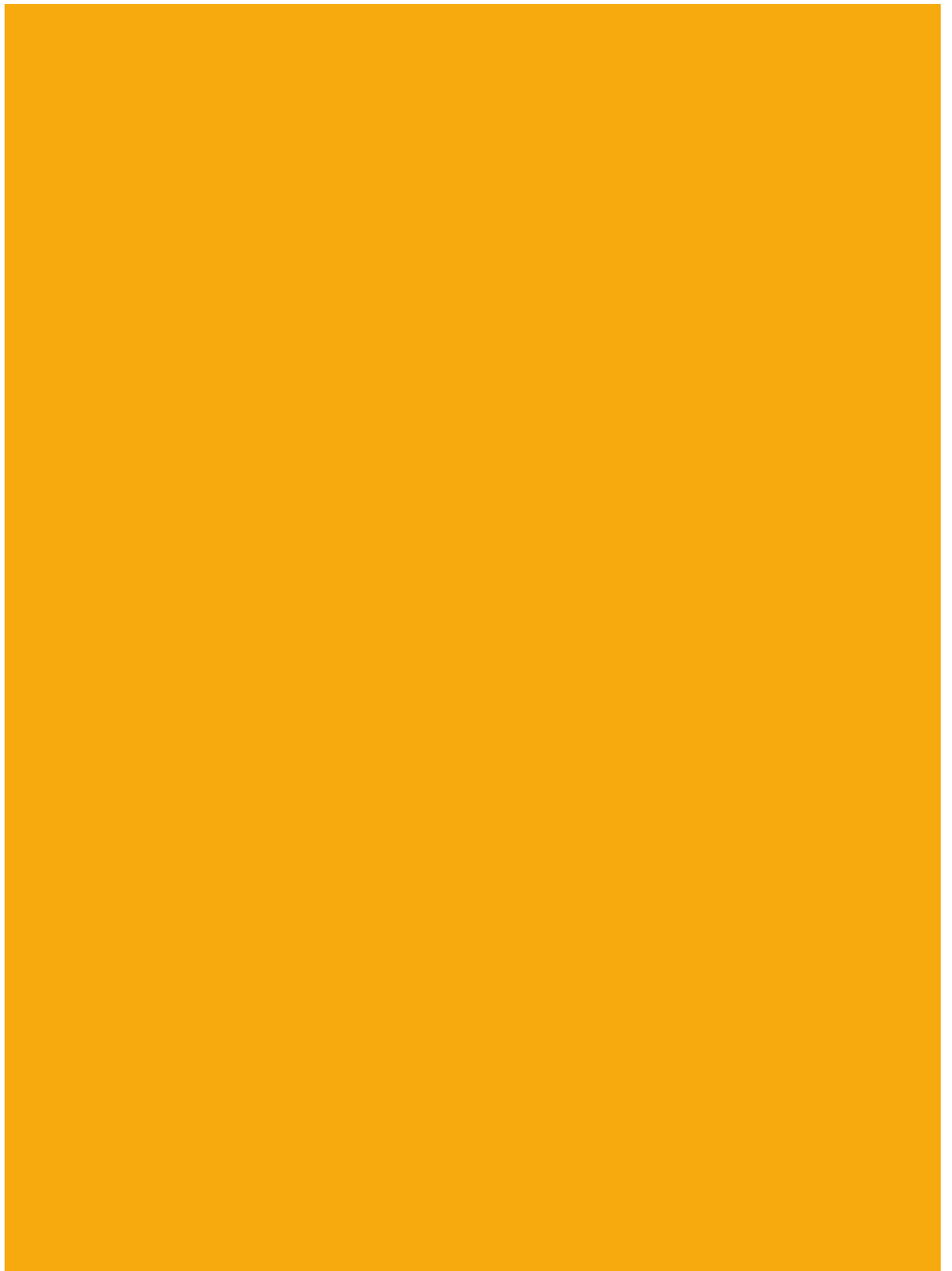


A Strategy for Resident Hunter Recruitment and Retention in British Columbia







CONTENTS

PREFACE	1
PURPOSE	1
Background	1
WHY MORE HUNTERS?	2
Hunters and Conservation	2
Hunting as a Way of Obtaining Food	3
Hunting and the Government's Great Goals	3
Great Goal 4	4
Great Goal 2	4
Great Goal 5	4
FACTORS AFFECTING RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT	5
STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE HUNTER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION	8
THE BIG SIX	23
CONCLUSION	25
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	25



