



MASTER HUNTER ADVISORY GROUP

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Meeting Notes for MHAG Meeting #60
March 8, 2024, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
CWU SURC Room 137A, Ellensburg

MHAG Members		WDFW Staff	Guests
Region 2	Monty Pyle	Kris Thorson, Hunter Education Section Specialist Steve Dazey, Region 1 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator Nick Montanari, Region 2 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator Aaron Garcia, Region 3 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator Amy Elliott, Region 5 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator Bill Montgomery, Region 6 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator Kelly Riordan Statewide hunting R3 Coordinator	
Region 3	Don Brunssen		
	(vacant)		
	John McAuliffe, Chair		
Region 4	Kyle Smith		
	Jason Armstrong		
	Jeff Fjelstul		
	Jeff Larsen, Secretary		
Region 5	Ian Stewart, Vice Chair		
	George Dennis (excused)		
	Keith Pfeifer		
Region 6	Dean Thornberry		
	Michael Bartoldo (excused)		
	David Ward (excused)		
	Gary Tennison		

Procedural Business

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

New Business

- **Meeting Ground Rules Reminder (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
 - The reason for the ground rules is to ensure everyone can share with the group.
 - This will help the group hear all voices.
 - These ground rules will make it more standard across all advisory groups.
 - The ground rules are:
 - Assume others have the best intentions and are contributing in a positive, constructive manner.
 - Foster trust and model civility.
 - Negative or corrective comments towards other members is not permitted
 - Be hard on the issues, not on the people
 - Be open to others' perspectives and new ideas
 - Be present and engaged
 - Minimize digital distractions
 - Respect time
 - Start and end on time
 - Follow the agenda
 - Keep stories relevant to the topic being discussed
 - Respect others' privacy
 - Share air time
 - Staff will track hands for comment to ensure each member gets their time to provide input on the topic being discussed.
 - Teams chat should be used for supplemental info like weblinks, documents, resources, or positive remarks like "agreed" or "I support". Members should ask questions or make comments verbally because some members cannot access the teams chat during the meeting.
 - Empower group and facilitators to manage the agenda and enforce rules
 - A staff member will monitor raised hands and call on members in the order the hands are raised.
 - Bring your humor, and have fun
- **WDFW reports and updates (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - MHPP Participation statistics
 - As of February 29, there were 1,119 certified Master Hunters.
 - There were 145 applicants in 2023 and 136 of those applicants have not completed the requirements yet.
 - That means we have had 9 complete the requirements and be certified so far in the 2023 certification cycle.
 - So far, 40 tests have been taken in the 2023 certification cycle.
 - Twenty seven of the 40 have passing scores.

- That is a pass rate of 68 percent.
- Twenty-one applicants passed the initial test.
- Six applicants retook the test and all six passed on their second attempt.
- The highest score was 96 and the lowest score was 47.
- The average score of all tests is 81 percent.
- Nick displayed trend lines for the number of Master Hunters, number of applicants, and the number of applicants certified.
- Field coordinator reports
 - Steven Dazey – Region 1 Field Coordinator
 - Steve attended a staff meeting to discuss the 2023 Terry Hoffer nominations.
 - He has been working on getting teams started that haven't taught since COVID and he has been able to restart two teams.
 - Steve conducted inert ammo checks on teams that were teaching before hunter education was able to supply them with approved inert ammo.
 - He participated in the interview panel for hunter education's new AA4 position.
 - Steve conducted a Basic Rifle training for enforcement interns and Nick, the new region 2 field coordinator.
 - He had to travel to recover firearms from instructor's wife since the instructor has been put into memory care.
 - Steve transferred inventory from a retiring instructor to new team lead.
 - He also attended the memorial service for long time instructor Ed O'Leary.
 - Steve assisted Aaron with a pre-service training and onboarding Nick in Region 2.
 - Nick Montanari – Region 2 Field Coordinator
 - Nick completed his basic rifle and hunter education instructor certifications.
 - He completed a pre-service training for three applicants in the Quincy area, five applicants from Grand Coulee area, and one applicant from Winthrop.
 - Nick started a regular email update.
 - He visited the following teams/Chief Instructors:
 - Ritzville Team/Phil Peterson
 - Quincy Team/Eric Etue
 - Royal City/Jen Jensen
 - Brewster/Ron Oules
 - At each class visit he audited their ammo and delivered dummy ammo as needed.
 - Nick conducted his first field skills evaluation class with Chuck Ray for four students.

