



MASTER HUNTER ADVISORY GROUP

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Notes for MHAG Meeting #55
August 20, 2021 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Teams Meeting

| MHAG Members | | WDFW Staff | Guests |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---------------|
| Region 2 | Ray Boone | David Whipple, Hunter Education Division Manager | |
| | Carissa Craghead, Secretary (excused) | Kris Thorson, Hunter Education Division Specialist | |
| Region 3 | Jonathan Barr | Aaron Garcia, Region 3 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator | |
| | Wes Clogston | Steve Dazey, Region 4 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator | |
| | John McAuliffe, Vice Chair | Amy Elliott, Region 5 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator | |
| | Kyle Smith | Bill Montgomery, Region 6 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator | |
| Region 4 | David Floyd (Excused) | | |
| | Jeff Larsen, Chair | | |
| | Ian Stewart | | |
| Region 5 | George Dennis | | |
| | Keith Pfeifer | | |
| Region 6 | Michael Bartoldo | | |
| | Jim Gleiter | | |
| | David Ward | | |
| | Thomas Woodruff | | |

Procedural Business

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

New Business

- **Conservation easement presentation (*Thom Woodruff, 30 minutes*)**
 - Thom Woodruff gave a presentation on Conservation Easements to the MHAG.
 - A conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement that permanently limits uses of the land to protect its conservation values.
 - Conservation easements must be recorded by the county auditor's office.
 - There are currently about 400,000 acres of land held under conservation easements in Washington.
 - Conservation easements can be sold or donated.
 - Value of the easement is calculated by a before-and-after appraisal.
 - Conservation easement terms are typically forever.
 - There are potential federal tax benefits when entering a conservation easement.
 - The easement also grants what kinds of activities are allowed on the property like residential development, fencing, grazing, etc.
 - The easement also restricts activities like subdivision of the property, timber harvest, use of vehicles, use of pesticides, and building new roads.
 - Other activities generally restricted are severing the water rights, commercial activities, and exploring the property for the extraction of minerals, rock, sand, and gravel.
 - Conservation easements have benefits to outdoor recreation such as possible public access, conserve habitat for wildlife, prevent urbanization, and may reduce depredation complaints and costs. Public access to the conservation easement area remains a landowner decision, but easements specifically do not preclude access.
 - Jeff had a question about agencies like WDFW ever placing a conservation easement onto property they own?
 - The answer is generally no because the property is protected under the agency ownership.
 - Michael asked if the conservation easement properties could also enroll into feel free to hunt or hunt by reservation programs for benefits.
 - The landowners can decide to enroll in WDFW programs like the feel free to hunt or hunt by reservation programs if the easement allows hunting.
- **2021 budget request and legislative news/update (*David Whipple, 15 minutes*)**
 - There are no legislative news/updates to report on.
- **WDFW reports and updates (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - MHPP Participation statistics
 - Currently WDFW has 1,324 Master Hunters.
 - There are 104, 2019 applicants who are still in a holding pattern to become Master Hunters.
 - As of August 20, 2021, there were 42 applicants for the MHPP in 2021.

- WDFW may receive more applications because we are honoring applications post marked by August 16, 2021.
- Field coordinator reports
 - Aaron Garcia
 - Aaron has a few projects coming up but is waiting to advertise the projects due to COVID protocols and the uncertainty there.
 - He is helping First Hunt Foundation with a deer camp in eastern Washington for 12 youth hunters.
 - Steve Dazey
 - Steve had a request from a conflict staff member to help put in fencing, but the landowner completed the fencing prior to the project starting.
 - Amy Elliott
 - Amy has been keeping in touch with conflict specialists.
 - She sent out an opportunity for Oak Creek wildlife area work party, likely fence replacement and repair on August 20.
 - Amy has had a couple WDFW volunteers who coordinate with RMEF on work parties that are working with Daren Hauswald to plan 2022 opportunities on the Mt. St. Helens WL. These projects are generally in the spring, scheduled for four different dates, and include weed spraying and removal as well as tree and shrub planting.
 - Bill Montgomery
 - Bill has been working with Michelle Tirhi on using Master Hunters on bat box placements at Western State Hospital.
 - He is still waiting for the Purple Martin box materials and instruction so the construction can begin.
 - He had a non-Master Hunter ask for details for volunteering for WDFW.
 - Bill also went over a laundry list of wishes for the Scatter Creek wildlife area, but most require specialized training before volunteers could start them.
 - Bill also sent an email out to Master Hunters in Lewis, Wahkiakum, Grays Harbor, and Pacific counties to ask for pheasant release transport volunteers.
- **MHAG member updates and Master Hunter communications (*Jeff Larsen, 10 minutes*)**
 - Has any MHAG member been in contact with other Master Hunters?
 - Jeff heard from a few Master Hunters about putting email addresses in the BCC line when sending emails to avoid reply all issues and other Master Hunters having their contact email now.
 - Ray has been asked about the COVID restrictions and how we are progressing.
- **COVID related updates (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**

