

**Minutes**  
**WILDLIFE ADVISORY GROUP MEETING**  
**USFS RANGER STATION**  
**NORTH BEND**  
**March 31, 2007**

1. Welcome and Introductions – Chairman Ralph Engle  
Attendees: WAG - Larry Boose, Mark Burlington, Michael Crowder, Chris Dorow, Ralph Engle, Scott Fink, Oscar Graham, Doug Hargin, Rick Haugen, Dan Howell, Fred LeVering, Dick Price, Fred Slyfield, Patrick Shearer, Dave Sievers, Steve Herman, Chris Hyland, Mike Meseberg,; WDFW – Don Kraege, Dennis Beich, Mikal Moore, Dave Ware; Guests - Roger Reynolds, Paul Sullivan
2. Review of agenda
3. Review of July 2006 meeting – Don Kraege
  - a. Amend motion to improve quality of hunting in overcrowded areas, including assignment to address Samish area in Skagit County. Update will be provided today.
  - b. Minutes approved**
4. Development of duck stamp expenditure program – overview provided by Don Kraege
  - a. Motion to approve department recommendations, not seconded**
  - b. Currently no money allocated for duck stamp money in capital budget, operating budget still intact. Even though funds are dedicated, no capital spending authority has been provided.
    - i. Conference committee with house and senate in 2 weeks with opportunity to amend budget.
    - ii. WAG discussed need to contact senators/ reps on conference committee.
    - iii. Request for info why money was left out of all budgets (governor's, senate, and house).
    - iv. WAG discussed action plan to contact senators/ reps
      1. Form letter
      2. E-mail
      3. Contact sportswriters
    - v. Title "Migratory Waterfowl Habitat", 2008-2-045 (line item)
      1. Department requested \$700,000, no funding included in gov, sen, or house budget
      2. State waterfowl stamp funds are dedicated funds, but currently we do not have authority to spend
  - c. Discussion of individual capital projects
    - i. Channeled Scablands was noted not to have scored well
    - ii. Ephrata Lake acquisition – in process of development
    - iii. Motion to approve capital projects as ranked, seconded, motion passed**
  - d. Discussion of individual operating projects

- i. Provided partial funding: Shillapoo WA, Sunnyside, Phragmites control, lower Columbia habitat evaluation
  - 1. Question regarding loss of corn on Shillapoo, conversion to moist-soil management, concern from WWA, suggestion to bring concerns to Shilapoo WA citizens advisory group
- ii. Concern regarding sources of WDFW salary funding from operating budget, money better spent on-the-ground; WDFW only charges for hours spent on duck stamp projects
- iii. Discussion of feasibility studies, especially when permits are not obtained. Difficult to spend money allocated in 2 year budget cycle, chances of losing money are increasing. More conservative budget approach from department standpoint.
- iv. Discussion of Cusick sago pondweed and feasibility;
- v. **Motion to approve operating budget as ranked, seconded, passed**

5. June Commission Meeting Proposals – Don Kraege

Commission now requires department to bring regulation change proposals for public input at the meeting prior to the meeting the proposals are adopted.

Several proposals are under consideration for adoption at the August 1-2 meeting in Anacortes, so they will be presented for public input at the June 1-2 meeting in Spokane. Fall season proposals are an exception to the new process, and will be presented for input and adopted at the August meeting, due to federal regulations deadlines.

- a. Regulated Hunt Areas (review of WAC that clarifies WDFW authority). Currently use signing authority, citations based on failure to obey signage. Better public disclosure, gives department more flexibility to try different techniques to develop RHAs.
  - i. Part of larger Wildlife Area regulations package
  - ii. Gives the department authority to regulate public access and/or hunting methods on department owned or controlled lands to increase wildlife use, improve hunter success, and manage wildlife viewing opportunities.
  - iii. Public access may be controlled by limiting the number of users on the areas, limiting the number of days per week the areas can be hunted, and/or limiting the hours of the day that the public can access the areas during the hunting season
  - iv. Hunting methods may be controlled by such means as limiting the number of shotshells in possession, requiring the use of decoys, and/or other hunting method restrictions.
  - v. Discussion: reservation system recommended, need to discuss whether to use online lottery system. Department could come back with options.
  - vi. Discussion: enforcement issues, this WAC will give department authority to limit days, methods, etc, rather than signage. Does there need to be a penalty associated with WAC? Reference WAC in enforcement code.

