



MASTER HUNTER ADVISORY GROUP

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Notes for MHAG Meeting #56
June 10, 2022 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Washington Cattlemen’s Association, Ellensburg

MHAG Members		WDFW Staff	Guests
Region 2	Carissa Craghead, Secretary	David Whipple, Hunter Education Division Manager	
Region 3	Jonathan Barr (excused)	Kris Thorson, Hunter Education Division Specialist	
	Wes Clogston	Steve Dazey, Region 1 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	John McAuliffe, Vice Chair	Jackie McBride, Region 4 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Kyle Smith	Amy Elliott, Region 5 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
Region 4	Jeff Fjelstul	Nate Pamplin, WDFW Policy Director	
	Jeff Larsen, Chair	Jim Brown, Conflict Section Manager	
	Ian Stewart		
Region 5	George Dennis		
	Keith Pfeifer		
	Dean Thornberry		
Region 6	Michael Bartoldo		
	Jim Gleiter		
	David Ward		
	Gary Tennison		

Procedural Business

- **Call to order and announcements (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
- **Introduction of members and guests (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
- **Update on Jen Mannas regarding administrative topics (hours, mileage reimbursement, vol requirements, etc.) for Injured Animal Transport (5 minutes)**
 - Kris contacted Jen to discuss her coming to this meeting.
 - Jen had other projects and priorities come up since our last meeting and has not yet completed the work needed on the administrative topics.
 - Kris will invite Jen to the August meeting.

New Business

- **WDFW Communication Program Reorg (*Nate Pamplin, 45 minutes*)**
 - The commission adopted the 25-year strategic plan in November 2020.
 - One strategy for the 25-year plan is to engage communities through recreation and stewardship.
 - The commission identified 14 near term goals for this strategy.
 - Nate was tasked with engaging communities through recreation and stewardship.
 - He looked at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency Relevancy Roadmap to help guide this work.
 - Jeff relayed that it was very helpful for him to hear and see people in the department who hunt and fish when he attended the external R3 summit.
 - Nate gave an overview of the spectrum of public participation and talked about where WDFW wants to grow.
 - Dave Whipple suggested that when we must “inform” the of a public of a decision, as noted in the spectrum of public participation model, that we may want to frame in the reasons and rationale for the decision.
 - Ian has recently seen a change when receiving public input into the decision-making process and how easy it is for people outside Washington state to comment on the proposed changes.
 - Nate talked about the staff do a review of the comments and give an overview to the commission during the rulemaking process.
 - Nate did interviews with other natural resource entities in Washington as well as other fish and wildlife agencies in other states to see what their outreach and education processes were and how they were working.
 - The department also did a survey of staff and found that 30 percent of staff members identified that outreach was more than 50 percent of their job.
 - In that survey only 15 percent of respondents felt they had access to hot topics information to respond to customer inquiries.
 - After Nate’s research, there was a clear need to centralize communication and outreach.
 - The new program of staff will be moving together on July 1.
 - Hunter education will be moving into the new program.

