

## Game Management Advisory Council (GMAC) Meeting Notes

June 2, 2018

WCA Boardroom  
1301 N Delray Road  
Ellensburg, WA 98926

**Members present:** Shawn McCully, Jerry Barron, Dave Ingham, Al Martz, Dave Duncan, Bill Essman, James Stephenson, James Horan, and Warren Gimlin.

**WDFW staff present:** Anis Aoude, Donny Martorello, Brian Kertson, Paul Whelan via Skype, Ben Maletzke.

**Approval of notes:** Anis led the review of notes from the March 2018 meeting. Motion to approve, seconded, approved. Anis said once the notes are approved by GMAC he sends them to the WDFW Director and posts on the WDFW website as requested at our previous meeting.

### **Predator prey presentation (Brian Kertson):**

- Effects of predators on ungulates:
  - collared 102 mule deer - met target in Okanogan study area
  - collared 56 elk - met target
  - collared 30 white tail deer – poor conditions, mild winter, exploring alternative capture methods
- Status of monitoring ungulates: presented chart showing capture, harvest, depredation, illegal, road kill, disease, and predation, unknown. Iridium uplink of mortality signal to satellites very slow.
- Moose study: Anis to set up presentation for future GMAC meeting.
- Cougar captures (NE WA):
  - 29 total captured, all in GMU 117 except one adult female
  - 8 adult females, 3 adult males, 4 sub adult females, 2 sub adult males
  - A lot of missed opportunities because cat chased onto private property land, so access issues getting permission from many multiple owners.
- Cougar captures (Okanogan):
  - 20 total captured in several GMU's
  - 7 adult females
  - 5 adult males
  - 4 sub adult females
  - Good distribution throughout the area.
- Current cougar monitoring:
  - NE WA, 12 active collars
  - Okanogan, 10 active collars
- Mortality: Brian showed a graph of hunting, conflict, starvation, strife, unknown.

- Wolf capture – monitoring:
  - Install GPS units on 2 wolves per pack.
  - There are 9 collars in research packs (Stranger, Dirty Shirt, Carpenter Ridge, Loup Loup).
  - Current emphasis is huckleberry and Look Out.
  - Stranger has 1 GPS, Carpenter Ridge has 2 GPS, Loup Loup has 1 GPS.
- Carnivore prey use as of May 31, 2018 chart: WTD, Mule Deer, Unknown Deer, Elk, Moose, Other.
- Upcoming activities:
  - Continue to monitor WDFW in cooperation or coordination with University of Washington (UW).
  - Fawn and calf captures – lead is UW.
  - Carnivore cluster visits – lead is UW.
  - Kitten captures – lead is WDFW.
  - Cameras – lead is UW.
- Quantitative investigations:
  - Camera grids set up to model predator – prey dynamics, re ungulates vs. carnivores, ungulates risk modeling and behavior changes, multi species occupancy models (helps look at black bear populations and densities).
  - Time to detection.
  - Densities.
  - Field work begins next month.
- Mesocarnivores issues:
  - UW is the lead.
  - Looking at bobcats, coyotes, etc.
  - What is the impact of large carnivores on coyotes and bob cats re facilitation, suppression, etc.
  - Considering GPS collars, space use, prey use, population dynamics.
  - Work starts in the coming months.
  - No mortality from wolves.
  - All facets up and running.
  - Carnivore component on track.
  - Collar performance has hindered some aspects of study re ungulate mortality investigation (data uplinks show) carnivore clusters also shown by cameras.
- Cougar habitat:
  - Need to consider “forest” as cougar habitat.
  - They are generally not seen at high elevation where there is no food for some of their prey.
  - They can be seen in riparian drainages in sagebrush areas, also in aspen and cottonwood locations, though usually excluded in agricultural areas such as open fields and orchards.
  - They basically follow the food supply.
  - There may be long term changes in cougar ranges due to climate warming, changing forest management and agricultural practices.
- Discussion of density to harvest quota:

- Dept has plans to relook at how harvest data tells them about number of cougars.
- Does public safety figure into model? Yes.
- The cougar harvest now is 2.5 times more now without dogs.
- Camera data by citizens is anecdotal, not rigorous science, but over time may suggest changes in animal behavior and needs to be followed up on. Landscape changes re forest management practices, new housing developments, fire, etc may likely cause animals to move individually and or in concentrations.
- WDFW thinks population of cougars statewide is probably stable despite increase in harvest.
- Vast majority of cougar harvest is during deer and elk modern firearm seasons.
- Some personal experiences of GMAC members is a lot more cougars being seen and or cougar evidence (tracks in snow, etc).
- All recognize that changes in forest management practices from clear cutting to selective cutting, road management have affected cougar populations and movement in the landscape.
- Game Management Plan guides populations at risk.
- Brian thinks results of study will provide excellent data on ungulate populations and should lead to desired results.
- Need to manage “ecosystems” not just single species.
- There is a legislative mandate to this research.

**Web map demonstration (Paul Whelan):**

- Need internet connection to access at present.
- Includes a survey monkey for users to give feedback to WDFW.
- Shows seasons for big game, small game, migratory birds.
- Shows public land distribution, GMU’s, and private land opportunities.
- Draws boundaries
- Can select categories: deer archery, shows locations in state, and select permit hunts
- Topo map shows USFS roads, habitat types.
- Shows regulations.
- This is the second year it has been available.
- WDFW is working on a standalone phone application.

