



MASTER HUNTER ADVISORY GROUP

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Notes for MHAG Meeting #55
March 11, 2022 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Teams Meeting

MHAG Members		WDFW Staff	Guests
Region 2	Ray Boone	David Whipple, Hunter Education Division Manager	
	Carissa Craghead, Secretary		
Region 3	Jonathan Barr	Kris Thorson, Hunter Education Division Specialist	
	Wes Clogston		
	John McAuliffe, Vice Chair	Aaron Garcia, Region 3 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Kyle Smith		
Region 4	David Floyd	Jackie McBride, Region 4 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Jeff Larsen, Chair		
	Ian Stewart	Amy Elliott, Region 5 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
Region 5	George Dennis		
	Keith Pfeifer	Bill Montgomery, Region 6 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
Region 6	Michael Bartoldo	Kyle Garrison, Ungulate section Manager	
	Jim Gleiter		
	David Ward	Joel Sisolak, Lands Planning, Recreation and Outreach Section Manager	
		Jen Mannas, Wildlife Rehabilitation and Falconry Manager	

Procedural Business

- **Call to order and announcements (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
- **Introduction of members and guests (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**

New Business

- **Region 1 and 4 Hunter Education Field and Volunteer Coordinator positions (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - The region 1 hunter education field coordinator retired in August 2021.
 - WDFW decided to shift that position from a 40 percent employee that was exclusively hunter education focused to a full-time position.
 - The full-time position has 75 percent of their time dedicated to hunter education and 25 percent of their time dedicated to the Master Hunter Permit Program.
 - After the recruitment and interview process, the position was offered to Steve Dazey and he accepted.
 - Steve worked as the coordinator for both regions 1 and 4 starting in November while the department recruited for a region 4 coordinator.
 - The recruitment for the region 4 coordinator was posted in early December and ran through the end of December.
 - WDFW conducted interviews in January.
 - After the interview process, WDFW offered the region 4 position to Jackie McBride.
 - Jackie's first day was on March 1.
 - Kris asked Jackie to introduce herself to the group.
 - Jackie has been a longtime hunter in Washington.
 - She has been hunting and/or guiding since she was 14.
 - She is going to be working with shooting organizations to enhance recruitment and retention efforts.
 - With Jackie's hiring, Hunter Education is now fully staffed again.
- **MHAG recruitment debrief (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - The recruitment was to fill seats in region 3, 4, an at large position and two region 6 seats.
 - After the recruitment period closed, Ray Boone asked Dave and Kris to list his seat as he feels that he does not have the energy to give his full attention to MHAG and the Master Hunters of Washington at this time.
 - At that time the recruitment was reopened to advertise for the region 2 seat.
 - The second recruitment was open from February 4 through February 21.
 - There were 11 total applicants to MHAG in 2022.
 - Three current members applied.
 - No region 1 or region 2 Master Hunters applied.
 - The subcommittee met on March 1 to discuss the applicants.
 - The recruitment subcommittee was comprised of John McAuliffe, Carissa Craghead, George Dennis, Kris Thorson, and Dave Whipple.
 - Kris and the group congratulated the current members who were in attendance who were reappointed.

- **Report on 2021 Master Hunter Hoof Disease Permits (Kyle Garrison, 30 minutes)**
 - Kyle is the acting ungulate section lead but usually is the western Washington ungulate specialist.
 - Kyle gave a quick overview of Treponeme-associated hoof disease.
 - There are currently two components of the incentive program such as general season and special permits for general hunters.
 - General hunters can submit their harvested elk hooves to the department at locations around the state to possibly draw a permit the following year.
 - Hunters submitted 143 sets of hooves with 134 showing signs of hoof disease.
 - Most of the collections were during modern firearm season.
 - There were sites where a lot of hooves were submitted but we also had sites where no hooves were submitted.
 - The Master Hunter Special Permit was also offered in 2021 to target specific locations in western Washington.
 - There were 40 permits issued in 2021 with 18 pairs of hooves submitted.
 - Sixteen of the seventeen had hoof disease.
 - Of those 17 that were reissued permits, eight were able to harvest a second animal with seven of those showing signs of hoof disease.
 - The program may remove the ability to reissue the permit as it has been very difficult on staff in regards to reporting.
 - Hunters found more access on some private lands because they identified they were specifically targeting hoof disease elk.
 - John asked if hoof disease was an international issue now and Kyle does not know if British Columbia has issues but a disease similar to this was first discovered in European cattle and has spread to North American cattle in the 70s and 80s.
 - Wes asked if we knew how long the bacteria is active in the soil to possibly infect new animals on the landscape.
 - This is one of the next steps that the WSU veterinarians are going to research but currently it is not known.
 - Kyle Smith had a question on what kinds of treatments the cattle industry has used to halt the spread.
 - The industry uses chemical baths to cure animals who have digital dermatitis or remove the animal to a holding pen to administer topical ointments.
 - There are some antibiotics that have some level of effectiveness, but it would be extremely hard to do on wild ranging animals.
 - Dave Ward was able to hunt on the hoof disease permit and harvested a younger cow with hoof disease, was reissued a permit and harvested another elk with hoof disease later in the permit season.
 - Ray asked about the feeding stations and if WDFW has thought about treating the soil to mitigate the possibility of spreading the disease.
 - The feeding stations are not in an area of high prevalence.
 - Keith asked if the harvest rates per hunt were stable or if it had high variability.

