



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

MHAG Meeting #22

December 14, 2012 - 9:00 am to 3:30 pm
Washington Cattlemen's Association Offices, Ellensburg

Procedural Business

1. Call to order by Chair Mike Britton, 9:10 a.m.

2. Introduction of Members and Guests.

Members present:

Mike Britton, Chair	Jim Fitzgerald, Vice Chair
Craig Broadhead, Secretary	John McGlenn
Chris Brong	James Reinbold
George Dennis	Dennis Clay
Mike Estes	Wayne Ward
Greg Yonemura	Roger Hurst
Jim Zimmerman	

Members excused:

Robert Scoville	Jim Sutton
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WDFW Staff present:

Sgt. Carl Klein	Mike Kuttel
Anthony Novak	Capt. Richard Mann, Region 3
Christine Redmond, Volunteer Program Manager	

Guests or Presenters:

Bob Cromwell	
Jim Huckabay, CWU	Isa Loeb, CWU

Group noted and excused absence of Robert Scoville and Jim Sutton.

3. Kittitas County ordinance conflict with Elk Area 3911

Captain Mann discussed the Kittitas area firearms code issue. Parts of the Kittitas Valley are within GMU 334, Elk Area 3911, and covered by a Kittitas County Ordinance. Both the County Ordinance Area and GMU 334 are a firearm-restricted area – no center fire rifles during hunting seasons. Some confusion has arisen among Master Hunters that have been hunting in Elk Area

3911 with illegal firearms within the restriction area. Though the pamphlet doesn't specifically state that Elk Area 3911 includes a firearm restriction area, it is written on the Modern Firearm General Elk Season page of the pamphlet that some GMUs/Elk Areas may be within or include these zones and it is the responsibility of the hunter to know.

Further clarification is required as part of the County Ordinance allows the use of center-fire rifles in game damage situations, but the WAC that sets WDFW regulation does not. Captain Mann stated one potential option is to add language to the WAC to allow the use of center-fire rifles when used for game damage in all firearm restricted GMUs. Until clarification and regulation is complete regarding this issue, Master Hunters that hunt within Elk Area 3911 are reminded to know where the restricted areas are located, and hunt with the appropriate weapon.

4. Approval of Meeting #21 Notes from August 29, 2012 – Notes approved by group and posted to website.

5. Volunteer Opportunities and MHPP Status for 2013

Discussion of the evolution of the decision to freeze new applications for the MHPP in 2013.

WDFW decided to freeze enrollment in the MHPP for 2013 until an assessment of the program can be completed. The MHAG collectively were blindsided by this decision, and much explanation and discussion was had regarding the reasoning behind the decision.

Sgt. Carl Klein described that this was a WDFW decision, not a MHAG decision. The decision was based on several factors, mostly involving the need to define the goals and objectives of the program. Sgt. Klein stated that if all the MHPP was intended for was to assist the Department with damage control, than the program is successful and we don't need more Master Hunters. However, several other goals of the program, such as engaging Master Hunters as volunteers, have not been met. In addition, there are still questions about, and an overall negative impression of the MHPP. Sgt. Klein stated WDFW owes it to the people to answer these questions and redefine the program. Sgt. Klein also stated the interim period to assess the program should not involve a new group of Master Hunters. Enrollment will reopen when questions have been addressed and the future direction of the MHPP is clearly defined.

Mike Kuttel added that decisions have to be made regarding the MHPP at the administrative level, and concerns must be addressed. The MHPP is a State program, created for the purpose of "improving the image of hunters and hunting." The decision to define the direction of the program and identify meaningful projects is the burden of the Department. It is known that WDFW is not conducive to the use of volunteers, and the MHPP is thusly not living up to its potential. The Department does not want to add more Master Hunters to a program that isn't being engaged sufficiently to provide meaningful benefits. The freeze in enrollment will allow time to answer questions, define direction, and make it a meaningful program.

Several of the MHAG voiced concerns regarding the freeze. One member felt this was adding to the general hunting public perception that Master Hunters are an elitist group, and the freeze is hurting the program as a whole. Another felt this was a "frustration time-out" on behalf of the Department, and did not feel that enough reason was given – particularly when compared to the

reorganization of the program in 2008 where goals were clearly defined. In addition, timelines & identifying benchmarks for reopening enrollment should be identified.