PREFACE

Hunting has been a part of the human experience since prehistoric times. Numerous cave paintings, pictographs and other art forms have depicted humans in the act of hunting many different animals. Records of this nature have been found in diverse areas of the world, dating back tens of thousands of years. The remains of ancient dwellings and camp sites have yielded many implements and artefacts which make it clear that early humans hunted for food, clothing, building materials and probably for spiritual reasons.

More recently, North America's many diverse aboriginal people all hunted game as a food source, a lifestyle that existed undisturbed until a few hundred years ago, and for some bands, into the 20th century. Native folklore and history is rich with reference to hunting and the important role it played, and continues to play, in their lives. Hunting played a very large part in the survival strategy of early Europeans in North America, and was critical to the survival of our early settlers. In some of Canada's more remote areas, especially in the north, to this day hunting continues to provide families with a significant portion of their food requirements.

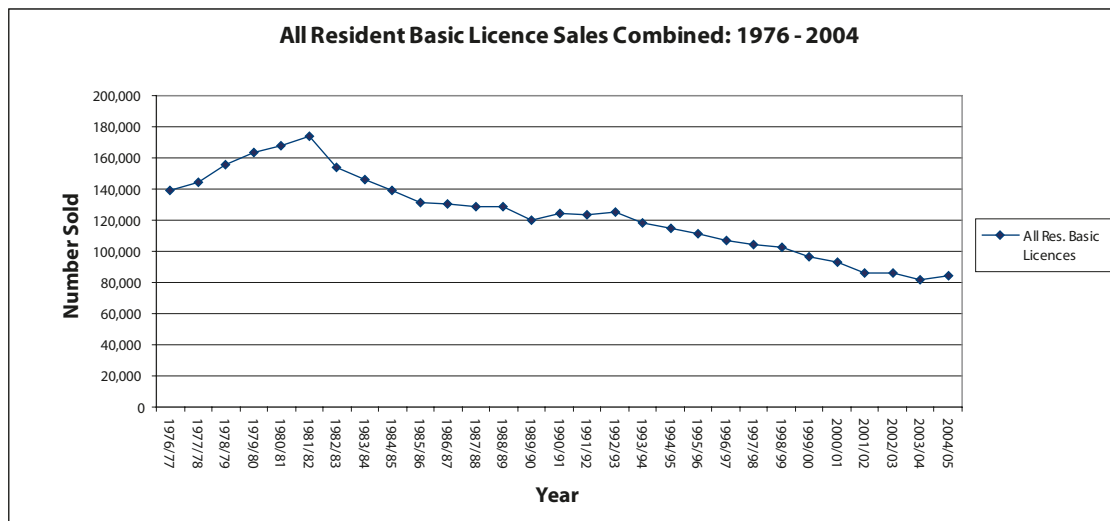
Today, hunting continues to be a way of life to many British Columbians. For some, it remains a vital source of nourishment on which they depend, while for others hunting is more of a social, spiritual or lifestyle concern. All hunters share a love of nature and an appreciation for their place in it, as well as a concern for the welfare of wildlife now and into the future.

PURPOSE

The number of annually active resident hunters in British Columbia has been declining for the past 25 years. For reasons that will be outlined in the following pages, hunters are considered a positive force in the stewardship of our wildlife resources. This document explores the reasons for the decline and presents recommendations for its reversal.

Background

The number of resident hunting licences in British Columbia peaked at 174,000 in 1981 and has declined ever since, with only 84,000 being sold in 2004.



The most precipitous drop in sales occurred in 1982, coinciding with a serious recession and a doubling of licence prices. Sales have continued to dwindle with today's sales being less than 50% of those in 1982.

