



MASTER HUNTER ADVISORY GROUP

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Notes for MHAG Meeting #50
June 12, 2020 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Teams Meeting

MHAG Members		WDFW Staff	Guests
Region 1	Shawn Woodard (absent)	Dave Whipple Hunter Education Division Manager	
Region 2	Carissa Craghead, Secretary	Kris Thorson Hunter Education Division Specialist	
	Jim Hope (absent)		
Region 3	Jonathan Barr	Aaron Garcia Region 3 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Wes Clogston		
	Kyle Smith		
Region 4	David Floyd (absent)	Steve Dazey Region 4 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Jeff Larsen, Vice Chair		
	John McAuliffe, Chair		
	Ian Stewart		
Region 5	George Dennis	Amy Elliott Region 5 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Keith Pfeifer		
Region 6	Michael Bartoldo	Bill Montgomery Region 6 Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator	
	Jim Gleiter		
	Thomas Woodruff		

Procedural Business

- **Call to order and announcements (*John McAuliffe, 5 minutes*)**
- **Introduction of members and guests (*John McAuliffe, 5 minutes*)**
- **Welcome of new and returning members (*David Whipple, 15 minutes*)**
 - Members who were reappointed to the MHAG are:
 - Carissa Craghead
 - Kyle Smith
 - Jonathan Barr
 - George Dennis
 - Wes Clogston was appointed to a three-year term in region 3.
 - Michael Bartoldo was appointed to fill Tom Conrads seat.
- **Officer elections (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
 - Each year the MHAG elects a chair and vice chair of the group for a term of one year.
 - Every two years the MHAG elects a secretary for a term of two years.
 - This year all three positions are open.
 - Kris opened the floor for nominations for chair.
 - George Dennis nominated Jeff Larsen.
 - Carissa Craghead seconded.
 - All members present were in favor and Jeff Larsen was elected as chair.
 - Kris opened the floor for nominations for the vice chair.
 - Keith Pfeifer nominated Ian Stewart.
 - Jeff Larsen seconded.
 - All members present were in favor and Ian Stewart was elected as Vice Chair.
 - Kris opened the floor for nominations for the secretary.
 - George nominated Carissa.
 - Thom seconded.
 - Carissa was elected as the secretary.
 - Congratulations to all who were elected.
 - The officers will act in their elected position at the next meeting.

Old Business

- **Budget and legislative news/update (*David Whipple, 15 minutes*)**
 - In response to significant economic impacts due to COVID-19, the Governor's Office of Financial Management (OFM) requested state agencies to identify options for budget savings equal to 15% of their State General Fund appropriation for State Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021).
 - The savings and reductions target for WDFW is \$12.8M.
 - WDFW used the 2018 zero-based budget analysis and the new draft 25-year strategic plan to inform its approach.
 - The agency prioritized one-time reductions to maintain services and employees.

- WDFW's list of options includes savings from four broad categories:
 - There were savings in fiscal year (FY) 20 that will save \$1.4 million in FY 21.
 - There were reductions in some of our new appropriations during the 2020 supplemental budget in the amount of \$900,000.
 - New savings ideas, vacant positions, and delays in purchasing will save \$4.1million.
 - The final \$6.3 million are positive fund balances in a variety of restricted and dedicated accounts WDFW can only use for specific purposes. These funds would require legislative action to make the funds available.
 - The Hunter Education Division did not have direct impacts, other than general cost savings that will also help mitigate the FY21 Pittman-Robertson reduction.
- OFM has posted all state agency preliminary savings options online.
- As noted on the website, "The spreadsheets reflect preliminary savings options identified by each agency. They are not formal proposals and do not necessarily reflect the priorities of the governor or the agency. Because a program or service reduction is listed does not mean the reduction will actually happen or happen at the level shown."
 - <https://ofm.wa.gov/budget/state-budgets/state-agency-fiscal-year-2021-savings-options>
- It isn't clear when a special session of the legislature may be convened.
- Jeff asked if the department had any furloughs within the department during the pandemic.
 - No there have not been any furloughs.
- In 2020, there was some agency request legislation related to increasing participation in recreational fishing and hunting.
- WDFW experiences a 1-2% decline in license sales each year.
- License sales make up approximately 1/3 of WDFW's operating budget.
- WDFW is seeking legislative changes to remove barriers to participation and provide financial incentives, to youth or those new to hunting and angling, to aid in WDFW's recruitment efforts.
- A few important changes can be made immediately to promote recruitment in hunting and fishing.
- Summary of the major provisions:
 - Align the definition of youth to be those persons under 16 for both hunting and fishing.
 - Allow WDFW to sell merchandise to better market to hunters, anglers, and the general public in the hope to drive more participation.
 - Exempt retired US military members and current or retired federal peace officers from the field skills portion of hunter education (military members are already exempt and by practice, WDFW

exempts retired military; the bill is intended to clarify current practice).

