

**Kootenay Wildlife Harvest Advisory Committee
December 1, 2007 - Creston
Meeting #2**

ATTENDEES:

Garth Mowat - MOE
Dave Dunbar - MOE
Andy Pezderic - EKWA
Jim Turner - TBBC
Arnold Deboon - COS
Wally Kampen and Brian Huscroft- WKO
Ken Robins and Chris Addison- SGOA (temporary alternates)
Kelly Lode – MOE (notes)

Absent: Don Patterson – EKWA; Brian Glaicar – SGOA; Don McNamar – BCTA

Additions to agenda: 12) Deer bag limits; 13) Larry Hall re: Disabled hunters

A brief discussion took place regarding the RHABC-EK Chapter's request to attend. Although the ESD Regional Manager, Wayne Stetski, had provided an invitation to a member of the RHABC to participate as an "observer-only status" for this meeting, no representative attended.

Tom Roos is summarizing website comments on regulation changes that are coming in from the public. Well over 100 comments so far. **Action: Garth to email website comments summary to KWHAC members.**

The Terms of Reference for the KWHAC was circulated at today's meeting for signatures.

Add to agenda: if person or group has possible changes to regulations when should they submit them? Garth – bring them up at end of meeting or beginning of next meeting or any time before next meeting.

1. GOS for spike/fork moose: VOTE

At least 10 years ago when moose went to LEH residents were told it wouldn't stay that way. "A Moose Harvest Strategy for the Kootenay Region" was handed out at the meeting which included 5 options. SGOA came prepared to vote depending on which option is being voted on. The EKWA and WKO have also discussed and are ready to vote. No representative from the BCTA to vote. GM told the group that West Kootenay south portion tags will be going up, regardless of discussion.

Website comments summarized (90 responses) :
Support – 49% (32 responses in full support; 12 with partial support);
Opposed – 51% (46 responses).

DD added that FNs, in general, are opposed to a GOS for moose. Moose represent a high value wild meat source for FNs therefore they are concerned about potential overharvest by hunters. AP asked if MOE had confidence in the population reviews. If estimates are accurate there shouldn't be a problem with a GOS.

KR suggested increasing the LEH in the west based on data and wondered if counts have been done. GM said Revelstoke, 4-07 and 4-08 have been done but in Ken's area (4-32) there is no data. KR noted that in 4-32B tag numbers increased to 18 this year. He said the whole valley is logged more for goat habitat and feels increasing LEH #'s could be wrong. GM suggested speaking with Tara for unit by unit quotas.

If immature bull season takes over, which will be impacted, GOS or LEH? If GOS impacts LEH there will be lots of opposition to it. How do you scale back GOS? Dates can be changed or manipulated to reduce or increase harvest. AP said we're harvesting very conservatively in Region 4 so we do have some leeway. JT asked about the possibility of moving the GOS to a 'special weapon' season but GM didn't think that would go over well for resident hunter opportunity and has to be an opportunity for hunters with all weapons. JT noted that he sees it as one user group – some hunters choose to hunt with a bow and others with guns.

If LEH permits go down it will impact GO quotas which is a concern to KR. AP said that overall harvest should be considered instead of just LEH harvest. BH said if there is a concern about over harvest, maybe we should go back to the old regulations which allowed an individual to harvest an elk or a moose (not both). GM doesn't believe we need to make it more restrictive – very little biological concern. GM cannot guarantee the GOs will not be impacted but the risk is very small.

It was asked what harvest rates will be used when deciding quotas – 15% vs 20%? Currently Region 4 uses a 15% harvest rate of bulls; Region 3 uses 20%. GM – we are willing to consider a higher bull harvest rate but he could not offer this on the spot. Why are we not harvesting cows? GM – there's not much support for it. Bull ratio is high right now. Resident hunters will be harvesting more moose and it shouldn't impact quotas. A suggestion was to use 20% harvest rate instead of working around allocation issues. One worry was that if spike/fork moose goes to GOS, not many hunters will apply for LEH. GM said LEH will be for any bull, so many will still apply. It was asked if option 2 could be chosen until data is back with population estimates. GM said that would require two regulation changes and feels the spike/fork population will not have a great influence on numbers. Population estimates used right now are very conservative so there shouldn't be a concern. Preference would be for clubs to identify units of concern and Tara can look at those and possibly reduce LEH

numbers until we have a survey done. Some don't think this season should overlap with LEH dates.

