



MASTER HUNTER ADVISORY GROUP
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091

MHAG Meeting #24

July 19, 2013 - 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
Washington Cattlemen's Association Offices, Ellensburg

Call to order by Chair Jim Fitzgerald, 9:00 a.m.

Introduction of Members and Guests

Members present:

Jim Fitzgerald, Chair	John McGlenn, Vice Chair
Craig Broadhead, Secretary	Jim Sutton
James Slyfield	Tom Conrads
Dennis Clay	Roger Hurst
Jim Zimmerman	Chris Brong

Members excused:

Jim Reinbold	Bill Zachmann
Wayne Ward	George Dennis

WDFW Staff present:

Nate Pamplin, Assistant Director Wildlife Program
Dave Whipple, Hunter Education Division Manager
Sgt. Carl Klein
Mike Kuttel

Guests or Presenters:

Dr. Jim Huckabay

Approval of Meeting Notes

Meeting notes from Meeting #23 (March 13, 2013) were approved by group as posted to website.

Standing Items

ALEA Grant – Region 1 Pilot Volunteer Coordinator Program

Mike Britton informed the group that the ALEA Grant for a volunteer Region 1 Volunteer Coordinator was accepted. Mike Britton is serving as the Volunteer Coordinator as per the grant request, and his focus with limited funding is to coordinate volunteer activities in the Region as well as coordinate the administration of the Regional Ranked List program for Master Hunter damage hunts.

Status of Hunt Behavior Study

Anthony Novak (WDFW Deer/Elk Conflict Specialist) was absent, but member Roger Hurst and Dr. Jim Huckabay (Professor Emeritus, Central Washington University) presented the status of the Hunt Behavior Study to the MHAG. Roger Hurst recapped known study results pertaining to the non-Master Hunter general hunting public and those Master Hunters that participated in the general study at chosen venues. These results indicated a percentage of violations by Master Hunters when compared to general hunters, but the study size was small and the margin of error was significant.

Dr. Huckabay reported on the status of the Master Hunter-specific mail portion of the study, which is the thesis of CWU graduate student Isa Loeb. This study provided a larger sample size of Master Hunters, which will in turn provide more accurate results. Though not complete, the study has decreased the margin of error and has shown Master Hunters violation numbers were significantly lower than the preliminary figures for Master Hunters that were based solely on those interviewed at Outdoor events. Based on the larger sample size, Master Hunters appear to have a lower rate of closed road violations; equivalent rates with the general hunter for trespass; near 100% compliance with tagging rules; and a lower rate of any violation than the general hunting population. The thesis and final results are expected to be complete by the end of the year.

Group Discussion on MHPP and MHAG – Future and Direction

The meeting was attended by special guests Nate Pamplin, Assistant Director of the Wildlife Program and Dave Whipple, the new manager of the Hunter Education Division which includes the Master Hunter Permit Program. Both expressed their vision for the MHAG and MHPP, which is a significant beneficial role for the Department. Both committed to working more closely with the MHAG in a full partnership relationship and stressed the importance of the program to achieving Department goals and objectives.

The group discussed the potential for creating a Wildlife Program Policy Statement for the MHPP to clarify the purpose and role of the program. The Group felt the draft revised Wildlife Program Policy Statement could be improved (see action item 24-1 below) but agreed would be beneficial for the program to ultimately revise.

ACTION ITEM 24-1: Mike Kuttel is to re-draft a MHPP Policy Statement working with Nate Pamplin, Dave Whipple, Jim Fitzgerald, John McGlenn and other past members, for discussion within WDFW and review at the next MHAG meeting.

Much positive discussion was had regarding the future of the MHPP, and the MHAG supports the direction and vision of the Department.

The Department will circulate a news release in late November announcing the MHPP Open Enrollment period from January 1-February 15, 2014.

Volunteer Coordination

The Group discussed the need for a coordination and oversight function for Master Hunter volunteer opportunities in each Region. Nate Pamplin summarized an update for the group written by Christine Redmond, which stated the Department's and her personal commitment to exploring enhanced volunteer coordination across all Regions. Nate Pamplin indicated that he plans to begin adding the responsibility to manage volunteers to the duties of Hunter Education Field Coordinators as new positions are added and perhaps through reorganizational decisions. Other options were discussed to better facilitate and coordinate volunteer efforts in the field, but both Nate Pamplin and Dave Whipple need some time to get-their-feet more firmly on-the-ground and gain a better understanding of the issues and opportunities available.