- Kyle didn't look at the harvest rates per hunt area, but he feels like the southeast or northwest hunt areas had better harvest rates.
 - Jeff shared a friend's experience regarding the permit hunt where his friend had extremely limited access due to Weyerhaeuser land ownership and he was not able to locate an elk with hoof disease.
 - Michael was able to hunt with the permit in 2021 but he was extremely limited on the public lands in his hunt area.
 - Michael also asked if there is a higher prevalence of younger animals having the disease compared to other animals.
 - Kyle has seen animals as young as four months have hoof disease but there is not research on prevalence in younger vs older animals.
 - Jonathan asked if Kyle thinks the Colockum herd or Selkirk herd may see this disease in the future.
 - Kyle thinks that these herds will probably have to deal with this disease in the future.
 - David Floyd asked what the prevalence was in Skagit and Whatcom counties.
 - It was detected in 2015 or 2016 but there is not a lot of elk harvest in those areas and harvest rate is used as the baseline for prevalence.
 - Ray asked if the disease is only effect hooves vs paws.
 - This disease is only known to occur in elk.
- **2021 budget request and legislative news/update (David Whipple, 15 minutes)**
 - Budget Update
 - The legislative session ended on March 10, 2022, and specific details about WDFW's budget are not yet available.
 - However, overall WDFW did well in the Supplemental Budget (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023) for new and enhanced work in certain areas.
 - Last session, an issue linked to WDFW's request to split the Wildlife State fund to reduce confusion and improve transparency.
 - Ultimately, legislative or implementation changes inadvertently provided one-time funding instead of the ongoing funding, which created a significant ongoing budget hole for WDFW.
 - It does not appear this issue was fixed.
 - Pittman-Robertson funding has increased significantly for next fiscal year.
 - WDFW may need to utilize some of the increased PR funding to help fix the state budget issue.
 - Some items of interest that were included in both the House and Senate operative budgets, that likely are in the final budget bill include:
 - Recreational land management
 - Wildfire habitat recovery
 - Habitat protection in solar energy projects
 - Increased elk and deer monitoring
 - Increased turkey management & access
 - Increased upland bird habitat management
 - Water access areas maintenance

- WDFW also did well in the Capital Budget, which appears to fund hatchery improvements, wildlife area fencing, property acquisition, fishing access, etc.
- Legislative Update
 - WDFW had four agency-request bills and tracked about 170 other bills that influenced WDFW or the resources we manage.
 - Dave reminded members that they can check the legislative website to find more information on bills at <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/> and entering the bill number into the search field.
 - **SB 5552 – Making hunting & fishing more accessible by removing participation barriers and providing financial incentives.**
 - This was agency request legislation, but it did not pass the legislature because other bills took priority in the short session. The bill had unanimous support all the way thru the session and hopefully it will get good support and pass next year.
 - Bill elements:
 - Align fishing and hunting youth ages at 16
 - Eliminate \$5 fee for youth fishing license
 - Allows temporary fishing license for opening day of lowland lakes
 - Allow one-time hunting license discount for hunter ed graduates
 - Removes hunter ed class 10 hours length requirement
 - Eliminates the three-year license requirement for accompanying hunters in the deferral program
 - Clarifies military exemption rules
 - Adds federal peace officers to the law enforcement exemption
 - Provides resident license rates to full-time college students whose residency is outside of Washington state.
 - Allows commission to offer new combination licenses
 - Allows DFW director to offer temporary discounts on licenses
 - **HB 1626 – WDFW electronic licenses**
 - This was also agency request legislation. It passed the legislature and was delivered to the governor.
 - It authorizes the Fish and Wildlife Commission to allow electronic cell phone-based licenses, tags, and permits.
 - Also, it allows customers to display their licenses on a mobile device.
 - **HB 1649 – Expanding Eligibility for the ADA Advisory Committee**
 - This agency request legislation passed legislature and was delivered to the governor.
 - The bill allows up to two additional advisory committee members to include individuals with all types of disabilities and experienced caregivers.
 - It will also increase the performance of the committee by providing for diverse viewpoints and experiences to be included in discussions.

