



MASTER HUNTER PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORT

2010

On January 11, 2008, the Fish and Wildlife Commission formally amended WAC 232-12-073 terminating the former Advanced Hunter Education (AHE) program and transitioning into the Master Hunter Program. Policy and programmatic changes and related initiatives with regards to the development of the program have been summarized in progress reports which are posted on the Master Hunter website. This report summarizes some of the Master Hunter Program progress and activities initiated or completed during 2010.

Participant Update

As of December 02, 2010, there were 1956, certified Master Hunters in good standing. During the 2010 open enrollment period, 806 hunters applied for entry into the program of which 150 successfully completed all requirements and have been certified as Master Hunters (there are 8 “special case” applicants still pending certification for 2010).

Master Hunter Advisory Group

The Master Hunter Advisory Group (MHAG) conducted four business meetings during 2010 (February, May, August, and December). The notes from all MHAG business meetings have been posted on the Master Hunter website at;

http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/masterhunter/advisory_groups/meeting_notes.html.

Just prior to the august meeting, Mr. Dustin Albright resigned his term as chair of the MHAG and as a member of the MHAG due to personal and family matters. Additionally, at the August it was unanimously approved by the MHAG that Mr. Bob Cromwell (current Vice Chair) became the new chair. At the December meeting, the MHAG evaluated four new candidates and two existing MHAG members for open MHAG Positions. After the evaluation process, the MHAG made recommendations to WDFW regarding candidate appointment. MHAG members serve staggered three year terms and each year up to five new members may be appointed by the WDFW Director. The MHAG and the WDFW finalized this process in policy and it has been posted on the Master Hunter website;

http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/masterhunter/policies_procedures.html

Policy & Programmatic

During 2010, the MHAG and WDFW developed several formal Master Hunter Program Policies which will eventually be part of a Master Hunter Program Policy manual. This document will explain the Master Hunter Program’s standard policies and procedures. It is intended to serve as a guide and framework in which decisions for the Master Hunter Program can be made. The MHAG and the WDFW finalized new applicant exams and testing policies. These policies have been posted on the Master Hunter website;

http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/masterhunter/policies_procedures.html

The policies are an effort to avoid veracity of the testing process being compromised. Additionally, the MHAG and WDFW have finalized a new version of the Master Hunter test which will be utilized in 2011. The MHAG and WDFW will continue evaluating the current Master Hunter curriculum and study guide in an effort to continue the evolution of the program. Focus will be on areas to best achieve the vision and spirit of the program while helping address high priority wildlife, habitat, and hunting constituency needs.

Communications & Outreach

Master Hunter Applicant Orientation meetings were held on January 9th in Yakima and January 16th in Olympia. The MHAG and WDFW jointly conducted both meetings. A related statewide news release announcing the meetings and the opening of the application period was issued on December 23, 2010. The MHAG will continue working with the WDFW liaison to evaluate the effectiveness of the Orientation meetings and to refine the content of future Orientation meetings.

No Information and Outreach (I & O) meetings were held in 2010. The MHAG has worked with the WDFW liaison to evaluate the effectiveness of past meetings and determined the content and scope for future meetings to serve the desired purpose.

The Master Hunter website continues to be updated, expanded, and refined as it is the primary source of information for current certified Master Hunters and Master Hunter applicants. WDFW volunteer project opportunities are posted for new/re-certification applicants who are trying to satisfy time requirements. To date, there has been approximately 30,000 to 40,000 hours of volunteer service to conservation projects by Master Hunters. In addition, WDFW and the MHAG, continues to seek partnership opportunities with the Eyes in the Woods Association to help facilitate new Master Hunter conservation projects throughout the state.

Program Refinements

During 2010, the open enrollment period for applying to the Master Hunter program was January 1 – February 15, 2010. This was the only opportunity during 2010. Applications were not accepted before January 1, 2010 and were not accepted after close of business on February 15, 2010 (unless postmarked). The intent of the shortened open enrollment period was to slow the growth rate of the program while maintaining progress made collaboratively by WDFW and MHAG. The need for more than 1,800-2,000 certified Master Hunters is not anticipated in the near term. The shortened application period appears to be achieving the desired result (see Participant update).

WDFW and the MHAG reviewed the master hunter testing requirements with regards to number of re-takes an applicant is allowed when trying to enter into the program. Based upon MHAG and internal program input, it was implemented on January 1, 2010 that Master Hunter applicants are allowed only one retest of the exam.

Program Integrity

During 2010, one Master Hunter had their Master Hunter Permit privileges suspended for life and one had their Master Hunter Permit Privileges suspended for two years. This was due to convictions for title 77 RCW violations. Currently, there are three pending suspension actions pending wildlife violations involving master hunters (all three are life suspensions).

To facilitate easy identification of Master Hunters possibly involved in violations of Washington State Fish and Wildlife laws, a “Master Hunter identifier” has been added to WDFW licensing documents. This identifier allows officers to identify a person as a Master Hunter during field contacts when checking license documents. This further protects the integrity of the program by allowing appropriate suspension action to be initiated if the Master Hunter is found in violation. Overall information continues to indicate that the number of fish and wildlife violations involving Master Hunters has significantly decreased when compared to the AHE program.

Policy C-6005 requires the Director to report on the Master Hunter Program implementation and performance twice annually or as otherwise requested by the Fish and Wildlife Commission.