- Change the hunter education deferral requirement for the accompanying hunter to be a licensed hunter in Washington who is over 18 years of age (would eliminate the 3-year license requirement).
 - Provide a \$20 discount to resident hunter education graduates on the purchase of their first hunting license.
 - Remove the restriction that prohibits temporary fishing licenses from being used for the popular lowland lakes fishing opener.
 - Allows youth to use a second pole free of charge.
 - Allows out-of-state, full-time, post-secondary students at an accredited institution to purchase hunting and fishing licenses at resident rates. Children and spouses of eligible students also qualify for resident rates.
 - Provide additional authority to create bundled license packages and multi-year license packages through rule and provide the ability for the Director to offer promotional pricing.
- **3911 equipment discussion (*Kris Thorson, 15 minutes*)**
 - The purpose of the Master Hunter 3911 season is to put pressure on elk and keep them out of agricultural zones.
 - When 3911 was first changed from Muzzleloader season to a Master Hunter season, some Master Hunters complained that they didn't want to "waste" their tag in August (which is when most actual damage occurs), and we should issue 2nd tags and allow all hunting equipment.
 - WDFW quickly started to hear from landowners that many were getting tired of Master Hunters.
 - During meetings with Rep. Dent 2015-2016, the message from landowners attending was generally "We do not like Master Hunters, give us permits instead".
 - HB 1353 in 2017, increased the number of permits WDFW could issue to landowners.
 - General season hunters need to draw the multi-season permit to be able to use any hunting equipment when hunting elk.
 - It's hard to explain to general hunters why Master Hunters could hunt with any weapon in 3911, especially when landowners were telling WDFW and Rep. Dent "There are too many Master Hunters and I won't allow them on my property".
 - There is limited opportunity to hunt in 3911 for Master Hunters.
 - Harassing elk is just as effective as removing an elk and having an archery or muzzleloader hunter in the field pursuing elk for four days is probably more effective than having a hunter show up first morning, shoot an elk, and not come back.
 - Much of 3911 is "firearm" restricted.

- Since the change, there have been no landowner complaints.
- Damage complaints have also decreased.
- We used to harvest close to 2,000 elk from District 8.
- The target antlerless elk harvest for District 8 in 2020 is 250.
- Both Colockum and Yakima herds are below objective and producing so few calves, that even harvesting 250 will restrict population growth.
- The department was unsure if there would be enough hunters for the 3911 elk season so the incentives for the second tag and any weapon choice was offered.
- Most landowners complained of too many Master Hunters, so the incentives were removed.
- Those incentives were never included for 3912 and GMU 371.
- Jeff had a question on if we could find out if there were 3911 landowner reimbursements.
- George asked to have some talking points for MHAG members to effectively talk about the changes and why they happened.
- Kris will complete the talking points and send them to MHAG members as well as add the information to the 3911 changes document.

New Business

- **HE classes, student data, etc. (David Whipple, 15 minutes)**
 - In response to COVID-19, WDFW cancelled all hunter ed classes on March 16.
 - Classes are currently canceled through July 15.
 - Due to the demand for hunter ed, we implemented an all-online course that utilized a virtual field day for students at least 9 years of age.
 - WDFW is working to get employees and volunteers back to work teaching classes by developing the necessary training and procedures to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.
 - The department is also sourcing personal protective equipment to minimize health risks to instructors, students, and parents once classes begin.
 - Jon Barr asked if students were receiving hard copy cards.
 - Currently students are only receiving the emailed certificates.
 - Ian Stewart asked if the online only option would be retained moving forward.
 - WDFW does not plan on having the online only option past the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- **WDFW reports and updates (Kris Thorson, 30 minutes)**
 - MHPP Participation statistics
 - In 2019 there were 110 applicants.
 - As of June 8, 2020, there were 1,396 current Master Hunters.
 - Twenty-one applicants or 19 percent have taken the exam so far.
 - Three of the 21 passed on their first attempt or 14 percent.
 - Seven applicants have attempted the exam a second time and five passed on their second attempt.

