

Game Management Advisory Council (GMAC) Notes

June 1, 2024

Washington Cattlemen's Association (WCA) Boardroom
1301 N. Dollarway Road
Ellensburg, WA 98926

Members present: Jake Weise, Bill Essman, Mark Pidgeon, Jason Bolser, Bruce Vandervort, Bart George, James Horan, Dave Duncan.

Staff present: Anis Aoude

Welcome and introductions:

Jake noted that a quorum was present, summarized the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Game Management Advisory Council (GMAC) history, purpose, member roles and responsibilities, engage in respectful participation, various activities, welcomed everyone, and on behalf of the GMAC thanked the WCA for the use of their boardroom to help facilitate the meeting.

Approval of meeting minutes:

Members noted a spelling correction and that the minutes of the last meeting should be amended. Motion by Mark Pidgeon, seconded by Jason Bolser, to approve the minutes of the last meeting as amended. Motion passed.

(Secretary's note: * is used as a reminder of action items and owners from this meeting)

Allocation sub-committee update:

Jason reviewed the sub-committees discussions as follows:

- Reduction of cow elk to be taken in the St. Helens herd was a big issue for sub-committee members as well as hunters. The sub-committee recognized that fewer elk has to result in issuing fewer special hunt permits. One of the hunting types cut an allocation of permits was for persons with disabilities.
- Any allocation formula to determine a fair result is complex because there are so many user groups that want special recognition for their representation (ex. age, gender, accessibility, weapons type, organization).
- General discussion by GMAC members was:
 - Engaging youth in hunting a hard sell, ie recruitment may be more successful if focused on adults,
 - Retention is better with late on-set hunters,
 - Current allocation formula is probably within 2% of target vs. a major difference in past years.
- *Anis agreed to request a staff person on R3 (recruitment, retention, re-engagement) to present their current and future plans to GMAC at its next meeting.

Game Management Plan (GMP) feedback and summary of comments:

Jake:

- Reviewed that our last meeting he had appointed several members to help collect, review and summarize member comments and get them to Rob McCoy for final distribution to Anis for staff and Commission Wildlife Committee consideration. He noted that since that meeting several GMAC members have resigned and that Rob received no comments from members for the first 3 chapters of the GMP update.

Anis:

- *Will send the first 3 chapters to Bart George per his request,
- *Will send the next 3 chapters to GMAC for review and comment and Jake requested that the *members please take the time to review and send their comments to Rob McCoy.
- The chapters being sent will focus on pronghorn, bighorn sheep, black-tailed deer, resident game birds.
- The remainder of the chapters will come out in future phases.
- Summarized aspects of the GMP:
 - A guiding document setting the population objectives for certain species,
 - Is being revised somewhat by identifying a separate chapter for each species which will be evaluated as information about a species suggests chapter updates,
 - Should be reviewed by the Commissions Wildlife Committee later this year,

Other related comments/questions:

- Would be interesting to know how does grizzly bear presence affect the distribution of black bear,
- Anis explained how the department is collecting data on black bear distribution to get density estimates resulting in at least a baseline and maybe some trend information. The data is from hair samples providing DNA information as well as the departments Diversity Division camera trapping information on various critters,
- Discussion of classified vs. unclassified species categories:
 - There is some interest in agency staff to remove unclassified as a category and simply list all appropriate species as classified so everything is listed much as most other states already do,
 - Concern is that listing as unclassified implies there is no management control which is not the case,
 - A competing concern could be adding more species to the classified category means more agency resources (staff, funding, etc) need to be dedicated to the additional species,
 - Anis thought that while there is some staff and Commissioner interest in the concept at this time it won't necessarily mean adding to staff workload.

Points and sequence of draw subcommittee update:

Jake said the sub-committee assigned to this issue no longer exists as most of its members are no longer on GMA.

Anis said the sub-committee had previously requested that the agency develop a survey requesting hunters views (thoughts, concerns, suggestions, etc) regarding assigning points to special permits and the drawing. He said the department leadership felt that this wasn't a high enough priority for expenditure of limited funds at present.