The 2006/07 – 2008/09 Service Plan for the Ministry of Environment lists sustainable use of environmental resources, optimized public and commercial opportunities from wildlife and providing outstanding hunting among its goals and objectives. The plan goes on to set a performance measure of increasing the number of basic resident hunting licences sold annually to 100,000 by 2014/15. The Ministry of Environment recognizes the importance of hunters and their contribution to a healthy environment and economy.



WHY MORE HUNTERS?

Hunters and Conservation

In North America, hunters and anglers have been on the leading edge of the conservation movement ever since the concept was developed¹. These people were in constant contact with nature and with the game they hunted (or fished for), and were among the first to realize that wildlife was not an infinite resource. They banded together into clubs and associations and lobbied for conservation measures, habitat protection and wildlife management. Today, the healthy populations of game animals that thrive across much of Canada owe their well-being to hunters². To take a single example, waterfowl in the central flyway have been greatly enhanced through the efforts of Ducks Unlimited. This organization has worked hard to preserve vital wetlands and to secure the co-operation of farmers in the enhancement of waterfowl habitat.

Hunters and anglers continue to press for conservation measures to this day. This year (2006), the British Columbia Wildlife Federation celebrated their 50th year, advertising their accomplishment with the slogan, "50 years of conservation leadership". In addition

.....
1 Two early giants of conservation, Theodore Roosevelt and Aldo Leopold were both hunters and anglers.

2 Two excellent references on the subject are:

'Wildlife Conservation Policy' by Valerius Geist and Ian McTaggart-Cowan

'Our Wildlife Heritage – 100 Years of Wildlife Management' published by the Centennial Wildlife Society of British Columbia

to their concern with and commitment to conservation, hunters also provide a vast pool of knowledge and advice useful for wildlife management. The noted biologist Stephen Jay Gould cites “The intimate knowledge of local natural history among millions of hunters and fishermen” as a valuable factor in understanding the natural world³.

Hunting as a Way of Obtaining Food

All living creatures, plant or animal, large or small, must eat in order to survive. All food comes from living sources, therefore for one organism to eat, another must die. This is a simple and basic concept, yet it seems to be outside the understanding of many people, and lies at the crux of the argument for hunting.

When a wolf eats, a deer, moose or some other animal must die. When a sheep grazes, plant material is consumed and dies. When a trout feeds, insects die. Trees derive their nutrients from the decaying remains of dead organisms in the soil, and some plants, such as the Venus fly trap, actually attract and consume prey. In every case, for one life form to thrive, another must be consumed. Humans are no different. To live we must eat, and whether it be fish or fowl, plant or animal, other life forms must die for us to live.

Although most people never give it any thought, raising food domestically has impact on wildlife. Huge amounts of land, often in the most productive areas, must be developed for farming, displacing wild ecosystems. To plant any given crop or raise any livestock, one must first clear the land. All the native trees, shrubs, herbs, grasses and mosses must be removed. Along with them go most of the birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and many of the invertebrates that lived there. Once the crop is planted, the farmer must try to discourage any wildlife that interferes with the planted crop. This is not to say that we shouldn't farm or that farming is wrong, but rather to say that people should be aware that there is a high cost in terms of wildlife and habitat for the food our society requires. It is also worth noting that farming replaces one type of habitat with another. Some species of wildlife, white-tailed deer and pheasants for example, do very well in farmland.

Contrast this with hunting. Hunting is a form of selective harvest. When a deer hunter ventures into an area, if the hunter is successful, he or she will take a deer. However, all of the rest of the habitat is left as it was before. The overall ecological community is unaltered. An individual deer is no longer there, but the rest of the deer population continues to thrive in an environment that is left unscathed. It could be argued that too many hunters would ultimately cause harm to the deer population, but we have wildlife management programs to prevent this from occurring. Properly managed hunting allows humans to take food from their environment while leaving the habitat intact and the hunted population in a state that allows it to produce a sustainable yield indefinitely.

