

# CRD Regional Deer Management Strategy Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, August 23, 2012 – 4:00pm

Activity Room, Burnside-Gorge Community Centre, Victoria

## Meeting Notes

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### **Present:**

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

### **Regrets:**

Phil Tom  
Glenn Jim

### **Staff:**

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

### **1. Approval of Agenda**

T. Michell moved approval of the agenda. W. Fox seconded.

**CARRIED**

### **2. Review and Discussion of Minutes of August 8, 2012**

The CAG noted that on page 4, the notes about establishing a permanent ERWG should read "with citizen representation included".

P. O'Rourke moved approval of the minutes. R. Moody seconded.

**CARRIED**

### **3. Chair's Remarks**

J. Skrlac noted that this was the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CAG and thanked the whole CAG for their hard work in dealing with an extremely complex issue. J. Skrlac also noted that the public may not have realized just how complex an issue this was and that the CAG had been as thorough as they could be. J. Skrlac also said that the two members who

had chosen to leave did not have the benefit of the complex discussions of the group. J. Skrlac also noted the challenge of receiving media representation. J. Skrlac said she felt privileged to work high caliber people on the CAG and that their commitment had helped her function as Chair. J. Skrlac also thanked CRD staff for their efforts and the members of the Expert Resources Working Group (ERWG) for their time and expertise in answering all the tough questions that had been posed by the CAG.

#### 4. Correspondence

J. Weightman said that there had been a number of pieces of correspondence that had been forwarded to the CAG. J. Skrlac noted that there had been some media attention on the large number of submissions.

#### 5. Facilitating Discussion

The CAG asked if any members of the ERWG were going to attend this meeting and J. Weightman replied that unfortunately none of the ERWG members were able to attend but that the ERWG had provided comments on the draft for the CAG to review.

J. Weightman asked the CAG to complete the recommendations and analysis sections today, as they had previously discussed the management options and background information. J. Weightman noted that in addition to the ERWG members, several of the CAG members had submitted comments. J. Weightman noted an overarching comment to change the report to read in the first person from the CAG's perspective. The CAG noted that the recommendations section should include a preamble stating that the recommendations were the opinion of the CAG as a whole. The CAG noted that the report already included a section outlining how decisions on recommendations had been made.

The CAG also asked that, where possible, information provided from a specific ERWG member should be attributed to the ERWG or the organization that the member represented rather than a specific individual.

The CAG then discussed the overarching principle for recommendations including the wording of "do no harm" noting previous input from the ERWG to include wording to emphasize *minimizing* harm rather than doing no harm. The CAG noted that the word humane could have multiple interpretations, specifically that any population reduction could be seen as inhumane. The CAG noted that ERWG comments on the relative inhumaneness of relocation had influenced their decision not to recommend Capture & Relocate as a management option as it violated the principle they had agreed on. The CAG also noted the commentary from the ERWG member from the SPCA on the principles. The CAG discussed the inclusion of the word anxiety, noting that it possibly precluded hazing and frightening, as frightening by its very definition would cause anxiety for deer. The CAG discussed changing the wording to read "every effort would

be made” and noted that the principle should guide anybody that implements their recommendations. The CAG agreed to change the principles to reflect their discussion.

The CAG then discussed the recommendations starting with the agricultural geography. The CAG noted that Public Education should move into the overarching recommendation section. The CAG discussed how the recommendations were listed in numerical order and suggested that there be wording inserted to make it clear that the order was for ease of discussion and that no ranking was implied.

The CAG then discussed the beginning of the Public Education recommendation, noting that the current wording suggests that public education around deer/human conflict is already happening, which they didn't feel was true. The CAG discussed media interest, including articles and letters to the editor, noting that these were often based on incorrect facts and should not be considered to be legitimate public education. The CAG noted that the report needed a section on the existing misinformation that is currently circulating and that the CAG only considered expert-vetted facts and personal first-hand experience, in making their recommendations. The CAG discussed the submissions and descriptions of deer human conflicts, noting the reflections of real personal experiences. The media coverage that cited the CAG's lack of information was misrepresenting the current situation, and noted that decisions often must be made with partial information, some of which may be anecdotal or based on personal experiences.

The CAG noted that habituation is the true problem, much as they discussed before with issues generated from resident deer. The CAG also noted that even if a full census of deer was available, the same conflicts would be reported. The level and nature of complaints facilitates an understanding of population levels in more abstract terms. The CAG also noted that even one animal can be a problem in specific circumstances. The CAG also noted that there will always be new information to collect in the future and that their decisions were made with the best possible information at the time.

