

Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR)
Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW)
GAME MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING #16
Virtual Meeting -ZOOM
February 18, 2021

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Commission: Stanley Ruidas, Lanai (Chair); Nancy Timko, Oahu (Vice Chair); Robert Masuda, Representative of the Chair of DLNR; Nicolai Barca, Kauai; Nelson Rapanot, Molokai.

DOFAW Staff: Jason Omick; John Medeiros, Shane DeMattos, Lindsey Ibara, Nick Vargas, David Smith, and Thomas Kaiakapu.

ITEM 1. CALL TO ORDER – DLNR Zoom Call

(12:30) Commissioner Ruidas called the meeting of the Game Management Advisory Commission to order. He asks Nicolai Barca to introduce himself as the new Commission representative for Kauai. Roll call conducted.

ITEM 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Action Required: Approval of minutes from the January 23, 2020 GMAC meeting.

(17:06) Commissioner Ruidas made a motion to approve the minutes from January 23, 2020 GMAC meeting. Nancy Timko motioned to approved minutes, Nicolai Barca seconded the motion. No opposition. Motion approved for meeting minutes and quorum met.

ITEM 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Action Required: Approval of minutes from the August 17, 2020 GMAC meeting.

(18:22) Commissioner Ruidas made a motion to approve the minutes from August 17, 2020 GMAC meeting. Nancy Timko motioned to approve the minutes, Robert Masuda seconded. No opposition. Meeting minutes approved and quorum met.

ITEM 4. HUNTING PROGRAM DISCUSSION

MANAGEMENT PLANS, STEERING DOCUMENTS, PROGRAM PROJECT UPDATES

(19:03) Jason Omick provides update on Lanai Steering document. The final document was sent back to HT Harvey & Associates and they are updating document with comments after the final DOFAW review was given. HT Harvey is preparing document for final delivery and acceptance by DOFAW. Steering document is being set for delivery within two weeks.

(20:30) Jason Omick provides project update for the Hunting programs Kanaio Access project. DOFAW has reviewed the management plan, biological assessment, archeological inventory survey and environment assessment. DOFAW is currently on standby awaiting site numbers to be assigned for all sites documented within archeological survey and soon as these site numbers are obtained, the EA document will be sent to OEQC for review.

(21:34) Outdoor mobile application update given by Jason Omick. The goal was to launch the APP in December, but DOFAW is still updating the hunting view activities so hunters can report harvests and conduct all hunting site check-in's and check-outs utilizing the APP. Another update will be provided within a week.

(22:40) Jason Omick reviews a new DOFAW project. DOFAW is working on a program for hunters to be able to submit online applications and obtain tags online for hunting. This will be done through the "GO HUNT" website. A Scope of Work was just obtained from the DOFAW vendor NIC to setup this project, and the Commission will be updated further when the project is begun.

(23:35) Jason Omick reviews the process for Game Rule updates. DOFAW is organizing a Game Rule package for Chapter 122 & 123. DOFAW staff has been reviewing all rules for the past few years and identifying areas within the rules that need to be updated. A spreadsheet is being developed to track all rule changes that will list: (1.) each rule, (2.) what the rule change will consist of, (3.) and why the rule will be changed. The Commission will be provided the spreadsheet for review, upon completion. The goal is to make the rule change process easier.

(24:36) Jason Omick has been receiving a lot of questions regarding the Lanai Hunt. All information regarding this hunt will be going out within the next few days. DOFAW's Communication Department will be providing a communication on the website and various other media outlets with the Lanai Hunt information.

(25:01) Legislative report update given by Jason Omick. Legislative reports 20 & 21 for GMAC sessions have been reviewed, approved, and uploaded to the report website under DLNR. All designated parties have been emailed these reports. During this process a report from 2018 was discovered missing and found along with all corresponding documentation. This will be submitted also for approval to the Legislature.

