

Game Management Advisory Council (GMAC) Meeting Notes

March 7, 2020

WCA Boardroom
1301 N. Dolarway Road
Ellensburg, WA 98926

Members Present: Mark Pidgeon, Dave Chromy, William Essman, Rob McCoy, Annalee Cameron, James Horan, Kira Woods, Mark Smith, Randy Tavenner, Roy Lee, Jake Weise, Max Cole, Shawn McCully, Jason Bolser, Al Martz, Dave Duncan

Staff Present: Anis Aoude, Brock Hoenes, Joel Sisolak

Welcome: Anis introduced Rob as GMAC Chair & Jake Weise as Vice Chair. Rob noted how he expects the meeting to flow, members participating and showing respect for others comments, being polite, and staying on the agenda. He said he recognizes how much members are passionate about their views and to keep in mind we all need time to work together.

Round Robin Introductions and Expectations: Rob asked each member to introduce themselves, background, where in the state they are from, what or who they represent (affiliation/non affiliated), what is their interest in being on GMAC, etc:

Comments from Members Introductions:

- Important to focus on youth hunting;
- Need to understand WDFW Dept issues;
- Need a functional GMAC;
- Increase female participation in hunting;
- Promote fair chase values;
- Understand game and non-game perspective;
- Promote new hunter recruitment;
- Possible future agenda item: demographic, gender, age, who is coming into hunting, who is leaving, etc. Get Dept marketing program manager to make presentation to GMAC:
- Need to do a better job in recruitment and retention;
- Recruitment/retention efforts in hunter education division not GMAC. Maybe need a subcommittee of GMAC to work with them;
- Lack of access a big issue;
- Need a GMAC mission statement;
- Need to know how to proceed once GMAC recommendation(s) made, what is the process to further recommendations;
- GMAC should not be seen by members, staff, or public as a “rubber stamp”;
- GMAC should identify what our input is, top issues, set priorities, set goals, and track progress.

Approve Notes from the last meeting:

- Amendments:
 - Page 2, Budget Update, Mark corrected the notes as follows: “Mark Pidgeon commented on some of the budget negotiations he was familiar with. He said the rules during the discussions were set for the fishing side of the Dept budget were identified as under sunset but the hunting side were made permanent;” Marks correction is: “the fee increases on the fishing side were sun-setted but on the hunting side were made permanent, therefore they failed”.
 - Page 3, GMAC Recruitment, Jake corrected the notes as follows: “Should there be alternates, if so how do they participate”. Jakes correction is “and it was agreed upon by the members that alternates were not necessary and go straight to the membership”.
- Motion by Mark, seconded by Jake to approve the notes from the last meeting as amended. Motion approved.

GMAC Charter Discussion:

- Anis distributed a draft charter saying that it’s important for the Council to understand their roles and responsibilities, what constitutes a quorum, the need for members to be at meetings, how lack of attendance affects the quality of discussions and recommendations, and some sort of method of removing members who don’t attend.
- Rob asked for volunteers to work as a subcommittee to prepare a charter for discussion at our next meeting. James volunteered to be the subcommittee lead, Annalee Cameron, Mark Smith, and Roy Lee volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.
- Anis asked that the subcommittee recommend how members terms should be determined. He thought it might be best if it were 1/3, 1/3, and 1/3 with appointments starting at 1 year, 2 years, and 3 years, but was looking for suggestions as to who should be in each group. One thought was maybe the new members should be 3 year appointments.

Useful Resources:

- Anis noted that he provided some links to Dept documents in an email to GMAC members prior the this meeting that will help GMAC members understand the focus and intent of the agency and Wildlife Program as follows:
 - <https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01676>
 - <https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02126>
 - <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/plans>
 - https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/about/advisory/WDFW_advisory_group_h_andbook.pdf
 - https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2019-03/orientation_for_new_volunteers.pdf

