

**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 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, current advanced hunters must apply to be master hunters. 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 (unless firearm possession is reinstated), or who have a current hunting license suspension 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 master hunter program for life. Master hunters who commit wildlife infractions may be removed from the master hunter 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 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](#), 08-03-088, § 232-12-073, filed 1/16/08, effective 2/16/08; 03-01-077 (Order 02-298), § 232-12-073, filed 12/13/02, effective 1/13/03.]