(26:00) Jason Omick states a new game bird survey methodology will be used to survey game birds via a Survey 123 starting in 2021. This survey methodology will be utilized beginning September 2021 on the Big Island, and the data will be imported into a database that can be viewed via a dashboard application in ESRI.

(27:29) All upcoming hunts can be viewed via the DOFAW website.

(28:10) All 2019 & 2020 GMAC reports can be viewed via the DLNR website under the, “reports” tab.

(29:41) Action Item: Robert Masuda requests Jason Omick to please email the last GMAC Annual Legislative report to Nelson Rapanot.

ITEM 5. BAG LIMITS AND DEER ISSUES WITHIN STATE OF HAWAII

(30:12) Commissioner Stanley Ruidas reports the following are updates regarding bag limits and deer issues within the State of Hawaii

(30:14) Commissioner Ruidas shares that Lanai over time has evolved into a hunting area with no bag limits. He is concerned that Lanai should not be included in the legislative changes underway occurring with some islands (Molokai and Maui), having no hunting bag limits in the new rule proposals. Both himself and Nelson Rapanot feel that Lanai should have bag limits and they are concerned about eradication of species on the island. They are both in agreement that a game management plan with bag limits should be in place on the island of Lanai.

(33:15) Jason Omick states that Lanai will have an island-wide game management plan (deer plan). There does need to be further discussion with the DOFAW branch manager to discuss a more structured game management plan for Lanai to address the issue, and to take into account the lack of hunting that has occurred during the Covid-19 Pandemic that has resulted in an overabundance of deer upon the island.

(35:01) Nelson Rapanot states that the deer are currently are an issue on Molokai but there does need to be bag limits on other mammals such as pigs and goats.

ITEM 6. MOLOKAI AXIS DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN

(36:32) Commissioner Ruidas asks Nelson Rapanot to discuss the deer issue on Molokai that began in March 2020.

(36::43) Nelson Rapanot discusses a short-term emergency plan he designed jointly after discussions with private landowners, DLNR, Scott Fretz to eliminate the overpopulation of deer on Molokai starting first with the “weak animals.” A long-term plan has also been designed with

Jason Omick at DOFAW. This is a very expensive process and he is working with the county that has \$1 million in grant funds to address the issue. Many groups are applying for the grant funds, but in order to give landowners access to the grant money to deal with this issue there must be transparency of where the funding is being allocated.

(40:33) Robert Masuda would like to hear if DOFAW staff supports the plan. John Medeiros states that there is no game management on Molokai which has resulted in the overpopulation of deer and a big die off of deer due to starvation creating a health hazard on the island. As a result, the struggling deer population has begun to move onto private land destroying property to meet their hunger needs. John states that, "YES," there must be a game management plan in place to deal with the increase in Axis Deer from DOFAW, but there must also be cooperation with the landowners to fence off property for better game management as well. John supports the plan.

(44:19) Shane DeMattos is concerned with who will actually implement and execute the plan. The State does not manage private land, so the States' influence is limited legally, so he is hesitant about implementation and who will take charge of this, though he would like to support the plan.

(45:23) Nicolai Barca explains that he likes the portion of the plan that proposes to manage the deer in relation to population density and their impacts to the habitat. He has suggestions in regards to the section covering watershed protection. Suggestions are as follows: (1.) Deer are one of three introduced animals that might be affecting watershed. (2.) Objective 4.1 needs to be refined. There needs to be a target goal stated regarding how much the deer population will be reduced.

(48:33) Nelson Rapanot discusses that the entire island needs to work together to achieve the goals of this proposed game management plan and properly manage their particular area in order to achieve results. Deer migration needs to be managed and this plan is only the first step in dealing with the issues on the island.

(50:27) John Medeiros states that in the forest areas the State is managing the deer, but the efforts are being thwarted as private property owners are not managing the animals upon their own land so they are continually migrating to obtain the resources they need to survive.

