



2014

Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife

ARCHERY REVIEW PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

By Rich Thompson

4/7/14

ODFW determined that the agency should bring archery hunters together after listening to requests from Oregon Bowhunters and private land owners. The department called together personnel from each of the five regions to lay the groundwork for discussions and form a group which became known as the [Archery Review Public Action Committee](#) (ARPAC). A group of external stakeholders from sports groups, bow hunters at large and private land owners were contacted to participate in three scheduled meetings during the winter months.

At the first meeting, 25 January, Wildlife Division Administrator, Ron Anglin, addressed the group and suggested a process and schedule for key points saying that the group must complete discussions in time for ODFW to take any recommendations to their regular May Public Meetings for comment, then to the ODFW Commission for a June presentation and questions and finally back to the commission in October for any rule making necessary. Ron went on to state that technology issues, crossbows, bowhunter education and choose your weapon concepts would not be entertained in the discussions.

Facilitator Sarah Rief (ODFW Wildlife Restoration Coordinator) then elaborated on department goals and desired outcome which were to:

Goals:

- WORK COLLABORATIVELY TO REVIEW ARCHERY BAG LIMITS/SEASON STRUCTURES FOR DEER AND ELK

Desired Outcome:

- AGREEMENT AND SUPPORT FOR POTENTIAL MANAGEMENT OPTIONS
- A SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADVANCE TO ODFW ADMINISTRATION AND COMMISSION (Take recommendations to the public - will not endorse or push them at public meeting forums)

N.E. District Biologist, Mark Kirsch, Pendleton, acted as ODFW chair of the committee and after introductions, the group was given presentations by ODFW staff about the current state of big game in Oregon with focus on deer and elk herds, hunter statistics and predator situations on both state and regional levels.

Following the presentations, the committee set out to air their concerns but first asked what ODFW's concerns about archery hunting were. Mark answered as follows:

1. Antlerless elk opportunity in general archery season is currently, ALL or NOTHING. *Briefly, ODFW will only open archery antlerless opportunity to a whole management unit under a general season framework as opposed to rifle hunts where portions of units are opened under a controlled hunt scenario.*
2. Tied deer & elk tags
Tied tags refers to units where an elk tag is required to hunt deer (Chesnimnus) and vice-versa where deer tag is required for elk (Steens Mt.)
3. Tag Portability
Firearms hunters are restricted to ONLY the unit for which they draw a tag. Archers can draw a controlled tag but are also free to hunt any general season hunt. Hence the question, should a controlled hunt tag also be valid for the general season? It should also be noted that ODFW typically equates the portability scenario to be your ONLY DEER/ELK OPPORTUNITY for a given hunt.

Committee Members Identified issues:

1. Concern with crowding in some units
2. ~~False application issues (residency issues)~~ moved to parking lot*
3. ~~Nonresident hunt camp displacement of resident hunters~~ moved to parking lot*
4. ~~Predatory management to help deer and elk populations (more hunting opportunity) or (downgrade tag – use deer tag to fill with killing a cougar)~~ moved to parking lot*
5. Elk/deer winter range conflicts – during archery season.
6. Elk displacement from public land to private land due to hunting pressure
7. Antler restrictions/bag limits

* Term used to identify lower priority issue – may be visited at later time.

The first meeting closed out after prioritizing issues (ODFW issues considered top priority), initiating discussions and listening to public testimony from those present.

Without getting to deep in the weeds, I will say that:

- ODFW was requested to provide about a dozen pieces of data for the second meeting.
- There was a second round of presentation material s presented by ODFW.
- There were several Background Papers by ODFW to support their presentations.
- Whenever a committee member couldn't reach consensus with the committee, they had to opportunity to write a Minority Report of which one was submitted.
- There were many dozens of emails that I know of between the major archery organization members to reach agreement between meetings on strategies and proposals.

In other words, this was a very intensive process with a great deal of information upon which to make decisions.

The committee barely got through the 3 ODFW concerns listed above in the course of 4 ARPAC meetings. The “nut” of these 3 issues was:

1. **Antlerless Elk Opportunity (AEO) in a controlled hunt –vs- general season environment**
ODFW recognizes that archers are not a major impact on antlerless elk and in fact, stated that many archers are targeting bulls and passing on opportunities to take a cow elk.

ODFW also said that archery AEO is directly tied to their [Persons with Disability Program](#) (PDP) which therefore significantly influenced what could be offered to archers. Both OBH and TAO asked for an explanation of why ODFW binds archery and PDP hunters with regard to antlerless hunting opportunity (without a satisfactory answer).

ODFW pitched that they could offer more opportunities to archers if they were offered in a controlled format similar to rifle opportunity (designated hunts within a management unit to target problem areas). ARPAC members were skeptical of ODFW intentions as it seemed to be a move to get ARPAC to accept larger scale controlled hunt format.

ODFW cited examples using the Heppner and Ukiah Units stating that neither unit's elk herd has completely recovered after cougar removal but it would be "biologically irresponsible" to offer AEO to archers (and PDP tag holders) unless it was "in a metered way" such as will happen in 2014 season (see current regulations, 248R and 249R hunts).

