

TAG ALLOCATION AND APPLICATION HUNT COMMITTEE
Minutes of the May 11, 2016 Meeting

The Tag Allocation and Application Hunt Committee (TAAHC) met at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 11, 2016 at Nevada Department of Wildlife, 6980 Sierra Center Parkway, Reno, Nevada.

PRESENT: Chairman Brad Johnston
Rex Flowers
Joe Crim
Peter Mori (by phone)
Paul Valentine (by phone)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF: Bob Haughian

OTHERS PRESENT: Maureen Hullinger – NDOW
Jack Robb – NDOW
Cody Schroeder – NDOW
Brian Wakeling - NDOW
Don Sefton - SCI
Jim Puryear
Sean Shea
Darin Elmore

NOTE: A tape recording of these proceedings is retained by the Department of Wildlife and is available for review upon request.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call of Committee Members – Chairman Johnston

Chairman Johnston called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda – Chairman Johnston

Joe Crim motioned to approve the agenda.
Paul Valentine seconded the motion.
Motion carried unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes – Chairman Johnston

The Committee may approve Committee minutes from the March 16, 2016 Committee meeting.

Paul Valentine motioned to approve the minutes.
Rex Flowers seconded the motion.
Motion carried unanimously.

4. Member Items/Announcements and Correspondence - Commissioner and Chairman Johnston - Informational

Committee members may present emergent items. No action may be taken by the Committee. Any item requiring Committee action may be scheduled on a future Committee agenda. The Committee will review and may discuss correspondence sent or received by the Committee since the last regular meeting and may provide copies for the exhibit file (Committee members may provide hard copies of their correspondence for the written record). Correspondence sent or received by the department will also be discussed.

Chairman Johnston asked the committee if they had any member items, announcements or any correspondence they would like to discuss.

Pete Mori said that the Elko CAB has brought forth an item to be discussed but he would address it at agenda item #7.

5. Report Regarding Relevant TAAHC Issues – Informational – Mr. Don Sefton, Systems Consultants

A report will be provided regarding data analyses related to potential changes to elk and pronghorn waiting periods and change of draw sequence, possible introduction of an apprentice tag program, review of the party application process and other relevant committee issues.

Don Sefton reported that if changing the bull elk harvest waiting period from 10 years to 5 years, accumulative total, there would be 4,432 resident clients returning. For nonresidents the accumulative total returning would be 613. For antelope, horns longer than ears, there would be 8,304 residents and 972 nonresidents returning to the application pool if the harvest waiting period is changed from 5 years to 3 years.

Additionally, Mr. Sefton addressed the financial impact if the PIW draw sequence was changed, with the PIW draw order to be before the big game draw. The fiscal impact gain would be approximately \$35,000.00 per year.

Mr. Sefton also addressed the party deer tag returns and the allegations that some party tag applicants are abusing the system by having a person with high bonus points participating in the party, thereby enhancing the party's chances to draw tags, only to have that high-point person return their tag and repeat the gaming or "bootstrapping" the next year. Mr. Sefton reviewed four years of applications and reported that there may be as few as 60 or less potential candidates gaming the party application process. He said that there are approximately 10,000 party applications a year. So this extremely small group of applicants who might actually be abusing the bonus point system is less than 1/10 of 1%.

Chairman Johnston asked if there were any comments from the committee members or from the public.

Rex Flowers recalled that the waiting period on the bull elk was discussed in prior TAAHC meetings and this was to encourage more people to take a lesser bull, and not get hung up on larger, "quality" bulls. He stated that he has heard comments from different individuals that maybe we are going in the wrong direction, rather than rewarding those who do harvest, take away from those who don't harvest and make everyone sit out a 10 year wait period. Regarding antelope, if the waiting period were dropped down to a 3 years, there would be a whole lot of people with bonus points that would not hunt. There will be more people put back in the draw than coming out of the draw.

Jack Robb stated that during past TAAHC meetings this topic has been visited multiple times. He himself is currently in a waiting period for bull elk and if the waiting period is changed to a 5 year wait, he would not have to wait so long to be able to apply again. While those who have waited the full 10 years and become eligible. He doesn't feel this would be fair.