(53:01) Commission Ruidas proposes taking action on the item of approving the Axis Deer Management Plan, but making the game management plan a living document that can evolve as needed, with changes. Robert Masuda would like to support the plan for the Molokai community, but would like DOFAW staff to email suggestions for improvement to the plan to Nelson and Jason so the concerns are documented. Any changes to the plan need to be put before the Commission as the plan is updated in the future.

(55:59) Nancy Timko would like to know if there is support from the parties that need to be involved to execute the plan. Nelson Rapanot states, "Yes there is support. "

Action Required: Review, discuss, and approve Management Plan

(57:08) Commissioner Ruidas motions for approval of the Molokai Axis Deer Management Plan. Approval for Molokai Axis Deer Management Plan is obtained. No opposition to plan documented.

ITEM 7. 2021 LEGISLATIVE SEASON UPDATE

(58:16) Commissioner Ruidas announces legislative season update discussion. He confirms with Jason Omick that the list of bills he had submitted to the Commission was so they could see what bills DOFAW is tracking that would be of potential interest to the Commission as they will impact the hunting program.

(58:41) Jason Omick confirms the list does contain legislation that he is currently monitoring as they will impact the hunting program. This morning HB-663 Bill passed and HB-1021 passed. He states that the Commissioners can provide testimony personally or provide him with questions or comments on any additional green highlighted bills so he can address questions that arise with the Commission.

(1:00:11) Commissioner Ruidas states he is monitoring SB-1364, and would like to see GMAC oppose this bill. He wants to know if “wanton waste” can be incorporated into DOFAW regulations or rules and how would a, “wanton waste” law impact how the State deals with eradication issues. Jason Omick states that DOFAW has not supplied comments yet on this piece of legislation and would like comments from Commissioners so he can incorporate everyone’s thoughts into the comments DOFAW makes on this bill.

(1:03:51) Robert Masuda states that DNLR would not support the killing of animals just for the sport i.e., “wanton waste,” and DLNR supports rules or laws that discourage “wanton waste.” When they need to eradicate animals to protect the forest or watershed areas, DNLR coordinates with individuals that have a need to recover the food source so nothing is wasted.

(1:07) Jason Omick and Robert Masuda state that the Commission cannot take action on approving or denying support of this bill or vote on this issue, as it was not formally on the agenda. If needed, a quick meeting can be pulled together to discuss this further once it is placed as an agenda item. Nicolai Barca states he does agree there needs to be legislation in the State to prevent “wanton-waste,” and they should look to other states for legislative examples for this issue. Please provide comments to Jason Omick regarding this bill for his review in the meantime.

(1:09) Action Item: Include the legislation SB-1364 concerning the wanton-waste, as a topic of discussion within next meeting agenda.

ITEM 8. COMMISSIONER TRAINING

(1:10:10) Commissioner Ruidas Jason Omick to discuss training that is available to all Commissioners. The Sunshine Law and Ethics training is available to all the Commissioners and

are typically one hour in length. Each Commissioner is supposed to participate in this training. Nicolai Barca, as a new Commissioner, needs to complete all training. All training is available on the OIT website and Jason just posted the website for the ethics training. Commissioner Ruidas further states that the Sunshine Law has been updated to include Zoom meetings etc.

ITEM 9. HUNTER SURVEY QUESTIONS- NEW HUNTER SURVEY 2021

(1:13:40) Commissioner Ruidas introduces Item 9 and asks Jason Omick to address this item.

(1:13:46) Jason Omick states that public surveys relating to hunting were done in 2016 and 2017 and the data was analyzed from the surveys and placed in a database. During 2020, the Commissioners brought to Jason's attention that they would like the hunter survey questions updated and or additional questions added to the survey. The information from the surveys is valuable and the information is useful to DOFAW Hunting Program.

Jason can provide copies of the current survey to the Commissioners again for review so that they can provide updates of what questions they would like to see added for the survey that will be conducted in 2021, prior to the survey being released. The survey is also easily accessible on the DOFAW hunting website and can be accessed by everyone at that site.