Liaison Report

Sgt. Klein discussed a few potential issues around the revised MHPP. These issues were increasing the amount of volunteer hours required for entrance and maintenance as a Master Hunter, whether or not to allow projects outside of WDFW projects as approved activities, and if on-line testing could be used for the program. The Group discussed the possibility of evaluating existing Master Hunter course material that already may be available on-line, as opposed to the continued use of the Alberta Guide. The Group did not take a position on any of these items.

The Department is seeking clarification to determine whether the existing statute for Hunter Education Training is broad enough to allow for expansion of the official duties of certified Hunter Education Instructors to participate in Hunter Training Clinics. If that is possible, even those Master Hunters that are not certified Hunter Education Instructors can be volunteer assistants and receive the same liability protection from the state.

New Business

Ranked List Discussion

The Group discussed experiences and options for the ranked lists and hunt coordination of Master Hunter hunts. The issue revolves around timely response for damage control actions, and often we are finding hunters on the lists live too far away for immediate action. Ideas included allowing only those Master Hunters living in a particular Region to apply for inclusion on a ranked list for that specific Region. Another option is specifically indicating in the Hunting Regulations that only those that can respond to any portion of a particular Region within 24 hours are eligible to apply for inclusion on a ranked list. The Department is considering adding more flexibility to the use of Master Hunter ranked lists to allow for the use of a subset of Master Hunters from the ranked list that live within the county were emergency, time-sensitive

game damage issues need to be addressed. A draft change to the Hunt Coordinator Guidelines adopted on 09/27/2011 will be discussed within the Wildlife Program and at the next meeting of the MHAG.

Master Hunter Orange Requirement

The issue of requiring hunter orange for all Master Hunter hunts was discussed. Regulations do not currently require hunter orange for all Master Hunter hunts. A motion was passed unanimously recommending that the Department require hunter orange for all Master Hunter hunts. The decision on mandatory hunter orange for all Master Hunters during all hunting seasons will be addressed during the 2015-17 three-year hunting season setting public review process.

Second Deer and Second Elk Tags for Master Hunters

Nate Pamplin briefed the Group on the need to develop a separate unique tag to track harvest information and effort for Master Hunter second deer or elk tag. There is also recognition for trying to provide this at a reduced cost as a way to provide additional damage control where needed. One mechanism is a legislative fix which may be pursued in the 2015 session. Another is to combine the second Master Hunter tag with a primary tag, and thus the second tag can be acquired at a reduced rate. The Group concurs this is a good idea as long as it doesn't provide the appearance of special privilege for Master Hunters. All supported the concept of Master Hunter tags because it would allow for specific harvest information to be determined. This will be discussed further at the winter MHAG meeting.

Agency Request Legislations Update

Three things that the Department may propose for consideration by the 2014 State Legislature were discussed by the Group: 1) Minimum age of 8 for taking Hunter Education training and/or purchase of hunting license; 2) Authority to charge a registration fee of \$20.00 for attending a Hunter Education class, and; 3) Requirement that hunters under the age of 14 must be accompanied by a licensed hunter over the age of 18. A motion was passed unanimously by the Group to support adoption of these three items.

The Group discussed the regulation revision regarding legal weapons to be used during Master Hunter hunts and second tag purchases. The WDFW emergency rule clarifying that the purchase of a second tag by Master Hunters is optional and that any legal "weapon" may be used during Master Hunter seasons was formally implemented on August 1, 2013

Administrative Changes Review Letter

The Group read a draft letter from the Department titled "Recent Administrative Changes in WDFW Hunter Education Division" and recommended minor edits.

Group Status and Upcoming Vacancies

The Department will begin the recruitment process for replacement members of the MHAG in mid-September. A news release will be circulated to fill Mike Britton's position in Region 1; Craig Broadhead's position in Region 3; George Dennis's position in Region 5; Dennis Clay's position in Region 2; and Jim Fitzgerald's position in Region 4. Those whose membership is expiring are encouraged to re-apply.

Other Business

The Group requested the Department to post a Reminder on the MHPP website that Master Hunters should gain permission from private property owners well before the season opens, not after they see elk on the property.

Conclusion

Action Items are as noted throughout this document in bold.

Next meeting Date and Location – Friday, September 27, 2013 at 9:00 am, Cattlemen’s Association in Ellensburg.

Agenda Topics for Next Meeting

- Draft Wildlife Program Policy Statement for the Master Hunter Permit Program
- Review of existing roles and responsibilities
- Review of certification and re-certification requirements
- Discuss Master Hunter requirement of passing Hunter Education class
- Discuss MHAG membership and group size
- Discuss volunteer requirements
- Discuss on-line testing for MHPP applicants

Meeting Adjourned at 3:45 p.m.