

CRD Regional Deer Management Strategy Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, August 27, 2012 – 4:00pm
Rm 107, CRD Building, 625 Fisgard St, Victoria

Meeting Notes

Present:

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

Regrets:

Phil Tom

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)

1. Approval of Agenda

W. Fox moved approval of the agenda. L. Kadonaga seconded.

CARRIED

2. Chairs Remarks

J. Skrlac noted that there would be no dinner break this evening, in the hopes of finishing quickly.

3. Correspondence and Project Manager's Remarks

J. Weightman noted that there was no new correspondence directed to the CAG for this week.

J. Weightman noted that the minutes for August 23, 2012 would be circulated for approval by email, as would the minutes from this meeting.

M. Misek-Evans presented the timeline for transmitting the Regional Deer Management Strategy (RDMS) to the Planning, Transportation and Protective Services Committee

(PT&PSC), noting that the formal portion of the CAG's business would conclude with the presentation to the PT&PSC. M. Misek-Evans said the CAG Chair and Vice-Chair would present, with staff support to develop the presentation. The entire CAG was invited to come and form a panel to respond to questions from the Committee. M. Misek-Evans further noted that although the September 5, 2012 meeting of the PT&PSC would be open to the public, the Committee would not be accepting public delegations, in order to provide the PT&PSC with a sufficient amount of time to discuss the matter and gain an understanding of the CAG's recommendations.

4. Facilitated Discussion

J. Weightman stated that the goal of tonight's meeting was to complete the analysis and evaluation section of the RDMS as well as the new section on information availability and data gaps. M. Misek-Evans noted changes to the RDMS were made based on CAG and Expert Resources Working Group (ERWG) input that had been submitted to date as well as the changes resulting from the August 23, 2012 CAG meeting.

M. Misek-Evans asked the CAG to consider the RDMS section titled Discussion of Evaluation Criteria Process and each of the management options that followed. The CAG noted that the sentence in Hazing & Frightening included the term "root cause", which the CAG had changed to "broader impact". The CAG also noted that an explanation was needed for term "broader impact" and suggested changing the sentence to reflect that the CAG felt that moving deer from property to property would not solve the larger issue of deer over-population. The CAG also noted the need for a brief introduction of the evaluation process as well as minor wording changes.

The CAG discussed the Landscaping Alternatives wording regarding plants that were considered less palatable, noting that deer browsing will increase based on the number of deer. The CAG also discussed the region's food security goal, and reworded the report language to reflect the concern that deer resistant plantings may compromise the CRD's regional food security goals. The CAG then discussed the term invasive and adjusted wording to clarify that only some non-native species are actually invasive. The CAG also noted that native plantings tend to be more expensive than non-native plants to purchase. The CAG noted that the Landscaping Alternatives section should indicate that non-palatable plantings need not compromise the "City of Gardens" moniker for Victoria, as the CAG has seen a great deal of public input and discussion about losing the moniker due to deer damage.

The CAG discussed electric fencing options noting the increased technical feasibility of newer technology. The CAG also noted that operational costs for fencing are maintenance costs. The CAG discussed electric fencing and the various types of crops that could be protected by electric fencing, i.e., fruit tree orchards but not vegetable fields. The CAG also discussed baited electric fences to act a deterrent and the various methods used for baiting, including examples in the Okanagan to deter bears.

One of the agricultural representatives noted that fields with electric fences require a power source, which is not always available. The CAG discussed solar recharge stations, noting the need to maintain power for the whole distance of the fence. One of the agricultural representatives also noted that electric fencing is less effective in summer months due to grounding issues.

The CAG discussed the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) and M. Misek-Evans noted that the provincial government is currently renegotiating the agricultural funding framework with the federal government and that the new framework may or may not include a fencing subsidy. M. Misek-Evans also noted that the RDMS should include positive language if it is intended to lobby the provincial government to include a fencing subsidy in any new plan.

The CAG discussed the wording of the fencing bylaw section, noting that Central Saanich recently amended their fencing bylaw to the suggested height of 8'. The CAG also changed the wording to reflect that properties are smaller in the rural geography, compared to agricultural and the area to be protected is smaller, and thus more feasible to fence.

The CAG discussed the cost/benefit analysis of fencing, noting the analysis applies to any of the management options. The CAG also noted that farmers without fencing have already done the cost/benefit analysis.

The CAG discussed the wording of the description of fencing over easements and public rights of way, noting that the inability to fence these areas limits effectiveness. One of the agricultural representatives also noted that property survey information is often outdated, as many properties have not changed ownership in 30 or 40 years. Survey costs to determine where an easement was located often exceeded the costs of a fencing installation.

The CAG discussed the environmental impact of low cost fencing, and suggested public education be used to inform the public about effective fencing types. The CAG also noted that poorly installed fencing can pose a health risk to deer if malfunctioning fencing materials restrict a deer's ability to forage, breathe or generally function.

The CAG also discussed the application of repellents to food plants, noting that at least one product, Bobbex, claimed that it could be directly applied to food crops and that it is promoted as a safe product to consume. One of the agricultural representatives also noted that some food products might be able to be treated with repellents if their skin was removed prior to consumption, such as a peeled cucumber, or on the non-eaten portion of a plant, such as on the leaves of a potato plant.

