

Archery Review Committee Meeting, March 22, 2014

Tag Portability Issue:

Mark reviewed the backgrounder document titled 'Tag Portability as it Relates to Archery Hunting in Oregon: 2013-14 ARPAC.doc'. Tag portability is when a hunter draws a tag for a controlled hunt and that tag is also good in other units for the general season. Mark highlighted the relationship between archery tag portability and the issues of animal displacement and hunter crowding.

Committee members questioned the relative contribution of archery hunters to the animal displacement phenomenon versus other factors such as seasonal weather, habitat degradation, rifle hunters, ATV users, mushroom pickers, hikers, grouse hunters, campers, or other forms of recreation on public lands.

One committee member pointed out that archery hunting participation increased significantly after rifle hunts went controlled. The control on rifle hunting played a significant role in the rise in archery season participation when hunters could not obtain an opportunity in a rifle season and moved to archery hunting as an alternative.

Mark stated that archery hunters are the first major disturbance but acknowledged the additional contribution of other factors to animal displacement. Another Committee member informed the group that he sees a huge influx of elk onto his private ground within 5 days of the archery opener.

The group discussed motorized vehicle access on public lands and one member proposed implementation of a 'Green Dot Road Closure System' during the archery season, similar to what is currently used on some public land Travel Management Areas. Tom noted that this is the jurisdiction of the federal land management agencies. ODFW and its stakeholders have made this request of the USFS and BLM in the past. But there are other user groups out there, wood cutters, mushroom pickers etc. ODFW doesn't have the authority to impose access restrictions on federal land.

A Committee member raised the example of the Ochoco Unit which went controlled for archery hunts with an either sex bag limit about 7 years ago, saying that animal displacement was why it went controlled. The Chesnimnus and Sled Springs Units were also mentioned as examples of units that went controlled to address (in part) animal displacement. But do we know it worked? Why should hunters support going to more controlled hunts when we lack sufficient evidence that this method is effective at addressing animal displacement?

Mark – Chesnimnus is not the best example to examine the animal displacement phenomenon because those elk moved out of the forest, took up residence in the mostly privately owned Zumwalt Prairie, and never came back to the public land.

Mike Hansen, ODFW Enterprise – Much of the animal displacement that occurs in the public forested portion of the Chesnimnus Unit coincides with the season interval between the close of archery season and the beginning of the rifle deer season. Tribal hunting pressure is quite high during that time and a large part of the displacement is probably associated with that disturbance. Additionally, a large number of the elk residing in the Zumwalt Prairie are part of a permanent resident herd that has developed over the last two decades. These permanent animals do not ever interface with public land and would not be affected by regulation changes where they have never been.

Mark – if we are going to lock a hunter into a unit (eliminating portability for that tag) we still need to make that tag desirable and marketable. Need to have discussion on this. We don't want to see loss of opportunity, and the general season is still an option for someone who didn't draw the controlled hunt. If we want general archery hunting in years to come, we need to address some smaller items to keep that opportunity available. It is correct that we do not know if limiting portability will solve the issue of animal displacement because we have not tried it yet or measured the outcomes. Ochoco is already set up to manage hunter densities and monitor animal displacement. This can serve to inform us on the merit of hunter management to affect animal distribution.

Committee members viewed the limits on tag portability as a loss of archery hunting opportunity and stated that they were not going to come to agreement on this issue.

OBH stated they will never get behind loss of general season for controlled hunt.

OHA stated that they can get behind biological needs, but felt there was no science or data to back this up that it is an issue with archery hunters.

Mark: The amount of hunter effort spent in some units is having an effect on animals on public land. Displacement is a biological concern when animals move to winter range prematurely. We will have to address this issue at some point.

TAO: lack of portability will end up being your only archery opportunity. Maybe ODFW should define what they consider to be a trophy hunt. We did our part to help OSP for trophy elk hunts and should do the same for deer. ODFW needs to make sure hunters are okay with the only opportunity hunt in good units. Example: MDI units were initially a tied tag and only deer opportunity until archers raised the question about – WHY? If ODFW wants to limit tag portability of archery hunters to specific hunts then it needs to answer the question – Why would I want to hunt anywhere else?

Tom: restricted units where the tags are not valid during the general season are the areas that some people consider the good hunts. We hear from hunters that support the idea of limiting hunters to the controlled hunts they draw because that can reduce the number of people applying for controlled hunt and reduced number of hunters. If for biological reasons ODFW needs to put units into controlled hunts, there is a potential for

ODFW to do so. If you limit hunters to hunting in the controlled hunt they draw it also reduces the total numbers of hunters in general season areas.

Tom clarified that ODFW did not come to the table with a specific proposal for how to address tag portability; the goal was to raise the issue for the Committee and see if a collaborative strategy could be identified.

