

**HUNTER EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING NOTES
April 10, 2021, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Teams Meeting**

IAC Members - Representing		WDFW Staff	Guests
Region 1	Hal Sims	Dave Whipple Hunter Education Division Manager	Chris White Pheasant release program specialist
	Sam Grubbs		
Region 2	Eric Lauver	Kris Thorson Hunter Education Division Specialist	
	Jen Syrowicz		
Region 3	James Conway (excused)	Mike Whorton Region 1 Hunter Education Field Coordinator	
	Rich Mann (excused)		
	Randy Absolon		
Region 4	John Malek	Aaron Garcia Region 3 Hunter Education Field Coordinator	
	Bob Palmer (excused)		
	Mikel Edwards		
Region 5	Steve Mills (excused)	Steve Dazey Region 4 Hunter Education Field Coordinator	
	Jim Sevier		
Region 6	Jim Gleiter	Bill Montgomery Region 6 Hunter Education Field Coordinator	
	Marty Kotzke		
	Larry Lufkin		
HERO	Butch Buffaloe		

⊙ Welcome & General Interest Announcements (20 minutes)

- ⊕ IAC Member Roundtable and Communications with Regional Instructors
 - Does anyone have anything to add?
 - Sam sent out a couple of email to his instructors.
 - The second email he sent there was a question on how soon the manual and tests will come go out.
 - The manual and test will be complete sometime soon and may be ready to go when we start teaching again.

⊙ WDFW Updates (30 minutes)

- ⊕ Student manual and exam updates
 - The student manual is almost finished.
 - Amy, Kris, and staff are working on the review questions in the back of the manual.
 - Once the manual is updated and finished, WDFW will send the draft to Kalkomey for review and formatting into the new manual.
- ⊕ COVID-related updates
 - Hunter education has set aside personal protective equipment for the instructors once we are back to in-person classes.
 - Next week the department will train all staff on the new in-person meeting standard operating procedure (SOP).
 - The new SOP will likely be more general than hunter education specific SOPs, which will likely will either supplement or replace the agency-level procedures.
 - Hunter education staff will work with the safety office to modify the current hunter education draft SOP for field skills evaluations (FSE) and teaching hunter education.
 - WDFW focused first on FSEs because FSEs are a simpler way to begin holding in-person classes vs. traditional classes.
 - The FSEs can be more easily held with smaller numbers of students and some FSEs may be able to be held entirely outside.
 - There will have to be contingencies for if counties revert to a previous phase per the governor's guidance.
 - Jim Sevier asked if when we will go back to classes if the online only will go away.
 - Dave does not think once we allow classes that the online only will be turned off immediately.
 - Larry brought up that folks will cross county lines to go to classes that are near to them and the changes in phases may need to be considered.
 - Hal talked about engaging other volunteers like the Master Hunters to help teach and possibly recruit the Master Hunter to become an instructor.
 - Sam asked if the instructors will be required to be vaccinated before returning to the classroom.

- At this point we do not believe that instructors will be required to be vaccinated before teaching.

⊕ Student statistics

- As of 04/09/2021, 5,034 students have completed hunter education in 2021.
- In 2020, 3,440 students had completed hunter education during the same timeframe.

⊕ Instructors & Instructor Applicants

- WDFW still does not have the ability to hold pre-service trainings.
- We are getting some applications still.

⊕ Brief Regional Field Coordinator Updates

- Mike Whorton
 - Mike has been keeping in touch with his instructors.
 - Turkey season is starting soon, and he has had an uptick in special field skills evaluations for student under nine.
- Steve Dazey
 - Steve has also had an uptick in the special field skills evaluations for students under nine.
 - Steve has received some inquiries on the RSO classes that were going to be held before COVID-19 restrictions.
 - He will work on getting out to complete those classes once we can based on WDFW restrictions.
- Bill Montgomery
 - Bill has been busy staying in touch with instructors and teaching teams.
 - He has also given out some of his instructor's plaques.
 - Bill has been discussing the logistics of when instructors can resume teaching.
 - He has spent a lot of time on the phone.
 - Bill and Amy been busy doing field skills evaluations.

⊙ **WDFW Budget and Legislative Update (15 minutes)**

⊕ Budget update

- WDFW fared well in the governor's proposed budget, as well as the recently passed House & Senate budget bills.
- None of WDFW's identified 15 percent General Fund State budget reductions required by all agencies were taken, and no ongoing reductions are included in any of the proposed budgets.
- The next step is a conference committee for the House and Senate to negotiate and reach concurrence on the final budget bill that will go to the governor.
- WDFW submitted its desired changes to the Senate and House budget writers for consideration in the conference committee.
- The conference budget is expected by the end of April.

