

**Kootenay Wildlife Harvest Advisory Committee Meeting #8
December 14, 2009 7:00 PM Mountain Time (conference call)**

MINUTES

Participating on call:

Garth Mowat	Donna Thornton
Dave Dunbar	Arnold DeBoon
Kelly Lode	Jim Turner
Andy Pezderic	Irene Teske
Richard Green	Tara Szkorupa
Don McNamar	Ken Robins
Rob Bishop	Steven Leuenberger
Andy Balcom	

1. Quick update on **moose** survey results.

Tara – composition counts in 5 MU's; will assess for 3 years. Surveys in upper Flathead (4-01), Lodgepole (4-02), lower Elk Valley (4-23), St. Mary's (4-20) and 4-32 in the west. Initial results indicate post season bull to count ratio of 35 to 50 bulls per 100 cows in the east, and much higher in the west – Garth thinks higher than 50 bulls per 100 cows. Lowest in southern Elk Valley where 13% of bulls were spike fork (post season) in the south, higher than 40% everywhere else. Comparing post season survey data from two years ago in the Lodgepole and upper Flathead, it was estimated that 9% of bulls were spike fork. Doesn't look like too much of a concern so far for the spike season. Elk Valley definitely lower. Surveys will be done in the New Year through other initiatives. GM - winter surveys don't give antler architecture – can't estimate spike/fork estimates, just bull to cow ratio. 4-32 flight (Monashee Mtns) saw very few spike forks; lots of bulls. Antler architecture may differ in the west compared to the east because of genetic differences, or simply because of more abundant forage in the west. **See last page for draft data from recent surveys.**

2. **Deer and elk** survey plans.

No elk surveys planned for this winter except what the Fish and Wildlife Compensation program has planned in 4-08 and 4-07. Some mule deer surveys beginning in the south (Creston area) and two surveys in EK trench. Establish buck ratios before going to more liberal Mule deer seasons. HCTF funded work - may fly in the next 10 days before they start dropping antlers. FWCP (4-7 and 4-8) multi species survey going on. This is the best data on ungulates in the WK (4th one), buck/doe ratios for MD and elk, moose ratios. Deer data is very weak but they do a population estimate on deer.

3. **Sheep and goat** survey plans.

Columbia Basin Syringa Sheep in the WK, Elk Valley east side surveys. Columbia Basin flight Premier Ridge down to Wildhorse and high elevation range (4-21,4-24). Survey Bull River if there is money available. No goat surveys planned at this time.

- Don't know what we'll be doing next year (in-house) because of budgets. Elk and deer work is already budgeted for. Deer survey funded for 4 years and moose for 4 years.
- GM – we have more consultation than we know what to do with. Not sure what to do with a lot of it. Individual regulation changes to discuss:
- JT – change of when seasons occur. Looking for clarity on which species this refers to for archery.
- Donna Thornton introduced herself and explained her new role as the Wildlife & Private land Stewardship Program – Agriculture/Wildlife Specialist. One focus will be on trying to increase hunter opportunity on private land.
- Our new Regional Mgr, Tom Bell, will be arriving early February to look for a house in Nelson and take part in our Feb 11/12 Regional meeting. He will step into his role mid to late March.
- KR – are regions being amalgamated? DD – yes, we will be amalgamating with the Boundary country (to height of land towards Osoyoos). Staff currently operating in that region will have a dual reporting role. If a decision is being made on the Boundary area, they will report to Dave/Garth/Jeff in this region based on Fish or Wildlife issues. JT – what does that mean to this committee? DD-there is a possibility that we will need greater representation. Not well thought out yet. The intent is to try to align and line up boundaries with other 'dirt' ministries.

4. **Mule deer:** we are still supporting the Vitoria based initiative as long as all southern interior regions and MU's adopt the same seasons.