- **SB 5504 – Extending discover pass free days**
 - This agency request legislation passed legislature and was delivered to the Governor.
 - This bill extends the current 12 discover pass free days from State Parks to include WDFW and DNR lands and recreation sites.
 - When practical, free days could be timed to correspond with family fishing days planned by WDFW.
 - It also authorizes a vehicle access pass to be issued for WDFW lands in conjunction with a seaweed or shellfish harvest license.
 - Expanding the existing State Parks free parking days to all state recreational lands will increase access to those lands for underrepresented communities and will reduce confusion overall for Discover Pass holders.
- **HB 1181 - Programs and measures to prevent suicide among veterans and military members.**
 - This was not agency request legislation and it would add WDFW to the suicide-safer homes task force.
 - It requires the task force, in consultation with WDFW, to develop strategies for creating and disseminating suicide awareness and prevention information for hunting safety classes, including messages to parents that can be shared during online registration, in either follow-up email communications, or in writing, or both.
- All bills concerning the Fish & Wildlife Commission and the governance of WDFW did not pass.
- **WDFW reports and updates (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - MHPP Participation statistics
 - Currently WDFW has 1,272 Master Hunters.
 - There are 100, 2019 applicants who have not completed their qualification requirements to become Master Hunters.
 - There are 46, 2021 applicants who have not completed the Master Hunter qualifications.
 - There have been five applicants from 2019 and 2021 that have been certified.
 - Field coordinator reports
 - Aaron Garcia – Region 3 Field Coordinator
 - Aaron has sent out some emails to Master Hunters regarding volunteer opportunities.
 - He is working with NWTF, INWC, Kalispel Tribe, and First Hunt Foundation on a turkey camp where new hunters can come get in-person mentoring and hunting camp experience.
 - Aaron is working on setting up one on one mentored hunts this spring with First Hunt Foundation.
 - He has also sent out some fishing mentoring opportunities to Master Hunters.

- WDFW did not participate in the sportsman shows this year because of COVID protocols.
 - He also proctored a Master Hunter exam recently.
- Jackie McBride – Region 4 Field Coordinator
 - Jackie has been working on meeting the teams and understanding the current needs vs demands of post covid teaching and what the expectations are from the groups.
 - She has been working on recruitment ideas to propose to the teams such as approaching high school seniors who need volunteer hours to become instructors.
 - Jackie has been working on making a spread sheet of different shooting events coming up in the next few months to liaison at a and make contacts.
 - She is also working on some more light duty projects like heron and fish counts as well as injured wildlife transport.
- Amy Elliott – Region 5 Field Coordinator
 - Amy is working with Rodger Wallace again this year.
 - Roger collaborates with RMEF and wildlife area managers for opportunities, and Amy has been able to send out opportunities for Mt. St. Helens, Oak Creek, and Asotin wildlife areas which will take place from March through August.
 - Amy and Region 5 Wildlife Program Manager, Sandra Jonker, will be participating in a May volunteer opportunity on the Mt. St. Helens mudflow.
 - Amy is in contact with the Cascade Forest Conservancy which has had some MH projects with positive feedback.
 - She talked with Thane Aubry, conflict specialist, and he reports generally positive feedback for Master Hunters deployed in his area.
 - Thane mentioned that there have been some issues with coordination and the 24 hour notice being an issue.
- Bill Montgomery – Region 6 Field Coordinator
 - Bill worked on a purple martin box project with Sequim
 - He also is working on setting up a pre-service training in April.
 - Bill has proctored the test a few times so far.
- **MHAG member updates and Master Hunter communications (Jeff Larsen, 10 minutes)**
 - Does anyone have anything to add?
 - Jeff has proctored three Master Hunter exams and has two more scheduled.
 - Dave Ward suggested WDFW have more engagement with Master Hunters with more limited mobility opportunities.
 - David also suggested WDFW could have a coordinator to increase these opportunities.
 - David has heard from some Master Hunters on the following topics:
 - Volunteer opportunities are a bit limited