Land owner rep: down the road portability will become a big issue.

Hunter at large: some hunts very undersubscribed, wouldn't have a good outcome if you develop controlled hunts and people are not applying as first choice but drawing on second choice.

Mark: stand-alone opportunity needs to be attractive enough to have folks be okay with losing portability. We would discuss what kind of opportunity constitutes an appropriate loss of portability for a controlled hunt to have them attractive.

One committee member stated they would give up opportunity for a great experience. If you give up opportunity, you need good management by ODFW to have a good experience. It would also somewhat force people to choose your weapon.

One committee member was willing to start on smaller scale and use it as a model. Come back in a few years and see how it worked. Opportunity vs experience youth example it's hard to get them the experience.

OBH stated they are not in a position to support a lot of controlled hunts. But there could be some benefits to keep in mind – control out of state hunters, limit the possibility of cross over hunters, depending on the number of restricted tags. Some units we could either agree could remain either sex – SE Oregon units, Columbia Basin. Other possibility of controlling antlerless hunting but not bull hunting. Keep in mind unintended consequences – may solve a problem in some areas but create problems in other areas.

One committee member heard that western Oregon rifle is going controlled. When that happened on the east side the archer numbers drastically increased. Tom clarified, this is only a rumor. ODFW is not going to controlled hunts for rifle in western Oregon at this time, and has no plans to in the immediate future.

The group did not feel they would be able to develop a recommendation restricting tag portability they could all support.

ODFW asked the group for a list of considerations for when they might make the decision to restrict portability. **NOTE: ARPAC members did not support restricting portability for all hunts, and recognized they could “discuss it for days” and not reach consensus. The Committee offered ODFW the following for consideration when deciding whether or not to propose to restrict portability:**

1. Quality hunts(definition varies) may include
 - a. 30 day hunt
 - b. Preference points high (indication that it is a desirable hunt)
 - c. "Trophy" hunt
2. Look at areas where animals are on private land and need to try to push back onto public land
3. Zone concept (could result in restricting out of state hunters)
4. Revolving units by weapon type
5. Is crowding reduced
6. Fire danger – what are hunters options if they cannot hunt in the controlled hunt area?
7. Clear definition of what a trophy unit is and list out management actions that back that up, maintain it. (predator control, habitat)
8. Be very specific as to what conditions are these used to eliminate portability.
9. Stick with biological basis and not social.
10. Sufficient research and data be collected that address the problem and any solutions provide tangible benefits that reflect a larger scale and indirect effect must also be evaluated and mitigated as appropriate.
11. Need science to back up this need. Need research before the change. The research should include biological and social aspects. If you try something it should not be in an area such as Starkey Experimental Forest – broader scale.
12. Bow hunters need to get something out of this. Look at what you are doing, line out what you hope to accomplish and how you are going to get there. Have a way to measure positive and negative impact and report it publicly.

Final approval of General Either-Sex Archery Criteria document and discussion of the ODFW Controlled Hunt Tag Considerations document:

The group recommended a clarification to the language so that black-tailed deer are not considered part of the criteria.

The group discussed the 110% threshold for elk, with some organizations stating it was too high. OBH and OHA stated they could not support a recommendation that would preclude controlled hunts from ever reverting back to a general season. ODFW biologists prefer the buffer between criteria (110% vs. 100%) because of variability in trend data. For small populations, it makes sense to maintain this spread. But for larger populations that spread may not be needed.

Tom – The concern for biologists is particularly for units with fairly low MOs, options to consider could include that in units that have an elk MO of 2000 or less the criteria does not apply and large units have 105%, or make small units at 110% and large units are 105%.

The group used their gradient of agreement scale to support the document subject to the following changes: 1) clarify that the criteria do not apply to black tailed deer and move that paragraph below mule deer, and 2) for units with an elk population MO of 2000 or greater, the criteria to move from a male only to an either sex bag-limit for general archery season is when the population is 105% of the MO and rising. For units with smaller elk populations (less than 2000 MO) the criteria will remain 110%.

Vote to accept document (5 = most support, 1 = disagreement):

5 – 7 votes

4- 4 votes

3 – 1 vote

2 – 2 votes

1- 0 votes

Include the document describing the ODFW thought process on establishing controlled hunts for either sex archery hunt to the criteria document (as an attachment).

Check in on remaining Tier 2 issues:

The group did not believe they had the time to address additional Tier 2 or Parking Lot issues to develop further recommendations. However, an additional proposal was brought forward by a small group of Committee members, as follows:

PBS recommended – Late bow hunts deer: Wenaha unit Oct. 18 – 26 white-tailed deer 100 tags or Nov 22- 30 +/- 50 tags, Mt Emily Nov 15 -26 +/- 20 tags either white-tailed or mule deer, sled springs (union county) Nov. window. These are the hunts that the District Biologists thought would work where there are some surplus animals.

