



# MASTER HUNTER ADVISORY GROUP

## WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

**Notes for MHAG Meeting #56**  
**December 9, 2022 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**  
**Teams meeting**

<b>MHAG Members</b>		<b>WDFW Staff</b>	<b>Guests</b>
Region 2	Carissa Craghead, Secretary	Kris Thorson, Hunter Education Division Specialist	
Region 3	Jonathan Barr	Aaron Garcia, Region 3 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Wes Clogston		
	John McAuliffe, Vice Chair (excused)		
	Kyle Smith		
Region 4	Jeff Fjelstul	Jackie McBride, Region 4 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Jeff Larsen, Chair		
	Ian Stewart		
Region 5	George Dennis	Amy Elliott, Region 5 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Keith Pfeifer (excused)		
	Dean Thornberry		
Region 6	Michael Bartoldo	Bill Montgomery, Region 6 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Vacant		
	David Ward		
	Gary Tennison		

## Procedural Business

- **Call to order and announcements (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
- **Introduction of members and guests (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**

## New Business

- **2023 budget request and legislative news/update (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
  - The legislative session is set to start on January 9, 2023.
  - This year will be a long session, lasting 105 days.
  - WDFW has identified its legislative priorities on its website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/administration/legislative-priorities>.
  - The department's legislative priorities are:
    - Hatchery routine maintenance under Shoreline Management Act permitting requirements
    - Recreational fishing licenses required for freshwater smelt, crawfish, and common carp
    - Fish, wildlife, shellfish, and seaweed disease prevention authority for highway signage to voluntary check stations
    - Capitalizing an account to provide for shoreline restoration revolving funds
  - Kris will send the MHAG members the fact sheets on these legislative priorities after the meeting.
  - WDFW is currently developing budget requests for the 2023-25 biennium, as part of the statewide budget that the Washington State Legislature will adopt during its regular session in spring 2023.
  - These budget requests include funding for maintenance-level needs (for routine, unavoidable cost increases and other technical adjustments), and "policy-level" requests to address new initiatives or emerging issues.
  - The current 2023-2025 Operating Funding Emergent needs are:
    - Restoring Washington's biodiversity, \$47.6M
    - Critical infrastructure maintenance, \$3.5M
    - WDFW fish passage maintenance team, \$1.5M
    - Expand wildlife conflict response, \$9.9M
    - Wildlife disease surveillance, \$644K
    - Columbia River ESA permitting, \$1.4M
    - Hatchery investment strategy, \$5M
    - Engaging volunteers in conservation, \$2.3M
    - Building a climate-resilient WDFW, \$5.3M
    - Building a carbon-neutral WDFW, \$1.8M
    - Body cameras and public records, \$1.6M
    - Emerging fishery implementation, \$3.1M
    - Manage impacts to state lands, \$1.3M
    - Geoduck stock assessment, \$1.3M
    - Emerging toxics in Chinook and orca, \$2.4M
    - HPA permitting systems replacement, \$7.3M

- Legacy systems replacement, \$1.4M
  - The information on the 2023-25 Operating Funding Emergent Needs requests can be found at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/administration/budget/update#operating>.
  - WDFW is requesting \$209.1 million in capital budget funding for the 2023-25 biennium, focused on conserving healthy fish and wildlife populations, sustainable outdoor experiences, supporting a strong economy and social values, and pursuing operational excellence within the Department.
  - For more information on the 2023-25 Capital Funding Emergent Needs information please see <https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/administration/budget/update#capital>.
- **Proposed new opportunity for Master Hunters (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
  - Kris was contacted in 2021 about a possible new Master Hunter opportunity in region 1.
  - The opportunity is proposed to expand the number of GMUs that would be open during the Master Hunter only December season in region 1.
  - The current GMUs are 127 and 130.
  - The proposed change would increase the GMUs to 127-142.
  - This adds GMUs 133, 136, 139, and 142.
  - This opportunity was discussed within the Game division but since it would be creating an opportunity, it was tabled until the next 3-year season setting process in 2024.
  - The biologists in the affected districts support this opportunity as a good way to address damage caused by elk.
- **Update on Injured Wildlife Transport Project (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
  - Jen sent out a message to all Master Hunters about the possible project on October 12.
  - Jen received 112 responses that included 96 yes and 13 maybes.
  - She also had 26 Master Hunters identify that they require light duty.
  - Jen has been quite preoccupied by bear cubs and avian influenza recently, so she hasn't had time to devote to the program's creation.
  - She is planning on having the project up and running before the spring baby season.
- **WDFW reports and updates (*Kris Thorson, 45 minutes*)**
  - MHPP Participation statistics
    - As of December 8, 2022 there are 1199 certified Master Hunters.
    - In 2022 there were 70 people who applied to the MHPP.
    - Of those 70, eight have completed all the requirements and been certified as a Master Hunter.
    - Since the MHAG reviewed the test questions in January, there have been 35 test attempts.
    - Of those 35, 20 passed the test.
    - That is a 57 percent pass rate.

