

Game Management Advisory Council (GMAC) Minutes

December 7, 2024

Washington Cattlemen's Association (WCA) Boardroom

1301 N. Dollarway Road

Ellensburg, WA 98926

Members Present: Jake Weise, Dave Duncan, Bill Essman, Mark Pidgeon, Jason Bolser, Bruce Vandervort, James Horan, and Rob McCoy (online).

Staff Present: Anis Aoude, Tom Ryle, Kelly Riordon.

Guest Present: Kevin Krause.

Welcome and Introductions: Jake asked everyone to introduce themselves and welcomed all to the December 2024 GMAC meeting, and thanked Dave Duncan for the continued use of the Cattlemen's Association Boardroom for the GMAC meetings. Jason said he was resigning from the Council and he'd asked Kevin Krause who is a member of the same organization with Jason and lives nearby in Cle Elum to attend the meeting.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: With no changes to the minutes of the August 24, 2024 meeting recommended, motion by Mark Pidgeon, seconded by Bill Essman to approve the minutes of the August 24, 2024 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

Approval of the Agenda: Approved as written with recognition that members and staff could request changes as items arose.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD): Anis noted that:

- The dept has detected another deer testing positive within 5 miles of the first one in the same GMU and within the radius of the original 3 GMU's in NE WA,
- 1800 testing samples have been taken in Region 1 as the dept is in a monitoring mode so we can understand the prevalence and distribution of the disease if and as it progresses,
- Culling hasn't worked in those states that've had tried it except in one case and at a location in New York State,
- The dept doesn't know yet what hunters feel about CWD so increased outreach may help us understand their views.

Hoof Disease – Update: Anis:

- Summarized the history of the disease, background of the dept's determination of prevalence, location, cooperative agencies including Washington State University (WSU), outreach to hunters especially in getting citizen reporting of elk with the disease as well as research capturing infected elk, radio collaring to monitor survival,

- Pointed out that the disease contributes to reduced survival through lower body fat, fewer pregnancies, malnutrition, harvest, and succumbing to prey,
- Said that so far, the distribution is mostly on the west side of the state in the Mt St Helens area, some in Skagit County, and has been detected in the Blue Mts. It may be that the disease is traveling around the state in relationship to locations of dairy herds,
- The dept thinks that the disease may have begun to decline, while still high, just not as high,
- He also mentioned the dept's "TAHD Incentive Program" which is intended to encourage west side hunters to harvest elk with the disease potentially reducing the prevalence of the disease over time,
- Anis said the dept continues to support WSU's efforts in captive research, disease lab, surveillance in the field and other collaborative methods of understanding more about the disease,
- Secretary's note: there is an excellent description of hoof disease in elk on page's # 65 & 66 in the 2024 edition of the Washington Big Game Hunting Regulations.

Moose Presentation: Anis:

- Gave a species overview as follows:
 - Moose in Washington are a slightly smaller subspecies,
 - Mostly located in NE Washington with a few in Okanogan County in the Methow Valley,
 - They are considered travelers.
 - The dept's goals are to preserve, protect and sustain the species,
 - The dept will continue to monitor through ariel surveys, radio collars, and harvest data,
- Moose harvest is:
 - Limited entry ie one permit per person per lifetime,
 - Permits issued are informed by survey and consideration of permits vs harvest with goal of high bull to cow ratio,
- Monitoring objectives:
 - Estimate population trends,
 - Evaluate use of monitoring and harvest opportunities,
 - Enhance knowledge of causes of mortality,
 - Better understanding of tick load,
- Year one update:
 - Still work to be done. Status of samples, surveys, and assessments of tick loads other causes of mortality, harvests, unknown factors showed that 21 out of 28 cows were pregnant whereas pregnancy should have been higher,
- Moving forward:
 - The dept will continue to capture moose in 2025,
 - Access the tick load,
 - Use aerial surveys to estimate late winter calf recruitment.

Game Management Plan (GMP) – Update: Anis:

- GMAC hasn't seen the final version of the plan yet,
- Anis said that members contributed to the plan and thanked them for that,

- Anis expects the final version of the plan to be adopted in 2 – 3 months.

