

Game Management Advisory Council (GMAC) Meeting Notes

December 1, 2018

WCA Boardroom
1301 N Delray Road
Ellensburg, WA 98926

Members present: Rob McCoy, Dave Duncan, Jerry Barron, Art Meikel, James Stephenson, Dave Ingham, Al Martz, Jake Weise, Dave Hingham, John Magart, Al Martz, Warren Gimlin, James Horan, BJ Thorniley, Bill Essman, Jan Patricio **WDFW staff present:** Anis Aoude, Kelly Susewind, Raquel Crosier, Dan Brinson.

Approval of notes: Anis led the review of notes from the August 2018 meeting. Motion to approve, seconded, approved.

Meet the Director: Kelley Susewind gave some background on his life in Washington State. From Aberdeen, WA, spent much of his time growing up hunting and fishing. Received his college degree in engineering from Washington State University. Worked in Alaska for a while, worked with a consulting firm with WA Dept of Ecology, managed their water quality program in cooperation with WDFW, became a Policy Advisory to Ecology Director, then decided to apply for the WDFW Director position. He thinks that management of fish and wildlife is crucial to the state. We need to reach out to folks who don't know us or understand who we are. We are missing about 6 million residents that don't understand the value of fish and wildlife. He said before he became the Director, the agency contracted with a firm to conduct an independent review of the Dept to determine where it could engage in best management practices. The review found that mostly all is well with some minor tweaks. But, we need to get better at communication internally and externally. He said habitat has been an afterthought so we need to work more closely with other land management natural resource agencies to improve game habitat.

He said/responded to:

- All regions need to listen to public feedback and pay attention to their thinking, comments, and views.
- The Director said GMAC is the kind of group the Dept. needs to keep. He plans to review the minutes of some of the previous GMAC meetings to get a better understanding of our thinking and advice.
- Comment from GMAC member that Dept law enforcement needs to remove "Police" and reinstate warden or conservation officer, etc. Private property owners perceive "Police" as cops and don't what them on their land.
- Comment from GMAC member there used to be a table set aside at Dept. public meetings for the media so that agency business was more transparent and truthful. Director said media has downsized. Many are not replacing old time reporters so not very many media folks available for Commission meetings.

- Comment from GMAC member, trust critical, last fee increase supposed to go to program enhancements but went to staff increases.
- Comment from GMAC member, there is a lack of communication within the Dept. Example given of public comment to Region 1 staff, but apparently not followed up with direction to subordinate staff.
- Director comment, we need to use social media more with lack of interest/availability of commercial media attention anymore; agrees we need to work more on trust. If trust is established the word police on a uniform would not be a big issue.
- Comment from GMAC member, Anis needs to have more authority in the Dept to pass on his thinking/questions to the appropriate Regions.
- Comment from GMAC member, Region 1 is a problem area, lack of communication within the office, lack of credibility with the public, lack of follow up communication based on public comment.
- Comment from some GMAC members, use GMAC members to help diffuse local issues, help get the Dept. message out. The Department needs to revise the wolf management plan. They also need to develop other predator management plans. The Department needs commonality among all advisory groups to have visibility and a meaningful role. GMAC needs a mission statement.
- Director comment, value of advisory councils/committees huge. Ad hoc committees/councils/etc. are useful for one-time issues, but advisory committees/councils long term advisors. We need your thinking/advice.
- Comment from a GMAC member, how can we be more useful, significant, or how can we have a more useful impact to the Dept.?
- Comment from a GMAC member, Use of harvest data not a good way to measure number of all sexes of deer/elk. Anis said the Dept. is starting to evaluate different approaches to gathering better game population and demographic information. Director said we need a cultural change and that he is committed to go in that direction using better methodology.
- Comment from a GMAC member, recommend Director talk directly with people in field so they get the message about trust. Local concerns need to be part of decision making, science is not the only decision maker, politics make a difference.
- Comment from a GMAC member, recruitment, retention of animals crucial but seems to be ignored by Dept staff.
- Comment from a GMAC member, need to manage predators.
- Comment from a GMAC member, the 5 year predator prey study, why wait to completion? when you see the issue today. Need to take action sooner.
- Comment from a GMAC member, got letter that Master Hunter Program going away. Mentioned that the Turnbull area showed a down turn in elk population till it was turned over to a private outfit. Then it rebounded until the LHP was cut. Roa hunting increased plus trespassing and resulted in land owner complaints.
- Comment from a GMAC member, we are in the 3rd year of the wolf predator prey study and we still do not have enough white tailed deer collared. Time to do something now while its evident rather than wait till the study is finished and analyzed.

- Comment from a GMAC member, western Washington concerned about lack of access on private lands due to fees. Director said the Dept. needs to try cooperative method of some sort and acknowledged that the land owners may see fees as an important revenue stream and that access to private lands contributes to reducing hunter recruitment and retention.
- Comment from a GMAC member, that one group of hunters provided for a dumpster to be located at a gate on private lands in the Vail area for trash and found that seemed to work well.
- Comment from a GMAC member, we need to educate the public about problems resulting from excess trash and to have volunteers stationed at gates to talk about ethics.
- Comment from the Director, part of the problem of access in that many of the private timber lands are no longer owned by local citizens but rather by out of area investment groups that may not feel they have a stake in the issues from our perspective. Anis said the Dept. has a team working on the issue.
- Comment from a GMAC member, the Dept. should consider proposing tax breaks to the legislature.
- Comment from a GMAC member, we should have an electoral college for Washington state so everybody's vote counts.
- Comment from a GMAC member, the Dept. should couple Master Hunters with kids, veterans on private lands.
- Comment from the Director, big timber companies don't want to destroy their conservation image.