GM – southern interior mule deer strategy is still on the books - seasons have not changed since last meeting however most feedback is negative. Victoria is feeling the heat and Garth wouldn't be surprised to see more conservative seasons. The 3 things he could see changing are: Closing date (back to 10th) - EK reps do not want it to go to the 10th; 30 day any buck season – may change back to 20th; LEH any buck Youth season proposed for the 10th-30th of Dec. Victoria has been getting lots of negative feedback from the Okanagan (on both the early and late season). Any changes to what was proposed would be to make season proposals more conservative. JT – why not go with a 4 pt season for all hunters with a smaller any buck season but youth can shoot any buck throughout? Garth is not sure of residents concern over the youth season. JT Sep 1 – 9 season any buck – don't see this in the proposals? GM - Not on website because we have that season already – that was not to change but still part of proposal. SL – Reg 8 season goes right through to Dec 10; why don't they want a season to Nov 15? GM – that's because it's bow only season. Trying to align it back to Nov 10, not Nov 15th. AP – what about antlerless component? GM- they have antlerless permits for all units in Reg 8. We're the only region that doesn't have them but I've said I'm willing to put them in but tag numbers will be conservative.

DT – 63% commented on this reg change. Lots felt they hadn't recovered so you shouldn't have a late season. Option 1 (Sep 10-30 4 pt; Oct 1-31 any buck; Nov 1-15 4 pt)– 26% positive; option 2 (antlerless harvest throughout the region via LEH...) – 24% positive; option 3(late season archery) - 30% positive, option 4 (any buck youth season Sep 10-30) – 26%; Option 5 (LEH antlerless for youth Sep 10-30) – 25%; option 6 (1 MD bag limit Reg 4 and drop aggregate bag limit) – 31%. Most don't want these changes. SL – what's a conservative # for does. GM – less than 10%. Take best data and extrapolate to the units

where we have poorer data and choose conservative # of LEH permits based on hunter success from past or nearby units and run these tag numbers for a few years.

TS – used percentage of previous years buck harvest to use for sex ratios. GM – a good part of hunter success is based on weather. It is better to put a conservative number of tags out and leave it for a while because the success rate (averaged over a few years) can be an index of population change. Still a one MD bag limit. Mule deer populations estimates are in the review which is on the web. **Garth will send internet link out again**
http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wildlife/wsi/reports/4571_WSI_4571_RPT.PDF

5. **WT deer:** latest version from Victoria has GOS doe season for November only and youth antlerless season Oct 20-31. Optional season is an any sex bow season Dec 1-20 (as we currently have) and, an any buck season Dec 1-10. Garth opposes the late buck season because early snows could result in very high kills and because buck ratios already seem quite low in places and increased buck opportunity will only make this worse. This came out of Victoria, they have written draft regulation change forms and asked us to consult. Major change is to antlerless GOS will now be in Nov (not Oct). Youth antlerless season in Oct. Lots of push back from the BCWF. Won't know final reg change until Victoria tells us what it is. KR – bag limits? Concern that hunters will kill 3 deer with the new bag limit. Opportunity will be taken away by overharvesting – should stick with 2 deer bag limit – still lots of opportunity for deer harvest with 2 bag limit. 3 bag limit will cause hunter congestion. KR – need to separate bag limits and keep MD at one and WT at 2 – get rid of the aggregate limit. Logic to separate bag limits was to encourage hunters to harvest does. JT – if part of the objective is buck/doe ratios, why are we culling the does after the bucks have been fighting to breed them? Why not have our GOS earlier and the youth season after? GM doesn't understand why they moved the doe season to Nov – means more disturbance and would be shooting during the rut. Garth finds this odd. The last version of this regulation had the doe GOS running from Oct 10 – end of Nov. JT - does this change 2 doe bag limit for bow hunters? GM – yes it will – they can't harvest two in the way the draft is worded. TS – this was meant to simplify regs across the province. DT – this proposal rec'd 2nd highest response (62%). Donna-what was the response based on web comments? SL – 2 deer bag limit would alleviate some of the pressure off the MD bucks. No interest in standardization in the west – don't want to lose opportunity to shoot 2 WT bucks.
6. **Lynx hunting and trapping season extension:** we have discussed this proposal with several HQ staff and they are concerned about the sustainability of the increase in lynx harvest given the sporadic distribution and low densities of lynx in our Region. The lack of population data was also a concern. Having a rule in place similar to the rule for cougar that does not allow the killing of any cat accompanied by young was supported. This rule would make the increased kill less risky in terms of sustainability. We agreed to stand down on the hunting season extension proposal until a rule like this can be adopted. We have asked HQ staff if they will support an extension to the trapping season but had no reply as yet. Not high on Victoria's radar. Proposal made to extend hunting season 15 days forward. EK Trailhounds Assoc supported this idea. Lynx #'s appear to be going up in many parts of the region. Victoria will not support our proposal but would possibly support starting the season earlier if it states "cannot shoot/hunt lynx if accompanied by another lynx/kitten". Too late

to make that change now but GM will bring forward with the proper wording and propose earlier season. Lynx season for trapping may suggest an earlier season. Trapping regulation change may be supported – line up lynx season with neighbouring regions – Nov 15 – Feb 15. IT – lynx mgmt plan recommended that hunting and trapping season be the same (Dec 1 – Jan 15).