- **R3 plan update (*David Whipple, 30 minutes*)**
 - Dave gave a quick background on the draft R3 plan.
 - The group that worked on the R3 plan was broadly represented from across the agency.
 - The department held an internal summit to help develop the R3 plan and incorporated information into the draft plan.
 - WDFW then had an external summit where conservation partners provided input to the draft strategies and tactics to address R3 issues. Jeff Larsen was able to attend and give input into the plan.
 - The plan incorporates the Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model into the plan.
 - The R3 plan will be finalized and implementation will begin this fall.
 - Some plan elements are increasing hunter education student numbers and increasing hunter education instructors with a focus on underrepresented demographics, creating an advanced hunter education class, increasing the number of small game hunters, mentoring of new hunters and anglers, working to improve land access, increase public support for legal, regulated hunting, etc. Some angler R3 elements include increasing the number of anglers with a focus on youth fishing, maintaining current boat launches and increasing shore fishing access, increasing public support for fishing, etc., etc.
 - The department is also going to focus on expanding partnerships with shooting sports organizations to help get participants involved in hunting.
 - The plan will also focus on reducing churn rate, which is the rate of hunters & anglers who hunt one year and don't another year.
- **2022 budget request and legislative news/update (*David Whipple, 15 minutes*)**
 - No changes since the last meeting.
 - Please refer to the meeting notes from March 11.
 - Does anyone have any questions?
 - Ian asked if the Hunter Education Division met the required match hours for the Pittman-Robinson funds that is required.
 - Since there was less funding expended due to COVID, there were fewer hours needed for match, and we should be able to meet the needs.
- **WDFW reports and updates (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - MHPP Participation statistics
 - As of May 31, there were 1,257 current Master Hunters.
 - In 2019, we had 110 applicants.
 - In 2020 the open application period was not opened due to COVID-19 restrictions.
 - In 2021 there were 42 applicants.
 - The deadline for the 2019 and 2021 applicants to complete their certification requirements was May 15, 2022.
 - At that time, WDFW had certified 13 new Master Hunters.
 - That is a completion rate of nine percent.

- Field coordinator reports
 - Steve Dazey – Region 1 Volunteer Coordinator
 - Steve has been meeting with region 1 staff and getting his feet on the ground.
 - He is working with the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council and referring Master Hunters to that group for volunteer hours.
 - Steve has some Master Hunters who are helping with disabled hunting and fishing access areas.
 - He had Master Hunters who completed a project building bird boxes.
 - Jackie McBride – Region 4 Volunteer Coordinator
 - Jackie has been working with the conflict specialists in region 4 and the conflict team has a few projects coming up.
 - She is looking for welders to do a project to help with elk fencing.
 - There are some projects coming up with Ducks Unlimited throughout the state.
 - Jackie also has a possible beaver project in Lynden.
 - Amy Elliott – Region 5 Volunteer Coordinator
 - She has been working with RMEF volunteers on projects with Master Hunters.
 - She has been sending out a lot of information for volunteer opportunities on the Bob Oke game farm in Chehalis.
 - Amy has also been in contact with the Vancouver Wildlife League, and they have several projects they are working on.
 - She is also working with Vancouver Wildlife League on a mentored pheasant hunt.
- **MHAG member updates and Master Hunter communications (*Jeff Larsen, 10 minutes*)**
 - Does anyone have anything to add?
 - Jeff did some proctoring for the Master Hunter exam.
 - Michael has been talking to other states and non-profit organizations about chronic wasting disease (CWD) and requested more information.
 - Kris committed to contacting the CWD point person in Washington to see if they could come to the August meeting and present.
 - Steve suggested that we could have a presentation about avian influenza at a future meeting.
- **COVID related updates (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
 - WDFW offers two kinds of hunter education courses, a traditional class and an online class.
 - The traditional classroom course is a multi-session instructor-led training with an average of 15 hours of instruction.
 - The online class is a student-driven interactive web tool teaching the same content as the traditional course.
 - Pre-covid, students were required to attend an in-person four-hour class with instructors after completion of the online course.

