



Making a difference...together

CRD Regional Deer Management Strategy Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, July 18, 2012 – 4:00pm

Activity Room, Burnside-Gorge Community Centre, Victoria

Meeting Notes

Present:

Robert Moody (Vice Chair)
Richard Christiansen
Wendy Fox
Lisa Kadonaga
Sol Kinnis
Terry Michell
Patrick O'Rourke

Regrets:

Jocelyn Skrlac (Chair)
Phil Tom

Staff:

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

1. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was unanimously accepted as presented.

CARRIED

2. Review and Discussion of Minutes of July 11, 2012

L. Kadonga moved approval of the minutes. P O'Rourke seconded

CARRIED

3. Vice Chair's Remarks

R. Moody noted there was no media correspondence last week. He further stated to the group that they were on the home stretch.

4. Correspondence

Correspondence was distributed without discussion.

5. Facilitated Discussion

J. Pezarro noted the CAG did not finish repellents as the urban geography was incomplete. The CAG read the minutes of the June 27 meeting and discussed Repellents in the urban geography. The CAG discussed the differences between the geographies, noting that with the relatively smaller areas that would need to be protected the effectiveness would be higher. The CAG also discussed the challenges of deer habituation to smells noting the results were worse in an urban geography with relatively higher amounts of smells. The CAG discussed the differences in deer behavior between geographies and asked if the Expert Resources Working Group (ERWG) could provide some information on deer ranges and movement differences between geographies. J. Weightman noted that K. Brunt's presentation indicated that deer tended to have smaller ranges in the urban geography.

The CAG agreed on a score of 2 for Repellents in the urban geography for Effectiveness for the Individual. The CAG then discussed their previously agreed to scores for Effectiveness: Broader Impact and Feasibility/Capacity and agreed to apply the same scores of 1 and 3 respectively to the urban geography.

The CAG then discussed Capability and whether there were any regulations that affected the application of repellents. The CAG discussed the issue of organic certification and noted less of an issue in the urban geography. The CAG also discussed the growing public awareness chemical sprays although they noted that currently no regulations covering chemical-based repellents exist and many repellents are not chemically-based. The CAG discussed community garden plots and whether any had rules restricting repellent use. The CAG noted that certified organic repellents such as sterile bone meal are available but that the impact of their use on organic certification is unknown. The CAG also noted that bylaws prohibiting noxious odours may impact repellent use. The CAG discussed possible recommendations of specific types of repellents, noting the ability to recommend non-toxic repellents. The CAG discussed the potential that unknown municipal regulations or bylaws might prohibit the application of repellents. The CAG agreed to a score of 2.5 for Capability in the urban geography.

The CAG then discussed Cost, noting the cost was borne entirely by the individual and that compared to fencing, repellents had a relatively low cost. The CAG also noted that relative to the cost of the plants being protected, repellents are fairly inexpensive. The CAG then noted that cost was dependent relative to the income level of the individual.

The CAG agreed on a score of 3 for Cost (indicating an overall low cost and high desirability) in the urban geography.

The CAG discussed Time, noting the repetition required for multiple applications affected the Time score but that it was relatively fast considering anyone at any time could start applying repellents. The group agreed to a score of 2 for Time.

The CAG discussed Support & Enthusiasm, noting that it was assumed to be relatively higher in the urban geography compared to the agricultural geography, although the CAG had previously discussed the issue of neighbours, potentially being opposed to the application of repellents. The CAG also discussed the correspondence they had received from the public regarding repellents and the split support regarding its effectiveness. The CAG then agreed to a score of 2 for Support & Enthusiasm.

The CAG discussed Negative Community Impacts, noting that if repellents are going to become a recommended option, an analysis might need to be performed to rate them by level of toxicity. The CAG also noted that they need to support the general CRD efforts to reduce chemical use in any of their recommendations. The CAG then agreed to a score of 2 for Negative Community Impacts.

The CAG validated the Immunocontraceptives evaluation, noting that there are no drugs legally available in Canada for broad-based application and that effectiveness may have improved in the last few years, especially given the high failure rate seen with the experimental application on James Island. The group also noted that options may become available and should be considered in the future and re-evaluated over time.

The CAG validated the Capture & Relocate evaluation, discussing the email response from the ERWG explaining the challenges with Capture & Relocate noting that animals should not be relocated in the winter due to increased mortality but that capture was best done in the winter due to scarcity of food making it easier to trap. The CAG further discussed the ERWG information that a potential relocation site might be the western side of Vancouver Island where human habitation is low. The CAG discussed ERWG information that noted higher feasibility of relocation compared to capturing deer but that ERWG information did not address the impact of relocated deer on the existing deer populations in the natural environment and the impact on the environment in the relocation area.

ACTION: CRD staff to ask ERWG about environmental impact of relocated deer on existing deer populations and general environment in the relocated area.

