

Game Management Advisory Council Meeting Notes

March 3, 2018

WCA Boardroom
1301 N Dolarway Road
Ellensburg, WA 98926

Members in Attendance: Dave Duncan Rob McCoy, James Stephenson, Art Meikel, Jerry Barron, Lee Davis, Darrel Moore Shawn McCully, James Horan, Gregg Bafundo, Al Martz

WDFW Employees: Anis Aoude, Jerry Nelson, Heather Bonagofski, Ben Maletzke, Joe Stohr

Observers: An additional individual came to observe the meeting –David Cromey

Agenda Items:

Welcome/Introductions/Approval of Notes – Rob McCoy Rob called the meeting to order and introductions were made all around. Meeting notes from two previous meeting were approved: August 2017 notes were read. Dave revised his statement/changed. Rob revised his statement/changed. Notes approved and seconded. Meeting notes from December 2017 were read. Al comments will be incorporated into the notes at a later time, also Al's cougar statement. Added a statement that Jake made a recommendation that a letter from GMAC be sent to the director and cc'd to commission. Minutes approved and seconded.

Discussion about Notes- Dave wants to know if the notes can be send to the commission. Who would be responsible to send the comments to the commission. Answer: Anis is willing to deliver pertinent content to the commission if the Wolf Advisory Group are all in favor. Re: Group is concerned that the Commission does not see the group meeting notes. Agreement: Once minutes are approved, Anis will send a note to the commission as to where the link on the website is to make them more aware. Notes are not approved until the following meeting, may be a delay to get to the commission. Group will suggest specific action items to share.

Lee: Spoke to the fact that if there is a particular item of importance, at the end of the meeting, they will vote for specific action item.

James H: James has a different take due to experience, follow the chain of command, should go through the director and then to the commission.

Joe Stohr: If there are key issues he believes that some sort of post meeting note should go to the director and then he/she can pass that on to the commission.

Art: Believes Region 1 is the last one to know the important issues. Maybe a rep from each region should be at this meeting.

Anis: Will talk to the Regional managers to see what their work load would be. Additional budget costs associated with bringing regional staff to meeting.

Final Conclusion: Anis will be the key person to share if there are specific things, add a motion or action item to share with Director.

Legislative and Budget Updates – Joe Stohr: Joe Stohr shared a Power Point presentation on the legislature and budget updates. One issue is accountability. He shared on all that the department does, what we manage and how the budget really works. Where our revenue comes from and where the budget goes and does not go. Federal dollars/ three kinds of funding dollars.

Dave: Brought up the point that Pittman-Roberson/Dingell-Johnson are not from the Federal Government, they disperse it but they come from the people. Point taken and received.

Dave would like the pie changed pertaining to the slide presentation, where the federal dollars are concerned.

Presentation included current challenges: hunting/fishing license downward trend. Increased habitat conversions and environmental pressures and communication of the complex budget. Zero Based Budget: Prioritizing the money that the agency has. Also asked to look at operating costs and admin costs. Matrix Consultants did the efficiency review: Report will be presented next summer.

Cost of living increases was the largest contributor to the budget deficit. Governor approve a 6% cost of living increase.

Question: How much of the money identified in the wild future need would go to the cost of living. **Joe:** does not have an exact number roughly 60%. **Question:** how do we make up the difference? **Answer:** Options include, lay staff off or put less money into programs.

Comment: Report is hard to find on the website: **Answer:** Anis will provide a link to all GMAC members.

Department Will Submit budget package to legislature next fall – long session.

Art: Why not sell turkey tags instead of trapping and giving to charity. Need price reduction on turkey tag.

Joe: Looking at different schemes to tackle the turkeys on the east side.

Jerry B: is there anything GMAC can do to contribute to the issue

Joe: Please contribute, let us know what you think if you have time.

Dave: Discovery pass, land use, some are getting a free pass with loads of car using one parking pass. Should have one pass per individual. How to get some of their dollars into the system?

Joe: Agrees. Some non-consumption groups are willing to pay more. Some of them are on the advisory group.

Also needs to be a way we can roll good projects into bad projects and not have to use the general fund.

Joe: When we do logging, farming, etc., we get to keep that money, and apply to other projects. Commercial fishing license fees goes into the general fund.

Joe: Wraps up his presentation and is willing to come and talk with GMAC again.

Anis opens the floor for questions to Joe:

Art: Per Commission meeting – revision for R1 for Joe to review.

Predator Prey Presentation – Ben Maletzke: Ben shared a Power Point on the Predator-Prey Research Update – March 2018. Provided by Brian Kertson and Melia DeVivo.

Ungulate side-Looking at wolf, mule deer, elk and white-tailed deer and cougars. Survival, reproduction age and distribution

Collaring adult female elk and white-tailed deer. Challenge, capturing enough white-tail. All other species they have met their goal numbers. This is the second year of this study.

This is the first year really of info coming in, last year was working on getting collars out.

Cougar – Collared 15 cougars.

Wolf Captures: 8 collard last two year. 4 different packs.