- Anis reviewed the agency organizational chart structure as it relates to decisions by the Director to the GMAC.
- Comments from members and staff (some comments are staff responding to members questions):
 - Decisions can be made in several ways depending on the complexity of the decision. Commission, Director, Deputy Director, Anis, etc:
 - Wolves are out of the Game Division;
 - Donny Martorello now handles wolf policy and is also responsible for wolf management and monitoring;
 - Game Mgt Plan is updated every 6 years but being delayed for 2 years so it is 1 year apart from 3 season setting. Next review is 2023;
 - GMAC is asked for advice @ beginning of the Plan updating process and then given an opportunity to advise again before staff presenting to the Commission;
 - GMAC Allocation subcommittee comment – total harvest success rate has to be equal among all groups;
 - Re elk herd mgt plans, need year produced by plan shown;
 - Wolf information is on the web, though may be tricky to find;
 - Folks interested in Dept activities should sign up for email either general or for specific information.
- Slide show on:
 - Game harvest reports;
 - Divisions and Regions;
 - Game status and trends reports (on web for 2019);
- 2020 report will be out this time next year

Target Shooting Rule – Jack Sisolak:

- Discussion:
 - Jack asked how many members have participated in target shooting on Dept lands; response was ‘a few’;
 - He then gave an overview of background of need for the draft WAC.
- Overview:
 - Goals for rule making:
 - Continue to provide shooting opportunities;
 - Protect public safety;
 - Reduce risk of wild fires;
 - Reduce littering and damage to habitat and facilities;
 - Reduce shooter confusion due to discrepancies;
 - Make consistent with rules on adjacent lands;
 - Rule making process to date (some background was provided by Bill Essman – Wenas Target Shooting Advisory Committee - WTSAC):
 - Over the years the clientele of the Wenas Target Shooting range changed from sitting in rifles for hunting to handguns and weapons capable of shooting many multiple rounds for recreational shooting;

- Clientele would leave tons of trash, do damage to Dept property, and there has been some thinking that some activities may have been gang related;
- The Dept used to provide some level of enforcement but that has been discontinued;
- The intent of creation of the WTSAC was to involve all stakeholders in understanding the problem and finding solutions;
- Early meetings of the committee were contentious because of very diverse and conflicting interests (users, adjacent land owners, shooting sports organizations, etc);
- Mountain biking has become very popular but the Dept didn't know where their trails were as they were developed by the users without consulting with the Dept resulting in a potentially unsafe situation;
- Committee developed flyer "Target Shooting on Public Lands – information on where to go..." etc;
- Draft rule:
 - Sent by email to the GMAC prior this meeting;
 - On screen as power point presentation at this meeting;
- Discussion/comments:
 - Dept needs to spend more money on education;
 - Need to find more ways to get the word out on where to go, etc;
 - Most private property owners don't allow target shooting;
 - Need to try to get presence of officials on site periodically;
 - Nevada information shows where to go shooting
 - There are already sufficient laws on the books;
 - Draft rule won't hold up in court;
 - Writing rules results in less trust in the Dept;
 - Enforcement needs to happen and be strict;
 - Need rules consistent across the landscape;
 - Can engage college students through their halls at college;
 - Look into Pitman Robertson funding this effort;
 - Model after "turn in poachers" program maybe try a "turn in vandals" program;
 - Joel will send link to survey he conducted with 33 wildlife areas in the state to Anis and Rob to send to GMAC;
 - Draft rule identifies:
 - Definition of recreational target shooting;
 - General target shooting restrictions;
 - Prohibited ammunition;
 - Where target shooting is allowed;
 - Allowable and prohibited targets;
 - Outreach strategy:
 - Engage legislators;
 - Develop FAQ's;
 - Engage Dept staff;
 - Re-engage Wenas Advisory Committee;

- Engage local organizations like local field and stream clubs;
- Biggest impact can be through dealer network;
- Create video to educate different media;
- Different styles for different audiences;
- Seasonal outreach, U tube video, Dept PSA's.

Legislative Update:

- Session over in 4 days;
- Budget close to being set;
- Bill to reduce game regulations pamphlet to simple tri-fold dead;
- No bills affect the Game Division or GMAC;
- Enforcement bill HB 2571 allows for discretion for issuance of civil vs. misdemeanor violations and provides for uniformity across jurisdictions (civil is simple infraction, misdemeanor is criminal).

Budget Update:

- Increase in general fund investment with no fee increase;
- \$35 million passed the House;
- Held up in the Senate which doesn't provide for ongoing funding out through next biennium and no funding for hatcheries.