Votes:

Option 1: SGOA (2). KR votes this way out of concern for the GOs, not for the population. GM mentioned possibly moving to 20% harvest rate for this region but would have to consult with Tara first. If target isn't reached, it won't affect quota.

Option 2 with Bow season Sep 1-19: Brian – WKO (1), Andy – EKWA (2), Wally, WKO (1). WK would still like to tweak the dates a little bit. He also has concerns with numbers in certain MUs and may come back and bring to Garth's attention.

Option 3: Jim TBBC (1). Will provide less impact on archery, assuming archery season Sep 1 – Oct 14. If a rifle season commences pre Sep 30, this will shift the archery LEH opportunity which is currently Sep 1-30. AP feels MUs need to be realigned .

No consensus reached.

No opposition for the archery seasons in Options 2 and 3.

Regulation number R408090-07 - Align LEH season dates throughout Kootenay Region so that all seasons run Oct 15 to Nov 15. Archery season for LEH holders would then run Sep 1 to Oct 14.

AP's Club 100% in favour of this regulation change

VOTE: EKWA (2), TBBC (1) WKO(2) – all yes.

SGOA not in favour. They would like to see an Oct 20th opening instead of Oct 15. AP suggested a Sep 20th opening for north of the Trans Canada.

2. West Kootenay 6 point elk GOS: VOTE

Website comments summarized (71 responses):

32 support the idea; 9 support with some restrictions; 30 against.

Many of the comments received were not from Region 4. The most common comment against the proposal stated to increase LEH instead. WK would like to see an Elk Management Plan done for the West Kootenays. A complete and informative proposal from the Ministry needs to go out to the public or clubs for consultation. His club (WKO) would like to go with status quo for now until more information is available. GM commented that a management plan for WK would delay this. It was stated that if a management plan is not feasible at this time, at least a document with all relevant information. Garth agreed that data is needed. Possibly move forward in phases with annual allowable harvest by MU (management unit). WKO would like to hold off of the GOS for now but increase LEH. KR stated that this must be based on numbers of elk.

VOTE: which Clubs support the regulation change for this year, with a Sep1-9 Archery season? Jim (1) TBBC; Andy (2) EKWA, but Andy noted that his Club tries to support the other regions as well. East Kootenay clubs are in support of this concept but support the West Kootenay club's decision. A junior/senior hunt was mentioned as well.

VOTE: which clubs could support a slower move to GOS over the next 2-3 years in all or part of the sub-region? Andy (2), Wally(1) Brian (1) Rob (2). Review of access is needed.

WK asked what the management objective is in the West Kootenay. GM said to have more multiple use for that resource. WK asked if the allowable harvest numbers could be added to the LEH. GM felt that 4-07 and 4-08 (possibly 4-09) could be updated because we have data on 4-7 and 4-8. WKO would like to see the LEH increased wherever possible based on current data. DD stated that he is open to a GOS 6 point elk season in the West Kootenay. He will do his best to provide the information that has been requested and would like to be in a firmer place for next years regulation submissions. WK has already begun the process of getting a committee together on this and will get discussed at next PHRAAC meeting. GM cautioned about the budget that will be required. GM will meet with Tara Szkorupa (MOE) and provide a spreadsheet on elk numbers, etc.

3. Align 4-18 Elk GOS dates with rest of the region

It was decided last year with the support of the WKO was to align regs in this MU so this is a house keeping issue, the only reason for the late opening this past year was to phase it in WK would like to include -the earlier bull season so it's consistent throughout the region. JT questioned that if it was the only NEW MU open in the region wouldn't all hunters head there, but GM said it hasn't been bad. JT added that an archery season from Sep 1-9 needs to be added. Brian asked if it should be left with the upcoming management plan?

4. VOTE – in favour of aligning dates. Discuss a 3 point bull LEH (as per Elk Mgmt Plan) and GOS

Website comments: agree – 31, against – 59.

AP's Club do not support LEH for elk because of what happened with moose. They suspect next time there's a dip, 6 pt elk will be put on LEH. They would rather see a short GOS for 3 pt elk. He added that not all in his region would support a GOS though. Maybe 5 pt+ would be better or 3 pt and smaller for a week. GM thought that maybe a full picture of elk needs to be presented first.