Question: Why is there not a lot of information of mortality? **Answer:** Not a lot of collars currently out.

Question: When will data be done? **Answer:** Annual report every year project due to wrap up 2021.

Question: Is this online? **Answer:** We are looking into this, but want to caution that preliminary results are not complete. Working on how to best balance those needs.

Question: If you go to a cluster site and two different species have worked on a kill how do you decipher?

Answer: it is very rare for two clusters for two different species to go in the same location, also GPS will let you know what animal gets there first.

Art shared a packet about NE regional hunter group shared Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife data. Looking for increasing total harvest. gaining traction. Packet was taken to the last commission meeting.

Questions on harvesting cougars. Discussion on how we harvest, time frame, etc. Resident adult cats are considered 2 years or older. Statement: is that young ones are the ones to get in the most trouble. Hard time with the over harvest statement (over the 16%) Answer by Ben. Harvest above 16% could cause more overlap between males due to migrating. Discussion ensues about the season length per cougar hunting and Game Management Unit's.

Ben fields questions for the group.

Break for Lunch:

Wolf Update – Ben Maletzke: Ben gave an update on the status of the Wolf population. In the Power Point presentation it included, Draft #'s. *They are NOT finalized, waiting on Colville Tribe numbers.* Topics included: Recovery status, objectives, dispersal, Listing status, definitions, reports from the public, wolf population status #'s., Washington known packs, territorial nature, capture and monitoring, Trend in minimum number of wolves. Trend in number of successful breeding pair, trend in number of wolf packs, know wolf mortalities, known wolf dispersal via collard wolves, Washington wolf population summary.

Questions: Where is the reported info in the regulation book? **Ben** answered the questions

Question: Wolf Translocation bill questions?

Questions: Getting information out to public to report online to let us know where they are? Possibly a post in the local magazine, paper. Diversity of land users.

Let Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife on private lands to research.

Again, numbers are not complete or out in the public yet.

Permit Levels and Other 3-year package Discussion – Jerry and Anis

Jerry and Anis gave an update on the 3- year package.

Anis: Cougar, we are not recommending changing the season.

Dan Brinson Public Safety Cougar: The WAC as it is currently written, hasn't had the effect that it was intended to have. Has not met requirement to go forward. Problem: Allowed to hunt cougars with hounds if enough complain, but had to go with the bounds of the quota. If the season closed. Recommendation – have a season to train hounds.

Committee took the language out of the WAC to allow training of hounds. Recommendations by hounds-men not to train hounds in an area that is largely populated. Looking at direction from stakeholders, focus into permit program to train dogs. Dan looked at the language, took considerations, implemented different language to get what was agreed on. Working dog owner could apply for a training permit. Time of year, location, etc. then issue a permit. Gives dog owners a more professional organization and image with minimal standards. Similar to the Master Hunter background set. Double checking with AGs office to make sure that it is moving along and good to go. Time to pause and do some extra work. Work w/ stakeholders/legislature to expand a little bit of exceptions that includes a chase situation instead of a kill situation.

Won't be in the 3-year package, but can be submitted anytime. Could be next year.

Nothing has changed in terms of responding to a dangerous cougar.

WAC -Night hunting of bob cats – only limits night hunting in a certain Game Management Unit

Bob cat sealing dates to match up

Bear test, limited it to eight GMUs–only the GMUs that you are likely to come in contact with a grizzly bear.

Muzzleloader 209 primer, moving forward.

Deer and Elk- specific issues w/recommendations: Jerry Nelson

2 deer season WACs

2 elk season WACs

Packets of those 4 Washington Administrative Codes dispersed. Open up the floor for questions:

Question : Are there many changes from now and what they recommended before

Answer: Changes will stand out in red ink. Info on why they have been changed

Shawn: District 8 special permits- discussing #'s for modern firearm, eliminating Archery, disabled and youth changes. Page 6 of 7 for Elk Special Permit packet. What they are not saying is they eliminated whole seasons in units. D8 was not a problem, feels like we are throwing whole thing out of whack. The net is more elk killed by different user groups. States district bio took only one year of numbers etc. Why are you reallocating to firearm and muzzleloaders?

Answer: Based on your comment, we made these changes, making sure you are aware. Some of the Game Management Unit pertain to two different herds. All of the resource issue is more to do with the Yakima herd. Other GMUs have not changed.

Dave: Archers came in by the thousands and pushed the elk herd all over.

Also, the herd had constant pressure with muzzleloader and modern.

Jerry: Look at elk general season, page 5. Early archery, GMUs that we are calling Colockum 328,329 334 335. First 2 dropped antlerless, last 2 added them in.

Other Game Management Units special permits were taken out, heard feedback from the public, it was a mistake to remove them. Seeing low numbers on calf counts, bulls, spikes.

Statement: Master hunter #'s should be included

Statement: Early archery, muzzleloader puts too much pressure on the herd, disperses them all over for the regular season

Shawn voiced his problem with archer permits. Elk and loss of elk opportunity.

Dave: argues the pressure on the elk and they end up on the valley floor

Shawn is talking about numbers and allocation, archers are getting the bad end of it.