DT 22% responded – 74% positive. KR – submit proposal as this has been on the table for many years. GM feels this would be a waste of his time as it will not be approved in Victoria. AP – BCWF is pulling out of it PRHAAC - it is basically dysfunctional now (as of 2 weeks ago). Proposal will still go to Ian Hatter. May have to write two changes – date changes and females accompanied by kittens. KR – reg 8 has more liberal season so why are we told ‘no’. DD - May be proposed changes in Lynx Mgmt plan – region 8 will be scaled back. GM will proceed with writing both proposal changes at committee’s request. Victoria (Ian and Eric) has concern over the number of hound hunters in Reg 4. Could see substantive increase in harvest by hunters.

****Note:** Since the meeting Steven Leuenberger has been in touch with Scott Ellis, Mgr of GOBC, who informed Steven that PHRAAC has not dissolved and in fact have a meeting scheduled for sometime in January.

PS: we do not intend to proceed with this regulation because there is no support for it in Victoria.

- 7. Sheep bow season:** we are no longer supporting this season because: 1) it is not supported in Victoria, 2) given the strong desire to get a sheep by many hunters they may buy a crossbow just to get more chance to get a sheep. We do not want to encourage new bow hunters in this way because it may increase injury rates, 3) there is a risk that sheep will be on winter ranges in some areas during this season. The only way to avoid hunter kills on the winter range is to create subMU hunting areas and this level of complexity is not desirable. Victoria was still working on general consensus on bow season in the Province. Winter range a concern – offer two season lengths. Feedback main concern re: crossbows – lots of comments – why are crossbows not licenced like firearms? AP - if crossbows are the reason for killing this proposal then the same could be said for other bow seasons. Concern over sheep being on the winter range during the hunting season. Average date at Radium is Oct 16 for the sheep to show up on the winter range. DT – hunter safety was also an issue raised; too many hunters in small area. 66% did not support this reg. AP – if this hunt isn’t sustainable they are ok with that but if we’re killing this just based on the crossbow issue, that doesn’t make sense. GM – if Victoria doesn’t support, why write the reg. Could go back to Ian and let him know that the committee supports this reg. JT – doesn’t feel there are a lot of bow hunters that would go for this but maybe some hunters would try using a crossbow – could be a recruitment opportunity. Resident hunters are only using 60% of their allocation. Garth mentioned that it varies from place to place on resident allocation use. Because it is for full curl rams, there won’t be a conservation concern. Why are GO’s on quota if sheep are not a conservation concern when it has to meet the full curl? GM – it’s because of allocation split, not for conservation reasons. Need to try and manage allocation targets. AP - resident allocation 60%, non-resident 100%. Varied support within branch and KWHAC committee for this bow season – ask Ian why Victoria does not support it-they would like to get the special weapons policy signed off before we do any specific changes. JT suggests leaving this proposal for now and he will raise it again next year. GM – Regs will be on a 2 or

possibly 3 year cycle. Won't know for certain before changes are made. Ian has clarified that he does not feel we can proceed with this regulation this year because he wants to get the bow hunting policy signed off.

8. **Sheep ewe season:** we are dropping this idea because: 1) no support from any hunter groups, 2) we want to look more fully into transplant options, 3) the price of a sheep tag may deter hunter participation and this kind of hunt had very low participation in Region 3.

DT – 34 % responded for full curl proposal and 28% for Ewe season. Ewe season not strong support; only 27% positive. IT –it is difficult to find locations to transplant. Most areas full except Premier Ridge area. They are all in one area but could only hold maybe another 10. IT – doesn't know where to put them now. The Lazy lake area is very rugged and hard to hunt. Maybe more of a liberal cougar season in that one area? GM – not planning to write this proposal.

