

Game Management Plan

Eric Gardner, Wildlife Program Director
April 6, 2023



Action Items from WLC: 3/16/23

Overarching Plan Issue Statements:

- Staff will engage with the WLC on what we heard from the full Commission in March and dive into the issue statements.
- Hold WLC meeting and identify the list of issues and state which ones can stay, which ones need to be altered, and which ones need pulled out and considered as Commission policy to present to the full commission (timeline?).
- Incorporate the two new WLC draft issue statements 1) eco-system and 2) climate change to the Overarching GMP.

Scheduling:

- Set YAG Milestones/Decision dates
- Update the GMP Timeline with Commission touch points

Phase 2 GMPs:

- Discuss the bear and cougar management plan's issue statements at the next WLC meeting.



Action Items from Commission: 3/17/23

- 1. Identify proposed Commission “Policy” issue statements and present recommendations to the full commission**
 - Working on this today
- 2. Identify and approve DRAFT Issue Statements for the Overarching GMP**
 - Sharing today for reference regarding Policy discussions
- 3. Schedule WLC meetings focused on GMP’s work**
 - Timeline planning on today’s agenda w/ proposal for next steps
- 4. Tie the GMP objectives to the annual Status & Trend Reports, which look back at the previous year’s activities**
 - This will be an ongoing “Action”; addressed as we develop the plans



Reminder: Active Assignments!

Phase 1 documents available for WLC member review by Friday, April 28th

1.DRAFT Waterfowl & Migratory Game Birds Management Plan: [DRAFT WLCreview_2023 Waterfowl & Migratory Game Birds Mgmt Plan 2-9-23](#)

2.DRAFT GMP Overarching Plan - Authorities and Guiding Principles: [DRAFT WLCreview_GMP Authorities and Guiding Principles](#)

3. DRAFT GMP Overarching Plan Outline: [DRAFT GMP Outline Overarching plan WLC Review March Mtg.](#)



WLC Policy Discussion Objectives

- Establish list of potential Policy topics
- Discuss/prioritize topics
- Develop WLC report to Commission regarding recommendations
- Review reference information to inform discussion



Terminology

- Commission Policy
 - WAC 220-415-060: Elk Special Permits
 - C-6003: Domestic Livestock Grazing on Department Lands
 - Spring Bear decision
- Principles
- Issue Statements



Potential Policy Topics To Date

WLC Commission Policy Recommendations

1. Game Species Conservation Principles
2. Spring Bear Hunting
3. Cougar Guidelines
4. Predator Prey Management
5. How to structure sustainable hunting opportunity (general season vs. permit)
6. The Non-lead Partnership
7. Classification of Unclassified Wildlife
8. Define “maximizing public recreational hunting opportunities” in the full context of RCW 77.04.012 and associated legislation



Principles – see handout

Ecosystem and Habitat

- Recommend seasons and bag limits that consider the effects to ecosystem health.
- Recommend seasons and bag limits that consider the effects of climate change on habitat, weather, and populations.

Population Management

- In general, hunting seasons shall be consistent with species planning objectives and provide maximum recreation opportunity while achieving population goals.
- The migratory bird, small game and upland game regulations shall provide maximum hunting opportunity considering federal guidelines, flyway management plan elements, and Department management objectives.
- The goat, sheep, and moose permit hunting rules shall maintain high quality opportunities consistent with resource availability.
- The hunting season closures, and firearm restrictions shall be sufficient to assure resource conservation and public safety.



Principles – see handout

Social and Economic

- Consider management objectives that are socially derived, as a valid justification for hunting and trapping season recommendations (e.g., Agriculture damage, quality hunt opportunity, address disease, and social tolerance).
- Private landowner hunting issues such as season length, damage control, and trespass should be given consideration when developing hunting season recommendations.

Allocation of Resource

- Hunting rules shall provide separate deer and elk general season recreational opportunities for archers, muzzleloaders, and modern firearm hunters.
- Special deer and elk permit hunt opportunities shall be allocated among three principal user groups (archery, muzzleloader, and modern firearm) using the approved formula of success/participation rate.
- Disabled hunter opportunities shall emphasize equal access consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- For disabled hunters, youth hunters, and hunters over 65, strategies for enhanced opportunity shall include special consideration during general seasons, opportunities for special access, and other incentives rather than special permit hunts.



