



# **MASTER HUNTER ADVISORY GROUP**

## **WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

**Notes for MHAG Meeting #57**  
**March 10, 2023 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**  
**Teams Meeting**

<b>MHAG Members</b>		<b>WDFW Staff</b>	<b>Guests</b>
Region 2	Carissa Craghead, Secretary (Excused)	Kris Thorson, Hunter Education Section Specialist	
Region 3	Jonathan Barr	Steve Dazey Region 1 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Wes Clogston		
	John McAuliffe, Vice Chair		
	Kyle Smith		
Region 4	Jeff Fjelstul	Jackie McBride, Region 4 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Jeff Larsen, Chair		
	Ian Stewart		
Region 5	George Dennis	Amy Elliott, Region 5 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Keith Pfeifer		
	Dean Thornberry		
Region 6	Michael Bartoldo	Bill Montgomery, Region 6 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Vacant		
	David Ward (excused)		
	Gary Tennison		
		Kelly Riordan, R3 State Hunting Coordinator	
		David Whipple, Hunter Education Section Manager	

## Procedural Business

- **Call to order and announcements (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
- **Introduction of members and guests (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
  - Kris introduced Kelly Riordan as the new Hunting R3 Coordinator.
  - Kelly is working on clinics and promoting hunting and R3 within the state.
  - He started on February 1.
  - He will begin engaging Master Hunters for a lot of the projects and clinics that he is going to work on in the future.

## New Business

- **MHPP Orientations Update (*Bill Montgomery, 30 minutes*)**
  - Bill has given several orientations this spring.
  - He gave an orientation at the sports show in Puyallup.
  - There were 47 people at the Puyallup show.
  - Bill has an orientation at the Big Horn show in Spokane next weekend.
  - He had a lot of comments from attendees that thought the orientation was good information.
  - Gary had some folks come up to him after the presentation asking for more information on the program.
  - Jeff suggested we review the orientations during the workplan process.
- **WDFW reports and updates (*Kris Thorson, 45 minutes*)**
  - MHPP Participation statistics
    - As of March 7, 2023, there are 1,192 certified Master Hunters.
    - In 2022 there were 70 people who applied to the MHPP.
    - Of those 70, nine have completed all the requirements and been certified as a Master Hunter.
    - Since the MHAG reviewed the test questions in January, there have been 48 test attempts.
    - Of those 48, 27 passed the test.
    - That is a 56 percent pass rate.
    - One applicant has taken the test twice and did not pass the test.
  - Field coordinator reports
    - Steve Dazey – Region 1 Field Coordinator
      - Steve virtually attended a seminar on women in hunting and R3.
      - He is working on National Hunting and Fishing Day.
      - Steve is working on getting Master Hunters to do wood duck boxes for region 1 and has had a lot of positive response.
      - Steve has sent a request out to Master Hunters to volunteer at the Big Horn Show.
    - Aaron Garcia – Region 3 Field Coordinator
      - Aaron and Steve met with a Yakima tribal enforcement officer who wants to start doing hunter education classes on the reservation.
      - Aaron has a lot of pre-service trainings planned for instructors.

- He is working on the spring turkey camp that will be taking place in April.
- Currently Aaron has 30 mentees and 27 mentors signed up for the turkey camp.
- Aaron has a low impact project he is working on with a wildlife identification project.
- Jackie McBride – Region 4 Field Coordinator
  - Jackie is working with the Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group on the I-90 elk fencing project.
  - She is also working with Conservation Northwest on another I-90 elk fencing project.
  - She is working with an Enumclaw producer on an elk fencing project for the conflict staff.
  - Jackie has three new Master Hunters going through the process to become hunter education instructors.
  - She talked with two Master Hunters who are coming up on their first rectification and they had no idea about First Hunt Foundation or that mentoring could also be anything other than taking someone to hunt for their first time
  - Jackie is working at the Ducks Unlimited Youth Day in May.
  - She is still waiting on an answer back on a low impact project.
  - Jackie and Kelly are going to work on some region 4 R3 events including a clinic for “I harvested it now, what do I do with it” probably sometime in late July or early August).
  - She is also pre-planning for a dyke replanting at Skagit in late summer with Greg Meis where the department will need over 300 trees planted.
- Amy Elliott – Region 5 Field Coordinator
  - Amy had a pond turtle project come up recently.
  - She was working on a project on steelhead monitoring but did not have any volunteers.
  - Amy sent out two opportunities this last week.
  - She has been working with a local school on some volunteer projects but WDFWs requirements for youth volunteers are very limited.
  - Amy is working with the region 5 staff on a plan to continue pheasant releases in case the current volunteer base is not able to continue releasing pheasants.
- Bill Montgomery – Region 6 Field Coordinator
  - Bill has held some MHPP program orientations around the state.
  - He has an upcoming orientation at the Big Horn Show in Spokane.
  - Bill is also working with Shelly Ament on another round of purple martin boxes.