The CAG discussed sonic barriers as a management option, noting that several ERWG members provided research on their effectiveness and that, like Immunocontraceptives, it would need to be revisited in the future, as it is currently ineffective.

The CAG discussed Deer/Vehicle Collision Mitigation, noting that the roads network in the region is already well established which leaves little opportunity to incorporate deer mitigation into new road construction. The CAG also suggested wording to note that existing roads are unlikely to be retrofitted for deer. The CAG also noted that ongoing maintenance cost was only associated with the roadway brushing option.

The CAG discussed Capture & Relocate, noting that the Ministry of Forest, Lands and Natural Resource Operations biologist statement that this option is under review, and the review would need to be completed before the Ministry issues any new permits needed to be included in the RDMS.

The CAG noted that the reference to “unpopulated areas” should be changed to “areas sparsely populated with people”. The CAG also noted that it should be clear that relocated deer may impact existing deer populations and the environment in the receiving location. The CAG noted the importance of such a statement, given the current (urban) public perception that this option could be implemented with relative ease.

The CAG discussed Capture & Euthanize, noting that public support would be negatively affected by more than just the capture process; it would also be affected by fact that animals are killed.

The CAG discussed the recommendation for any lethal management option needing to include statements that the public acceptability would increase if the meat could be used. The public acceptability affected the CAG’s choices of what lethal management options to recommend, noting that Capture & Euthanize using chemicals rendered the meat inedible.

The CAG discussed Professional Sharpshooting, noting that Professional Sharpshooting does not necessarily imply paid professionals citing the goose management strategy example, whereby the hunters are not paid. The CAG also discussed sale of meat, noting that the report should note that sale of meat is unlikely as is the support. The CAG discussed the specific circumstance of Sidney Island, noting that the venison sold there was from European fallow deer, an introduced species, not native Columbian Black-tailed deer as are found in rest of the CRD. The CAG discussed use of the meat and reiterated the need to make it clear that the CAG wishes the meat to be used.

The CAG discussed Controlled Public Hunt, removing the wording around pre-approval of hunters due to the bureaucratic nature of the statement. The CAG also discussed the difference between Controlled Public Hunt and Professional Sharpshooting and decided to make it clear that Professional Sharpshooting refers to the contracting of a hunter to

remove animals, while Controlled Public Hunt is a public hunt with no contractual arrangements. The CAG also noted that existing hunting regulations require a license and this is common knowledge thus does not need to be stated in the strategy. The CAG also noted that Professional Sharpshooting may be seen as more humane as it would use strict protocols. The CAG also noted that the province assumes that hunters are all following hunting ethics.

The CAG discussed the Crop Protection section and the need to include discussion of provincial permitting. C. Burger noted that the wording should note hunter or landowner as per the CAG discussion at previous meetings. The CAG further discussed the regulatory issues, noting that this option needed changes to both provincial regulations and municipal bylaws.

The CAG discussed Immunocontraceptives, noting large amount of public attention, and need for precise wording.

The CAG discussed the Public Education section, noting the need to mention that while it is relatively fast to implement, it would take some time to be effective.

The CAG discussed the Status Quo section, and requested that the language explicitly state that deer population has increased. The CAG also discussed clarifying wording to state that the longer it takes to reach a decision on imposing deer management measures, the greater the likelihood of higher incidence of deer human conflicts.

The CAG discussed overarching options, specifically the sections regarding amending local and provincial laws, regulations and bylaws. M. Misek-Evans noted the items were listed in the *Urban Ungulate Conflict Report* as administrative options, but were not considered as actual management options.

The CAG discussed the information gaps section, noting that data gaps exist in nearly all decision making. The CAG also noted that the availability of information was not a barrier in reaching conclusions on management options. M. Misek-Evans noted that the information gap section should consider the intended audience. The CAG discussed a count, noting that due to Ministry of Forest, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and ERWG advice, the CAG did not consider it critical.

The CAG also noted that qualitative data is considered perfectly acceptable in social science research. The CAG also discussed the 10% return rate on the *Vancouver Island Problem Wildlife Survey in 2001*, noting that empirically speaking the return rate was acceptable for a survey of this type.

The CAG discussed the farmer information in Appendix 7, and one of the agricultural representatives noted that the form had received nearly 25% return rate. The CAG were content that the information about agricultural loss was sufficient to make a decision and

M. Misek-Evans noted that the CRD Board had been very clear in its direction to the CAG to prioritize recommendations for agricultural areas.

The CAG discussed application of the term “precautionary principle”, noting that “no regrets” might be a more indicative term, as precautionary principle applies to a path of least harm, while the CAG was making recommendations based on best available information and including a recommendation to evaluate effectiveness following implementation, which was more in keeping with a “no regrets” approach.

The CAG then discussed the Population Count and Inventory section of the draft strategy noting that that it should explicitly state that conflict is increasing even if deer population isn’t necessarily increasing. The CAG also noted that the report should mention the increase in reports of aggressive deer.

In closing, J. Weightman asked for final thoughts and M. Misek-Evans repeated the next steps, including that the CAG would have a final approval of the final meeting minutes via email.

J. Skrlac finished by again thanking all the CAG members for persevering and thanked the CRD staff for all their efforts. J. Skrlac also thanked the public for attending the meetings, especially those who had come to all the meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 pm.