- vii. **Motion to approve RHA WAC, seconded, discussion**
- viii. **Motion amended to agree to RHA WAC, seconded, passed**
- ix. **Motion to ask Department to bring RHA lottery/reservation options to WAG at next meeting, seconded, discussion, motion seconded, passed**

b. Commercial use of WDFW lands

- i. Part of larger Wildlife Area regulations package
- ii. Affects waterfowl guide operations
- iii. Clarifies department authority to issue permits, limit activity, and charge lease fees for use of WDFW lands for commercial purposes
- iv. WDFW intent is to limit guiding activity to specific lands (e.g. Region 2: Banks Lake, Columbia River, Potholes Reservoir, and Winchester Lake).
- v. Restrictions would be based on revision of WDFW policy, would include lease fees, etc.
- vi. Discussion: guides would be excluded from department-controlled restricted-access hunts (RHAs). Guides would have a permit stating areas where they are allowed to guide. Concern that guides are trying to avoid competition but Region 2 proposed policy is crowding guides. Dennis suggested a public hearing, need to gain control of illegal guiding on department lands. Suggestion to support WDFW on regional policy. Suggestion to construct working committee to advise department, including discussion of repercussions for unlicensed/uninsured guides. Issues will largely be Region 2 specific.
- vii. **Motion: WAG supports public input for process to develop policy for guiding on public lands, WDFW will be responsible for constructing committee, seconded, discussion, motion passed.**
- viii. Discussion: need to define “activity”, language states “included but not limited to...”
- ix. Discussion: what is this WAC replacing? Currently require special use permit to guides, required fee for all activities (rafting, climbing, horseback, etc.)
- x. Discussion: specific exclusion of education-related activities, definition of commercial purpose is stretched; Department should consider recreational wildlife viewers and outdoors education more carefully; Currently WDFW does not discriminate between use activities when charging fees. In general, birdwatchers do not have to purchase special use permits. Vehicles are required to have access permits on most developed and signed controlled access points.
- xi. Concerns voiced regarding Douglas County private lands access program. Land is not leased, access provided by written permission. Currently no money is exchanged. A \$5 surcharge

would allow WDFW to lease land for access but has not been approved.

**xii. Motion to accept WAC 232-13-070, second, discussion (advise to revise definition of users to exclude education); motion passed with no amendment**

xiii. Request department work closer with educational activities

c. Use of waterfowl decoys and calls

- i. Request from group of hunters to Commission in 2006. WAC amended in 2001 to exclude battery-powered decoys and calls, amended to include turkeys and deer.
- ii. WDFW committed to re-examine issue.
- iii. Currently only change proposed is wording standardization.
- iv. Don provided powerpoint presentation given to Commission regarding evaluation of motorized decoys.
  1. California: harvest success decreased throughout season
  2. CDFG: daily success 56% higher for hunters
  3. Manitoba: success depended on habitat, 24x higher in field hunts
  4. Many factors affect hunter success in field tests.
  5. Most state opinion surveys are split.
- v. Discussion: another unfair advantage to hunter, should be regulated at the federal level; if legalized, need to take on restrictions;
- vi. Discussion: Department originally ignored public opinion when regulations were set; question of hunter retention/recruitment; need to make hunting easier for new hunters? Suggestion to consider quiver magnets or late season restrictions;
- vii. Discussion: Spinning-wing decoys are still used, just not battery-powered;
- viii. Discussion: Waterfowling abilities vary, many people would like restrictions removed if it does not affect regulations; California allows late-season use of spinning-wing decoys to allow education of hatch-year birds; recommend state considers late-season allowance of spinning-wing decoys and inclusion of quiver magnets;
- ix. Discussion: science should be included in the argument; increased kill-rate of waterfowl will affect regulations eventually; would prefer more days in the field;
- x. Discussion: Where does technology in hunting stop?
- xi. Discussion: Spinning wing decoys give average hunter more confidence. Reduce crippling loss, brings in ducks closer.
- xii. Discussion: Tradition has a place in waterfowl hunting. Electric does not have a place in waterfowl hunting.
- xiii. Discussion: Tradition vs. modernization, what is the issue being debated? Batteries or spinning wings? Is this an issue that gives ammunition to animal-rights groups?