The CAG discussed the outcome statement for the agricultural geography and whether or not they wanted to include a specific date in the past when there was acceptable levels of loss. The CAG noted that the rural geography outcome statement included the term “natural population levels”. The CAG discussed loss levels, noting that they varied by year due to many factors and one of the agricultural representatives noted that crop loss attributed to deer in their operations had dropped significantly this year due to the large expense they had invested in fencing. One of the other agricultural representatives also noted that deer feeding shifts by year and that crops that were not eaten in previous years are being eaten this year. M. Misek-Evans suggested that the outcome statement could reference a survey of farmers to establish an aggregate baseline. One of the agricultural representatives noted that acceptable levels of damage will also vary farmers' individual tolerance levels. The CAG favoured the option of an annual survey provided farmers determine how loss is measured, i.e., financial loss or size of area lost to deer damage.

The CAG discussed including a preamble for the Rural geography, noting that while land development has contributed to the issue of deer-human conflicts, previous actions cannot be retracted, only attempts to reduce future conflict situations can be made.

The CAG discussed recommending that the public hunting season be extended, specifically using the First Nations model to process the meat, including distribution to the community.

The CAG further discussed an extended hunting season and noted that the extension should be for the antlerless-season, as population reduction requires removal of does, not bucks. The CAG also noted that the reduced restrictions on firearm and bow discharge bylaws would allow greater hunting opportunities.

The CAG discussed the crop protection recommendation and noted that the wording for use of meat should read “allow for retention of meat by the farmer and/or hunter”.

The CAG discussed hunter proficiency relative to the crop protection recommendation, and noted that, although hunters selected would need to pass a course to demonstrate ability, they are not necessarily highly skilled. The CAG discussed the current program for crop protection as well as what was being recommended in the goose management strategy, where individual farmers maintain their own contact list of hunters. An agricultural representative noted the list size varies by farm. The CAG discussed a central list of approved hunters that the farmers could use, and whether such a list should be maintained by municipalities. The CAG discussed the issue of oversight on such a list and one of the agricultural representatives noted that the current situation allows for the property owner to oversee who is allowed to hunt on their property, adding or removing individuals from the list as desired. One of the agricultural representatives said they were contacted regularly by people who wanted to assist them with crop protection. The CAG discussed liability insurance and noted that the fish and wildlife clubs usually carry their own liability insurance which may extend to cover hunters engaged in crop protection.

The CAG discussed the proposed changes to fencing bylaws, the current urgency regarding the need for such changes and need to be a complementary program, to population reduction options.

The CAG discussed the fencing subsidy program and one of the agricultural representatives noted that the recommendation should read “reinstate and expand” as the previous program was insufficient for larger properties.

The CAG discussed the compensation for loss recommendation and clarified that the reference to senior governments should explicitly mean the provincial and federal governments.

The CAG discussed the data collection recommendation and noted that collecting crop loss information would help with evaluation of any management options undertaken, not just for crop insurance measures.

The CAG discussed the recommendation to build partnerships with bylaw enforcement officers and noted that there are few current bylaws that impact deer and that enforcement is difficult.

M. Misek-Evans then asked the CAG about the medium term recommendations in the agricultural geography and the CAG noted that they overlap with the short term, so the recommendation should state that short term options should be evaluated and expanded or adjusted as needed.

M. Misek-Evans then asked the CAG about long term recommendations and the CAG noted that revisiting new technology needs to look beyond immunocontraceptives and consider any other new technology developed since the RDMS was created. The CAG added sonic barriers, repellents and fencing technologies as examples of new or emerging technologies that might be evaluated in the future.

M. Misek-Evans then asked the CAG about the rural outcome statement and the CAG discussed changing the wording to remove reference to specific actions. The CAG discussed the term “range of tolerance” and noted that it was a phrase that could be unclear and open to interpretation.

The CAG discussed the specific reference to Lyme disease in the outcome statement and J. Weightman said that as the RDMS dealt with human health, not deer health, and given that all other diseases noted in the Hesse report that are transmitted from deer are minimal, keeping it specific to Lyme disease made the most sense.

The CAG discussed including public education in the statement and noted that VIHA provides health information to the public school system and each individual school is responsible for implementing the suggestions. The CAG also suggested that information on serious health issues such as monitoring for ticks could be provided in information packages and sent home with students.