Farming controls the environment in order to create a harvest. Properly managed hunting allows a natural harvestable surplus to be taken from an uncontrolled environment.

Hunting and the Government's Great Goals

The Ministry of Environment has a leadership role in achieving the government's objectives under Great Goal 4 and accountability in achieving the government's objectives under Great Goals 2 and 5. A detailed discussion is presented in the 2006/07 – 2008/09 Service Plan, and is of direct pertinence to this strategy.

.....
3 'The Living Stones of Marrakech – Penultimate Reflections In Natural History' by Stephen Jay Gould, published by Three Rivers Press, New York, 2000.

Great Goal 4

“To lead the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality, and the best fisheries management, bar none.”

The Service Plan states that the ministry has the following linkages to this goal:

“Providing sustainable environmental management using science-based decision-making.”

“Building greater understanding among British Columbians of the benefits of healthy living and the effect their actions have on the environment.”

Hunting is one aspect of sustainable environmental management. Science-based wildlife management allows British Columbians to enjoy hunting in perpetuity. Hunting gets people exercising in the outdoors and actively involved in their environment. It promotes family bonding and fosters an awareness of the value of our environment and the importance of looking after it.

Great Goal 2

“To lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness.”

The Service Plan states that the ministry will provide outdoor opportunities related to British Columbia’s parks, fish and wildlife.

Hunting provides exercise in a clean and exhilarating setting. Excitement, hard work and perseverance are companion benefits. Game meat is organic, lean, generally toxin free and does not contain dyes, artificial hormones or antibiotics. Lifelong friendships and strong family bonds are developed and enhanced through hunting experiences. The arduous conditions hunters frequently face build teamwork, resourcefulness and attitudes of cooperation and consideration.

Great Goal 5

“To create more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada.”

The Service Plan states that the ministry has the following linkages to this goal:

“Contributing to the economy and job creation through camping, hunting, angling and wildlife viewing opportunities.”

“Providing investment opportunities and job creation through sustainable environmental management.”

In addition to enjoying hunting as part of a healthy lifestyle, British Columbians benefit economically from the activity of hunters. Hunting is directly mentioned in the first of these linkages and implied through the second. Hunters generated \$48 million of the province’s GDP in 2003⁴. Hunters contribute money through licence purchases, the purchase of services and consumables and major capital purchases such as recreational vehicles, boats and ATVs. Many businesses, particularly in smaller communities, are dependent on the annual expenditures of hunters.

4 ‘British Columbia’s Hunting, Trapping & Wildlife Viewing Sector’ – BC Stats, August 12, 2005, page 8.



FACTORS AFFECTING RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

Hunting licence sales are down throughout most of North America, and variety of factors have contributed to declining trends in hunter participation.

1. Demographics

In North America, hunting has traditionally been predominantly a young, white, rural male activity. Trends toward increased urbanization, an aging population and an influx of ethnically diverse people have reduced the profile of the traditional hunting population relative to the rest of society. This change has been particularly profound in British Columbia. The mild climate of B.C.'s south coast is attractive to retirees and a large Asian community, mostly with little cultural tendency toward hunting, has arisen over the last 30 years.

2. Increased Recreational Opportunities

The recreational options offered today exceed anything ever available in the past. A baby boomer generation determined to cling to its youth has resulted in all manner of sporting leagues open to people of all ages. Golf courses, ski hills, tennis courts, recreation centres and many other facilities continue to be developed. Travel companies compete fiercely for clients, offering everything from completely self-contained destination resorts to extreme adventure vacations. Hunting must now compete with many other possible pastimes.

3. Gas Prices

The cost of gasoline has risen dramatically over the last few years. A lot of hunting opportunities require trucks and four-wheel drive vehicles that get poor gas mileage.

4. Time Obligations

Over the last 30 years, it has become the norm for both parents to be employed. Double careers, radically inflated house prices, limited vacation time and family obligations have all conspired to make a time consuming activity like hunting more difficult to pursue.