9. **Goats:** we are still supporting moving some MU's to GOS. The maximum number of units we could open are 10 but it may be better to open fewer. All are in the north; 4-27 and up. Identified up to 8 MU's for GOS. Need another discussion about that to come to some agreement on MU's which are mainly in the north - Lardeau Duncan and north of Hwy 1, 4-34. Concerns about access. AP – thinks this is too conservative, open more than 8 or they will get pounded hard. Hunters are only shooting ½ of the annual allowable harvest. Irene and Garth looked at entire MU's not LEH zones – some looked okay and some had areas that weren't great. Need to look at subzones. GM – doesn't know if you can have GOS in LEH subzones. They'd like to wait for management plan completion. AP-waiting too long for policies to be written in Victoria so we have to wait to write reg proposals. Not much access in the northern part of the region. GM – identify MU's and write the regulation. Harvest rate in those units are less than 2%; some are at 3 and 4% (maximum). 10 identified, 8 are best candidates - Units in Spillamacheen, Duncan, Lardeau and north of Hwy 1 – all Revelstoke country.

DT – closing portion of 4-32 12% responded and 93% were positive. Change to GOS – 28% responded, 58% positive. AP – increase GOS acceptance by shortening the season. Sep 10 – Nov 30 is a long season. Make one month GOS season to alleviate concern. Garth is not too worried about the number of kills. Residents will never achieve their allocation. We need to try and remove barriers including access closures if allocation is not being met. Most MU's chosen are in the west Kootenay when most of the goats are in the EK. Garth thinks he should stick with the MU's that are low risk rather than going to a shorter season. This regulation appears to be supported in Victoria.

10. **Cougar:** we are still supporting an increase in the maximum female kill for the East Kootenay.

Website – supported change in quota – 82% supported. EKTA did not support change. SL suggests leaving it at 15 for a year or 2 and see how that works. We've already increased it by 5 without any affect. Irene would like to see it at 20. Go back to Trailhound Assoc. in a year to see how they feel about the cougar population. GM – data on incidental kills has gone up 4-fold in last 2 years. GM - Feels cougar numbers are coming up so could kill more females. DM – any chance of giving trappers a bag limit of 1 since numbers are going up? GM - BC Trappers Assoc would have to submit this proposal to Victoria. KR – remember

these changes will be adopted for 2-3 years. Don't want to keep reviewing this year after year. GM – Victoria will entertain conservation based changes at any time and not have to wait the 2-3 years. **PS-as of Jan 5 the female kill was 2 for the WK, 12 for the EK, and 5 in the south unit. Non-hunting kills total 14 already, 8 of which are females. We have reports of significant increases in cougar numbers in the south unit and we are considering increasing the quota there to protect caribou.**

11. **Elk.** Discuss club support for various proposals.

TS – have groups report on most support vs least support. Deadline for response on the Elk Mgmt plan was last week. Everything still on the table and waiting to hear on what the clubs voted on.

General Open Seasons for younger bull elk. Tara looked at kill data from 96/97 where a 3 point or better season followed a 6 pt season and about 50% of bulls killed were 3 pt or better. There were probably fewer 6 points in the population at that time because of the long history of 3 pt seasons. Appears that a lot of animals are killed in that late season so must be very susceptible to that hunt which creates a concern. At this point leaning towards 3 pt or better in Ag/winter ranges.

AP- Suggested to Tara to let committee know which ones she is thinking of proceeding with.

Younger bull elk season in Ag-Winter Range zone (Sep 1 – 19). Looked at data and it looks like that would be less of a conservation issue. Not much support from Victoria for spike season because it is new and different from anywhere else in the province. JT – how will this impact other hunts that take place at the same time? TS – early season bull bow season would still take place outside the Ag Zone. Might shift some of the harvest away from cows and calves but still can adjust LEH numbers. Crowding is always an issue as we offer more opportunity. JT – this will definitely compromise all other hunts taking place especially bow hunts. TS – reason for starting so early is to allow overlap with youth season so kids can hunt before school begins – more hunter opportunity. JT – vehicle traffic takes away from current archery hunts. Perhaps have GOS after archery season – begin Sep 10 – 25th? Garth doesn't think August hunt is a viable option. COS recommended not having GOS overlap with 6 pt season from an enforcement point of view. GM – doesn't like the 3 pt seasons, would prefer the spike season as a more sustainable option. Doesn't really meet our agricultural objectives, it's just for hunter recruitment. AP - Public perception – receptive to Ag zone hunt more than a spike hunt throughout the region. This committee hasn't shown a lot of support for a spike season. DT – most respondents were not supportive of any of the options. Bow hunters would like Sep 10 – 19 to be any elk for archery. Feedback from ranchers saying they feel the archery hunts don't get the animals off the land.