DD noted that the 5 yr Elk Plan suggested having a low elevation 3 pt LEH (agriculture conflict) season. BH said the big bulls are constantly being taken, leaving the poorer ones. AP suggested a 5 pt+ for a week. GM wondered about a short any bull season. These are low risk options but hard to sell to hunters. 6 point hunters in AP's group are very opposed to this. BH suggested going to a 1

in 2 or 3 years draw for shooting an elk. JT submitted options from his group; e.g. extended archery season, target zone X. Jr/Sr season which works towards recruitment/retention. Option 2 is very close to what Jim is proposing although it doesn't mention archery. WK understood these were up for negotiations. He supports 3 pts or better depending on what the East Kootenay Club want. AP said his group was scared off with the 10 days stated. If it was 5 days, they would be okay with it.

DD suggested focusing this on Zone X, 3 pts or better for jr/sr only? AP's group sees this hunt as a key recruitment/retention answer. GM mentioned that option 1 is low elevation season; option 2 is GOS everywhere. He asked AP which issue his club had a problem with. AP stated that some opposed option 1 but most liked it. Andy said they don't like LEH!

Nothing will happen on this regulation this year. A survey is needed to see if elk have reached a target number, although the Elk Management Plan does not state a population target.

DD suggested a Senior/Junior hunt for 3 pts in the Trench zones if we cannot agree on this regulation. Alternately, this proposal could be shelved until the results of the Elk Trench survey is analyzed. GM said the Elk Management Plan states, "when elk herds have recovered a general 3 pt season could be implemented. **should be considered by MOE in low elevation areas of the Region.**

JT said Bow hunters will support. AP's group would support a 7 day jr/sr zone X season. Perhaps phase in a GOS for everyone the following year in agriculture zones. Maybe even a region wide 10 day GOS. AD said from the COS perspective, they have a hard time enforcing the Zone X's. Some felt having 3 pt season during rut would save some 6 pts.

GM said that seeing the mixed support from the website comments and table members, this will be a hard sell.

VOTE:

Option: broad open GOS -10 day season – JT - TBBC (1)

Option: Oct 10 – 20 GOS any bull 3 pt or better Jr/Sr in low elevation (X Zones) BH – WKO (1), AP - EKWA (2), WK - WKO (1) - but prefers GOS.

SGOA abstained

JT – TBBC yes, but would prefer it be GOS

5. Turkey – go to an archery and firearm season in fall: VOTE

Website comments summarized (84 responses):

37 agreed; 20 agreed with some concerns; 27 against (32%)

Victoria has not been able to implement a tag for turkeys, despite wide support from the hunting stakeholders. The common theme through all the comments was on 'rifles'. DD stated that there are a lot of hunters out in the fall and he is concerned that an either sex, any weapon, lengthy season could result in a significant overharvest of these birds. Shotgun-only could limit the harvest, which would be preferable, if an either sex season is recommended. AP would like rimfires included. If we don't want elk hunters hunting turkeys, limit weapon use. AP asked if there was any conservation concern with having a fall hunt? GM said that a species that has a high reproductive rate usually require hunting be done prior to winter season which is when there is a high mortality rate. DD was not confident with the assumption that the lower numbers of birds observed from the fall to the following spring was a result of over-wintering mortality. He felt that behavioural differences may be a factor influencing their visibility. DD stated that although there is some mortality through the winter season, he's not convinced that the mortality rate is that high in the winter. Further, DD expressed concern that an overly-liberal season during the fall could adversely impact the spring hunt. JT asked if the Sep season could be an archery and Oct shotguns-only season.

VOTE: dates same as Region 8 (Oct 1 – Nov 30 and Apr 15-May15) Bow season Sep 1 Sep 30. Those in favour of fall open season (any turkey with current firearm restrictions and leaving bow season as is and spring season as is) – all in favour (7 out of 7)

JT's preference would be to see the date extended to Dec 20.

All support a \$5 tag for turkey.

6. Grizzly Bear: same as last year, open north half of 4-15 and 4-16 and close the south half of 4-17 and 4-18. VOTE

GM stated that he would like to see the population estimate for Grizzly bear close to carrying capacity. WK sees conflicting strategies between Grizzly bears and caribou but Garth stated that he is not trying to manage GB for caribou. WKO is also concerned with bear/human conflict. GM feels that these areas could re-open in 3-5 years - not permanent closures. These were approved through the grizzly bear pilot project but shut down in Victoria. WK supports opening but not closing areas.

Committee members were not ready to vote on this today, but Garth will be submitting these regulation changes.

7. Access Mgmt closure on Holt Creek near Golden (as per GBRAP recommendations)

Access closure was there initially to limit harvest of Grizzly bears. Grizzly bear activity in Holt creek was very high so it was closed to protect that. Lower end is good elk hunting and feel road should be open to the quarry. Garth spoke with Peter Holmes about this and will follow up with Peter (**Action**).