- We have seven new Master Hunters from the 2019 applicant pool as of June 8.
 - Brief Field Coordinator Reports
 - Aaron Garcia – Region 1 South, region 2 south, and region 3
 - Aaron worked with Steve Wetzel and Jeff Bernitowicz to design a survey to landowners on Master Hunter use.
 - He is directing Master Hunters on solo projects after WDFW lands reopened.
 - He had to put mentoring on hold until after the pandemic started.
 - Steve Dazey – Region 1 north, region 2 north, and region 4
 - Steve evaluated one hunter education teaching team prior to the COVID shutdown.
 - He inventoried supplies for two teaching teams.
 - Steve recovered inert firearms and Genesis bow from an instructor who is no longer certified.
 - He is working on creating a Jeopardy trivia game with other coordinators based on fish and wildlife.
 - Steve attended a webinar on the San Juan deer herd and possible management activities.
 - Along with the region 3 coordinator, Steve conducted four special field skills evaluations for young students who had been decertified.
 - He continues to field and answer questions from Master Hunters regarding volunteer hours during COVID-19.
 - Steve has been answering questions on volunteer projects that benefit wildlife but are being directed by other agencies and whether they would qualify.
 - Amy Elliott – Region 5
 - Amy had to cancel several work parties on the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area due to COVID-19 and the state stay-at-home orders.
 - She is working with Alex Biswas to recruit some master hunters to build bat boxes.
 - The bat box kits will be shipped to volunteers.
 - Bill Montgomery – Region 6
 - Bill is working with Alex and Amy on the bat box project.
 - He was supposed to be working with Emily Butler on a bear hair project but COVID-19 has postponed the project.
 - Pierce conservation district contacted Bill about a tree planting project and asking if they could allow Master Hunters to get hours for the project.
 - Bill will help with the goat relocation project this July.
 - Mountain goat removal project
 - WDFW will not be able to use volunteers for the translocation project this year because of COVID-19 concerns.

- The lethal removal project is being run by the Olympic National Park.
 - Applications for this project closed on April 17.
 - Successful applicants should have been notified by June 1.
- **MHAG member updates (*John McAuliffe, 60 minutes*)**
 - John McAuliffe
 - John has not done much this spring due to COVID-19.
 - He attended a long-range shooting event in Naches.
 - Jon Barr
 - Jon has been working with online hunter education students he knows.
 - He has been taking kids fishing when he has had a chance.
 - Keith Pfeifer
 - Keith communicated with wildlife conflict staff member Thayne in Region 5 about Master Hunter challenges.
 - George Dennis
 - George took the on-line field course for his own information.
 - He found the course not nearly as comprehensive as what instructors do at a field course.
 - He participated in the WDFW Strategic Plan webinar last week.
 - He sent an email notice to nearly fifty MHs.
 - Jeff Larsen
 - Jeff has been talking to Master Hunters who want to take their exams.
 - When the exam can be reopened, he will proctor exams.
 - Thom Woodruff
 - Thom was signed up for the translocation for goats.
 - He still serves on the Scatter Creek Advisory Committee.
 - Carissa Craghead
 - Carissa has been going to Idaho and competing in archery.
 - She has also been mentoring her kids when shooting.
 - Kyle Smith
 - Kyle hasn't been able to volunteer.
 - He has one Master Hunter who wants to take his exam again after failing the first time.
 - Jim Gleiter
 - Jim had to cancel his classes this spring.
 - Michael Bartoldo
 - Michael emailed current Master Hunters per Kris's request.
 - Wes Clogston
 - Wes has been spending time at Oak Creek and Watt Canyon feeding areas.
 - Ian Stewart
 - Ian is wondering how to get kids back outside and engaged in the outdoors after the lockdown.
- **Lunch (*30 minutes*)**
- **MHAG communications with Master Hunters (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - John McAuliffe