GOS for antlerless elk. Earlier youth/sr season, earlier bow season. Sep 10-19 for antlerless elk in Ag zone only. Trench, Creston, Castlegar, Slocan – not the Elk Valley. Aug season for bow only, Sep 1-9 bow only youth/senior, Sep 10 - 19 GOS. LEH would still follow the GOS which gives us flexibility on the number of permits based on GOS harvest. AD – this encourages more crowding. AP – thinks it's worth trying. TS – we'd probably kill more elk with more opportunity for residents to hunt in the same place from year to year and build

relationships with landowners. GM – doesn't think the west requires a GOS in the Ag zones – not that many complaints. DT – need to think about the boundary changes. TS- this would only apply to current Ag zones or those that the reg is written for. Most would prefer not to have the Aug hunt and move the rest of the hunts forward. AD – concern with enforcement because we have a hard enough time keeping hunters in the Ag zone. JT – could still put a 3 pt season at the end. RG - Castlegar/Slocan should not be considered for this GOS. They do not want any GOS on elk and would like to see more LEH for elk. Would be great opposition if any GOS on elk was put in place in the WK.

LEH bull season West Kootenay – going to a decision maker. GM – west Kootenay clubs are split on the issue. Strongly against GOS for bull elk in WK. Support increasing # of LEH tags. They are even willing to change LEH regulation to 'any bull'. RG - Increase LEH for 3 pts or better and leave GOS in 4-18 (status-quo). Tara/Garth/Dave need clear answer back from Victoria. Feedback from outside WK support opening to a GOS. Spell out what stake holders have asked for and feedback from this group, submit regulation and see what comes back. Garth has since corresponded with Ian Hatter and Tom Either and this move is supported in Victoria.

Align LEH seasons – Agr zones – standardize starting Sep 30 start...Tara needs to look at dates. The GOS dates last proposal was to go to end of Sept for everybody so the LEH would not start until Oct. Not much support for going for longer in the Elk Valley or trench (maybe ending in Oct). The whole intent would be to provide relief to landowners but access on private land is an obstacle. Perhaps hold off for a year on those later hunts. AP – Kent feels elk population is approaching the level where they will start damaging the grass on the winter range – perhaps a late Oct for the EV. During the normal time frame the elk are in the sanctuaries of the mines. Their idea is for late Oct hunt in the EV (winter range). Some clubs are concerned with homesteader vs migratory populations. A lot of the mine elk don't migrate anymore. Kent likes the idea of a 'management' hunt vs Agr hunt. Standardize dates if we can. LEH permits can always be added even if the hunting regs (GOS) are locked in for 2-3 years. Mine reclamation zones are producing so many elk that they are spreading out onto the normal winter ranges and the ranges can't handle it. Perhaps a Feb hunt in the WK due to depredation on hay.

Open LEH antlerless elk outside Ag zone – this is probably dead right now. If we need more options we can look at in two years. Maybe monitor the effects of the other changes first. AP – concerned about health of winter range areas especially south of Cbk. So many animals are not migrating that Tara feels we can reduce overall elk populations with the seasons being proposed.

Changes to the zones – expand in the EV; expand the EK trench zone further north in the Trench. AP – opposed to moving Ag zone into 4-34 and 4-35 – don't have the elk density. Don't need one north of Brisco. TS – 4-26 (5% harvest rate) not many non-migratory animals. If we have few or no non-migratory animals in 4-34 and 4-35 it won't result in many animals being killed anyway. No benefit for landowners nor hunters.

JT – have we thought about expanding the zone where the problem really exists – adjust current boundaries (above 1100 m). AD – from enforcement point of view leave existing boundaries.