Proposed Rule Changes:

- Land owner hunting permits – exchange for access to property – what is in SOP (practice) now would be in rule, will be through rule making process – won't change anything for 2020 season;
- Cougar rule
- Migratory waterfowl season minor changes to be consistent with federal regulations;
- Crow depredation and hunting predatory birds depredating crops and damaging private property changes to be consistent with federal regulations;
- Clarification of multi-season deer and elk tags and special permits;
- Minor changes to deer season general and special permits and accessibility for persons with disabilities.

For the Good of the Order – comments/discussion – staff/GMAC:

- Opening dates and loss of days to hunt depending on when the 1st Saturday after September 10th occurs;
- Elk general season and special permits;
 - Blue Mtns 25% below objective, Yakima herd 14% below objective, Colockum herd 8% below objective;
 - Yakima maybe reduce cow harvest, mild winter so no flight survey (fewer elk at Naches Feeding Station to count), maybe predators keeping population low;

- Need more data to recommend specific season reductions to start rebuilding the herds;
 - From 2015, drought, severe winter conditions surprised all and forced Dept to cut the cow seasons;
 - Archers taking a huge loss, being displaced, when resource comes back give archers better access;
 - Calf recruitment low for 4 years;
 - May need to have limited draw;
 - Large percentage of archers will quit hunting if reduced days;
 - Need to look at statewide perspective;
 - Muzzle loaders taking a high 5 of elk in the state;
 - No surplus, below objective;
 - Shoving archers into the Colockum herd area pushes elk into Kittitas valley causing depredation;
 - Eliminate Master Hunter opportunity and let archers hunt from the valley up towards the Colockum;
 - Elk very concentrated in 2 GMU's;
 - Dept standardized area flights to count elk might not capture elk because they already moved to a different area;
 - Lots of variables in where elk are located in last 10 – 15 years due to weather, food, cover, winter conditions, drought, predators, etc.
- Hunting boundaries and equipment:
 - In GMU 334, County and Dept firearm restrictions different and are being reconciled in favor of County ordinance;
 - Minor adjustments for moose, big horn sheep, and mtn goat;
 - Elk hoof disease:
 - Recommending abolishing 2014 rule requiring hunters to leave diseased hoof at site shot because not effective;
 - Disease has spread to eastern WA and Blue Mtns;
 - Dept looking at ways to incentivize hunters to target limping elk;
 - WSU website has lots of information;
 - 30% to 35% of St. Helens herd has hoof disease;
 - Cougar rule hunting:
 - Recommend to increase hunting;
 - Move to status quo median vs. mean;
 - 1st option – allow 32 more to be harvested;
 - 2nd option - ???
 - 3rd option – December 31st look at guidelines to maximum high;
 - 4th option – Sub adults don't count toward harvest in quota when figuring harvest (sub adult is defined as 24 years or younger);
 - Comments:
 - Cougars well over guidelines;
 - Cougar hunting with dogs is controversial;

- Need to find alternative ways to take cougars like live trapping, hunting at night, etc;
- Probably area specific;
- 1 year adjustment might influence next 3 year season setting;
- Social structure of WA state adds to complexity of issue;
- Maybe guided hunting would help =’s not an option.
- Roy Lee:
 - Provided members with some handouts he thought we might be interested in (“Going After Game Cams”, “Technology in the Field”, “Biology from the Bench”);
 - Said there are social, financial, political implications on biology and hunters have got to stop arguing about opportunity to hunt and become true advocates of hunting.

Next Meeting:

- Discussion about a Saturday end of May of early June. No date was set for the next meeting. Anis will poll members through Doodle Poll.
- Potential agenda items:
 - Identify committees to address topics;
 - Dept Marketing Program Manger presentation on marketing efforts re recruitment, retention, gender, age, disabilities, income, culture, etc;
 - GMAC Charter committee report;
 - Points committee presentation on status of work to date;
 - Allocation committee presentation on status of work to date;
 - Recruitment/retention discussion/research (per Roy Lee member comments about University of Colorado study includes all counties in WA state);
 - Goat relocation from Olympics status, issues;
 - Outcome of deer and elk surveys;
 - Election of officers.

Adjourn:

- The meeting adjourned a 4:00 pm.