Principles – see handout

Fair Chase, Safety, and Regulations

- When setting regulations, the Department should consider high standards of hunter ethics and principles of fair chase.
- In general, hunting seasons and boundaries of game management units should be easy to understand while maintaining hunting opportunity and management options.
- Weapon and Hunting equipment is always evolving. Strive to maintain the primitive aspects of muzzleloaders and archery equipment. Restrictions to all implements should maintain public safety; protect the resource; allow wide latitude for individuals to make equipment choices; be easy to understand and allow effective enforcement.
- Offer the public high quality hunter education and firearm safety training.



Principles – see handout

Process

- Use a three-year season setting process to address complex issues and provide consistent general seasons from year to year. Annual permit and season changes will be considered to address emergent resource issues; natural disasters; and to meet requirements of federal guideline changes; etc.
- Establishing hunting seasons shall be consistent with the Commission Policy C-3607 regarding cooperatively managing wildlife resources with the tribes.
- The public shall be offered substantial and timely opportunity to make comments on and recommendations for the three-year hunting rules decision-making process. These opportunities must comply with the state's Regulatory Reform Act.
- Public involvement for annual permit season setting shall include at a minimum, a standard written comment period and one public meeting where comments will be considered.
- Continuity in hunting seasons over time is highly valued by the public; therefore, Department recommendations for significant changes to seasons should be adequately explained to the public and should address a resource management need.



Scientific/Professional Management of Hunted Wildlife – see handout

Issue Statement #1

WDFW wildlife managers and biologists have developed goals, objectives, and strategies in these plans to ensure long-term sustainability of all wildlife. The best available science will be the basis for the maintenance of all endemic wildlife populations. Strategies for hunted wildlife will not have significant negative impacts on the sustainability of other wildlife or their habitats. None of the strategies, subsequent hunting season recommendations, or implementation of activities will deviate from these fundamental principles. Science is the core of wildlife management, the basis for achieving the agency's mandate, and the foundation of this plan.

Issue Statement #2

While science and professional opinion form the foundation of wildlife management, social and economic issues often strongly affect public opinion, and influence management strategies and regulations. An easily accessible public involvement process is necessary to facilitate broad public involvement in developing and implementing management alternatives. The key is to develop programs that both achieve key biological objectives and are supported by the public.



Hunter Ethics and Fair Chase

– see handout

Issue Statement #3

Many hunters think that the latitude to determine what constitutes fair chase belongs to the individual. They feel that others should not determine what fair chase is for someone else. Other hunters are concerned that the image and standard of ethics for hunting may be compromised, particularly with the expanding use of technology for hunting. This is especially evident with equipment technology.

Issue Statement #4

A majority of the general public believes that many hunters violate hunting laws (Duda 2002a). They feel that hunting without a license and poaching are the major violations, and shooting game out of season and hunting over the bag limit are also common violations. Hunters cite these same concerns with the addition of shooting from a vehicle. The public also indicated they developed their opinions from direct observation, physical evidence, and from talking with others. In addition, they support hunter refresher courses and feel that an additional training requirement will improve their opinion of hunters.



Non-toxic Ammunition

– see handout

Issue Statement #5

A wide variety of birds may consume spent lead shot, resulting in increased mortalities and sublethal effects. Birds of prey may ingest lead as they scavenge animals (e.g., deer) taken during hunting seasons. In Washington, there is increasing evidence of lead consumption by golden eagles, a species of concern with low population levels. However, some sportsmen are concerned that the added expense of purchasing non-toxic ammunition is not justified with population-level impacts and may further reduce hunter recruitment and retention.



Hunting Season Regulations

– see handout

Issue Statement #6

The Department must manage game populations for a variety of hunters, each utilizing different methods and weapon types. This is accomplished with designated seasons for each to ensure all have opportunity. The hunting public informs decisions so that seasons and restrictions are equitable among all user groups. Continuing to solicit input from all users is a primary objective of the Department so hunting opportunity is fair and balanced.



WLC Policy Discussion

- Establish list of topics
- Discuss/prioritize topics
- Prepare for WLC report to Commission regarding Next Steps



Timeline Discussion

- Identify WLC timeline
- Identify Commission touchpoints
- Schedule additional WLC mtgs

**WDFW staff working with WLC Chair
on Phase 1 and Phase 2 timelines**



Website, Teams, and SharePoint Platforms

- Public Facing Website
- Schedule time with GD staff for Teams and [SharePoint](#) training



Questions?