- Recently the Hunter Education Division staff completed the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to restart in-person hunter education classes.
 - Once that was completed it paved the way for other SOPs, and the division turned its attention to getting the Master Hunter Permit Program Exam Proctor SOP completed.
 - The governor's proclamation on August 9 requires all state workers to be fully vaccinated by October 18, 2021.
 - The proclamation also covered volunteers and contractors, but there was some ambiguity surrounding requirements for non-cabinet agency volunteers and contractors.
 - The WDFW Executive Management Team and Attorney General's Office reviewed the proclamation and developed draft direction on how it would be applied to WDFW volunteers and contractors.
 - Initial discussions between WDFW's Director's Office and the Governor's Office have occurred, but the agency's direction is not yet final.
 - We should know the implications of the proclamation relatively soon, and we'll modify the SOP accordingly.
 - Proctors may be able to start holding exam sessions starting in September.
 - We'll provide updates as quickly as we can.
- **Peer to peer subgroup report review discussion (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - Staff met to discuss the document prepared by the subgroup.
 - WDFW looked at how feasible it would be to implement the suggestions.
 - WDFW will work with conflict staff to better understand situations and rationale for deviating from the guidelines.
 - The information identified in the peer-to-peer mentoring document is currently provided to MHPP applicants and Master Hunters in different places like the orientations, expectations letter, and the damage hunt guidelines.
 - Should WDFW implement a required training that will cover all these items and more, or do we continue to go down the path we are on and not require mandatory trainings?
 - David Whipple proposed various options for implementing recommendations such as developing an online training and requiring applicants and current Master Hunters to complete the virtual training before certification or re-certification, voluntary orientations, etc.
 - Jeff, Keith, and Wes voiced support for mandatory orientations to help mitigate issues.
 - One of the key questions is how do we get hunt-specific information in the hands of drawn MHs before the hunt?
 - Keith thinks that the Master Hunters who are drawn for a permit should have to go to a pre-hunt meeting.
 - Thom thinks that we should have orientations and we could use the virtual platform.
 - Wes was introduced to the program through an orientation and thinks it would be a good idea.

- Ian and Dave Ward both felt that general orientations could be a recorded training done at any time and hunt-specific info could be completed as a Teams call with conflict staff.
- Jeff feels it is important to help educate applicants for damage hunts of WDFW's expectations, landowner expectations, and damage hunt goals.
- Ray asked if it would be beneficial to have all the Master Hunters know which hunting stage they are in to help alleviate issues.
 - This may not be beneficial to the management objectives for hunt coordinator hunts.
- Several members identified that a more targeted video stream for damage hunts may not be beneficial, but a 10,000-foot view of the damage hunts are and what the expectations are would be great to hopefully set the expectations effectively.
- WDFW will further scope the report recommendations, including discussing with conflict staff the possibility of testing increased use of mentoring for damage hunts, adapting it as necessary.
- **Master Hunter Permit Program survey results discussion (*Kris Thorson, 60 minutes*)**
 - Kris sent the survey results out to the MHAG members for review.
 - The survey was sent to current Master Hunters, lapsed Master Hunters, Master Hunter applicants, and WDFW conflict staff.
 - The survey was sent on June 25, 2021.
 - The surveys were open for submission until July 15, 2021.
 - Once the surveys closed, Kris compiled the data through survey monkey.
 - Since there was a lot of information contained in the comments gathered with the other (please specify) section or comment portions of the survey, Kris added these to the survey results for the group to review.
 - Reviewing the responses from the surveys indicates the main reason for participation in the program is extra hunting opportunities.
 - WDFW is interested in what the MHAG members took away from the survey results.
 - Wes took away that folks who completed the program are concerned with being stewards of the hunt, but a lot of folks also are concerned with reduced opportunities.
 - Wes has also heard rumors that the GMU 371 is going away next year and asked if there was validity to this rumor.
 - Kris and the program do not know of any changes moving forward with reduction of GMU 371 seasons.
 - Keith viewed that most of the respondents were also in the program to give back and that some folks left their contact information in the survey as well.
 - Jeff was concerned that only eight of the conflict staff responded to the survey and what the reason might have been.
 - Ray was wondering if there were any biological reports about human selection of animals vs natural selection as far as a possible detriment to the herds.
 - Kris has not seen or know of any reports on this topic other than the predator prey project.

- Keith asked if there was a plan to put a broad response of the survey into the Master Hunter newsletter to give the information back to the Master Hunters.
 - Dave suggested putting together a quick report on what we learned, what was said, and what we are going to do with the information that we could put out to Master Hunters.
 - Wes agreed that we should put out something to the Master Hunters but not the individual responses.
- The staff committed to working on a document to send out to the Master Hunters based on the results from the survey to make the feedback actionable.

Conclusion

- **Recap action items (*Carissa Craghead, 5 minutes*)**
 - Peer to peer and orientations/trainings, damage hunt pre-meetings, etc.
 - Survey results cleanup for newsletter
- **Agenda topics for next meeting (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
 - WDFW direction on orientations, online trainings, etc.
 - Survey summary for newsletter.
 - Next meeting is Dec 10.
 - At this point it will be on TEAMS.
 - If things change, we will let you know.
- **Good of the order (All; General discussion items by MHAG, 5 minutes)**
- **Adjourn**