- Field coordinator reports
  - Aaron Garcia – Region 3 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator
    - Aaron recruited for Master Hunters to build shelving in the district office.
    - He is planning on having a pheasant clinic tomorrow, but the weather may require him to cancel that.
    - Aaron is going to recruit for the sport shows in eastern Washington.
    - He is planning the spring turkey camp right now.
    - Aaron and Steve are going to go meet with the wildlife area staff and try to get some projects going on the WLAs.
  - Jackie McBride – Region 4 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator
    - Jackie is working on getting projects entered into CERVIS.
    - She has a field day scheduled on January 7 with other CAPE employees on the wildlife areas near her.
    - Jackie has a project on I-90 at the underpass for wildlife that will be cleaning the underpass of vegetation.
    - She also sat down with the north region 4 conflict specialist and helped him understand the Master Hunter Permit Program and what it can do for him.
  - Amy Elliott – Region 5 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator
    - Amy had a Master Hunter who resigned in a public letter to the governor, director's office, and commission.
    - She is working with the Vancouver Wildlife League archery range project on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area.
    - She has heard from a region 5 conflict staff that there was a lot of bear damage in 2022.
    - She helped with a turtle transport project in late August taking turtles from the Oregon zoo to PAWS in Lynnwood.
    - Amy is working through some communication issues between Master Hunters and employees.
    - She is also working with Master Hunters who have volunteer ideas and getting them connected with the right people to approve the project work.
  - Bill Montgomery – Region 6 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator
    - Bill was not at the August meeting because he was at the WashJam event with Jackie and Gary Tennison.
    - Bill was contacted by the conflict staff and helped at an elk culling operation in the Orting valley.
    - There has been a lot of elk hazing in the Puyallup valley this year.
    - He had a project where students in Sequim constructed purple martin boxes but there were some needed modifications that he had a Master Hunter assist with.

- He had a couple Master Hunters picking up grouse wings from the grouse wing barrels.
    - Bill is working with Kris to revive the Master Hunter Orientations.
    - They are also working on creating a WDFW style class like CORT with the enforcement staff.
    - Bill also worked at the Puyallup fair this past September.
  - COVID related updates
    - The governor's state of emergency lapsed in October.
    - The president's state of emergency is still in effect until at least March 2023.
    - The Department of Labor and Industries (LNI) requirements and guidelines will now solely drive agency practices.
    - The LNI direction is that non-vaccination-verified volunteers are required to be masked indoors when within six feet of the public, other volunteers, or WDFW staff.
    - Kris will update the Master Hunter Proctoring SOP to mirror the guidance from LNI.
- **2023 MHAG Workplan Review (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
  - Kris sent an email with the draft MHAG workplan to the members for final review.
  - After Kris's email, Jeff sent an email asking the group to review the workplan and decide which items they may have a special interest in.
  - Kris asked the MHAG if the priorities of the MHAG plan are correct or if they may need to be changed.
  - Ian suggested that we add to the list an item on getting ahead on the bear spring season and how to help moving that forward.
  - Jeff Fjelstul talked about a pending lawsuit in Montana and corner crossing from property to property and if the MHAG wants to work on messaging for the future.
  - Kris suggested that WDFW could add information into the newsletter about corner crossings and possible legal ramifications.
  - Kris also suggested we talk to the lands staff to determine what they are doing on landlocked properties and corner crossings and possibly having a presentation from those staff.
  - Jeff Larsen asked if we should create a workplan item of opportunity enhancements and how we can increase opportunities with bear, cougar, and other species not just deer and elk.
  - This was placed at priority number 5 and Kris will add some background to the item for clarification.
- **MHAG Strategic Plan Review (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
  - In November 2020, WDFW published the department's 25-Year Strategic Plan.
  - This plan provides the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife with a long-term strategic focus aimed at improving mission success.