- What's in the program for me?
 - Need incentive for Master Hunters to renew their permit
 - Suggested one preference point for Master Hunters for each year in the program
 - WDFW Police Officers didn't have good info regarding the MHPP & could use some education/coordination
 - Establish a project by region for work being done on wildlife areas where Master Hunters can log hours (CERVIS).
 - Recommended educational opportunities by WDFW to educate Master Hunters to facilitate increased knowledge of for ambassadorship.
- David also commented that WDFW should notify farms and private landowners in hoof disease areas of the issue at hand and possible solutions as well as posting about it at trailheads and high viewing areas like the parks in North Bend so the public is aware of the ability to report observations.
- Keith has had a good experience with Thayne, who has asked Keith to mentor master hunters on damage hunts but there have been no deployments yet.
- Keith noted that deployment timing is still an issue since some Master Hunters don't understand the urgency.
- Ian participated in a class with 25 students recently and got to meet Jackie in person.
- Ian heard from a Master Hunter on a damage hunt who had challenges locating where they should park and the safe shooting zones.
 - Ian thinks WDFW needs to review the peer-to-peer concept proposed in previous meetings.
- Kyle has proctored three exams so far and has four more scheduled.
- David Floyd's Term is up this year, but he wanted to let the members know that he feels privileged to have served on MHAG.
- George helped Kris rewrite some the Master Hunter exam questions applicants were consistently missing to improve clarity.
- George also served on selection subcommittee and noticed that some applicants didn't answer questions well in their letter of interest.
- George is working with Jeff, Carissa, and John McAuliffe on possible revised questions to improve the process.
- George also proctored a MH exam and is mentoring a youth hunter in Willapa.
- **COVID related updates (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
 - As you may know, the governors mask mandate will expire at midnight on March 11.
 - This means the public does not need to mask indoors unless that business or location requires it.
 - The State of Washington, as an employer, still requires employees to mask when indoors with partners, volunteers, contractors, etc. of unknown vaccination status.

- Staff are not required to mask indoors when among only other employees, or when indoors with partners or volunteers who are vaccination-verified such as non-public office areas
- WDFW staff and volunteers working outdoors with the public do not need to be masked unless there may be crowding, vaccination status of persons is unknown, or other risk factors for transmission are present.
- WDFW is preparing to reopen offices to the public on March 21.
- Volunteer projects will hopefully begin to increase due to changes in the mask mandate and the field season.
- **Injured wildlife transport project (*Jen Mannas, 45 minutes*)**
 - Jen Mannas is the Wildlife Rehabilitation and Falconry Manager.
 - She wants to build a network of volunteers to transport injured animals to wildlife rehabilitators in Washington state.
 - Jeff asked for clear guidance regarding vol hours and what would qualify.
 - WDFW is working on determining what hours would count.
 - Aaron Garcia is already using Master Hunters to transport raptors and he is encouraged WDFW is seeking a formal program.
 - Aaron believes the interest from Master Hunters will be huge (it already is for raptors).
 - Aaron identified the needs to implement the volunteer requirements like the volunteer vehicle checklist, driver abstract, etc.
 - Aaron has allowed hours between pickup up animal until they get home, but WDFW will need to clarify what hours are countable.
 - Ray asked about if there will be more rehab centers in eastern Washington.
 - The goal is to increase the number of rehabilitators in eastern Washington and there are a few people interested in obtaining a permit.
 - Amy has done some coordination of volunteers for wildlife transport and has received a large amount of interest.
 - Bill suggested Kris add this topic into the MHPP newsletter.
- **MHPP Annual Report review (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - The draft report was sent out to the MHAG members on February 25 for review.
 - The members sent a couple recommended changes in to WDFW prior to the meeting.
 - There were no other changes suggested at the meeting.
- **10-year recreation strategy for DFW-managed lands (*Joel Sisolak, 60 minutes*)**
 - Joel gave the MHAG an overview of the 10-year recreation strategy for DFW-managed lands consisting of the plan's goals, strategic initiatives, recreation planning, and education and engagement.
 - Wes cautioned about the public's ability to know and understand specific rules to use public land, especially due to the patchwork of public lands that have different regulations.
 - He also mentioned that the Green Dot Road System (GDRS) could be utilized to possibly not harm consistency with regards to road use.