- xiv. Discussion: spinning wing decoys are good for hunter numbers and related local economies
  - xv. **Motion: group vote on continuance of status quo; seconded; 10 approved, 6 disapproved;**
  - xvi. **Motion: WAG will make recommendations to commission at June meeting if restrictions are changed to implement late season admission of battery-powered decoys, seconded, 4 approved, motion failed**
- d. Snake River closure – overview provided by Don Kraege; In 2004, WDFW removed closure on Snake River from Levy Park up to lower Monumental Dam. Low numbers of waterfowl in area, was not functioning as a reserve. Concerns: disturbance of geese on river that use nearby ag fields, generally strong public support for opening river, approved by WAG in 2004. Issue was reviewed in 2005, vote to close the river if data are not supportive of continuing with the river section open for hunting; Providing hunting for 5-7 parties per weekend; No quantitative data for geese roosting on rivers, numbers are lower than 10 years ago; Goose harvest in Franklin/Walla Walla counties does not reflect decreased harvest.
- i. New language: retain existing closure downstream of Levy Park, reinstates closure on open river section upstream of Levy Park but allows hunting within ¼ mile of the river; would eliminate open water sets in the river;
  - ii. Discussion: access to HMUs is by boat or walk-in access;
  - iii. Discussion: why the change? what is gained? The new language is in response to WAG recommendation in 2005 due to inconclusive data regarding goose roosting trends.
  - iv. Discussion: effect on goose hunters is localized, not much goose use currently, opened up minimal access, sacrificed field opportunities for geese;
  - v. Discussion: difficult to drive geese off river
  - vi. Discussion: guides/outfitters/hunt clubs provided main voice of concern to WAG, not from individual hunters; need more data to make a decision;
  - vii. Discussion: challenges to all hunters, providing opportunities is a great challenge in state, will maintain a large area of access, need to make up for loss of access, should remain open
  - viii. Discussion: still a significant closed area on river; open river section narrows upstream, geese are no longer using; total number of birds using area affect hunter success in surrounding area, opening closure has reduced hunter success.
  - ix. Discussion: what is effect of fishermen in open area? minimal, don't drive geese off
  - x. Discussion: unique hunting area, providing access to general public is good policy, even at expense of some private land hunters

- xi. **Motion: Keep area open until more data available to justify closure, seconded, discussion; motion withdrawn**
  - xii. **Motion: Original justification as presented in 2002 for opening area is still sound and should be kept open for public access, seconded, motion passed**
- e. North Potholes Reserve
- i. Watchable wildlife site being developed, concern that use of the area by general public will disturb waterfowl, colonial nesters. Restrict sections 9, 10, and 15 during critical use period. Currently closed to hunting, public access issue;
  - ii. Discussion: herons begin nesting in February, birdwatchers disturb rookery;
  - iii. Discussion: western grebe nesting?
  - iv. Discussion: BOR is planning improvements to access/facilities on Job Corp dike;
  - v. Discussion: western WA does not restrict non-consumptive users; wildlife viewers need to be held to same standard as consumptive users;
  - vi. Discussion: fishing in Desert WA occurs during nesting season (Winchester Reserve). This proposal should include all areas managed for production. Needs to be taken up with wildlife area citizen advisory group
  - vii. **Motion: Approve proposed change as stated, seconded, motion passed**
- f. Fir Island Game Reserve
- i. Created in 1990s, includes private land owner
  - ii. Snow goose quality hunt area instituted last year, landowner had firing line, agreed to inclusion in reserve.
  - iii. **ACTION: present Fir Island Quality Snow Goose Hunt results at July WAG meeting.**
  - iv. Requested information: sea duck harvest data; Don provided information;
  - v. Discussion: firing line was unsporting, public opinion of snow goose hunt has improved
  - vi. **Motion: Approve amendments as proposed, seconded, motion passed**
6. Samish Unit, Skagit County, hunter overcrowding issue – overview provided by Oscar
- a. Overcrowding continues, good waterfowling year in Skagit
  - b. Parking lot improvements instituted, better handicapped access, improvements took place during peak of waterfowl season
  - c. Met with Skagit Citizens Advisory Group, WWA, WDFW, enforcement for input
    - i. Proposed even-odd weekend approach, enforcement was supportive
      - 1. Would include alteration of small-game license