Combine zones – 4-26; combine southern MU into one EK trench Ag zone so a LEH holder can hunt anywhere which may help with overcrowding. AP – likes the idea but doesn't think you should open it all up and say go anyplace. Only 5 MU's right now. Working this through the hunt coordinator can help. Maybe one zone on each side of the river. Gives people the chance to go to the same place year after year and create a better relationship with the landowners. After some discussion there was support for creating one southern zone (current Zone X but excluding 4-26).

12. Which 3 proposals appear most supported by the club(s) you represent?

13. Which 3 were least supported?

Crawford Bay – strong support for closure. Not only 'no shooting' but also 'no hunting'. Reg change came from COS in Creston – had a lot of feedback from people in Crawford bay. Nelson Rod & Gun club against it – more of a fundamental reason. They are concerned that it is a move towards no hunting. There are public safety concerns in the community.

AP – Bighorns – something to allow residents to fully utilize their allocations, anything new to report? DD – one avenue is to look at access management which has probably been a barrier for residents. We didn't have time to get out this year due to travel restrictions. AP – Allowable Annual Harvest of 55 is probably unattainable – too high? GM deal with access issues first before AAH, if you think the rams are there. If we reduce AAH there may be no point in dealing with access issue. The AAH includes sheep in the National Park and mines. If the rams are actually there, it would be more beneficial to supply the access to the residents. AP – concerned that lack of harvest by residents will affect the allocation and change the split in 2012. Non resident allocation is 16 sheep but are getting quota of 48 tags in order to get those sheep. AP - Guides are afforded every opportunity to harvest their sheep but the same isn't given to residents. If both groups can agree on a split, new calculations wouldn't be necessary. In terms of the Allocation policy in 2012, success rates won't be able to be used to calculate quota. Will change guide's quotas considerably.

JT – would like to see Tara's revisions on the elk regulations.

DM – Range enhancement and over grazing, has anything been done? GM – is now in the hands of Ecosystems. MOF has hired a silviculture person to address this . Committee is just getting started. No specifics to pass on. Target areas in WK is south Arrow and Gilpin Range in boundary area. Creston areas are still on the table but 3rd priority. RMT program in the EK – still going strong – Sue Crowley is MOE rep. Andy sits on the committee and they are maxed out

with money and not enough trained and qualified burn bosses in the district. Slashed and piled 5 or 6 hundred ha's.

Of all the people responding to reg changes: 83% BC residents within region, only 10% outside region. Out of Province .08%, about 6 % unidentified.

Draft population demographics for Moose and Mule Deer: 2009/2010

We use a model that incorporates the group size of animals observed and the relative vegetation cover and snow cover surrounding the observed group to predict and correct for the number of animals that were likely missed during surveys. If, for example, bull moose were observed in heavier average cover than cows, then a larger correction factor is applied to bulls, as there were likely more bulls missed during surveys. Bull ratios would be slightly higher using the model than if ratios were calculated with no sightability correction. **Data presented below have not yet been corrected for sightability and population ratios may change slightly once corrected.**

Moose

MU	calves/100 cows	90% CI	bulls/100 cows	90% CI	SF/100 cows	90% CI	Total Moose Observed
401/402	18	12-26	43	34-52	8	4-14	158
420	20	11-32	50	38-62	20	11-32	85
423	17	11-24	43	35-52	6	2-11	170
432	12	4-26	85	71-94	6	1-18	65
407*	45	21-70	64	30-79	0		24

*MU 4-06 and 4-07 were surveyed for mule deer and incidental moose observations were recorded; however moose habitat was not surveyed intensively. There were 2 bulls observed in MU 4-07 that had shed their antlers. No moose were observed in the portion of MU 4-06 surveyed.

Mule Deer

MU	Fawns/100 does	90% CI	Bucks/100 does	90% CI	4 points or larger/100 does	90% CI	Total Mule Deer Observed
422	30	25-35	26	21-30	10	6-14	291
421	28	21-35	36	28-43	7	3-11	225
406/407	49	32-50	25	18-34	6	2-12	146
402*	32	28-36	14	11-18	4	2-8	335

*Data from Sheep Mountain, located west of the mouth of the Wigwam River in the southern extreme of MU 4-22 were included in MU 4-02.