Other comments:

- The draw system is a mess nobody understands it,
- The hunting public thinks the points system is intended to be a revenue generator,
- The system was adopted because of pressure by special groups,
- Most hunters don't understand the system,
- Anis suggests there needs to be an education component de-emphasizing revenue and points in that they don't really you closer to being drawn,
- Suggestion to set up the system to resolve inequities by eliminating the sequence (4 choices),
- The issue is how to change the system and sell it to staff, GMAC, organizations, and nonaffiliated hunters,
- Department is not managing the system as a way to achieve a dream hunt,
- The system is basically a random draw,
- Problem with preference points is once you get points creep no one wants to enter the system because too many hunters already have amassed so many points new folks don't stand a chance of drawing,

Next steps:

- Have the department make a presentation to GMAC:
 - How the system works,
 - What is its intent (fairness, equity, revenue, disbursement, etc),
 - Staff should consult with Jake in advance to ensure all messages, research, opinions, data, values, observations, history, etc are presented as a consistent manner with any disagreements identified so they can be weighed,
- Intent would be to understand what needs to be fixed, then why, how, by whom, and when,
- Motion by Jason, seconded by Bruce, to have the department make a presentation on how the system works. Motion passed,
- *Anis will appoint someone from the department to make the points and sequence draw system presentation.

Membership strategy draft proposal:

Discussion (all members contributed):

- Reviewed elements of the council charter provided that members serve a 6 year term,
- Probably should have a 3 year churn,
- Recruit members in multiples or divisible by 3 ie 12, 15, 18, 21 (Anis felt that at a time in the past the council had up to 22 members and that is too many for effective participation),

- Need to recruit new members soon,
- Currently have 11 members,
- Certain groups deserve a seat at the table,
- Sometimes a person represents an organization but the organization doesn't agree with GMAC's position on an issue,
- Some groups are very outspoken and fight for their interests without consideration of opposing views,
- Some people representing a narrow or focused hunting activity or type have no interest in other issues GMAC is involved in and don't participate,
- Membership should be made up of various hunting organizations and individuals considering a wide variety of interests and diversity such as:
 - Gender,
 - Age,
 - Historic hunting organizations,
 - Conservationists,
 - Geography,
 - Weapons preference,
 - Demonstrated interest,
 - Ability & willingness to participate,
 - Organizations or persons with political clout,
 - Should any group have an automatic or deserved special standing representation,
 - Species preference hunted,
 - Can represent more than one species hunted,
 - Can represent more than one type of weapon used,
 - Can represent more than one organization,
 - Etc, so forth, and so on.
- Next steps:
 - *Anis to develop and send to GMAC prior to our next meeting a draft list of membership qualifications, desired attributes, that we could use to begin developing a strategy for the department to recruit members in the near future,
 - *GMAC members should contribute to his list prior to our next meeting including any additional criteria we think should be considered as well as rationale for inclusion or why not.

Action items:

- Anis agreed to request a staff member on R3 (recruitment, retention, re-engagement) to present their current and future plans to GMAC at its next meeting.
- Anis will send the first 3 chapters to Bart George per his request,
- Anis will send the next 3 chapters to GMAC for review and comment,
- GMAC members please take the time to review and send their comments to Rob McCoy.
- Anis will appoint someone from the department to make the points and sequence draw system presentation
- Anis to develop and send to GMAC prior to our next meeting a draft list of membership qualifications, desired attributes, that we could use to begin developing a strategy for the department to recruit members in the near future,

- GMAC members should contribute to his list prior to our next meeting including any additional criteria we think should be considered as well as rationale for inclusion or why not.

Future meeting topics and agenda:

- Share croppers vs CRP - *Anis to facilitate a conversation with Department Lands Division to present to GMAC how this program works and how hunters can effect that process,
- Legislative update - *Anis to provide at our next meeting,
- GMAC letterhead - *Jake to develop draft,
- Future items GMAC wants on agenda – Anis asks that members let him know so he can be prepared,

Future meeting dates:

- 2024
 - August 24, 2024
 - December 7, 2024
- 2025
 - June 7, 2025

Adjourn:

- The meeting adjourned at 1:25 pm.