The MHAG decided to provide WDFW with a letter of response to the freeze in enrollment. The letter will be co-written by Chris Brong, Chair Mike Britton, and reviewed by Sgt. Klein and Mike Kuttel. The letter will include the MHAG position on the enrollment freeze and outline the group position on what should occur to make the program meaningful. This letter will be provided as soon as possible, and will assist in meetings with WDFW program Liaisons, Chief Bjork, Nate Pamplin, Christine Redmond, and perhaps Director Anderson.

ACTION ITEM 22-1: MHAG to deliver letter of expectation to WDFW regarding future direction of the MHPP, draft by Chris Brong.

Volunteer Program Manager Christine Redmond

Christine Redmond, new WDFW Volunteer Program Manager, met with the MHAG to discuss her role with the Department. Christine has a goal of making it easier to navigate the bureaucracy within the Department to use volunteers. She is learning the tools and resources that will help her do that, and is identifying trainings and efficiency improvements. She is a huge advocate for volunteers and volunteerism, and is excited to help make the MHPP a skilled labor force of volunteers for WDFW to use. Christine likes the model of Regional volunteer coordinators as an interface, and understands dedicated staff in each region would be ideal.

Over the next few months, Christine plans to learn and understand what policies within the Department are making it difficult to use volunteers, and address the deficiencies. She will also learn more about the programs and people across the state, and will identify opportunities for improving the volunteer program. Christine encouraged the MHAG to send her stories of volunteerism, what is working, and why. Right now, the MHPP does not have an identity with Department administration, and Christine feels that this is needed as part of talks regarding the future of the program. The MHAG feels Christine will be a great advocate for promoting not only the MHPP, but also the use of volunteers across the board.

6. Hunt Behavior Study.

Anthony Novack, Region 3, Deer/Elk Conflict Specialist presented latest results on hunter behavior study.

Also in attendance were Isa Loeb, CWU Graduate Student whom is doing her thesis on using the survey technique, and her advisor CWU professor emeritus and Master Hunter Jim Huckabay. Isa stated that over 400 survey responses were returned from approximately 800 Master Hunters that were mailed the survey. Isa is still putting together results from the surveys regarding Master Hunters.

Anthony's discussed the statistical significance behind the Randomized Response Technique for acquiring more accurate information regarding violations. The study asked questions regarding road violations, trespass violations, tag violations, or any violation. Study results allow a metric of comparison between multiple categories of hunters, such as deer hunters, elk hunters, archery hunters, muzzleloader hunters, and rifle hunters.

The study identified several interesting correlatives amongst different groups. Of particular importance to the MHPP, the study is able to compare rates of violations between Master

Hunters that participated in the survey and members of the general hunting public. The information Isa is preparing will provide more statistical significance to the Master Hunter numbers and tighten up the range, but initial trends in the data appear to indicate a potential violation problem amongst Master Hunters.

7. Liaison Report – Mike Kuttel

Data for the 2012 MHPP:

- Total number of current Master Hunters – 1938
- Total number of 2012 applicants – 510
- Total number of 2012 applicants completed – 83
- Total number of 2012 applicants denied – 8
- Total number of 2012 applicants that took the test – 149
- Total number of 2012 applicants that passed the test on the 1st try – 49
- Total number of 2012 applicants that passed the test on the 2nd try – 44
- Total number of 2012 applicants that failed the 2nd time – 32
- Total number of Master Hunters removed for life in 2012 – 2 (one resigned before action could be taken, and one had their privileges removed for life)

Statistical Review of renewing Master Hunters

The number of Master Hunters that chose to recertify versus those that did not recertify can give an idea of retention within the program. Non-recertification could be due to Master Hunters choosing not to recertify, or just not completing the requirements. The number of recertifying and non-recertifying Master Hunters since 2008, and a percentage of loss for that year are shown below.

Year	# Renewed	# Not Renewed	Percentage Lost
2008	145	85	37
2009	255	154	37.7
2010	241	209	46.4
2011	163	140	46.2
2012	210	144	40.7

Since 2008, the program has lost an average of 42% of possible renewing Master Hunters. The cumulative effect of this will cause a negative trend in retention over time, and indicates that if nothing changes the program is not going to sustain current numbers.

Mike Kuttel also mentioned that hunter numbers were down statewide, but revenues were up. This was due to the increase in license fee structure.

8. Communication Planning

Discuss annual report

The group discussed the Annual Report, and decided that a few small edits should be made.

ACTION ITEM 22-2: Chair, Mike Kuttel, and Sgt. Klein will finalize the annual report, post it on the MHPP Webpage, and facilitate circulation through Chief Bjork to Director Anderson and the Fish and Wildlife Commission consistent with Commission Policy C-6005.