Legislative and Budget Update (Raquel Crosier DFW Legislative Liaison & Rachel Voss Mule Deer Foundation): See attached presentation

It is hard to get some legislators interested in hunting issues because many of them didn't grow up hunting.

- There is a joint plea from the natural resource agencies to get bigger budget including a coalition of people to deal with funding and reforms to the calculation methodology.
- License fees are not keeping up with appropriation authority.
- The 2017-19 Budget Proviso made sure that revenues go to the appropriate area of expenditure.
- Comment from a GMAC member, that some user groups are using the resource and not paying. All users should have a license in their pocket.
- Comment from the Director, last time a fee increase was proposed it was too large. This time the Dept proposal is 25% from license fees (hunters and anglers) and 75% from the general fund.
- Part of the reason for license sales dropping is that the hunting population is growing older and not hunting anymore.
- We need to educate kids in schools regarding the value of hunting in conservation.
- Some schools offer archery as a school course.
- Budget priority need to invest in kids.

- Comment from the Director, we are not successful getting the importance of hunting into schools is because most teachers don't hunt thus they don't get it. We need a different approach.
- We need to find a way to enter the system and provide an incentive for kids to go hunting.
- Anis said Colorado developed a hug a hunter campaign.
- The GMAC hunting recruitment and retention committee has not met in a while.
- Anis said he is working the Hunter Education Coordinator on hunting recruitment and retention.
- National hunting and fishing day needs pre and post follow up.
- The fee lift up is focused on limiting impacts to recruitment.
- We need to develop a program to get non-hunters, not anti hunters, to understand why hunting is important.
- The Dept. is developing tools for tracking legislative progress.
- Discussion about how GMAC feels about a fee increase: the Dept needs to earn our trust, \$ need to go where it was proposed, trust and transparency crucial, Oregon tried a voluntary access fee and it didn't work.
- The Dept has a budget and policy advisory group and is looking for ideas: everybody needs a license, develop a conservation license, do away with the Discover Pass, include a stamp to go on the Discover Pass to raise revenue, any idea needs to be enforceable.
- The Director noted that the legislature writes the rules and can take away funding.
- People don't support a fee increase because the Dept is not doing anything anyway.
- Recruitment and retention is difficult because more people are living in cities and don't grow up hunting as well as more people moving into the state and into cities and are not hunters.
- Insurance companies are lobbying to reduce ungulate and vehicle collisions.

Technology in Hunting:

- Comments were made about the importance of fair chase, trail cameras, motorized e-bikes, drones, firearms, archery.
- Anis said it is illegal to use drones for hunting since the WAC has been updated to include drones in the definition of aircraft.
- There should be a way to identify the drone, and its owner and operator.
- Hunting with drones has not been an issue yet.
- Trail cameras can be set up using cell phone technology and hunter can sit at home and monitor what the camera sees as live action.
- Nevada has a new rule that folks can't use a trail camera during hunting season.

Action: Anis will follow up

- Arizona voted to ban live action trail cameras.
- We need to think about developing a guides license if someone is making money using trail cameras to determine where and when to hunt.
- Can't govern ethics but can govern fair chase.
- Need to govern e-bikes as they are a growing problem especially when used off trail or road.

- GMAC supported limited baiting but now not supporting using e-bikes or cameras.
- Motion for the Dept to consider 1X scopes on muzzleloaders legal. Seconded. Approved.
Action: Anis will follow up
- Boone and Crocket started the concept of fair chase in pursuit of game. Use of radios to direct a hunter to game not fair chase and no animal will be considered for their recognition if it can be shown a radio was used in that fashion. Anything that can give you a real time update to be used to guide somebody to a trophy is subject to scrutiny and is not fair chase.
- Motion that the Dept consider drones and cameras with radios or other 2 way communication with real time information to hunters in the pursuit of game as illegal. Seconded. Approved.
Action: Anis will follow up
- Should GMAC consider baiting as illegal. No, too hard to enforce.
- E-bikes should be considered as motorized vehicles.
Action: Anis will follow up
- Firearms and archery equipment have received technology improvements.
- Thermal imaging for game retrieval. Example an animal is shot at dusk but not killed. Thermal imaging provides a way to find the animal so you can recover it. It also can be used to locate game which is not ethical. So far not an issue.
- Request that the Dept look at regulating peddle bikes off trail.
Action: Anis will follow up
- Muzzleloaders allowing only 1X scopes approximates normal vision. An ADA opportunity.
- Crossbows can shoot a 3 inch group at 100 yards. Not an issue. For a hunter progressing through disabilities and having to have someone else shoot their game, use of a crossbow may mean the hunter can shoot the game themselves.
- Recommend making cougars as furbearers and allow trappers to trap them.

Bear Timber Damage Program: See attached presentation

Wrap up:

- Comment from GMAC member it seems that hunter recruitment and retention is a problem throughout North America with hunter numbers declining everywhere. Fees from hunting are an important revenue stream for wildlife departments as is hunting considered an important method to manage game populations. The budget discussion showed a reference to recruitment and retention, yet since an agencies budget is a reflection of its priorities and the reference to recruitment and retention was almost invisible, it seems if recruitment and retention is a high priority it should be clear in the budget with sufficient dollars to support it.

Next meeting:

- March 9th.

Suggested agenda items for the next meeting:

- Legislative update.

- Update from Anis on today's items he was going to follow up on.
- Update on predator prey study.
- Rule changes.
- Discussion of GMAC mission.