The current mailing list has approximately 7,500 individuals. Now, more people will be able to be reached with the survey in 2021 as the survey can be taken directly on DOFAW's website and the Listserve has grown, so more data will be obtained from the 2021 survey.

Please contact Jason Omick if you need a copy of the analysis from the surveys in 2016 or 2017. He would recommend the survey be put as an action item on the next GMAC meeting agenda to finalize all survey questions. Jason also stated that an outside vendor can be used to conduct the surveys in 2021 if the Commissioners deemed this might be appropriate, so he will get the information regarding the costs associated with that, if the Commissioners would like to explore this option. Funds from the Wildlife Revolving Fund can be utilized to do this.

Action Item: Commissioner Ruidas would like the link for the old surveys to be sent to each of the Commissioners for their review.

(1:18:23) Commissioner Ruidas asks Jason Omick the current status of funding for the branches, since much of the funding comes from the Pitman Robertson Fund. Jason Omick states that the PRF went up 19% but that will not make a huge change to the funding that goes to the branches for operating funds. The branches also use the Wildlife Revolving Fund to fund operations and this was increased also, which will assist in getting the branches slightly greater resources for operation in 2021. The combined small increases in both funds along with less spending during the Covid-19 Pandemic will give the branches more resources for operation in 2021, but overall, funding for 2021 will be similar to what was received in 2020.

(1:20:31) Jason Omick states that they are currently drafting the new proposal for FY22-PR which is due in beginning of March. It is not due until July, but they will be applying for new fiscal funding shortly. Overall, there is not any drastic funding changes occurring for DOFAW.

ITEM 10. WILDLIFE PLAN FEASIBILITY COSTS FOR EACH ISLAND

(1:21:42) Commissioner Ruidas announces discussion of Wildlife Plan feasibility costs for each island. He asks Jason Omick to address this topic.

(1:21:55) Jason Omick would like Commissioner Ruidas to explain exactly his objective with this topic.

(1:22:20) Commissioner Ruidas would like to see a cost estimate for writing a game management plan for each island so it can be determined which islands should get these plans done and in what order based on the associated cost factors. Commissioner Ruidas would like to see a cost breakdown of how much it would cost to write a game management plan for each island so decisions can be made by GMAC on completing these projects based on a prioritization process.

(1:23:36) Jason Omick explains that these plans can be done in many different ways, and the decisions to do so is often based on the objectives for each island, such as a need for obtaining federal funding for particular areas for compliance reasons, etc. The goal of a game management plan often impacts the cost of designing one. If the overall goal of the island is simply to have a broad-based game management plan that details out routine maintenance issues, facility maintenance, habitat management etc., this type of plan would be less costly as this is a broad-based plan.

At the moment they can continue to push forward to complete the Big Island of Hawaii plan, ensure everyone is content with the plan and then use this as a model to design plans for all the islands. Jason can develop a cost model to get these plans done, but it will take some time. He will need to interface with vendors to discuss the scope of work for these plans and determine the needs of each island.

Action Item: Determine the feasibility of creating a game management plan for each island.

ITEM 11. COMMISSIONER ISLAND REPORTS

(1:28:53) Commissioner Ruidas asks each Commissioner to give a short report on their island.

7-I **OAHU.** (1:29:10) Comm. Timko stated that she met with Nick Vargas last month. Oahu has been fairly quiet, though it is a busy bird season. There has been a lot of hunters out, but few birds to hunt. She and Nick discussed continuing to raise the birds on the island, the need for this and she would like to see the Department support this initiative. They discussed possibly

meeting with local farmers and private property owners that have game birds and relocating the birds to the fly pens in the game management areas in order to increase hunting opportunities on Oahu. Commissioner Ruidas stated that he hopes that the State could contribute funds to this initiative so no one has to go to the mainland to acquire game birds.