- The final budget signed by the governor is expected in May for the July 1 start of the biennium.
- The Pittman-Robertson (PR) apportionment for fiscal year 22 (July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022) is about what WDFW expected.
- The fund recovered somewhat over last fiscal year but is not yet fully back to expectations given the increase in firearm and ammunition sales.
- WDFW still has a small shortfall next fiscal year but is working to fill that hole through past and current savings efforts and other mechanisms.
- The PR apportionment shortfall is partly due to deferred excise tax payments provided to manufactures due to COVID impacts.
- WDFW has not received official word whether all the deferred taxes have been recovered.
- We also don't know if those taxes count in the timeframe that they were deferred or when the revenue is received.
- There is also a lag between tax payments into the fund and availability to states.
- The fund is expected to be stronger next fiscal year.
- Because the PR apportionments to states are dependent on state land area and the number of licensed hunters, a state's percentage of the total PR fund is negatively affected by any reduction in licensed hunters.
- Overall, sales have showed an increase over last fiscal year. Sales in March were up by approx. 50% over March last fiscal year. This is good trend.

⊕ Legislative update

- April 11 is the last legislative cutoff, when bills must be passed out of the house of origin to the other chamber, except for bills considered necessary to implement the budget.
- For more detailed information on Senate bills (SB) and House bills (HB) enter the bill number in the search field at <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/>.
- 2021 agency-request legislation (all bills are still alive & still moving):
 - SB 5058 - House-cleaning changes to the State Wildlife Account
 - Delivered to the governor for signature
 - SB 5146 - Authorizing the fish and wildlife commission to indemnify the federal government as a condition of securing certain funds. This bill is critical to continue receiving federal funding to manage federal lands (e.g. Bureau of Reclamation lands).
 - Passed the legislature
 - HB 1172: Rectifying legally incorrect statutes regarding treaty-reserved rights and state-tribal agreements in the management of salmon, trout, and steelhead.
 - On Senate floor

- SB 5159 – Moving WDFW’s payments in lieu of taxes for WDFW-managed lands to the State Treasurer’s Office. This is supported by the PILT coalition which WDFW is part of.
 - On House floor
 - The 2 hunting-related bills have not moved forward & are considered “dead” this session. They could come back next session.
 - HB 1261 - Concerning wildlife harvest reports required by WDFW. This bill would have increased the maximum penalty the Fish and Wildlife Commission can employ for failure to report harvest from \$10 to \$20. It also would have kept the penalty active for any previous year of non-reporting instead of being limited to just the prior year’s missing report. The goal was to increase WDFW’s data on which to base hunting seasons, and possibly increase opportunity.
 - HB 1185 - Providing discounted hunting licenses to seniors. This bill would have offered an additional discount for senior hunting licenses, bringing the total discount to 80 percent.
 - Other bills of interest:
 - SSB 5452 concerns the use of electric-assisted bicycles. It gives direction to WDFW (and DNR) to undergo a public process to collect information related to e-bike use on natural surface trails and roads that are limited to non-motorized use to determine where e-bike operation may occur and which classes of e-bikes are acceptable. Requires the agencies report back findings to the legislature by January 1, 2022.
 - On House floor
 - SB 1168 concerning forest health funding. This would create an account to help fund forest health treatments by state, local agencies, and other entities but does not ID funding. Eligible activities for funding include fire preparedness & prevention (e.g. thinning, prescribed burning and post fire recovery), and fire protection for homes, properties and communities.
 - In Senate Rules Committee
 - 2SSB 5253 – Implementing recommendations of the pollinator health task force (from Nov. 2020). WDFW has offered amendments in the House to clarify the agency’s role and the benefits of native pollinators.
 - Passed out of the House

⊙ **Policy manual update discussion (30 minutes)**

- ⊕ In 2017 the IAC and hunter education staff completed extensive work on the Hunter Education Policy Manual.
- ⊕ The changes to the policy manual were brought to the instructors at the 2018 statewide in-service training.

- ⊕ Some of the instructors had issues with proposed changes so WDFW chose to shelve the updated manual and revisit it later.
- ⊕ The policy manual states, “Major revisions to the Policy Manual are planned every five years.”
- ⊕ The hunter education staff are going to work on the policy manual updates in the coming months.
- ⊕ Our next meeting will include a review of the proposed changes and time to comment on issues IAC members and instructors have with those changes or other policies dictated in the Policy Manual.