One constant in the discussion was the fact that rifle hunters seem to get all the AEO, even in units where archers have been excluded. This point was even driven home in public testimony at the end of meetings and in correspondence received related to ARPAC which led Mark to prepare a [presentation](#) using Ukiah, Starkey and Desolation as examples why rifle hunters get the nod on AEO.

SUMMARY

The committee approved conceptual criteria to determine when ODFW would switch from a controlled hunt platform to a general season platform. Specifics of biological triggers and thresholds would be determined and developed by ODFW Biologists and presented at next meeting. Generally, decisions would be based upon data such as population as percent of M.O.(i.e. 110%), cow/calf ratios, bull/cow ratios, calf recruitment, etc. Revised criteria was distributed 8 March, then discussed again with [final criteria](#) agreed upon 20 March.

2. Tied Tags

Majority of discussion centered around the premium N.E. elk hunts in Walla Walla, Wenaha and Mt Emily units. State Police gave detailed reports about poaching issues and supported their claims by stating that there were no poaching investigations in the 2013 season following new regulations.

The ARPAC was challenged in an [ODFW White Paper](#) "to find a way forward that continues to minimize the crossover elk poaching issue while recapturing the same deer opportunity lost" in N.E. Oregon's premium elk units. A part of that paper included possible solutions which ranged from: Return to previous condition (sever tied tag deer/elk) to establishing a late controlled archery buck deer hunt and offered biological and social Pro's & Con's for each solution. Committee members felt that these units should offer a tag holder an opportunity for a quality hunt given the "once in a lifetime" of these hunts. Members also wanted to ensure that OSP had every possible tool available to thwart poaching and felt that if ODFW was able to grow the number of trophy quality bulls they could offer more a few tags in the future. The committee decided to "take one for the team" by not allowing deer hunting in the hopes that all Oregon elk hunters would be able to share in the results. The caveat was that controlled archery deer hunting be allowed for the first week of the season only. OBH, the lone holdout, stated in a

[minority report](#), that losing a full general season opportunity for a 9 day controlled hunt would be unacceptable to their membership.

At the 29 March meeting, archery organizations [requested replacement](#) for loss of whitetail deer hunting opportunity in Walla Walla, Mt Emily & Wenaha as well as Chesnimnus, Sled Springs (lost years ago). Additionally, ODFW was asked to declare the Mule Deer Initiative Study complete and either reopen those units to general archery hunting or announce why that could not happen. Once again, after drilling down into the request, ARPAC members voted in favor that ODFW move these replacement hunts forward for consideration at public meetings and put them before the ODFW Commission in June.

SUMMARY

The committee agreed to support OSP efforts to curb poaching and ODFW desire to grow the resource with potential of more future opportunity in premier units (Walla Walla, Wenaha and Mt. Emily) by retaining current 2014 regulations for archery (Only elk opportunity and have used/unused unit specific elk tag).

Lost deer opportunity is to be replaced with 9 day controlled deer hunt first week of season.

The committee also agreed that ODFW Staff needs to explore other replacement hunts for lost deer opportunities (such as N.E. Whitetail Deer hunts as one example) and report by November, 2014 as noted above.

3. Tag Portability

Tag portability discussion was introduced at the third meeting with most discussion taking place at the fourth and final meeting. Once again, ODFW was forthcoming with [information](#) to be considered by ARPAC members. In the course of discussing portability, Mark stated that it means “locking controlled hunt tags”. The way portability (or lack of it) shows up is when you see ONLY ARCHERY OPPORTUNITY in regulations which means archers loose more opportunity.

Naturally, ARPAC members were once again skeptical of ODFW motivations on this topic but continued on with discussions or maybe, more accurately, ODFW wouldn't let go! The main sales pitch for portability was that it could potentially mitigate crowding in archery seasons, an issue which has been central to dissatisfaction in archery seasons for many years.

ODFW made several attempts to use the “popularity” of archery hunting as a contributing factor to perceived crowding. However, OBH and TAO presented a [report](#) showing a definite correlation between Eastern Oregon going to complete controlled hunting in the mid 1990's and the increase of “popularity” in archery seasons. ODFW stated that percentage wise, the number of “cross-over hunters” wasn't that great because many rifle hunters simply purchased OTC tags or didn't bother to hunt that year. However, OBH pointed out that just looking at the raw numbers, **it is significant**, especially when compared to the number of archery hunters prior to rifle going to controlled hunt format in 1993.

SUMMARY

The committee stated that they could discuss tag portability for days without being able to develop a recommendation to restrict it which they could all support. Members did however offer a list of concerns (3/29 minutes) to be considered by ODFW prior to proposing whether or not to restrict tag portability.

As a final order of business, OBH and TAO presented the group with a [Statement of Intent](#), the purpose of which was to ensure that solutions reached on specific issues were not to be construed as tools to be used by ODFW for other situations which were not part of ARPAC discussions. Some members felt somewhat uncomfortable with the statement of intent, but did agree to support it.

You are encouraged to attend [ODFW local public meetings](#), in May to ask questions and provide input then write to the odfw.commission@state.or.us in time for their 5-6 June, 2014 meeting.

ARPAC Meeting Minutes:

[25 January](#)

[15 February](#)

[8 March](#)

[22 March](#)