CA said he spoke with Wilf Boardman when it was Wilf's Guide Outfitter territory, and Wilf supported having the closure begin at the quarry site too.

8. Road closures for WK (update on closure review for WK): Sproule Creek and Elmira Road near Kingsgate. Sproule is effectively closed by the Smallwood road closure so some decision needs to be made around whether people can use a vehicle in there or not. Elmira is in construction and bisects a major ungulate movement corridor to King Creek.

There are quite a few road closures being discussed in the Kingsgate area. These closures are proposed by our ecosystem staff, but some have been initiated by external processes (SRMMP, MOF, etc). DD will have a careful look at them to see if the closures are still relevant. Some closures currently in place were meant to be temporary and have never been re-opened. It may be possible for some closures to be closed for certain dates only (seasonal). GM would like the committee members to discuss closure in Elmira with their Clubs.

9. Englishman Creek VHAC: the Lower Kootenay Band will be submitting a letter requesting a VHAC on Englishmen Creek. How do other user groups feel about this request?

Englishman Creek is near Yahk. Forestry wants to get in there to log for Pine Beetle. The First Nation/Guide Outfitter in this area have concerns regarding the impact on wildlife of increased access due to road building requirements of the forest industry. MOF has lobbied MOE for access closures to be implemented under the Wildlife Act (i.e., either VAHC or AMA designation) to address the FN concerns. DD would prefer that MOF regulate access restrictions utilizing a combination of access-related legislation under MOF, signage & gates, road deactivation and the establishment of "road density targets". The Lower Kootenay Band is very supportive of access restrictions in this area and have advised MOF that they will not support timber harvesting if access is not managed. FN owns the GO territory but they don't currently operate it. CA stated that the GO operation would still have to abide by an access closure.

10. Discuss Caribou

Garth gave update on caribou issues.

11. Discuss Ecosystem Restoration in the WK

GM asked that the members take a copy of the Ecosystem Restoration Plan to their Clubs. AP sits on the Steering Committee for the ERP. A similar Plan will be developed for the West Kootenay.

12. Deer bag limit

GM doesn't think this can be resolved today. AP suggested it be added to the agenda for the spring meeting (3 deer bag limit). Deer are low priority in Victoria so he doesn't want to wait too long. GM stated that we'll probably have to initiate in Region. We need to allow for a liberal harvest. Region needs to come up with

money to analyze deer data. GM will approach clubs requesting a money commitment and then approach Victoria for budget dollars as well. AP questions what kind of response he will get from clubs when asking for money for what should be a government initiative.

Boundary change; include Lister right to the border - description needs to be changed. Brian and Arnold to show Garth.

One more suggestion was to have a small LEH draw on elk (10 or 15 days) for the month when there is no hunting.

13. Disabled Hunting policy – email from Larry Hall (provided to KWHAC members)

Larry Hall, Canadian Outdoor Disabled Alliance, has requested a GOS on Grizzly bear, sheep, and any antlered animal for disabled hunters. Although the EKHOC was very supportive of providing opportunities for disabled hunters, the Fish & Wildlife Branch, at this time, does not support the creation of special seasons, unique species restrictions and/or exclusive LEH draws for disabled hunters. DD asked the committee their views on the provision of certain species exclusively for disabled hunters. Right now permits are issued so disabled hunters have access to certain areas that are closed to vehicles for hunting. Dave is planning a review of all access closures within Region 4. Does this table support Dave working with HQ to find certain species for the disabled? In general, KWHAC members supported such a concept, but felt it should be limited to elk, deer and turkey. COS would like to see a visible identifier that the COS and public can see. CA - by giving access into VAHCs, it undermines the quality of hunt for those in AMA's. WK suggests that there is probably already provincial direction on this issue. AP asked approximately how many disabled permits were issued last year and DD recalls about 30-40.

Other:

- AP says rancher in 4-26 (between Fairmont and Invermere) would like to be taken off Zone X because there are no elk there.
- Any changes to LEH season need to be submitted by Jan 17/08. Access closures need to be in by Jan 24/08. An email will be sent out to the KWHAC by the end of Dec or early Jan stating the decisions and rationale that were made. **Action Dave/Garth**
- Spring meeting for new proposals. Ask clubs what they would want.
- A decision on moose needs to be made for this year. Consensus was not reached at this table. GM will submit Grizzly bear regulation change as well as the access and turkey regulations.

Next meeting April 19 or 26/08. There was discussion on possibly moving the December voting meeting to mid December.