- He has in-service training events planned in Moses Lake and in Okanogan.
- He currently has 19 RSVPs for Moses Lake and 8 RSVPs for Okanogan.
- Region two currently only has 10 classes scheduled for the year so far and Nick is requesting instructors to post their classes ASAP to help students plan and for him to recognize gaps in class offerings.
- He has seen a significant resistance to offer the field skills evaluation class but there is also a high demand.
- Aaron Garcia – Region 3 Field Coordinator
 - Aaron has been sent emails to the Region 3 Master Hunters about kids fishing events in both Yakima and Tri-Cities that are coming up soon.
 - He spoke with wildlife area managers about other projects for this volunteer season and nothing has materialized for sure yet.
 - One probable project is some wire clean up in the LT Murry and Wenas coming soon.
 - Aaron has spring turkey camp scheduled for May 3-5.
 - He is working with NWTF on the spring camp and WDFW will do the registration of participants and help with mentor and staff recruitment.
 - He is waiting on a final go from NWTF before he starts those recruitment efforts.
 - Aaron also talked to Steve Wetzel about the general elk Master Hunter season harvest and they currently cannot break out the statistics.
 - He also talked about the Alkali GMU and the history of the hunt and what the future state may be.
- Jackie McBride – Region 4 Field Coordinator
 - Region 4 has been piloting a Master Hunter hunt/project coordination with conflict staff that Jeff L. and Jeff F. are headlining with Kevin OConnor.
 - They have been instrumental working with Kevin OConnor on building relationships with property owners, providing face to face meetings with Master Hunters for damage hunts with the property owners as well as projects.
 - So far it has been working very well and we have had a lot of positive feedback, as well it has taken quite a bit off of Kevin's plate and peace of mind so he is able to do more.
- Amy Elliott – Region 5 Field Coordinator
 - Amy has Mt. St. Helens wildlife area and Cowlitz wildlife area events that are set up in CERVIS in collaboration with RMEF and has sent an email to notify Master Hunters.

- She had several Master Hunter volunteers help at the Portland Sportsmen's Show
 - Amy is diving into NHFD planning and will be reaching out to Master Hunters later for volunteer assistance.
 - She had good feedback from the Regional Wildlife Program Manager that MHAG members, Master Hunters, and hunt coordinators are beneficial and there's a good working relationship.
 - Amy also fielded comments from a Master Hunter whose certification lapsed and they gave some constructive feedback and perspective from the experience.
 - Bill Montgomery – Region 6 Field Coordinator
 - Bill attended the meeting with Region 6 MHAG members and Region 6 conflict staff where they discussed some upcoming projects, along with permits and bear damage.
- **Reporting of Master Hunter Hours (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
 - At the last meeting, the MHAG asked if Master Hunter should report hours in excess of the 40 required to WDFW when volunteering as a Master Hunter.
 - Anyone volunteering as a Master Hunter for WDFW projects need to have their hours logged with the WDFW Volunteer Program for Department of Labor and Industry purposes.
 - Most of the Master Hunters that Kris hears from in regards of Master Hunter hours are only sending the minimum 40 hours per renewal cycle.
 - Some are sending more than the 40 required.
 - WDFW would like to know of projects Master Hunters are completing as a Master Hunter that are more than the 40 hours required for renewal.
 - Having all volunteer hours Master Hunters complete as a Master hunter will help WDFW show the benefits of the Master Hunter Permit Program to wildlife conservation and to the department.
 - Kris will add this information into the March newsletter and will send a copy to the MHAG for review.
 - Jeff L. asked that we bring the information to the IAC about not having the Master Hunters who are also instructors needing to send in the proof of service forms.
 - Jeff L. also asked if there was a way to have a project for the mentoring hours in CERVIS.
- **Bear Timber Damage Management Proposal Discussion (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - Ian, Don, and Dave W. worked on the bear timber damage management proposal.
 - The group discussed the need and came up with the current proposal.
 - Kris sent the proposal out to the MHAG in January for review.
 - Ian gave a background on the current proposal to the MHAG.
 - Steve suggested that if there was a vetting process that someone would have to do and that we could look at the Olympic National Park goat hunt vetting.