The CAG then discussed where specifically on the western side of Vancouver Island the deer could be relocated to; staff were asked to seek a response from the Vancouver Island wildlife biologist.

ACTION: CRD staff to ask ERWG, specifically the provincial Vancouver Island wildlife biologist, regarding specific locations for animal release.

The CAG discussed the feasibility of capturing deer in the winter and holding them until the spring. The CAG also noted that feeding any wild deer that are held may habituate them to feeding, reducing their survival once released back into the wild.

The CAG also discussed the relatively mild winters in the CRD versus some of the climates that the animals would be relocated to. The CAG discussed capturing deer in the spring, noting that by May when the relocation areas can support deer, planting has already commenced on farms and thus deer could not be trapped in the fields, reducing effectiveness on agricultural impacts. The CAG then asked if the ERWG could provide information regarding a location for holding deer between capture and relocation.

ACTION: CRD staff to ask ERWG regarding potential locations for holding wild deer prior to relocation.

The CAG then decided to defer the validation of the Capture & Relocate evaluation until they were able to gain more information from the ERWG.

The CAG validated the Professional Sharpshooting evaluation, discussing the footnote regarding potential competition between professional sharpshooters and hunters in the rural geography before agreeing to strike the footnote. The CAG also discussed the likelihood of selling meat from culls to offset costs, again noting the ERWG response about the low likelihood of public and hunter support for any sale and legal issues around selling deer meat. The CAG discussed the differences in animal management in BC where the province legally owns all game animals versus other provinces that allow private landowners to legally own and control the animals allowing for the sale of meat. The CAG also discussed the number of professional sharpshooters and that not all law enforcement officers can be considered qualified sharpshooters. The CAG also asked the ERWG about numbers of professional sharpshooters available.

ACTION: CRD staff to ask the ERWG how many potential sharpshooters would be available in the CRD.

The CAG then discussed the effectiveness of hunting to reduce the number of animals and the effect the hunting season structure has on deer population, including number of hunting permits hunters can hold. The CAG discussed the restriction on doe hunting and the restricted season, noting the cumulative effect of limitations effectively reduces hunter interest. The CAG discussed the footnote regarding reproductive rates of deer for hunted vs. non-hunted animals, noting that the information came from K. Brunt's presentation. J. Weightman noted the audience for the evaluation worksheets would eventually include people who did not have the benefit of the discussion with K. Brunt, including the general public and elected officials. The CAG noted that the reproductive

rate depended on availability of food, not on whether a deer was hunted and agreed to strike the footnote.

The CAG then validated Controlled Public Hunt, discussing the footnote regarding smaller agricultural properties noting more suitable criteria for its application would be Feasibility/Capacity, not Effectiveness. The CAG discussed how the CRD's Goose Management Strategy uses Controlled Public Hunt as one of their management options. The CAG also discussed the issue of retention of meat from hunting and that any animals taken under Crop Protection permits cannot be kept by the hunter or the landowner even if taken during the hunting season. The CAG noted that only those animals taken under a hunting permit can be kept.

The CAG discussed the Effectiveness of Controlled Public Hunt, noting that the CAG scored it lower than Professional Sharpshooting but that given the effectiveness of Crop Protection which uses a form of Controlled Public Hunt, the CAG discussed the potential of moving it higher. The CAG noted that it had scored the Effectiveness of Controlled Public Hunt lower than Professional Sharpshooting because the CAG opined that non-professional hunters were less effective. The CAG discussed the potential balance and increased effectiveness of having more hunters under Controlled Public Hunt, but fewer professional sharpshooters. The CAG discussed reducing effectiveness in the urban geography due to the greater numbers of restrictions and noted the already lowered Feasibility/Capacity and Capability scores in the urban and rural geographies, agreeing to lower the score of Effectiveness as well.

The CAG discussed the bundling of Controlled Public Hunt and Professional Sharpshooting noting that Professional Sharpshooting could reduce the deer population and then Controlled Public Hunt could be used to maintain the population at a specified level. The CAG discussed the permitting change that might be required for this kind of management option to be implemented.

6. The CAG broke for dinner from 6:05pm to 6:45pm

7. Facilitated Discussion (cont'd)

The CAG validated Deer/Vehicle Collision Mitigation and discussed existing deer warning signs such as those that have been erected around the region, including on Blenkinsop Rd. in the agricultural area. The CAG also noted that wildlife warning signs are considered an Administrative option according to the CAG's separation of the Deer/vehicle Collision Mitigation options. The CAG also discussed speed limits and the relatively lower speed limits in Canada versus the United States. The CAG discussed the footnote regarding whether vehicles were a significant cause of mortality amongst deer in the CRD.

The CAG discussed the validation of Repellents and agreed to defer validation until next week, then opted to discuss the footnotes, noting that CAG has only heard information about small farms successfully using repellents on the perimeter. The CAG also decided to remove the footnotes around public awareness of spraying repellents.