- He is working on starting classes with the Quinault, Nisqually, and Chehalis tribes.
    - He has been working with the region 6 MHAG members on local meetings with conflict staff.
    - Bill worked at the native plant sale last weekend and it was an interesting event where he talked about the Master Hunter Permit Program to some of the attendees.
  - COVID related updates
    - Dave had a quick update to provide.
    - The department of Labor and Industries is lifting the mask requirement for medical facilities on April 3.
    - The federal declaration of emergency currently is scheduled to expire on May 11.
    - Due to the state Health Emergency Labor Standards Act (HELSEA), a legislative bill passed in 2021, the federal declaration has trickle-down effects on Washington Dept. of Labor and Industries (L&I) worker protections that have implications for employers with 50 or more employees.
    - Dave has had discussions with WDFW's human resources about the L and I requirements on masks in health care facilities termination and if it will alter WDFW volunteers COVID requirements.
  - MHPP Volunteer Survey
    - WDFW is doing some survey work with its volunteers.
    - The volunteer program wants to see how we can improve the volunteer experience and what we can do to retain volunteers.
    - There were three separate surveys sent out, one to Master Hunters, one to Hunter Education Instructors, and one to general volunteers.
    - If you haven't done it already, please feel free to take the survey.
    - It will give WDFW more actionable information on the volunteer program moving forward.
    - Kris will add an informational report on the survey responses to the next agenda.
- **MHAG Strategic Plan Discussion (*Kris Thorson, 60 minutes*)**
  - Kris sent out the draft starting language for the strategic plan for everyone to review.
  - Were there any suggested changes to the introductory language?
    - Wes was pleased to hear that there were more volunteer opportunities within WDFW but would like to see some of this in the strategic plan.
  - What kinds of strategies do we want to include in the strategic plan?
    - How can the Master Hunters work to help the conflict staff.
      - Checking areas for the conflict staff to minimize the windshield time to check traps, field areas, etc.
    - Increase the number of Master Hunters who are mentors within the state.

- Michael suggested increasing the exposure of Master Hunters to hunter education classes and help message with program and what it is about.
- Dean suggested a public outreach plan on the program.
- Jeff is going to talk with the Instructor Advisory Committee in July about bridging the gap of Master Hunters in the classroom.
- Dave suggested we incorporate the R3 Plan as part of the strategies.
- Kris suggested adding in the strategies supporting the R3 plan and Agency 25-year strategic plan where able.
- Ian suggested we add in working directly working with conflict staff to both increase use of master hunters and increase the conflict staff happiness with the MH's performance.
- Wes thinks we need to increase our contact with the conflict specialists as our work revolves around their work and creating a more open dialogue with the conflict staff would be good.
- Jeff Fjelstul met with the region 4 conflict staff, and they were mostly happy with the program, but they also had some incidents where the Master Hunter behaviors were poor and reflected negatively on the program.
  - He looked back at the 2007 orientation information he had on hand and the same performance issues are still occurring.
  - A discussion at the region 4 meeting had to do about the situations where the conflict staff have highly sensitive areas where they are not confident using a Master Hunter whom they are unfamiliar with in those situations.
- George suggested we put our accomplishments out to the public to promote the good the program is doing for Washington's wildlife.
  - Kris suggested adding those stories on positive MH success stories to MyWDFW.
- John suggested we also promote the bad issues to Master Hunters and highlight negative behaviors to not emulate in the newsletter.
- Amy has heard from the region 5 conflict staff and they have had multiple Master Hunters who declined an opportunity because it was not within their immediate area and the conflict staff want to know what they can do to mitigate this issue.
- Amy also had discussions with regional staff where a Master Hunter was cited or charged for a fish and wildlife infraction but was either not prosecuted or plead to a lesser non-fish and wildlife violation that would necessitate a suspension, but the issue still causes a negative image of the MHPP.
- Jeff proposed that we add in the newsletter information on what the damage permits are, what the expectations are, what the requirements are, etc.
- Gary asked if there was a way to put a list together of different ideas and vet the list based on their merits vs issues.

