

Game Management Advisory Council (GMAC) Notes

December 2, 2023

Virtual Meeting (Microsoft Meetings)

Members present: Jake Weise, Bill Essman, Rob McCoy, Roy Lee, Mark Pidgeon, Max Cole, Jason Bolser, Bruce Vandervort, James Horan.

Staff present: Anis Aoude.

Guest present: Dale Magart.

Approval of meeting minutes:

Discussion: Members noted that comment from last meeting stated that a quorum was present and the minutes should be amended accordingly.

Members also noted that reference to “Organizational Mission Statement...” in Items for next meeting should be deleted and the minutes amended accordingly.

Motion by Jason Bolser, seconded by Bill Essman, to approve the minutes of the last meeting as amended. Motion passed.

Additions to the Agenda: Jake asked that ‘membership’ be added.

Game Management Plan (GMP) update:

- Anis:
 - Same format and path as presented at the August 26th meeting.
 - Completed internal review of 5 chapters (elk, white tail deer... etc).
 - Will be reviewed by WDFW Wildlife Committee by mid January 2024.
 - Then to full Commission as an update.
 - Then 10 more chapters using same process.
 - SEPA process to start in August 2024.
- Roy:
 - Will GMAC get to review the GMP during the staff/Wildlife Committee review process?
- Anis:
 - Hadn’t contemplated it because, while in the past that would have been normal procedure, now with the Wildlife Commissions Wildlife Committee review as a new part of the review process the timelines have become so tight, GMAC review will delay the process. But we can certainly discuss it.
 - GMAC opportunity for review can occur as part of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process review which includes public participation.
- Rob:
 - Always in the past GMAC had the opportunity to review and provide input to the process prior to public input through the SEPA process. He recalled working on a subcommittee in GMAC that presented their recommendations to the Wildlife

Commission and that some of their recommendations were incorporated in the final document, but that all were considered. He recalled some issues were contentious at the time particularly predator prey.

- Jake:
 - Should GMAC review with Dept staff before it goes through the SEPA process?
- Anis:
 - Depends – timelines are too tight, best to have reviewed by GMAC and Wildlife Committee at the same time.
- Jake:
 - Best to have GMAC integrated in process earlier in process.
- Roy:
 - Why does GMAC exist if we are not used to advise the department prior the public comment period?
- Jake:
 - Proposed that GMAC establish a GMP subcommittee (Rob to lead) on how best to integrate GMAC in the review process.
- Rob:
 - We are so far behind the eight ball now, trying to catch up not our best effort right now. Best for Anis to send whatever changes he knows of out to all GMAC members right away, members will need to get on it and make their comments ASAP.
- Jake:
 - Ok. But need a GMAC liaison with the department to collect all comments and forward to department. Appointed Roy and Mark as subcommittee to review all comments and get to Anis.
 - Asked, how can we most efficiently contribute to the process?
- Anis:
 - He will share chapters with us, and needs one person to receive and collate comments, get them to Jake, Jake to review, consolidate, and send to Anis.
- Jake:
 - Wants drafts sent to Rob, Rachel, Roy, and Mark to get to Anis to share with the Wildlife Committee.
- Rob:
 - Subcommittee will do best it can to summarize, use discretion, respect diversity, merge thoughts, etc.
- Roy:
 - Suggests the 4 members of the subcommittee forward their recommendations to Rob and Rob forward to Anis.
- Anis:
 - Fine with that approach.

3 – Year Season Setting Update and Process:

- Anis:
 - Planed to have usual process, but.

- Wildlife Committee wondered if they should not use GMP, but determined that some rules require revision on a set schedule.
- Compromise was to do initial scoping for a middle ground which is a condensed approach, not like the old 3-year process.
- Delegated some rule making decisions to the Dept Director, rules going forward will be shown on line, to be focused on special permits, improve trapping rule language, likely to occur in March 2023 with virtual public hearing.
- Allocation percentages is being reviewed by GMAC subcommittee with recommendations due in January.
- Jake:
 - Asked if the 1 power scope issue will be included in the rules. Yes. And will picking up found heads be in the rules. No.
 - Is there anything for GMAC to help with for this process now. No.
- Roy:
 - Regarding the cougar and bear petition, where is the Commission on that matter?
- Anis:
 - The petition is on the dept website, he'll send the link to GMAC (its 72 pages), or just go the their website, click on petitions. Staff recommendations is to deny it until agency has a chance to update the cougar and bear mgt chapters in the GMP. Council members are welcome to recommend action to the Commission.
- Jake:
 - Recommends GMAC take an active role in GMP update by recommending that the Commission delay a decision on the petition till GMAC has a chance to participate in the process. He offered to write a letter to the Commission to reject the petition so as to be driven by the GMP process at the macro level.
- Rob:
 - Motion by Rob, seconded by Bill, to request that the petition by denied and to let GMAC be involved in the review process. Motion passed.
- Jake:
 - Said he'd prepare draft letter, review with Rob and Anise first, then forward to the Commission.
- Anis:
 - Some rules not intended to be opened now, will be in the future as needed.
- Jake:
 - Do we have a GMAC letterhead, and if not we should get one created.
- Anis:
 - Staff can help with that.
- Jason:
 - Asked what he should review before participating in the upcoming allocation subcommittee?
- Jake:
 - Look at last subcommittee meeting notes. Anis offered to send them out.
- Bruce:
 - What are the timelines for drafting language regarding rules.
- Anis:

- He said rules have to be filed by February.

Species Classification Discussion:

- Anis:
 - Noted that there is internal staff review now.
 - Final decision could affect hunting.
 - Classifications are complex, complicated, generate biological data and public concern usually supporting, opposing, agency positions resulting in public comment during and using various opportunities and testimony at Commission meetings.
 - He gave some examples of current review process, and will share with the GMAC a briefing paper he just sent to the Commission on the issue.
- Council members:
 - Noted questions or concerns about, magpies, crows, sage grouse, coyotes, ravens,
- Anis:
 - Reminded Council members that classifications don't necessarily cause population declines sometimes counter to peoples personal observations. Often there is more to the story.
 - And that keep in mind the cougar were made a game animal in 1965, are a game species important to the ecosystem, and staff feels that there are not too many or to few.
 - He said its important that Council members do not make unsubstantiated statements to the public.
- Jake:
 - Wants the Council to be able to comment when the opportunity comes up.

Membership:

- Anis:
 - Noted that the Inland NW Wildlife Council representative is Dave Chromy, not Dale Magart. Dale says their representative will be nominated by the group as John Magart.
 - Noted that Al Martz of the Stevens County Fish and Wildlife Advisory Council has resigned.
 - Asked the GMAC members what is the optimum number of members on the Council considering diversity, geography, quorum, hunters, affiliated, unaffiliated, meeting management, etc?
 - Responses:
 - Consider likely number to attend meetings.
 - Folks interested in game management.
 - Divisible by 3 or 5 for rotation purposes.
 - Limit/don't limit # of years of appointment.
 - Quorum can be majority of total membership.
 - Voting can be majority of membership present at a meeting.
 - Look to GMAC charter for guidance and WDFW policies on advisory committees.

- Charter can be revisited, should be a living document.
- Goal of 20 members provides enough churn, =’s 10 – 12 realistically are active.
- Never used to be this much churn.
- People in the past didn’t understand the role of GMAC is advisory only, had unrealistic expectations, and or maybe had vested interests.
- Age of membership now will result in natural attrition, ie older members phasing out.
- Quorum is key, 15 members better than 20.
- Membership needs to be on March meeting agenda.

Final comments/questions/thoughts for the good of the order:

- Roy said it’d be good for members to understand legislative/rule making process including role of the Director now.
- Anis said some GMAC members, especially those affiliated with organizations are often more up to speed on those processes and issues, hard for him to track all potential and real issues and keep GMAC informed but he’ll try with what he knows. He asked that members aware of any issues let GMAC know cause he might not be aware of them.
- Jason said he understood there are proposals to do away with the Wildlife Commission and make WDFW a Governors cabinet agency with the Director appointed by the Governor.
- Anis said those proposals surface from time to time.

Action items & owners:

- Prepare letter to Wildlife Commission requesting they reject petition re cougars and bears (Jake)
- Game management chapter review with comments:
 - Anis to send available chapters to GMAC for review.
 - GMAC members review and comment to sub-committee (Rob, Rachel, Roy, Mark) – All.
- Membership strategy – draft proposal (Anis & Jake).
- Points preference subcommittee (Max, Rachel, Al, & Jake).
- GMP feedback.....?

Next meeting:

- Date: March 2, 2024
- Location: WCA Boardroom, 1301 N. Dolarway Road, Ellensburg, WA 98926
- Time: 10am – 4pm
- Agenda:
 - Preference points/subcommittee update (Max Cole)
 - Allocation setting update (Allocation Subcommittee)
 - Game Management Plan update (Bill Essman)
 - Subcommittee to consolidate GMAC comments and communicate to WDFW (Rob).

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 1:45 pm.