Chairman Johnston stated that any time you change a waiting period, there will be an impact some place. .

Darin Elmore said he looked at the harvest data and the application data for the last 5 years and came up with rudimentary demand and supply for the elk population. In the last few years the number of antlered elk tags has grown to 70% in Nevada, which is a great success story. However, we are still only talking about 17,086 antlered elk tags in Nevada this last year which is a very small number over all. 12,500 annual applicants for at least the last 5 years, demand far exceeds supply and so why change the waiting period from 10 to 5 years? In 2011 the simple demand supply ratio was 12 to 1, the last 3 years that has dropped down to 7 to 1. He said that in his opinion, the waiting period is working and the elk population is growing so the simple draw odds, excluding the bonus points, seems to be working. With the bonus points, depending on the hunt unit selected, you could draw a tag every 5 or 6 years. If adding in the 44,000 hunters back in by changing the waiting period, you would be going backwards with the way the supply and demand ratio looked in 2011.

Jim Puryear stated that the Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife had a meeting on this elk issue and the coalition is against any change for any social type reason. But if it is biological reasons, then the coalition would support it if there are no other options to have the biology reasons met. If you wanted to harvest younger bulls, then have a separate season and you would get more of a consistent harvest. He believes there are better options than changing the waiting period.

Chairman Johnston said he would present this data to the Board of Wildlife Commissioners and they can make the decision if they so choose. The TAAHC will have done its job as a committee by presenting the commission with recommendations and information on the waiting period for elk and antelope, and the PIW draw sequence in which they can make a decision. This is not an action item to the commission. It will only be a report from the TAAHC on topic items that have moved up to the commission level.

Pete Mori stated he would like to see consistency with harvest or no harvest for the waiting periods, whether it is 5 and 5 or 10 and 10.

Paul Valentine said the comments he had heard was that the older hunters would like the opportunity to hunt elk sometime in their lifetime.

6. Interim Report Regarding the Ongoing Survey Conducted by the Game Division – Informational – Game Division Administrator Brian F. Wakeling

An interim report will be provided regarding survey data on the opinions of Nevada's big game hunters and other relevant matters.

Brian Wakeling said he wanted to speak about the harvest guidelines which is an ongoing process and was initiated in August 2015. It is an effort to largely identify objective measures for the commission to adopt and provide the biologists and opportunity to have clear direction on what they are trying to shoot for. An example would be what should be the buck to doe ratio overall? We are trying to hit 30:100 but don't have a hard guideline that the biologist are trying to obtain. Part of this effort is to reach out and speak to the public--do they accept what we currently are managing for or is there something else they would rather see us shoot for? As part of the process, NDOW has put together town meetings and went out in the first week of November 2015 with 5 different meetings around the state to engage with the public. We received additional input through the mail and also as part of the license simplification process. NDOW Game Division created the survey instrument based on the comments and input that was received, and released the survey instrument on March 23rd. It was sent to 2,200 randomly selected hunting- or combination-license holders within the state of Nevada. 735 have responded. The following are the questions and responses for this interim presentation.