M. Misek-Evans then asked the CAG about the short term recommendations in the rural geography and the CAG reworded the recommendations in the agricultural geography, to adapt it to rural, such as by changing references to land owners rather than farmers. Medium and long term recommendations were addressed similarly to those in the agricultural geography.

The CAG discussed the outcome statement for the urban geography. The CAG noted the wording about deer as prey animal and removed this reference. The CAG discussed “natural and healthy populations”, noting that populations fluctuate in the wild. The CAG also noted that urban issues are driven by complaints rather than loss as in the agricultural geography.

The CAG noted that the outcome statement explicitly stated that reduction in deer human conflict is attributed a reduction in population rather than through conflict

reduction. M. Misek-Evans noted that the CAG may wish to change the language to be the same as in the agricultural and rural geographies.

The CAG discussed immediate and short term recommendations, noting that the options to use many of the conflict reduction measures are already included. The recommendations should expand the awareness and public education.

The CAG discussed the recommendation to create and enforce deer feeding bylaws, noting again that few municipalities had them, and included the CRD given that the CRD oversees the animal control in certain areas.

The CAG discussed the possibility of a fencing subsidy program in urban areas and felt that this recommendation should be oriented to local governments as they were more likely to implement it compared to the province. The CAG noted that other programs are struggling to get provincial and federal funding, so the likelihood of getting funding for fencing in urban areas seemed remote.

The CAG discussed the recommendation to exchange deer resistant plants for non-deer resistant plants, noting the existence of programs that replaced items such as toilets with low flush models. The CAG decided to abandon the recommendation as its implementation seemed unlikely.

The CAG proposed population reduction measures similar to the other two geographies, with the exception of hunting. The CAG discussed large land owners and noted the list of potential land owners who might be able to host population reduction were also places with high deer/human conflict, such as government house or the University of Victoria. The CAG decided to broaden the recommendation to capture a range of possible locations. The CAG clarified their recommendation to include post-secondary academic institutions for safety reasons, although they did note that many cougars have been spotted around playgrounds. The CAG was clear in that their recommendation that the meat gained from any population reduction measures should not be wasted. It was noted that the carcass from the recent wounded deer in Centennial Square (Victoria) likely ended up in the Hartland landfill.

The CAG discussed the recommendation regarding animal control officers, noting that the procedures for animal officers were clear but that there was a general lack of public education regarding protocols when reporting a problem deer. J. Weightman noted that people are currently calling the CRD regarding all manner of deer issues due to the media attention around the RDMS and the CAG. The CAG discussed whether or not to recommend that provincial government delegate animal control authority to local government officials. The CAG noted that there are currently only two Provincial animal control officers south of Duncan on Vancouver Island. The CAG clarified their recommendation to state that local government officials should have power to deal with aggressive deer, not broader deer issues or other wildlife issues.

The CAG applied similar medium and long term recommendations to the urban geography as in the other two geographies.

The CAG noted that while deer issues originally started due to human encroachment into deer habitat, current issues with deer/human conflict stem from animals that are born and live in these geographies, not from displaced deer. Further, the CAG noted that turning back the clock and retracting development would not be possible.

The CAG discussed Deer/Vehicle Collision Mitigation and noted that the outcome statement should include both a reduction in risk and in the number of deer-vehicle collisions.

The CAG discussed the warning sign recommendation, noting it should be aimed at school districts to create the signs and to road authorities (municipalities and the province) for placement/implementation of the signs. The CAG discussed their recommendation to improve effectiveness of signage, noting that it is part of Public Education. The CAG also noted that it could be rolled into existing ICBC-driver education in schools.

The CAG discussed the recommendation on roadway brushing, noting that the extent and frequency of brushing should be expanded, with particular focus on known areas with high deer-vehicle collisions.

The CAG noted that the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) recommendation should be directed at the CRD.

The CAG discussed next steps and noted that they would like to spend time discussing the analysis section of the report. The CAG decided to have one more meeting on Monday, August 27 at 4pm to finish discussions on the final report.

M. Misek-Evans noted that with the final changes, the RDMS would go out in the agenda on Friday, August 31 for the September 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Planning, Transportation and Protective Services Committee (PT&PSC). M. Misek-Evans noted that the PT&PSC meeting of September 5<sup>th</sup> would not receive any public delegations and that the RDMS would be presented by the CAG Chair and Vice Chair, with advisory group members able to attend forming a panel to respond to questions. A future meeting of the PT&PSC and the CRD Board would allow for public delegations on the RDMS.