9. Reports from the Chair:

Report from Retention Committee - Bob Cromwell, George Coulbourn, Jim Reinbold, and Greg Yonemura.

The Retention Committee presented results regarding their discussions on why Recruitment and Retention (R&R) is critical for the future of the program. Reasons described for the loss of interest in hunting include an urbanization of the population causing a shift in attitudes about hunting and firearms; an aging hunting population; lack of interest by youth who are raised in an instant-feedback society; loss of lands available for hunting; increasing fees, and; low rates of success.

Possible ideas for improving R&R are:

- Start hunters with better chance of success by encouraging small game/bird hunting. Better initial success rates may build long-term interest in hunting, versus harvesting an elk once every 15 years.
- Promote participation in outdoor activities.
- Develop better tools to encourage property owners to allow access. Encourage Landowners to prioritize first-time hunter access.
- Provide training for inexperienced hunters.
- Increase mentoring opportunities for first-time hunters.
- Use hunting publications to provide incentives for first-time hunters.
- Develop a multi-year license system, where licenses are bought the first year but are valid until harvest.
- Give bonus points to those that complete hunter education and purchase a license the following hunting season, and those that participate in the hunter education deferral program.
- Provide lifetime hunting licenses based on actuarial tables.
- Foster relationships with hunting groups.
- Increase outreach to non-traditional sources, such as “loca-vores” to promote the health benefits of harvesting wild game.

The R&R Committee will provide a summary of their findings to the Chair for distribution to the MHAG.

ACTION ITEM 22-3: MHAG members to provide ideas of projects that could build on these ideas or improve R&R in their respective Regions.

2013 Appointment recommendations

The MHAG discussed the appointments to be made based on recommendations from the Chair, Vice Chair, and Mike Estes. Summary of appointments below:

- Two required region #6, reappoint Jim Zimmerman and appoint Bill Zackmann (new member).
- One required region #3, appoint Tom Conrads (new member).
- Two at-large positions, reappoint John McGlenn and appoint Jim Slyfield (new member).

These 5 recommendations will be made to Sgt. Klein to provide to the Director for decision and appointment.

The MHAG also held elections for Chair and Vice Chair, positions to be taken after the March meeting. Jim Fitzgerald was elected Chair for 2013. John McGlenn was elected Vice-Chair to fill behind Jim Fitzgerald.

Mike Kuttel will order plaques of appreciation for outgoing members of the MHAG, and outgoing MHAG leadership positions as well as name badges for newly appointed members of the MHAG. He will also prepare letters of appointment for signature by Director Anderson.

10. Reports on Action Items

- By-laws & Roles and Responsibilities, proposed changes - Mike Estes review MHAG Roles and Responsibilities and Bylaws. (**ACTION ITEM 21-1**). ON-HOLD PENDING PROGRAM ENROLLMENT SUSPENSION.
- Information & Outreach – Mike Estes. Status. **ACTION ITEM 19 – 1** – I&O committee determine means of communication with MH via website and/or G-mail account. ONGOING.
- Ways & Means – Proposals: NONE PENDING.
- **ACTION ITEM 20-3** – Mike Kuttel has a commitment of a link between the “Conservation” Master Hunter web page and link to the CERVIS program from Mike O’Malley and James Chandler. CLOSED – MHPP PROJECTS ADDED TO CERVIS BY JAMES CHANDLER.

11. GMAC Interface:

GMAC meeting Saturday, December 1, report by Jim Reinbold,

Jim Reinbold attended the last GMAC meeting and reports that GMAC has formed a R&R committee similar to MHAG. GMAC is considering having an MHAG member on the GMAC Board. GMAC is developing a questionnaire for hunters. GMAC would like a standing agenda item for MHAG to give an update on Master Hunter issues.

12. Other Business.

Jim Zimmerman presented the Washington Cattlemen’s Associations position on the removal of the “wedge” pack of wolves in Northeast Washington. The summary is the WCA supported the removal and was impressed that WDFW took the initiative to manage the pack through lethal removal.

Dennis Clay gave short synopsis of his volunteer activities and also was encouraged to identify his discussion items so that we might include for future agenda preparation.

Conclusion

Recap Action Items – Action Items are as noted throughout this document in bold.

Agenda Topics for Next Meeting –

- Hunter behavior Study - Anthony Novack
- Invite DFW Landowner Access Specialist to future meeting

Next meeting Date and Location – Friday, March 15, 2013 at 9:00 am, Cattlemen’s Association in Ellensburg.

Meeting Adjourned at 3:45 p.m.