Legislative Update: Anis:

- Dept has submitted a decision package responding to wildlife diseases – details will be on the agency website,
- The dept’s 2025-27 budget request can be found at: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/02529/wdfw02529.pdf>.
- Bruce met with Senator Sollaman regarding trapping of beavers and concerns about lethal removal of problem beavers which should be only as a last resort. Also concerns about closures around relocation areas,
- The dept is adding more conflict specialists, wants an increased portion of the personalized license plates,
- A new legislative liaison has just started in the agency (Melena Thompson).

Recruitment (GMAC) – Update: Anis:

- The dept’s current list of organizations and people were sent a recruitment notice along with various media.
- The announcement identified what qualifications the dept was looking for, how and when to apply to be considered for appointment, length of term, etc,
- Details of the announcement and copy of the application are at the dept’s website at [WDFW seeking applications for Game Management Advisory Council positions | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#)
- Intent is to have all vacancies filled in time for the June 7, 2025 meeting.

Commission Discussion: Anis:

- Discussions ranged from getting an understanding of Commissioner appointments ie how selected, who appoints, role of the Senate, length of appointments, whose terms are up, how the new Governor might approach recommending appointments, is a background in fish and wildlife useful or necessary, etc.

R 3 (Recruitment, Retention, Reactivation) – Presentation: Tom Ryle & Kelly Riorden:

- Tom and Kelly presented background and purpose of the R3 vision noting the importance of increasing statewide hunting and fishing participation, support for the hunting and fishing heritage in Washington and increasing broader public support for these activities and awareness of their economic contribution to wildlife conservation,
- Their presentation was an excellent example of how important the dept places R3 at the highest levels of decision and policy making within the dept hierarchy.,
- The presentation details followed closely to the dept’s publication “Washington Hunting and Angling Recruitment, Retention, and Recreation (R3) plan which can be found at: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/02529/wdfw02529.pdf>.
- Of particular interest to GMAC members was what the presenters identified as next steps including:
 - Goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics,
 - And an R3 tracking tool to measure success, barriers, etc.

- Members suggested R3 staff contact other natural resource agencies as potential partners in their efforts including:
 - WA State Department of Natural Resources, WA State Parks, Recreation and Conservation Office,
 - Federal Agencies including US Forest Service, National Parks

Rule Making – Update: Anis highlighted the following:

- Special permit hunts,
- CWD emergencies – mandatory reporting
- Bear and cougar,
- Feeding wildlife – may be statewide rules, will be controversial due to concerns about dept feeding stations, archers prefer any restrictions be implemented as the need progresses rather than start with a statewide ban,
- Waterfowl,
- Bullfrogs,
- May be a rule for deleterious wildlife ie imported from out of state can cause CWD,
- Classification of coyote as game from nongame,
- May be a suggestion to issue a 2nd tag for cougar if a hunter is successful in bagging one,
- Members discussed setting cougar target levels by areas not statewide and then adjust targets based on harvest,
- The dept’s current rule making plans in detail can be found at:
[https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/regulations/development#:~:text=Civil%20Rights/Accessibility-.About%20WDFW,Current%20rule%2Dmaking%20activity%20\(Rule%2Dmaking%20docket\),-Current%20rule%2Dmaking.](https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/regulations/development#:~:text=Civil%20Rights/Accessibility-.About%20WDFW,Current%20rule%2Dmaking%20activity%20(Rule%2Dmaking%20docket),-Current%20rule%2Dmaking.)

For the Good of the Order: Jake:

- Complimented the dept staff and their response to some wind blown damage on his property necessitating getting a dept permit to resolve the matter on the ground and their quick response to help him,
- Thanked Jason for his active participation on the Council especially his enthusiasm for making sure his contributions were “thorough and heard!”

Review Future Meeting Dates and Agenda Items: Jake:

- Next 4 meeting dates are (dates are set one year in advance so the next 3 meeting dates have already been established with the 4th one set at this meeting):
 - March 1st, 2025,
 - June 7th, 2025,
 - August 30th, 2025
 - December 6th, 2025,
- March meeting agenda items:
 - Presentation about the Boone and Crocket Club, history, what they do, relationship to GMAC interests, etc. Jake suggested other members might like to have their organizations consider making similar presentations to the GMAC. All agreed a good idea,

- Wolf update,
- How the permit draw works, problems, successes, public understanding, compare with other states, ideas to resolve issues,
- Status of Rule making and legislation,
- Status of GMAC member recruitment,
- Reconsideration of members position re want face to face meetings vs need to be cognizant of long distance driving in poor weather conditions and members personal matters needing their attention.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.