successfully passed the master hunter course and maintained the requirements set forth in this section, or if the person's master hunter privileges have been suspended. Violation of this subsection shall be enforced under RCW 77.15.400 for wild birds, RCW 77.15.410 for big game, and RCW 77.15.430 for wild animals other than big game.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.047. 03-01-077 (Order 02-298),  
§ 232-12-073, filed 12/13/02, effective 1/13/03.]

## **RECOMMENDED ADJUSTMENTS**

### **MASTER HUNTER PROGRAM**

**WAC 232-12-073**

**The following proposed adjustments came after the December 7-8, 2007, Commission meeting:**

In (3): Clarified that a person cannot apply for the Master Hunter Program if he or she has had prior wildlife or trespassing-while-hunting convictions within the last 10 years, or prior felonies prohibiting the possession of firearms, or hunting-license suspensions in another state.

In (3)(b), we changed “master hunter privileges suspended” to “removed from the master hunter program.”

In (3)(c): changed “commits” to “is charged with,” in the following: “If a master hunter is charged with a wildlife or trespassing violation that does not result in a conviction, or an ethical violation that does not rise to a criminal law or regulation violation...”