- 2. Limited to Samish Unit
  - 3. Weekends only affected
    - ii. John Garrett supports idea of addressing overcrowding
  - d. Wildlife Area is very accessible, large by western WA standards, high waterfowl use
  - e. Discussion: casual hunters oppose, limited parking, even-odd are all proposals; land has been added to the Samish Unit. Ducks Unlimited/WDFW are developing rotating moist-soil management scheme.
  - f. **Motion: Support limiting access to Samish Unit and implementing an even-odd method of accessing site on weekends only, seconded, motion passed**
7. Waterfowl Advisory Group mission statement – Chris Dorow gave overview
- a. Minor editorial suggestions provided by group
  - b. **Motion: approve mission statement including suggestions provided, seconded, motion passed**
8. Members terms of appointment and procedures for recruiting new members – overview provided by Don Kraege; terms are coming after July meeting, form provided to members to determine whether interested in continuing service. Need to discuss recruitment process; Have 18 members currently, try to keep equal E/W, distributed through regions.
- a. Discussion: recruitment should address minorities and women
  - b. Discussion: members should have impact and influence within waterfowling community
  - c. Discussion: should establish how big the group should be, how geographically diverse, and Department chooses 6 other people; several areas of the state not represented. Suggestion to have 20 members.
  - d. Discussion: suggestion to include Audubon representative
  - e. Discussion: get women involved in banquets, rare to see diversity in the field
  - f. **Motion: Ralph appoint committee to determine method for recommending members of group, seconded, discussion, motion withdrawn**
9. Additional topics
- a. Mergansers – separate limits, committee formed to evaluate data, impact on regulations; the evaluation is ongoing, will be considered at July 27 Pacific Flyway Council meeting in Spokane.
    - i. Discussion: Merganser – regulations simplifications, wanton waste vs. value of separate merganser limits
  - b. July meeting – 28<sup>th</sup> in Moses Lake
    - i. **Motion to hold meeting July 28<sup>th</sup> in Moses Lake, seconded**
  - c. Restoration of Wiley Slough – status of funding? Not in house or senate budget.
  - d. Dove Season – extend to month-long season; need significant increase in call-count index based on game management plan;

- i. Discussion: what is status of Canada mourning doves? Not known;
- e. **ACTION: Report on status of duck stamp projects requested**
  - i. Telford Project: grazing impact? Letter written to DU, no response.
  - ii. Discussion: Telford project is complete and full of ducks
- f. Eurasian Collared Dove sightings, technically a protected species. Mostly exist in urban-suburban areas. Currently not able to hunt.
- g. Request to publish aerial survey data in more timely manner
- h. Question regarding value of moist-soil vs. flooded corn; nutrient makeup is different, both important
- i. Sea-duck card due date, wording needs to be changed in regs; the change in vendor should fix problem
- j. **Request for next meeting: Discussion whether we should raise duck stamp fee.**
- k. **Request for next meeting: Caveats on how we spend duck stamp money (e.g. hunter access)**
- l. **Request for next meeting: Revamp of game management plan, start discussion with advisory group**
- m. **Request over next year: Presentation of mallard studies funded**
- n. **No cormorant season was requested**
- o. **Request for future meeting: HCP process for wildlife areas, it will affect hunting, request presentation by Jennifer Quan**

10. Meeting adjourned