- Respondents were asked to identify themselves as primarily a big game hunter, mostly a big game hunter, both a big game and an upland hunter, or mostly or primarily an upland game hunter. 7% identified themselves as mostly or primarily an upland game hunter, 56% identified themselves as either primarily or mostly a big game hunter, and the rest identified themselves as both a big game and an upland game hunter.
- One of the results was that 94% of the people in the last 3 years did not re-apply for elk.
- Regarding the issue of hunter crowding or congestion, 70% responded that it was not an issue.
- There was a survey question on frequency of hunting> Of the last 3 years, how many of those years did you hunt in Nevada? The most frequent response was they hunted in all 3 years. The second most frequent response was they did not hunt any of those years.
- When asked if you did not hunt in the past 3 years, how many times did you help others hunt? The most frequent response was they didn't; the second most frequent response was they did in all 3 years.
- When asked if waiting periods speed up the rate that most hunters get drawn for a tag, 41% responded they agree or strongly agreed. 23% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Brian Wakeling stated that he has done his own analysis regarding the impact of a waiting period. In his first example, a hunter must sit out 5 years if a tag is drawn. In year one, there were 20,000 applicants, and only 3,000 tags, so in year two there would be 17,000 applicants because 3,000 of those would be in a waiting period. In year three, there would be 14,000 applicants. By the time you get to year 6, there would be 5,000 applicants with 3,000 tags and in year 7, you would start adding back in the applicants who sat out in year one. On the draw odds, in year one, you would have a 1 in 6.7 chance in drawing a tag; in year 7, you would a 1 in 1.67 chance in drawing a tag. In a second scenario, you reduce the applicants by half--only 3,000 tags available and a 5 year waiting period, with 10,000 applicants applying in year 1. By year 5 and 6, you would run out of applicants who could apply because of the waiting period. In a third scenario you have a lot of applicants; there are 50,000 applicants with 3,000 tags available and a 5 year waiting period. In year 2 you are at 47,000 applicants and so on. You would take 15,000 applicants out by year 6. In year 1, you would have a 1 in 16.7 chances in drawing a tag, and in year 6 you would have a 1 in 11.7 chances in drawing a tag.

Brian Wakeling addressed further responses to his survey:

- How many years should a hunter have to wait out after being awarded a bull elk tag? The number one response was 5 years. The number two response was no wait.

- Respondents were asked if a hunter should be given the opportunity to purchase bonus points during a waiting period? 50% responded that they agree or strongly agree and 41% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- When asked if a youth under the age of 12 be able to purchase a bonus point for big game, 74% responded that they disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Where NDOW is trying to reduce the elk population, should antlerless elk tag holders be able to purchase a second antlerless elk tag?; 50% responded that they disagreed or strongly disagreed and 28% responded that they agreed or strongly agreed.
- In units where the elk population is not wanted, should elk tags be offered over-the-counter? 72% responded that they agreed or strongly agreed.
- Regarding the question asking if interested in receiving an alternate tag, should all 5 of my choices to be considered? 52% agreed and 8% disagreed.
- When asked should party applications be considered for all species, 38% agreed and 41% disagreed.

Maureen Hullinger stated that she has heard comments at other meetings. These comments were regarding if changing the waiting period there would be benefits associated with wildlife management on people taking an elk versus not taking an elk and asked if this should be looked at as one viewpoint per Mr. Wakeling's report.

Brian Wakeling said when people build bonus points, you see people's draw odds increase until they receive around 5 or 6 bonus points. At that point, they would change their application behavior and not want to waste their bonus points on a standard hunt unit. They would then become more selective. If you waited a long period of time to draw a bull elk tag, it would probably influence your likelihood to settle for a bull that is maybe less than what your expectations are. One would think that hunt success would increase, but currently the resident rifle bull hunt success is at 55%. The rifle successful hunters is at 71% on average to kill a 6 point or greater. We have built up expectations; we have high bull-to-cow ratios, and it is relatively easy to have a high quality harvest if you can get that tag. Biologically it is hard to speculate on exactly what the effect would be by reducing the waiting period and changing it for the successful hunter and unsuccessful hunter by having the same waiting period. This would more likely influence an individual's choice to harvest or not. The waiting period is not going to influence hunt success. Increasing tags would influence hunt success which will influence harvest. It might be likely you would have a detectable difference if successful and unsuccessful hunters have a similar waiting period because at that point you are not investing in the future. On the last few days of your hunt you would be more likely make the decision to harvest a bull when it may not be as large as you were hoping for. Just changing the waiting period in its self is not likely to influence hunt success or harvest. The most frequent comments received both internally and externally as we did the public and the agency town meetings, was that NDOW needed to take another look at the waiting period. The consistent message NDOW received was that the successful bull hunter waited too long.

Brian Wakeling informed the committee that NDOW is planning on holding town hall meetings for the license simplification in June 2016 and the harvest guideline meetings in July or early August 2016.

7. Consideration of items on the Open or Closed TAAHC Topic Lists – Commissioner and Chairman Johnston – For Possible Action

The Committee will review any new suggested topics received from County Advisory Boards or the public and may take action to add and/or rank those topics on the TAAHC Open Topic List for future consideration for implementation, and may take action to move topics on the TAAHC Open Topic List to the TAAHC Closed Topic List.