- Jeff asked if the larger timber companies might be interested in the program.
 - Most of the larger companies don't have a need but could in the future.
- Dean asked if there was concern that the project may not have a lot of interest.
 - Ian thinks that there will be interest and he would prefer to give 10 names of vetted folks vs no names or non-vetted names.
- Keith commented that he thinks the proposal and project would be good for the future and this is a great opportunity moving forward.
- Nick thinks that this may also have a benefit from recruiting folks who like to hunt bear to the MHPP.
- Monty suggested we take the program to the timber companies to see if they would like to use the program.
- Monty asked if these permits were for only one bear or multiple bears.
 - Kris will check with conflict team to see if they can harvest only a single bear vs multiple bear.
- Jeff L thinks we need to be mindful of the good old boys club image that the program has fought in the past and to be mindful of the possible spring bear seasons.
- **MHAG member updates and Master Hunter communications (*John McAuliffe, 10 minutes*)**
 - Does anyone have anything to add?
 - George heard from a few Master Hunters who had heard some rumors about the commission going to draw only for hunting licenses.
 - Kris talked to Kyle Garrison and WDFW is not proposing any limited entry/permit only system in this year's 3-year package, which would run through the 2026 season. WDFW routinely receives public feedback to initiate permit only, though, so it's on our radar and likely something we will do specific scoping on.
 - Keith has been surprised in the lack of communication from Master Hunters in his years on MHAG but recently had some responses to an article he wrote for the Master Hunter newsletter.
 - Monty had a conversation with a Master Hunter about why he was not going to renew his Master Hunter Permit and it had to do with the lack of hunting opportunities.
 - Ian had a really good conversation with conflict specialist Jacobson after being deployed to a property and harvesting an elk.
 - John suggested that we still need a vetting process on Master Hunter applicants.
 - Don liked the information on the expectations that were presented in the orientation and Instructor Inservice Training PowerPoint and would like that information to be higher on the webpage.
 - Keith asked if the application for membership as a Master Hunter could be amended to add a check box for the applicant to mark indicating they desire to have a Member of the Master Hunter Advisory Group contact them to discuss the Master Hunter program.

- Monty suggested that the box might be changed to encourage the applicants reach out to the MHAG members.
- **Lunch (60 minutes)**
- **NHFD Update (Kris Thorson and Amy Elliott, 15 minutes)**
 - WDFW will be holding the 2024 event at the Cowlitz Public Shooting Range in Castle Rock WA on September 28 from 9am-3pm.
 - We are planning on having 500 youth attend the event.
 - Kris and Amy are working with WDFW's new event coordinator to plan the event.
 - Amy gave out save the date cards at the Portland and Puyallup sports shows.
 - WDFW will be translating the poster and save the date cards into Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese for outreach in the surrounding area.
 - The range can have 20-gauge shotguns, .22, .223, air rifle, archery, and bb guns available for the youth.
 - There is a plan to have a fishpond at the event with trout for the youth to catch.
 - Amy and Kris will provide updates throughout the year to the MHAG.
- **2024 Workplan discussion (Kris Thorson, 60 minutes)**
 - Has anyone completed any work on the workplan?
 - Jeff and Jeff have been working with their conflict staff and doing face to face meetings.
 - Region 6 has continued to hold face to face meetings.
 - Monty has had contact with the region 2 staff in the past.
- **Advisory Group Member Compensation and Reimbursements Update (Kris Thorson, 30 minutes)**
 - There were a few questions that members had on the new advisory member compensation and reimbursements.
 - The first question that was asked was:
 - Is the compensation only for meetings or is it all activities associated with their service on the MHAG?
 - Compensation would be for any work assigned to them by Department staff for purposes of advisory group. So, working on work plan items (that have been approved and assigned by you or another appropriate Department staff person) and other related work would be eligible for compensation.
 - Could we have a black and white guide to what is eligible?
 - Kris will draft up the guidelines and send them out before the next meeting.
 - The second question that was asked was:
 - Would the compensation of the members for their work on the advisory groups move them out of volunteer status and move them to another category like contract employee or part time employee status?
 - They are still considered volunteers. However, they do need to register as a vendor through OFM to get payment. If an advisory member receives \$600 or more in a calendar year, the IRS