- Wes was concerned about driving people away due to unintended consequences and Joel agreed with the need to coordinate across different land managers, and that element is called out as a need in the plan.
- Joel has been hearing from others that the GDRS works well and WDFW is looking at expanding that along with other agencies.
- Joel also agreed with trying to be aligned with other agencies on rules, as well as simplifying rules to the extent possible.
- Keith asked how can WDFW expect improved conformance to the rules without prosecutors dealing out punishments?
 - Joel responded that prosecutorial practices vary across the state, but rules are also important as a deterrent and to educate people who want to do the right thing.
- Jeff was impressed with the breadth of the rec plan and offered to be a resource to help shape policy and increase participation in volunteer or Master Hunter projects on WDFW lands.
- He also supports the link of the Rec Plan to R3 because access is especially important for R3 due to reduced access to private lands, especially for hunting.
- Jeff noted that since hunting is seasonal, WDFW should be sure to take that into account for rec planning.
 - Joel has heard some public suggestions to consider “reserving” certain WDFW lands for hunting in those seasons.
- Ian was concerned about the preservation vs. conservation terminology used in the plan.
- **WDFW direction on orientations, online trainings, etc. (*Kris Thorson and Bill Montgomery, 15 minutes*)**
 - WDFW has held orientations for Master Hunters in the past and they have been well received.
 - WDFW plans to resume having orientations moving forward.
 - There was support from MHAG to continue the orientations as well as possibly requiring the orientations to become mandatory.
 - We discussed the possibility of recording an orientation to then provide it digitally for applicants and the public.
 - Bill has taken over the lead on Master Hunter orientations statewide.
 - Kris will continue to assist with the orientations PowerPoint and providing technical support for these orientations.
 - Keith voiced support for the orientations because they are critical and should include conflict specialists and WDFW Police.
 - He feels the orientations help reduce Master Hunter issues, create comradery, connect to damage hunt mentors, and more.
 - Keith suggested WDFW record the orientations for Master Hunters who cannot attend.
 - Ray suggested creating an online review of the specific hunts (e.g. 3911) including reasons for hunts, creating knowledge of how to hunt the unit, etc.
 - Jeff echoed Keith’s opinion on live and/or recorded orientations.

- He has participated in two orientations that had a very good cross section of exiting Master Hunters and candidates, peer-to-peer, ethics, etc.
- Jeff noted that he thinks the orientations provide critical training and need a WDFW Police presence.
- Jeff also thinks the orientations should be required for certification.
- George supports Keith and Jeff's comments and thinks at least one MHAG member should attend every in-person orientation.
- He also believes the orientations should be required to be certified.
- Wes supports in-person orientations because he feels the orientation he went to was very beneficial.
- Ian agrees the orientations are critical and MHAG members should attend.
- John supports in-person orientations and if WDFW decides to require the orientation we may need to schedule these on a regular basis.
- David Floyd is willing to assist at orientations even after his term is over.
- Aaron made the comment that WDFW should hold the orientations early, if required, so applicant's expectations for the program are realistic.
- Bill noted that WDFW will need help from MHAG because staff are busy early in the year.
- Amy commented that if WDFW decides to record versions it would be nice to have a recorded version from each region for applicants to see their MHAG members, WDFW Police, conflict staff, biologists, etc. from their region.
 - George and Jeff fully support that concept.
- Carissa suggested if the orientations are required and recorded per region, there needs to be a certificate of completion.
- Amy suggested a Google Doc quiz at end of recorded training to make sure they were paying attention.

Conclusion

- **Recap action items (*Carissa Craghead, 5 minutes*)**
- **Agenda topics for June 10 meeting (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
 - MH lost opportunities and a presentation from Jim Brown, Conflict section lead.
 - Orientations
 - Follow-up on Jen's presentation, especially re: administrative topics (hours, mileage reimbursement, vol requirements, etc.)
- **Good of the order (*All; General discussion items by MHAG, 5 minutes*)**
 - George asked if the department was planning on hosting a NHFD event in 2023?
 - The plan is to host the event in 2023 in the Spokane area.
 - Jeff thanked everyone for their time today and urged suggestions for agenda items.
- **Adjourn**