Chairman Johnston asked the committee to address the open topics A1.27 & A1.27.1 – Application and Bonus point eligibility, and A1.28 – Abusing the party application process by use of bonus points.

Rex Flowers replied having seen the information provided at tonight's TAAHC meeting, he felt that topic A1.28 was not worth changing regulation over for those very few who may be abusing the bonus point system.

Chairman Johnston also agrees with Rex Flowers on this item. From the information provided tonight he would like to weigh this item as a "3" and move it to the closed topic list. Chairman Johnston asked the committee to make a motion.

Jim Crim motioned to the committee to move topic item A1.28 to the closed list with a ranking of a "3".

Rex Flowers seconded the motion.
Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Johnston opened the discussion on topic item A1.27 – Application and bonus point eligibility; have the ability to apply for both spike and antlered elk which would allow for bonus point applications in both categories too.

Darin Elmore said when he looks at this topic he would like to apply for both a bull elk and a spike elk in the same year. He said he would also put in for the spike elk if in a waiting period for bull elk and views the spike elk hunt as a management hunt.

Chairman Johnston said he views this as an opportunity for people to apply for something other than antlerless elk. Chairman Johnston asked if there were any more comments. There were none.

Chairman Johnston asked the committee to make a motion.

Jim Crim motioned to the committee to keep topic item A1.27 on the open topic list and be ranked as a “2”.
Paul Valentine seconded the motion.
Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Johnston opened the discussion on topic item A1.27.1 – Application and bonus point eligibility; Have the ability to apply for both ram and ewe hunts for bighorn sheep, which would allow a person to apply for bonus points for each.

Rex Flowers stated that he didn't think too many people would put themselves in jeopardy by applying for a ewe and a ram in the same draw. He suggested at looking at how many individuals are applying for these hunts so the committee will know how to address this topic.

Jim Puryear asked if there could be a ewe hunt that everyone could put in for and could be treated separately. The bonus points would be separate and to simplify this, you could put in for ewe, you could put in for rams, you could put in for a spike elk, and you could put in for a bull elk and it is all separate bonus points.

Maureen Hullinger informed the committee this is how it is done currently. If you are in a waiting period for a ram hunt, you can put in for a ewe hunt. If you are not in a waiting period, you would have to choose between applying for a ram or ewe for the same subspecies.

Chairman Johnston stated that the committee would have to entertain public input as to the possibility that someone may draw a bull elk tag and spike elk tag in the same year. Chairman Johnston asked if there were any more comments. There were none.

Chairman Johnston motioned to the committee to keep topic item A1.27.1 on the open topic list and be ranked as a “2”.
Rex Flowers seconded the motion.
Motion carried unanimously.

8. Public Comment Period

Persons wishing to speak may do so at this time. Public comment will be limited to three minutes. No action can be taken by the Committee at this time; any item requiring Committee action may be scheduled on a future Committee agenda.

Pete Mori reported that at the Elko CAB meeting they took action on military personnel regarding as to tags and bonus points. He received correspondence on this and will be turning it over to the Wildlife Board of Commissioners. The correspondence reads in part “This year it has come up that the military personnel do not get fair access to their licenses through HuntNevada.com and the Nevada Department of Wildlife. While applying for bonus points, my son who is in the military and is stationed in Germany, if would not let us buy his bonus point without paying for a license and fee for the military price. Two years ago when he went into the service he surrendered his buck deer tag back and did not get a bonus point or anything for making the choice to serve our country. Nevada requires military personnel to come back to Nevada to purchase a military licenses even though you sign an affidavit on HuntNevada(.com) stating you are a member of the military not stationed in Nevada. Military personnel cannot always come back to purchase licenses. HuntNevada(.com) does not offer military licenses after taking to an employee at Systems Consultants they do not offer military licenses options. Bonus points may cost different amounts depending on species.” Pete Mori also stated that in other states, military members have to provide the department with a valid current military ID card, military leave orders, a

current leave and earning statement indicating the applicant is receiving hostile fire compensation and proof of residency at the time of application.