- How long do we want to have the strategic plan?
  - Wes thinks that the strategic plan should be a 5-10 year plan.
  - George and Dean think 5 years would be a good target.
  - The group settled on a 5-year plan.
- **MHAG member updates and Master Hunter communications (*Jeff Larsen, 10 minutes*)**
  - Does anyone have anything to add?
  - Jeff has proctored a few tests and has talked to the applicants about the program.
  - Kyle has proctored a few tests, helped at the sport show in Tri-cities, and he contacted the local conflict staff member to determine how the program is working currently.
  - Dean worked at the Portland show with Amy and fielded a lot of questions on the Hunter Education Program.
- **Lunch (*30 minutes*)**
- **NHFD Update (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
  - WDFW has had several team meetings on NHFD.
  - The invites to the participating non-government organizations (NGOs) was sent out at the end of February to most groups.
  - Kris is still working on getting the correct information for some NGOs.
  - Currently we have commitments from the Boy Scouts of America, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Operation Lifesaver, Washington Department of Agriculture bug display, Spokane Fly tiers, Puget Sound Knappers, Backcountry Horsemen, WDFW enforcement, and WDFW Invasive species unit.
  - WDFW recently applied for a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation grant for safety equipment and ammunition for the event.
  - WDFW will be allowed to shoot .22, 20-gauge, air rifles, bb guns, and archery at the event.
  - There is no high-power range available for .223.
  - Steve has reached out to the Shriners hospital, different youth groups in the area, and area schools to invite youth to the event.
- **MHAG Workplan Items Discussion (*Kris Thorson, 60 minutes*)**
  - The term limits group has a report out.
  - The term limit group looked at other non-profit groups of similar size to see what their bylaws entailed and why they had term limits.
  - The biggest challenge that the group found was finding quality board members.
  - Their identified disadvantages were:
    - Difficult to find members
    - Long times to recruit membership
    - May lose group members who are fervent supporters
    - Continuity is important
    - Department must dedicate additional time to building the cohesiveness
    - The mistake of using term limits to avoid discussions of poor member performance.
    - Potential loss of expertise or insight

- Potential loss of organizational memory
  - Can remove qualified people from service
  - Forcing members off the group may limit future options
- The identified benefits were:
  - May be able to attract new members
  - Have the option of weeding out older members
  - Keeping people focused
- Additional thoughts on term limits were:
  - Since 2013 there have been opportunities for new members except 2014
  - There are over 50 advisory groups within WDFW
  - First term seems to be orientation and then in subsequent terms are more information providing.
- After the presentation Gary Tennison made a motion that the group not adopt term limits.
  - Wes seconded the motion for no term limits.
  - The group had 12 members vote to approve the motion for no term limits.
  - No members voted for term limits.
- Kris will update the workplan with the decision and information that was discussed here.
- Dave wanted to add some discussion based on the R3 plan and how MHAG and Master Hunters can plug into the R3 plan.
- Kelly talked about how Master Hunters can be a great resource for him to use moving forward on some of his clinics and events moving forward.
- Keith gave a quick update on the roadkill salvage program and how they are waiting on the new regional director gets hired before proceeding.
- Jeff asked if the group could have a discussion on the uniform item within the workplan.
  - Wes heard from some Master Hunters about maybe wanting to get a cap that identifies them as a Master Hunter when afield.
- Keith has placed his patch on a shirt and has then worn his MHAG nametag to help identify himself and has seen good results.
- Jeff had concerns that the public may think that they are employees of the department but likes the idea of the hat.
- The group likes the idea of having a hat for the MHAG.
- Wes asked about a rocker to go under the MH patch.
- Kris will investigate these options and will report back at the next meeting.
- **MHAG Recruitment update (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
  - Kris and the WDFW wanted to recognize all the members whose terms end on March 31.
  - Those members are Carissa Craghead, Jonathan Barr, Wes Clogston, Kyle Smith, and George Dennis.
  - There were six seats open on the group with Jim Gleiter's resignation.
  - Eleven applicants submitted letters of interest.

- The selection subcommittee met on March 1 to discuss the candidates.
- The newly updated recruitment questions and format seemed to work well.
- More applicants expanded on their experience in their letters.
- Hunter education staff engaged with Wildlife Program staff on the prospective appointments.
- Kris and Dave will meet with the Director of External Affairs, Nate Pamplin, on Tuesday March 14.
- After discussing the candidates with the Director of External Affairs, Kris and Dave will present the nominees to the director.
- Hopefully we will have the appointment letters out to the members by late March.
- Kris will work on getting the new members an MHAG binder that we have done for new members in the past.
- Kris asked which of the current MHAG did not get a binder when they were appointed so he can get them a binder?
  - Dean Thornberry, Gary Tennison, and Michael Bartoldo all do not have binders currently.
  - Kris will also send the workplan to all members for their binders.
- Kris also printed new nametags for the MHAG members and will give those to the membership at the June 9 meeting.

### **Conclusion**

- **Recap action items (*Carissa Craghead, 5 minutes*)**
- **Agenda topics for next meeting (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
  - Survey results report
  - Uniform update for workplan.
  - Jeff Fjelstul suggested having briefing on disease outbreaks and access at future meetings so the MHAG can be knowledgeable on the programs.
- **Good of the order (*All; General discussion items by MHAG, 5 minutes*)**
- **Adjourn**