7-II **KAUAI** (1:31:21) Nicolai Barca stated he met with Thomas and Lindsey from DOFAW last week for their first meeting. The goal of the meeting was to gain an understanding of how things operate and why things are the way they are so that he could better represent hunters and DOFAW within the Kauai community.

7-III **MOLOKAI** (1:32:02) Nelson Rapanot stated that he has been in close contact John Medeiros regarding the deer issue on Molokai and they are awaiting county funding to address this issue. The deer are no longer dying on the roads as they were previously, but he is concerned they cannot let their guard down and must proceed with the management plan to address the deer issue on the island.

7-IV **LANAI**. (1:33:49) Comm. **Ruidas** stated that they have been attempting to open the 2021 hunting season and he met with DOFAW staff and stakeholders to develop a plan to announce the hunting season and how to go about this. The 2021 season will have a longer rifle season but a smaller amount of hunters. There will only be a special hunt being conducted. There is a 3500 people a week limit on the island. There is over 150 people coming to the island daily and all are utilizing the Aloha safe APP for Covid tracking. There are strict limits on non-resident hunters being allowed on the island to limit potential Covid-19 impact.

7-V **HAWAII** (1:38:34) Robert Masuda speaks on behalf of the Big Island. They are currently looking for a new Commissioner for this island.

(1:38:56) Commissioner Ruidas mentions they need two new Commissioners for the island of Hawaii and one new Commissioner for Oahu. Please make recommendations if you know of individuals that would be interested.

ITEM 12. FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE & AGENDA ITEMS

(1:39:23) Commissioner Ruidas announces this item.

(1:39:44) Nelson Rapanot mentioned that he has spoken with Jason Omick regarding future meetings being focused on individual islands for each meeting instead of having the meetings incorporate discussions on all islands. He feels a more focused meeting would be more productive.

(1:40:36) Commissioner Ruidas recommends the next meeting to be focused on Molokai. He asks all the Commissioners if they are in favor of this GMAC meeting approach. Jason Omick

suggests to build an agenda that is island centric but that all Commissioners do need to attend the meeting so they can vote on line items, etc.

(1:43) Robert Masuda enjoys everyone reporting on various islands, as hearing the island reports is useful to him. Anyone that has a major island item to be addressed, they should get with Jason to arrange getting these items on the agenda so the special report can be included in the agenda.

(1:45:18) Commissioner Ruidas asks all Commissioners if the meeting time of 5-7 pm. is good. No one objects to the assigned meeting times.

(1:46:09) Commissioner Ruidas states that the next meeting will have a special focus on Molokai. Nelson Rapanot is in agreement with this approach. Agenda items will be lessened to approximately five items, with a bigger approach on the Island of Molokai discussion.

(1:47:30) Jason Omick asks Nelson Rapanot to provide him with agenda items that he would like included to discuss on Molokai during the next meeting. The next meeting will be scheduled on March 18, 2021 at 4:30-6:00 p.m.

Action Item 6: The next GMAC meeting will be scheduled March 18, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. Nelson Rapanot will provide Jason Omick with specific agenda items to be addressed for Molokai.

ITEM 13. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1:51:15) Jason Omick states that DOFAW got in all the artwork for the stamp contest. There were 15-18 submissions for the hunting license and gamebird stamps. He will forward the Commissioners the paintings via email so the Commissioners can vote on the artwork also.

(1:52:15) Robert Masuda requests that Jason Omick send the information on the License Plate Wildlife legislative bill to all the Commissioners. He would like all the Commissioners to support this legislative effort.

(1:53:27) Commissioner Ruidas opens up public testimony. Richard First is heard.

ITEM 14. ADJOURNMENT

(2:04:02:) Commissioner Ruidas moves to adjourn the Game Management Advisory Commission Meeting. Robert Masuda and Nancy Timko first and second the motion. Meeting is adjourned at 6:56 pm.