8. Next Steps and Outstanding Items

The CAG then discussed the large summary worksheets that CRD staff had developed showing all 11 management options and their ratings for each of the 6 criteria and separated by the 3 geographies. J. Pezarro noted that this was consensus mapping and that individual CAG members may hold differing views. J. Pezarro also noted that this discussion had yielded a great deal of valuable information and informed the CAG during their decision-making process.

J. Pezarro then spoke to the CAG about the next steps and how the group might choose to craft the recommendations section of the report. M. Misk-Evans asked the CAG how they wanted to proceed. The CAG noted that agricultural geography is their priority as per the Regional Deer Management Strategy Terms of Reference and that certain options don't really affect the goal of reducing deer-human conflict in the agricultural geography. The CAG asked CRD to separate out Deer/Vehicle Collision Mitigation from the summary sheets for all geographies and present it on its own, independent of geography.

The CAG discussed the various groupings of management options and whether or not it was easier to look at specific types of activity. The CAG also discussed whether the next steps should be a general discussion of management options or whether they should begin with an outcome statement. An outcome statement would allow the group to work backward or 'backcast'. The CAG also discussed whether to spend time crafting recommendations for management options such as Immunocontraceptives that are ranked relatively low. The CAG discussed separating recommendations and management options by public versus private options and how many management options the CRD would reasonably consider.

The CAG then discussed the need for an outcome statement to work towards and discussed several possible options for defining one. The CAG discussed the difference between a goal of reducing deer population and a goal of reducing deer-human conflict and how the two different goals would affect their choice of management recommendations. J. Pezarro mentioned that most outcome statements use action words. The CAG discussed dividing up their strategy by geography and how there may be different goals for different geographies. The CAG discussed the potential agreement on a goal or outcome statement, and how the resulting discussion of the various options would allow them to address that goal.

The CAG noted that there is a clear difference between the agricultural geography and the urban geography but that the difference between agricultural and rural is less distinct. The CAG noted the need to discuss all three geographies despite their initial goals of focusing on the agricultural geography.

The CAG discussed the Goose Management Strategy and what ideas for RDMS could be drawn from it for the agricultural geography. One of the agricultural representatives noted that the Goose Management Strategy covered urban parks such as Beacon Hill Park and noted the sentiment that the RDMS should follow the same multi-prong approach.

The CAG discussed the timeframe for the objectives and considered splitting them out into long and short term options. M. Misek-Evans noted that the long-term timeframe is ongoing given the requirement for sustainability. Shorter term recommendations are needed to address the CRD Board's direction to the CAG to draft a RDMS to reduce agricultural crop losses. One of the agricultural representatives suggested that their short term time frame might be next growing season which would start in February 2013. The CAG also discussed regular monitoring to determine if management options are working as anticipated and to re-consider options that become available, i.e. immunocontraptives for example. One of the agricultural representatives suggested that a short term management option might be to subsidize farmers until such time as crop damage has been reduced.

The CAG discussed the long term timeframe and one of the agricultural representatives noted that the higher crop loss due to deer damage is a recent condition and a goal may be to reduce deer damage levels to those seen five years ago. One of the agricultural representatives noted that the Goose Management Strategy was multi-jurisdictional, including the Victoria Airport Authority as geese were being moved from farms onto airport property by hazing & frightening methods.

The CAG discussed the level of crop damage that was acceptable to farmers and how to arrive at that level again. One of the agricultural representatives noted that they would like to be back at an acceptable level again by February of 2013. The CAG discussed using terms from Integrated Pest Management programs given to agricultural producers which look at levels of pest infestation to see if that language could help the CAG craft a strategy. One of the agricultural representatives noted that with the Goose Management Strategy, farmers have lists of pre authorized hunters at their disposal should they be needed, but that they only call on the nominated hunters if needed. The CAG discussed the goal to have the measures in place by February 2013 to reduce the crop damage but that it was unlikely to be able to reduce crop damage to the previously-seen levels by that point in time. The CAG noted that the expanded bag limit option for hunters could be accomplished by Fall 2012, due to its regulatory nature under the provincial jurisdiction.



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Due to time constraints, the Vice Chair moved the meeting along to the next agenda item so that adjournment would not run past 8:00pm. The discussion on management options will be continued at next week's meeting.

9. Project Manager's Remarks

J. Weightman noted that he will have a first draft of the front sections of the report before next meeting and the Capture & Euthanize feedback. J. Weightman noted that there have been a number of requests for members of the ERWG to join the CAG during the management option discussions and he will invite any and all members of the ERWG to join the CAG at their next meeting.

Vice Chair Bob Moody and J. Weightman also noted that this would be the last meeting J. Pezarro would be joining them. The CAG thanked J. Pezarro for her work over the past several meetings.

10. Next Meeting

The CAG agreed to meet next Tuesday from 4-8pm at Burnside Gorge Community Centre pending availability.