- The 25-year Strategic Plan can be found online at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02149>.
- In June 2022, the Washington Hunting and Angling Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) Plan was published.
- Contained in the R3 Plan are goals, objectives, strategies, and tasks to increase participation in hunting and angling moving forward.
- The R3 plan can be found online at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02323>.
- Since the Master Hunter Permit Program Strategic Plan was adopted on January 9, 2015, it should be updated to support the 25-Year Strategic Plan and the R3 plan as possible.
- Kris will send the 2015 plan to the MHAG members after the meeting.
- Kris asked the MHAG members to review the 25-Year Strategic Plan and the R3 plan prior to the next meeting where the MHAG will start to revise the MHPP strategic plan.
- Also, Kris will work on updating the 2015 strategic plan Introduction, Master Hunter Advisory Group, and Master Hunter Permit Program Strategic Plan elements by February 20 and send it to the members for review prior to the March 10 meeting.
- **Lunch (30 minutes)**
- **MHAG member updates and Master Hunter communications (*Jeff Larsen, 10 minutes*)**
  - Does anyone have anything to add?
  - Jeff Larsen, Ian Stewart, Jeff Fjlstel sent out a joint message to the Region 4 Master Hunters and they received several interesting responses.
  - One of the responses the region 4 MHAG members received was to start thinking about having Master Hunters assist in predator conflict issues.
  - The Region 4 MHAG members also received some emails indicating that they were not going to renew their permits because of the current commission direction.
  - Ian added that the overall responses were more on the limited opportunities.
  - Jeff Larsen also heard from Master Hunters, a desire to facilitate an easier way to communicate with other Master Hunters more effectively.
  - Ian also talked to a Master Hunter applicant at a recent hunter education course who had some challenges with getting some hours for his volunteer service.
  - The applicant that Ian talked to tried to contact a wildlife area manager and was not able to find some volunteer opportunities with that wildlife area manager.
  - Dave Ward, Michael Bartoldo, and Gary Tennison sent a survey to the 260 region 6 Master hunters and received 12 responses.
  - There were a few comments on lost opportunities and how the conflict staff use Master Hunters currently.
  - Another takeaway the region 6 members found was getting Master Hunters involved in youth mentoring.
  - Dave suggested adding to the MHPP Newsletter a blurb from each MHAG member to kind of introduce themselves to the MHPP.

- Also, Dave suggested adding in more education pieces into the MH Newsletter to help further educate the Master Hunters out there.
- Dave felt that his time doing outreach to the Master Hunters has strengthened his working relationship with Bill Montgomery and Scott Harris.
- **NHFD Overview (Kris Thorson, 30 minutes)**
  - In 2015, WDFW was asked to participate in the National Hunting and Fishing Day event at the Cowlitz Public Shooting Range.
  - We had 49 youth attendees at that event.
  - After the 2015 event, we decided to move the event to different regions each year to reach more youth and hopefully have partner organizations hold the event in future years.
  - In 2016, WDFW asked the Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association to partner on an event in East Wenatchee at the North Central Washington Gun Club.
  - There were 78 youth attendees at the 2016 event.
  - In 2017 we moved the event to Camp Pigott in Monroe.
  - That event had 749 youth attendees.
  - In 2018 we went to Moxee and had 65 youth attendees.
  - For 2019 WDFW held the event at Tacoma Sportsman's Club in Puyallup.
  - There were some administrative challenges and there was not an accurate count of attendees, but we know there were more than 400 youth attendees.
  - In 2020 we were planning to go to Camp Cowles but COVID shut the plan down.
  - We instead did a virtual learning all month long that Christine Redmond put together and ran.
  - In 2022 we did a virtual celebration with Instagram and stories about hunting and fishing and why our partners enjoy it.
  - There were over 1,000 views of some of the Instagram stories.
  - On September 30, 2023, WDFW is going to hold the in-person event at the boy scout camp, Camp Cowles, in Newport.
  - We are planning on having 500 youth attendees at the event.
  - Steve and Kris are leading the planning effort, but the CAPE staff are also helping immensely.
  - Pre-covid, MHAG was a great supporter of the NHFD event.
  - Kris asked if the group would still be supportive of the event.
  - The MHAG would like to continue to support the event moving forward.
- **MHPP Annual Report Draft (Kris Thorson, 30 minutes)**
  - Kris will be drafting the MHPP Annual Report this month.
  - The previous annual reports can be found at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications?category=26227>.
  - Once Kris has the 2023 MHPP Annual Report drafted he will send it to the MHAG for their review.
  - Kris then asked the MHAG if there were any pieces of information they felt he should add to the annual report.

## **Conclusion**

- **Recap action items (*Carissa Craghead, 5 minutes*)**
  - Kris will finalize the 2023 workplan and send to the MHAG members before the March 10 meeting.
  - Kris to draft the updates to the 2015 strategic plan Introduction, Master Hunter Advisory Group, and Master Hunter Permit Program Strategic Plan elements by February 20 and send it to the members for review prior to the March 10 meeting.
  - Kris to draft and send the MHPP Annual report to the MHAG for review.
- **Agenda topics for next meeting (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
  - MHPP Orientations update
  - MHPP Strategic plan discussions
  - May not have to be the next meeting, but a future meeting the MHAG members would like to have a presentation from the lands staff to determine what they are doing on landlocked properties and corner crossings.
- **Good of the order (*All; General discussion items by MHAG, 5 minutes*)**
- **Adjourn**