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Regional Deer Management Strategy Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, May 16, 2012 – 6:15 pm
Room 107, CRD Building, 625 Fisgard Street, Victoria

Meeting Notes

Present:

Jocelyn Skrlac (Chair)
Robin Bassett
Wendy Fox
Robert Moody
Patrick O'Rourke
Philip Tom
Kerri Ward
Sol Kinnis

Regrets:

Richard Christiansen
Lisa Kadonaga
Terry Michell

Staff:

Jeff Weightman (Deer Management Project Manager, CRD Regional Planning)
Marg Misek-Evans (Senior Manager, CRD Regional Planning)
Corey Burger (Recording Secretary, CRD Regional Planning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:19 pm.

- 1. Arrival and Dinner**
- 2. Approval of Agenda**

K. Ward moved approval of the agenda. R. Bassett seconded.

CARRIED

- 3. Review and Approval of Minutes of May 9, 2012**

P. O'Rourke moved approval of the minutes. W. Fox seconded.

CARRIED

- 4. Discuss Binder Materials**

J. Skrlac introduced the binder material previously discussed and asked the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) for any additional management options that were not included. The CAG discussed new material including a thesis contributed by K. Ward, titled

“Resident Opinions Concerning Urban Deer Management in the Greater Winnipeg Area, Manitoba, Canada” by Erin McCance of the University of Manitoba. J. Weightman asked if the thesis covered White-tailed or Black-tailed deer and it was mentioned that it covered White-tailed. The discussion continued regarding management options.

ACTION: CRD Staff agreed to make the thesis available to all CAG members

J. Skrlac asked the CAG about identified information gaps. The CAG discussed the deer counts in the CRD and origins of other deer management strategies and their base information. The CAG discussed timing and utility of a public opinion poll and M. Misesk-Evans replied that in the Terms of Reference a regional survey is to be conducted at the discretion of the Board upon review of the CAG recommendations. The CAG then asked if there were any previous regional deer counts and M. Misesk-Evans replied that currently there were none at that level of geography. The CAG discussed the different approaches to counting in other jurisdictions with different vegetation and geographic scale, some of which allow for aerial counting. The CAG discussed what strategies could be recommended in the absence of an exact census.

CAG members commented on the CAG mandate regarding public opinion and considerations of measuring Cultural Carrying Capacity (discussed in the BC Urban Ungulate Conflict Analysis). The CAG asked if information about deer observations by police officers could be collected from the various regional police forces (similar to the methodology from Helena, MT).

ACTION: CRD staff to ask Expert Resources Working Group (ERWG) if counts by police are a valid methodology of collecting information

The CAG continued to discuss Sidney Island deer management and efficacy of various options, including fertility control. The CAG discussed the efficacy of fertility control at the Capital Regions geography.

The CAG discussed the various First Nations interests including resource considerations and ceremonial purposes. The topic of the Douglas treaty was discussed along with the movement of deer from surrounding farms to the First Nations reserves. The CAG discussed First Nations consultation. J. Weightman mentioned that there is a First Nations representative on the ERWG, with the potential for additional representation.

The CAG asked about hunting and wildlife control bylaws, to provide context to provided feeding bylaws.

ACTION: CRD staff to provide hunting and wildlife bylaws in the region

The CAG asked about the total capacity of First Nations for deer. The discussion included reference to the Ministry of Environment guidelines regarding disposal of deer culled by farmers out of season. A request was made for the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority's Deer Management Plan mentioned in public submissions regarding deer management.

ACTION: CRD staff to research the processing capacity for local First Nations

ACTION: CRD Staff to provide Upper Thames River Conservation Authority in Ontario's Strategy for Preventing and Managing Human-Deer Conflicts in Southern Ontario to the CAG

The CAG then discussed deer fencing and the various types in addition to bylaws restricting fencing height. Discussion then turned insurance for farmers for crop loss and the relatively high cost for this type of insurance.

Discussion by the CAG turned to specific numbers for economic agricultural loss, including whether or not Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) collected crop loss dollar figures, although the consensus was that the CRA did not. M. Misek-Evans mentioned that CRD Planning Transportation & Protective Services Committee and the CRD Board are not disputing the economic loss statements provided to the CRD Board by local farmers and that it is not the mandate of the CAG to justify any management options based on specific economic loss numbers. The CAG discussed crop loss, how to mitigate economic impacts and how that impacts their choices of management options.

The CAG discussed the possibility of a public volunteer deer count including the logistics and challenges of such a count. They noted that some of the farmers have done some specific counts, and asked if a count was beyond the scope of the Terms of Reference. J. Weightman committed to discussing the need for and options regarding a deer count with the ERWG.