Discussion:

- Chesnimnus, Sled Springs, Ochoco – ODFW did the same thing in these units as they did in the premier units. That lost opportunity has never been addressed. Would also apply to the MDI units? Steens and Warner – is there a necessity to tie the tags?

Tom – ODFW will be reviewing its management approach in the MDI units.

TAO – Presented a written proposal for the group's consideration so as to provide additional archery opportunity as they gave up opportunity in the 3 premier units. These additional tags (hunts) would also be good during general season not an only opportunity. This written proposal is attached to these meeting notes, which include the '3 bullets' listed below:

- As another offset to opportunity in the premier trophy elk units, ODFW should allow a controlled late white-tailed deer opportunity in the Wenaha Unit. N.E. Oregon Wildlife Managers are in agreement that there is a surplus of whitetail deer in this unit, it has calendar openings available in the October-November time period and access to the unit would all support a quality whitetail deer hunt for archers. (Ref pg. 2)

- ODFW should sever the tied tag status for Sled Springs, Chesnimnus and Ochoco and return these units to a general deer season to allow local hunters in N.E. Oregon and Central Oregon the opportunity to hunt evenings or weekends when they cannot get away for longer periods.
- The Mule Deer Initiative, originally slated as a 3 year study, affecting bowhunting in five additional units, is now going into year four. ODFW should remove the controlled hunt status and return all units to general season for deer and elk, unless there is biological data which indicates this would not be prudent. (Ref pg. 3)

Tom – Specific unit-level hunt setting is not the scope of ARPACs work; the normal process is we would be getting hunt sheets from the DBs and discussing at our tag setting meeting in mid-April.

Committee members clarified that these were not specific recommendations for ODFW to commit to, but rather a set of recommendations for ODFW to consider.

The group had some discussion of whether to have ODFW consider these recommendations for the 2015 or 2016 hunt regulation setting process, and how to have ODFW respond to these recommendations. One committee member pointed out that there is already a monitoring process with the public meetings and the commission meeting.

OHA – Since there is little time between now and the May meeting schedules, ODFW should have the wildlife districts evaluate potential archery hunt possibilities by November 2014 to allow enough time for adequate review before hunt proposals would be generated. If the current cycle is too compressed to develop hunt proposals in the next month, there may be a better opportunity to develop these proposals for the 2015-16 process so a complete review can occur.

The group used their gradients of agreement for the following recommendation:

ARPAC recommends ODFW consider the 3 bullets with the specific hunts as examples, as part of their 2015 hunt regulations. Outcomes of ODFWs deliberations will surface via public meetings in April 2014 and the Commission hunt regulation meeting in October 2014*.

Vote (5= most support, 1 = disagreement)

- 5 – 7 votes
- 4 – 4 votes
- 3 – 1 vote
- 2 – 1 vote
- 1 – 0 votes

*While not explicitly included in the formal vote, some ARPAC members were also recommending that the ODFW District Bios evaluate additional archery hunting opportunity by November 2014, thus allowing more time to fully evaluate potential

options. Those members were under the impression this recommendation was part of the formal vote. Because of this confusion in the process, this recommendation should carry forward as a footnote to the formal vote, not as something that was officially voted on by the whole group, but given consideration as a recommendation voiced by some members.

The following items were added to the Parking Lot

- - ODFW give consideration to a few controlled archery pronghorn tags in additional units.
- More accurate assessment of white-tailed deer resource, particularly in NE Oregon.
- Explore private lands hunting opportunity
- ODFW consider allowing people who apply for a preference point as their 1st choice also be allowed to apply for and draw a tag on a subsequent choice.

Next Steps:

- A report will be generated that summarizes each of the Committee's recommendations and minority reports
- Failed proposals will also be reported as they provide insight into the group's discussions
- The report will also include all documents developed during collaboration as well as the meeting minutes
- Public comments will also be included
- This report will advance through the public meetings in April 2014 as well as the Commission meetings in June and October
- Committee members are encouraged to attend those public meetings

As a final order of business, the group agreed to adopt the following language brought forward by Rich Thompson:

ARPAC Statement of Intent

Any recommendations made by ARPAC are made to deal with specifically identified situations existing as of March 2014.

Such recommendations are not to be construed as applying more broadly, extrapolated or otherwise used as a precedent to be extended to any situation or circumstance other than those specific units, hunts or situations being specifically addressed by ARPAC.

Any more general application of any ARPAC recommendation beyond those situations specifically being addressed by ARPAC is done without ARPAC's approval or support.