⊙ **Overview of the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program (60 minutes)**

- ⊕ There is a western Washington release program because pheasants cannot naturally reproduce in western Washington.
- ⊕ The program releases 38,000 to 40,000 ring neck pheasants annually.
- ⊕ The program is funded through western Washington pheasant license sales.
- ⊕ There are 15 major areas for the release sites.
- ⊕ Hunting starts at 8am unless the even/odd rules apply to the release site.
- ⊕ The end time for hunting on the sites is 4pm.
- ⊕ Non-toxic shot is required on the release sites.
- ⊕ Bag limit is two pheasants of either sex.
- ⊕ The program is dependent on volunteers and volunteer service.
- ⊕ The program is more cost effective for some western Washington hunters as well as an earlier season and greater chance to harvest.
- ⊕ Chris also manages the eastern Washington pheasant enhancement program which was created to improve harvest rates.
- ⊕ A portion of the small game license goes to the program.
- ⊕ The eastern Washington enhancement program funds are split 50/50 for habitat and rooster pheasant releases.
- ⊕ Eric asked about the habitat enhancement is on private lands and if so, do those lands have public access associated to the properties.
 - As far as Chris knows the answer is yes but he does not release pheasants on those pieces of property.
- ⊕ Mikel asked about the genetic origins in Washington state and if there is a difference in western Washington vs eastern Washington.
 - Pheasants colonized Washington from the Willamette Valley in Oregon.
 - The pheasants that are bred for release in Washington are from a breeder in Wisconsin that were directly from China.
- ⊕ Chris has 2000 hens and 200 roosters as breeding stock and collects eggs twice a day.
- ⊕ WDFW incubates about 50,000 eggs and about 80 percent of those eggs hatch.
- ⊕ The eggs incubate for 24 days before hatching.

⦿ **Virtual meetings between IAC members and instructors (15 minutes)**

- ⊕ Some of the IAC members have asked to have a virtual meeting with the instructors they serve.
- ⊕ Virtual meetings were thought of as a possible avenue to keep instructors engaged.
- ⊕ Because we are moving forward with reopening SOPs, and the logistical considerations of holding those meetings (w/ WDFW's assistance), virtual meetings will not be pursued at this point.

⦿ **Online test review (30 minutes)**

- ⊕ The online quiz has had some issues with it for several years.
- ⊕ Some students have challenges with the matching section.
- ⊕ WDFW has recently reviewed the quiz and made changes to the format and questions.
- ⊕ The new quiz removes the matching section and has six true/false questions and 14 multiple choice questions.
- ⊕ The quiz questions are a selection of questions from the new traditional test.
- ⊕ IAC did not have any changes to the current draft of the quiz.

⦿ **Traditional test review (60 minutes)**

- ⊕ WDFW and the IAC worked for most of 2020 on creating an updated student manual for traditional classes.
- ⊕ Since we are updating the manual, we need to make sure the information on the test is accurate and covered within the student manual and traditional class.
- ⊕ The first step after completing edits to the manual was to review the tests (test A and test B had some questions that were the same and some questions that were different) to ensure the material deemed necessary was covered in the manual.
- ⊕ Information on the test that was not covered sufficiently in the manual meant WDFW had to update the manual to get the information covered sufficiently.
- ⊕ Kris and Amy then determined which 75 questions to keep on the test and reworded the questions to match the material in the manual and remove confusing elements of questions known to cause issues for students.
- ⊕ Staff and IAC went through the current draft test and cleaned up some wording issues.

⦿ **Instructor recruitment discussion (30 minutes)**

- ⊕ After COVID-19 WDFW is expecting some of the instructors to not return to teaching for any number of reasons.
- ⊕ WDFW is looking for suggestions on how to recruit new instructors.
- ⊕ Butch had a suggestion that most of our instructors have come from the classroom and getting students/parents certified.
- ⊕ Mikel suggested we contact/email the "COVID bubble" certifications to recruit them as an instructor.

- ⊕ Sam suggested inserting a page about becoming an instructor on the online class.
- ⊕ Sam also suggested a table at the sportsmen shows and/or gun shows recruiting instructors.
- ⊕ Jim Sevier suggested having information in the hunting regulations about WDFW is accepting hunter education instructor applications.
- ⊕ Steve suggested if WDFW were to send an email out to the “COVID bubble” we should explain the benefits of becoming an instructor which included incentive permits and getting to know and network with other hunters.
- ⊕ Steve also suggested that coordinators identify those chief instructors who were successful at recruiting for their teams and talk with them to learn how they are doing it.

⊙ **Adjourn**