requires a 1099-MISC form (Miscellaneous income) for tax purposes.

- The new form will be used from now on to get reimbursement from WDFW for advisory group expenses.
- ⊕ Members need to fill out the information on the front side of the Workgroup Compensation and Reimbursement Form.
- ⊕ They will also need to enter the number of hours at the meeting and the number of miles (round trip) on the back of the form. They then need to sign where it says requestors signature.
- ⊕ Kris will take these at the meeting and complete the costs before forwarding the forms to the travel desk staff for processing.
- ⊕ Kris will also start providing these forms filled out for MHAG members at future meetings to ensure that they are easily readable for the travel desk staff to ensure quick compensation and reimbursement.
- Steve asked if the compensation and reimbursement for meals are taxable or tax exempt.
 - Kris will find out and report back.
- **Recertification and non-completion survey results (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - On February 6, Kris sent the survey results out to the MHAG members for their review.
 - Jeff L. thought it was good reinforcement for what things the MHAG is bringing to the department in terms of issues/challenges.
 - Monty suggested that we possibly look at having a Master Hunter general tag for elk or deer tag.
 - Jeff suggested that we look at offering ExpertVoice to Master Hunters as a benefit to being a Master Hunter.
 - Kris will investigate ExpertVoice and report back.
 - Amy brought up that this is a fine line we walk because giving more incentive is going away from our giving back mentality.
 - Nick suggested that with the instructor incentive tags that the instructors see a benefit in their students and the permit is the cherry on top and that we could more effectively show Master Hunters what the benefits are of volunteering.
- **MHAG Recruitment update (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - The recruitment email to Master Hunters went out on October 31.
 - Kris sent two reminder emails to Master Hunters reminding them of the December 31 deadline.
 - The reminder emails were sent on November 28 and December 21.
 - There were thirteen applicants for the six seats currently available.
 - We have three-year terms are available in Regions 1, 2, 4, 5,6, and a two-year term in Region 3.
 - The recruitment subcommittee met on February 22 to discuss all the applicants and determine which of the applicants to recommend to the director for appointment.

- After determining which applicants to recommend for appointment, Kris sent an email to all the Wildlife Regional Program Managers to see if they had any concerns about the applicants.
- They were supposed to respond by March 1 so Kris could present the recommendations to the director for appointment.
- The director made his appointments after Kris presented the recommendations.
- Kris will send appointment letters to the members who were appointed and send thank you letter emails to those applicants who were not appointed.

Conclusion

- **Recap action items (*Jeff Larsen, 5 minutes*)**
 - Kris will draft an article for the March newsletter about reporting all MH volunteer hours, even those more than the 40 required hours, and will send a copy to the MHAG for review.
 - Ian and subcommittee to draft the conflict staff questionnaire.
 - Kris will research ExpertVoice and determine if it will work as a Master Hunter incentive.
- **Agenda topics for next meeting (*John McAuliffe, 5 minutes*)**
 - Report of Master Hunter reports and harvest statistics for 2023
 - Discuss ExpertVoice.
 - Presentation by WDFW staff on hot topic information like the Predator/Prey project.
- **Good of the order (*All; General discussion items by MHAG, 5 minutes*)**
- **Adjourn**