- From March 2020 – June 1, 2022, students 9 and over could complete the all online course that included a virtual field day.
- WDFW on June 1 changed the age requirements for completing the all online hunter education class.
- The change only allows only students 18 and older to complete their hunter education certification all online.
- Now, students 17 and under must attend an in-person field skills evaluation or a traditional class to become certified.
- Students 18 and older may also choose to take a traditional class or attend an in-person field skills evaluation.
- Instructors are required to be masked when teaching indoors.
- We have had 92 in-person classes in 2022.
- There have been 50 traditional classes and 42 online field skills evaluation classes.
- Dean asked if we looked at the number of COVID students who completed the course and are out in the field hunting.
 - We have not completed the data analytics but will be doing so as part of the R3 plan.
- **Test effectiveness review (Kris Thorson, 15 minutes)**
 - In January 2022, we updated several questions to the Master Hunter exam because applicants were missing the questions over 50 percent of the time.
 - We updated 19 questions.
 - Eleven of the 19 questions showed improvements in answering correctly.
 - Twenty-four tests were completed after January 1 improvements.
 - Of those 24 tests taken, 13 passed.
 - That is a pass rate of 54 percent.
 - The original 2019 test had 34 tests taken with only 10 people passing the test.
 - That is a pass rate of 29 percent.
 - Question 53 still has a correct response rate of less than 10 percent, so we may want to look at that question moving forward.
- **Lunch (60 minutes)**
- **CERVIS program (Christine Redmond, 15 minutes)**
 - Kris presented a quick overview of CERVIS since Christine was not able to attend.
 - Kris will check with Christine to see if she can be at the next meeting to present on CERVIS.
- **Wildlife Conflict Section Manager introduction (Kris Thorson, 45 minutes)**
 - Jim Brown introduced himself and gave a quick background on his experience with WDFW.
 - The wildlife conflict section is about managing for adverse Human-Wildlife interactions, to provide for better co-existence in a shrinking space for both.
 - The section strives to reduce the risk of damage or harm, and to mitigate for damage which we cannot sufficiently reduce.
 - The conflict staff in the regions report to the regional program managers and not the conflict section manager.
 - There are 15 conflict staff that are stationed throughout the state.

- Currently the department is only allowed \$150,000 per fiscal year for damage reimbursement.
- There were over \$850,000 in reimbursement claims for 2020 and 2021.
- While Master Hunters are a tool for conflict management, some places are not a good fit, landowners don't want to allow Master Hunters on their lands, and some conflict specialists have had bad experiences.
- A discussion was had on creating flexibility to remove bad actors from the program.
- **MHAG Recruitment process update (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - During the last recruitment process, the subcommittee noticed that a few of the applicants have applied several times to the MHAG and had similar letters of interest.
 - The letters of interest are generally shorter or less focused on the three questions WDFW is asking the applicants to answer.
 - During discussions the subcommittee made some suggestions on how to improve the recruitment process to help applicants better express their qualifications.
 - They put together the proposed application document.
 - Kris reviewed and commented on the draft.
 - John noted that he had challenges judging some of the applicants against each other and suggested questions to help him judge.
 - Carissa also pointed out that she saw letters that were unfocused and didn't answer the questions clearly and this document will help guide the applicants.
 - The group approved the changes.
 - Kris and Dave will check with the director's office to move this forward.
- **Officer elections (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
 - Kris thanked Jeff Larsen for his service as the MHAG chair and John McAuliffe for his service as the MHAG vice chair.
 - The group also thanked Carissa for her service as the secretary for the past eight years.
 - Kris opened the floor for nominations for chair.
 - Carissa nominated Jeff Larsen to be the chair.
 - John McAuliffe seconded the nomination.
 - The group unanimously approved Jeff as chair.
 - Kris opened the floor for nominations for the vice chair.
 - Jeff Larsen nominated John McAuliffe.
 - Ian Stewart seconded the nomination.
 - The group unanimously approve John McAuliffe.
 - Kris opened the floor for nominations for the secretary.
 - Jeff Larsen nominated Carissa Craghead.
 - John McAuliffe seconded the nomination.
 - The group unanimously approve Carissa Craghead.
- The officers will be in their roles at the August 19 meeting.

Conclusion

- **Recap action items (*Carissa Craghead, 5 minutes*)**
- **Agenda topics for next meeting (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
 - CWD presentation
 - Christine to talk about CERVIS

- Jenn Mannas on Injured Wildlife administration
- More R3 information
- Follow through on member application process
- Roadkill salvage for Region 5 counties like INWC.
- **Good of the order (*All; General discussion items by MHAG, 5 minutes*)**
- **Adjourn**