**Wolf advisory group (WAG) update (Donny Martorello):**

- Background:
  - Started in 2013.
  - Had a rocky start due to such divergent interests.
  - Included environmentalists, livestock producers, hunters,
  - Developed protocol on how Dept deals with predators on livestock.
  - Now refocusing efforts on wolf management after delisting.
  - 20+ packs fill in plus NE WA very similar to Oregon and Idaho.
  - WDFW wants to start next wolf management plan.
  - Summarizing of work of Peace Building Group to facilitate discussions.
  - Big part of renewing the plan is WDFW needs to hear from constituents especially hunters about the process to update the plan.

- Hunters are very diverse by type of firearm, location, family experience, etc.
- How does the dept reach out to get input?
- Looking for much more meaningful dialog.
- Will start officially soon.
- Post delisting plan should consider science and local knowledge including what we have learned through wolf movements since the first plan was drafted.
- A lot of dissention in Wolfe Advisory Committee (WAG) and concerns about WDF internal staff with interests/responsibilities wolf group (WIG) overpowering WAG discussions.
- A lot of major stressors in WAG dealing with issues and the dept.
- Question for GMAC: what process does GMAC want to be involved and how does WDFW reach out to hunters?
- Comments:
  - Why is our plan more considerate than other states?
  - Why are not dispersing into other areas under the plan?
  - What will the dept do to address over abundance in some areas and under abundance in other areas?
  - Addressed the science forced on public on distribution needs for wolves/genetics.
  - Science at WAG meeting also concerning.
  - Don't need to go back to the public ie. got good people already.
  - Does science need to be readdressed?
  - Need to move to goal oriented – science needs to be adaptive.
  - Science is being used as a weapon – sides can pick their science.
  - Trust a major issue, rural communities lost a lot of trust in last 2 WAG meetings.
  - Trust issue re cattlemen a major issue.
  - Trust in general has to be dealt with.
  - Schedule WDFW Commission meetings not in conflict with citizen's ability to attend ie on weekends and in the evening.
  - Most folks think the dept is just going to do what they want no matter what folks want.
  - Face book page loaded with negative comments about WDFW.
  - Tolerance for wolves on the landscape going down not up.
  - Dept needs to describe how it thinks its following the original plan e.g. don't know how many ungulates there are so how can they follow the plan?
  - The dept needs to justify why we have the agency and why we need to manage wolves.
  - Some stakeholders want wolves to displace hunters because they are anti hunting. Use wolves to manage hunting not hunters.
  - WDFW needs to place emphasis on certain types of stakeholders i.e. folks out in the resource.
  - Some stakeholders are more invested in the issue.
  - Survey on opinions already done 10 years ago.

- Dept should get back to original mandate not saying don't want wolves, but don't want to lose our wildlife re manage all wildlife.
- How can GMAC be involved:
  - More voice to the WDFW Commission – GMAC doesn't carry enough weight.
  - Have the opportunity to review the post-delisting plan prior to public comment.
  - Hunters and livestock most directly affected.
  - Help build the sausage.
  - Wolves are presumed to be a game species eventually.
  - Game species will be a hot button topic. It's about ungulate opportunity.
  - Need to think about diversity of our voice.
  - All groups have a bell curve of opinions. And, there outliers.
  - There are 2 GMAC members on WAG and we hope that continues.
  - Have to try to represent the center of the bell curve.
  - Need for WAG to work without WIG.
  - Idea to have chair of GMAC to annually report annually directly to WDFW Commissioners on status of discussions, issues, and recommendations.
  - Donny's flip charts should be attached to more accurately reflect comments.

**Wolfe update (Ben Maletzke):**

- Listing status Federal and state.
- Description of pack and successful breeding pairs.
- Territoriality and movements – 350 square miles.
- He had information on tracking wolves, citing reports, depredation reports, and surveys by camera, tracks and howling, and captures.
- Capture and monitoring activities by recoveries by regions, successful breeding of pairs, minimum counts, livestock depredation.
- Known number of wolf packs as of 12/31/2017 was 22.
- Dept would like to get pics of wolves where a pack exists.
- Trend of more number of wolves is just natural progression.
- Trend of breeding pairs is same.
- Trend of wolf packs is same.
- Mortalities are low.
- A discussion occurred about the protocol and lawsuit related to Sherman pack.
- Discussion about breeding pairs and how they relate to total population size.

**Zero based budget presentation (Anis Aoude):**

- Attach presentation.

**Discussion spurred by the ZBB presentation of raising hunter fees to support costs of WDFW Wildlife Program (GMAC members):**

- We think we understand that hunter fees if dedicated solely to the Wildlife Program would substantially support program costs. But, some of those fees are used by the dept to support non wildlife programs.
- After discussion of the concern that GMAC feels strongly that hunter fees should be directed solely to the Wildlife Program to support program costs that support hunting, the GMAC moved to oppose any hunting license fee/permit increase and recommend development of a letter to go to the legislature and the WDFW Commission noting their position. Motion approved and asked Shawn to draft language and work with the Council Chair to consider at next Council meeting.

**Point restoration discussion (Anis Aoude):**

- Anis reviewed the options with Council experiences.
- Idea was to get points back if hunter drew for multiple permits based on applications but had reason to choose one hunt over another and or couldn't go hunting.
- After discussion, motion was to have dept establish method to refund for any reason points for tags turned in 30 days prior to the start of the hunting season and reissue that tag to the alternate pool. Seconded. Approved.

**Permit bundling (Anis Aoude):**

- Anis showed several options and alternatives.
- Anis to send to GMAC for comment so members can poll their groups as to what they think works.

**Next meeting:**

- Agenda items:
  - Moose presentation.
  - Points presentation – need to have another subcommittee meeting before the GMAC meeting to get ready.
  - Deer predator update.
  - Antelope update/discussion about reintroducing to WA.
  - New WDFW Director update/invite to GMAC.
  - Update of WDFW decision packages.

**Adjourn:** 4:05 pm.