ACTION: J. Weightman to speak with ERWG regarding deer counts for the CRD deer management strategy.

5. Responses to May 9, 2012 requests

J. Weightman introduced some of the new material that CRD staff provided to the CAG, including the requested agricultural crop loss submissions submitted to the Board in February 2012.

The CAG discussed a map of Census data from the 2001, 2006, and 2011 showing total dwelling units and asked for the numbers in table format.

ACTION: CRD staff to provide the census dwelling unit data as a table

Next, the CAG discussed the petitions by farmers and non-farmers that were submitted to the CRD Board for the February 22, 2012. The CAG further discussed the agricultural crop loss numbers and noted that they are from August 2011.

ACTION: CRD Staff to provide the petitions submitted to the CRD Board for the Board's February 22, 2012 Meeting.

The CAG discussed various management options contained in the deer management email submissions including immunocontraceptives. J. Weightman noted that immunocontraceptives have been used experimentally on Sidney Island and other smaller herds, in small geographies but not outside small and localized populations.

6. Next Steps

J. Skrlac asked the CAG to start creating a table of contents for the RDMS. The CAG discussed the various management options discussed in the BC Urban Ungulate Conflict Analysis. M. Misek-Evans outlined some possible steps forward for the plan including interim measures.

The CAG then discussed both the split between urban and agriculture and the split between urban and rural, noting that agriculture existed in the urban areas and that some management strategies were more appropriate for different circumstances. The CAG also discussed economic damage to non-agricultural as well as damage to parks. The CAG wondered if any parks department in the region had looked at deer damage to understory plants.

ACTION: CRD staff will provide CRD Parks' studies of deer grazing impacts in parks

The CAG then discussed other considerations that should be included in the proposed Table of Contents, including riparian impacts, health issues and, safety issues, and transportation-related issues including accidents with both cars and bicyclists. The CAG discussed separating gardening for food production from ornamental or aesthetic gardening as a consideration for management options.

The CAG then discussed the various issues that exist in urban areas with denser deer populations, concluding that many of the same issues exist as for rural and agricultural but the criteria might have different weighting and different management approaches might be required.

M. Misek-Evans noted that CRD staff will expand on the Table of Contents as per the comments from the CAG and then provide a revised version of the document for the group's review.

M. Misek-Evans then directed the attention of the CAG to page 5 of the Regional Deer Management Strategy (RDMS) Terms of Reference which included a list of evaluative criteria and said that this was a partial list and asked the CAG to identify other evaluation criteria.

The CAG discussed the local information gaps and how the lack of data could be dealt with in evaluation criteria and the criteria should be prioritized. M. Misek-Evans suggested that management options might be based on population thresholds, for example.

The CAG discussed categorization of management options based on the jurisdiction and the speed with which any management option could be implemented. The CAG discussed the issue of food security and integration of regional deer management strategy within the larger CRD corporate strategic vision. The CAG noted that restrictive planting lists to reduce deer conflict do not work in agricultural areas.

The CAG discussed management options that may involve changes to local, provincial and federal laws, noting that implementation would need to be conceptualized at the regional level to be effective.

The CAG then discussed the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and the Regional Growth Strategy and asked if the CRD had an agriculture committee. M. Misek-Evans replied that the CRD did not.

ACTION: CRD Staff to provide information to CAG regarding ALR land within the CRD

The committee took a 15 minute break

After the break, J. Skrlac asked the CAG commercial farm representatives about agricultural losses and their opinions. The CAG discussed the lack of deer count information and the challenge of making recommendations. The CAG asked about the timeline for the strategy and M. Misek-Evans replied that the CRD Board set the timeline based in part, on the agricultural sector's submissions regarding urgency due to economic losses. The CAG discussed the possibility of using deer as a sustainable, local food source and asked that the ERWG provide details on population projections and thresholds for management options.

The CAG discussed the adaptive management procedures including Cranbrook's issue with catching the wrong type of deer. The CAG then considered asking the ERWG for information about the assumptions of other deer management plans.

The CAG decided that they would like to have two presentations from the ERWG at the next meeting regarding deer count and related population questions and agriculture impacts resulting from deer encroachment on farming areas.



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J. Skrlac asked the CAG if they were comfortable circulating each other's contact information amongst the CAG and there was general consensus to do so.

ACTION: CRD Staff to circulate CAG contact information amongst the CAG
CRD Staff to organize ERWG presentations for the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 8:45 pm



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