Maureen Hullinger reported that the Department offers two types of licenses for military: If you are a resident of Nevada and stationed outside of Nevada, we offer a reduced fee license. Proper documentation showing evidence of duty assignment must be provided. If they are a nonresident stationed in Nevada, they and their family can receive an a resident license, and the 6 months residency requirement is waived. They would then pay \$33 for a hunting license verses the nonresident rate of \$142. Some of the military will purchase the regular hunting license just to purchase bonus points if they are unable to come back and hunt and they do not have the ability to scan or fax the required documentation for the military license.

Pete Mori said at looking topic item A.1.22, No loss of bonus points for active duty military who leave the State of Nevada. He read the statement from the Topic List where the Department strongly opposed this recommendation based on to identify when the client has left the military or no longer are in stasis and in a holding pattern on their bonus points. He asked if this was still the Department's view.

Bob Haughian commented that this proposal was to allow for an indefinite period of time for possession of bonus points until the applicant draws a tag. NDOW's opposition was that the proposal does not allow the ability to validate eligibility every year. If you allow for military personnel to do this, in 5 years or 10 years from now, NDOW would not know if this person, who has continued to retain bonus points, was still on active duty. In order for the department to make this work administratively, the department would need some sort of revalidation every year that the clients are still eligible for this. The proponent of this particular item did not want to see a revalidation process.

The topic statement reads "NDOW staff comment: Need further discussion about the "status" of military members to determine person's eligibility. A person's military status can change from year to year. For example, a person is on active duty this year, but retires or is discharged from service next year. Without annual reconfirmation of the member's military status the Department will not know the client's current military status and their eligibility for "No loss of bonus points for active duty military who leave the State of Nevada." Furthermore, if this recommendation were implemented without annual service verification, there will be those residents, no longer on active duty, who could go for years without losing their bonus points. And to portray an extreme situation, this recommendation may allow for retention of bonus points by a prior military person who was discharged from the service for "dishonorable" reasons. These issues were discussed in meetings between the Department, Systems Consultants and the proponent for this recommendation. The proponent was insistent that there be no annual verification of eligibility. Without some type of verification, the Department strongly opposed this recommendation."

Chairman Johnston asked when going to HuntNevada.com, why can't there not be an attestation for the military when purchasing a license like there is for the residents. NDOW Deputy Director Jack Robb stated this is something that can be looked at through NDOW to find a solution.

Joe Crim said at his CAB meeting they did not have a specific item on the agenda to talk about TAAHC items but at the end of the meeting on the public comment section, he was asked to bring to the TAAHC meeting the idea of having a lifetime hunting and fishing license.

NDOW Deputy Director Jack Robb reported this has been looked at by the department and have found that a lot of states have done this and are now reverting and not doing this anymore, but said he would provide Joe Crim the information that NDOW has.

NDOW Deputy Director Jack Robb asked if the TAAHC could look at the Desert Bighorn sheep> Currently there are tags awarded for the sheep in the Silver State, PIW, Heritage and Dream tags processes which leads to a unit closure for sheep the following year. He said he would like the TAAHC to look at different scenarios of how we address a potential over harvest of an animal in an area and the impact on affected units. The Department has looked at this and has discussed this internally and would like to provide different scenarios to the TAAHC as a starting point, then, vet it through the public process to see which scenario would go forward.

Chairman Johnston said he would have this put on the next TAAHC agenda for June.

Sean Shea said he has been approached by nonresidents who would like to purchase bonus points for the Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep and the Mountain Goat. These hunts are currently closed to nonresident to apply for. The reason for this is that the residents can built up their bonus points for these species but the nonresidents can't.

Jim Puryear said agrees with Sean Shea on this topic.

Chairman Johnston asked if there were any more comments from the committee or the public. There were none.

9. Future Committee Meetings – Commissioner and Chairman Johnston – Informational

The Committee may confirm the date and location of the next TAAHC meeting.

Next TAAHC will be scheduled in June in Elko. Time and location to be determined.

Meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

DRAFT