- John has not had any communications other than the 3911 issues we covered earlier.
 - Jon Barr
 - Jon has not had any communications other than the 3911 issues we covered earlier.
 - Keith Pfeifer
 - Keith has received no return communication.
 - He is wondering if this may be more effective to contact Master Hunters from their own region.
 - George Dennis
 - George had a communication with a Master Hunter about the 3911 safety challenges discussed above.
 - Jeff Larsen
 - Jeff has not emailed his list
 - Thom Woodruff
 - Thom has not emailed his list.
 - Kyle Smith
 - Kyle received questions about how the exam will move forward.
 - Michael Bartoldo
 - Michael had several communications about 3911.
 - Ian Stewart
 - Ian had questions about extended renewals.
 - He had questions on the budget challenges with the COVID-19 issue.
 - Ian had several communications on field dressing skills, shooting proficiency, shot placement, and other qualification to ensure Master Hunters have proficiencies.
 - He also received a thank you note regarding his contact and the continued support.
- **COVID impacts to MHPP (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - 2019 Applicants
 - The 2019 applicants will have their completion deadline extended by at least the length of the stay home order.
 - The deadline may also be increased due to volunteer opportunities are not currently being offered by WDFW.
 - WDFW is also not allowing Master Hunter Permit Program exams currently.
 - We will have to wait until at least the regional offices are open to the public before thinking about allowing exams to take place.
 - Renewals
 - Renewals are proceeding as best as it can during COVID-19.
 - Future MHPP orientations
 - WDFW is planning on holding future orientations.
 - Currently we are unsure when this will restart again.
 - Volunteer projects

- The department is working on creating standard operating procedures and sourcing personal protective equipment to allow volunteers to return to service.
 - Mentored hunts
 - The spring turkey mentored hunts did not occur this year because of COVID-19.
 - Aaron will work with the mentors and mentees to try for a fall turkey hunting experience.
 - 2020 MHPP Applications
 - The 2020 application period will be open July 1 through August 15.
 - Given the current COVID-19 issues and high likelihood of a virus uptick this fall, WDFW is wondering if we open the 2020 application period?
 - The MHAG voted to continue with the application period.
- **Hoof disease incentive program draft proposal (*Kyle Garrison, 30 minutes*)**
 - Kyle presented a draft proposal on how to incentivize harvest of elk with hoof disease.
 - He gave a basic overview of hoof disease, wildlife disease management, the proposed incentive program, and the Master Hunters role in the proposed program.
 - Incentive programs are commonly used in wildlife management like early reporting, reporting poaching, and population reduction.
 - Strong incentives could increase harvest of infected animals and reduce the diseases prevalence over time.
 - The incentive permit program is intended to increase harvest of animals with hoof disease, not increase elk harvest.
 - Hunters would submit all four hooves in barrel drop locations.
 - The Master Hunter portion of the program would be a draw under the Master Hunter permit.
 - If the hunter harvested an elk with abnormal hooves, they could be allowed to purchase a second elk tag.
 - The goal is to target diseased elk more precisely.
 - The hunt would be an any hunting equipment hunt just like the current Master Hunter special permits.
 - Keith suggested if something like this was to move forward, WDFW would want to make sure to increase the outreach about the meat is safe to eat and the disease is not transmitted to humans.
 - Kyle noted that hoof disease only effects the hooves.
 - Ian asked if Kyle has considered a hotline or reporting system for observations of diseased animals that could be provided to participating hunters.
 - There is an online tool that records observations.
- **MHPP Renewals (*Kris Thorson, 30 minutes*)**
 - Some Master Hunters have contacted Kris about renewing their MHPP after their certification has lapsed.
 - In the past there was a grace period Tracy unofficially allowed.

- If a Master Hunter expires, they must start over like a new applicant.
- Currently WDFW does not send a notification to Master Hunters when their permits are about to expire.
- Should WDFW send reminder emails to Master Hunters whose permits are going to expire?
 - The MHAG mostly supports the reminder emails be sent.
- Do we allow a grace period for renewal?
 - The group was mostly supportive of a grace period if allowable by WAC.

Conclusion

- **Recap action items (*Secretary Craghead, 5 minutes*)**
 - Get talking points regarding 3911 to the MHAG and put the document online.
- **Agenda topics for next meeting (*John McAuliffe, 5 minutes*)**
 - Report on 3911 landowner contacts with Steve
- **Good of the order (*All; General discussion items by MHAG, 5 minutes*)**
 - Keith asked about offering to any MH who provides written communication to the program awarding them 3 volunteer hours.
 - There was a suggestion to allow Master Hunters complete a survey for some volunteer hours.
 - There was a suggestion to have a new MHAG member orientation by the chair, vice-chair, or secretary and walk new members through the expectations and CERVIS etc.
 - Next MHAG meeting is August 21.
- **Adjourn**