Dave: Would like to see no kills by depredation or master hunters. We need to find a way "not give the archers the shaft, that's your words" but also not chase the elk off the hill.

Shawn: Muzzleloaders are pushing the elk down? Does not believe that DFW is giving the hunters "opportunity" to harvest or even see a deer/elk.

Anis: Opportunity is the opportunity to hunt.

Statement: Archers are not going to buy elk tags, WDFW are going to see a loss in revenue, is it a money issue?

Anis: No it is not a money issue. That does not play into our decision making. We are looking at biological data, success rates and recommendations from regional staff.

Jerry: Take a look at adjusting muzzleloader/archer numbers

Dave: There is more to managing elk than resource allocation.

Shawn: One way to fix this, give 400 archery permits for the area- possibly kill 50% may get our numbers back.

Dave: You could try it, monitor to see how the elk get scattered

Jerry: Understanding what he is suggesting? Are you talking 400 in 328 or 329?

Shawn: Just 328 and 329. Still have the Yakima issue, thinks harvest will go down there too. This is the biggest season change we have had in a long time.

Lee: The numbers you had the last few years were because the elk population was huge, this is not a guarantee every season.

Anis: We will take all of your info into consideration and take it back to our staff.

Shawn will email his numbers to Anis.

Dave: Throw the master hunter numbers into it as well.

Lee: Master hunters need mandatory hunting, and should pinpoint on a map where they harvested.

Anis: What master hunters are you talking about, master hunters do need to report. The numbers are in the harvest. If it is a draw permit it is reported.

Jerry: General season for master hunter, they report, just not pulled out as specific harvest. 3911

Dave: 3911 created to solve a problem, it is not solving a problem. Not hunting just shooting elk. It needs some examination in the process. Is it 200, 300 elk that are killed? Depredation is 200 because that is how many tags that are issued. All inter related.

Monitor the effect and change the numbers as the years go along

Shawn: I think you have cherry picked the archers, I don't hear you talking about muzzleloaders and modern.

Anis/Jerry: will go once again back and touch this topic again.

Al: Elk general page 4 – five day gap between closing of modern and late white tail. We would like to see the five days added back to modern elk season. Going from 9-14 days. Mentioned this every year for the last five years.

Anis: Asked if they have talked to the regional folks. Al has not heard back from them.

Anis: We will look at that.

Al: White tail has been shortened.

Anis: Five days no one is hunting, maybe a good thing, maybe a bad thing, depends on who you ask.

Jerry: We are managing a little more conservative and now we're hearing from some landowners that we have too many elk.

Deer Season

Al: District 1 – Deer #'s are in the toilet. Entire district. Last year youth and disabled two weekends only. This year giving youth and disabled four days. Antlerless Does. Would like to see the same structure as last year.

Comments: 124 ok. 121 needs help 108, 111 saw twice as many does as usual.

Al: So many guys up there saying they are not even hunting this year. 10-225 antlerless permits this season. We don't need any of them. Whose idea was it to add all of these antlerless permits?

Jerry: Regional recommendations. They want to put opportunity back with the archers and muzzleloaders.

Al: Who is saying that we have all the deer, Spokane or Colville office?

Jerry: Colville

Al: Why not land owner permits

Jerry: we do

Comment, you won't find deer up high. They are all down at the alfalfa fields

Jerry: Check stations asking did you kill on private or public land. Numbers from 2013 to 2016 are very similar. Disputes the comments that we don't have any deer on public land.

Al: That's interesting, I have worked those check stations, hunters do not even know what Game Management Unit they were on. How are they supposed to know if they are on public or private lands?

Question: last year reduced hunts

Anis: that is because of specific biological issues.

Rob: Just a huge jump for what we had to where we are.

Jerry: Deer comments general season this topic, counted and there were 6. Special permits, probably same boat.

Discontent on population and numbers for the future.

Al: Last thought if you are going to kill off all of these doe's give the youth an opportunity.

Al: One more comment, John Magert asked to state lowest deer numbers he as ever seen.

That's what he is hearing, everyone he talks to.

Lee: In an area that is heavy with wolf, a hunter will need to shift their area to hunt.

Wrap up – Anis and Rob

Rob: We do appreciate Region 6 reaching out to the tribes regarding antlerless elks. GMAC letter to go the director and cc'd to the commission. Passed around to get approval to have the letter sent.

Comments: typo

Lee -Motion to approve - Al second zero opposed. Rob will send the corrected letter to Tami Lininger

Is there an action item from this meeting that need to be viewed by the Commission?: No comment

Anis: Would anyone in the group be willing to take notes? **James Horan** has volunteered to take notes for June. GMAC approved.

Agenda Items for June 2, 2018:

- 3-year package summary
- Predator Prey update
- Update on wolves
- Wolf Advisory Group update
- Black Bear –expanding hunting
- Highly sot after hunts that cannot go on them, how to handle that. Should there be a mechanism? Philosophy from this group.
- Small game discussion – upland quail

Adjourn