5. Federal Firearms Laws and Hunter Education Requirements

While hunter education requirements are the norm in most North American jurisdictions, Canadian hunters face the additional requirements of our federal gun laws. Canadian law requires the registration of all firearms. This requirement carries an extra expense and makes the purchase of firearms a cumbersome and protracted process. Furthermore, in order to be eligible to own or in any way acquire a firearm, Canadians must first pass the federal firearms safety course.

In the case of long-gun owners, the federal firearms safety course is mostly redundant to the training presented in provincial hunter education courses. Successful completion of a hunter education course (C.O.R.E. course) is mandatory in British Columbia. These courses are privately delivered and can cost up to \$150. After completing such a course, prospective hunters may pay as much or more to take the federal firearms safety course so that they can buy and legally own a firearm. The federal training is very similar to the firearms safety training provided as part of the C.O.R.E. course, but federal law does not recognize C.O.R.E. training. This situation forces prospective hunters to complete two courses, one of which is largely redundant, at a cost that may exceed \$300 before they even have a chance to try hunting.

6. Hunting Regulations and Licensing Options

As with all North American jurisdictions, hunting in British Columbia is highly regulated and professionally managed by wildlife biologists. The regulations are complicated and vary throughout the nine provincial regions. Regulations are designed to allow the harvest of game within conservation constraints and are based on wildlife management principles. Many regulations exist because hunters have requested them, based on concerns over sustainability, ethics or safety. With the best of intentions, these regulations sometimes result in confusion or misunderstanding that can discourage hunter participation.

British Columbia's hunting licence system is archaic. Licences can only be purchased in person and they involve pre-printed forms with carbon copies that are used to track sales. These carbon copies are entered into an electronic data base, but the process may take months and not all types of licences are captured. This system makes the purchase of licences and the replacement of lost licences an inconvenient and inflexible process. Offering licensing options that allow innovative packaging of hunting opportunities or pricing options that might be enticing is difficult or impossible.

7. Opportunity and Enjoyment

Hunting opportunities are more restricted now than ever in the past. Tighter restrictions on land access, increased private land and new restrictions within municipal boundaries and regional districts have all reduced hunting opportunity. Wildlife management plans designed to produce quality animals at the expense of quantity have further reduced hunting opportunity, especially for novice hunters. The decline of hunting opportunities close to Greater Vancouver and Greater Victoria has had a profound negative impact on participation and recruitment. Some game species, such as Canada geese, have very high population levels; yet hunting opportunities are limited in some areas because of private land issues or local restrictions. Such limited hunting opportunity sometimes

arises even in areas where farmers would welcome a reduction in animals because they are agricultural pests.

8. Lack of Mentors and Advice on How to Hunt

Numerous studies have shown that it takes a hunter to make a hunter. Most people that become hunters do so under the tutelage of an older relative, usually their father, grandfather or uncle. Those that come to hunting outside of a family setting usually do so in a manner that simulates the same path, such as befriending a hunter and becoming their protégé. People that are new to hunting need mentors and advice on how to pursue their new interest. Simply going hunting does not make an individual see themselves as a hunter⁵. Becoming a hunter is a protracted learning and social process.

Advice on where to hunt and how to hunt is lacking. New hunters need advice on where to hunt both in a general geographic sense and in the sense of being shown what type of habitat and terrain they should investigate for the species they seek. The actual techniques of hunting must also be learned. Fundamentals of firearms care and use, wilderness survival and orienteering, hunting ethics, basic equipment, first aid and care of game meat must be understood in addition to the various techniques for stalking game. These matters are covered in mandatory hunter education courses, but further study, especially under field conditions, is necessary in order to truly become a hunter. Generally, the acquisition of such skills requires a mentor.

9. Hunting Has Not Been Promoted

Unlike angling, hunting has not been actively promoted in BC. British Columbia boasts a greater variety of game species than anywhere else in Canada and many of our opportunities are world class. Nevertheless, while hunting has always been a legal activity supported by science-based wildlife management, active promotion has been avoided. This lack of promotion has led to underutilization of much of the available resource, a loss of recreational opportunity, a loss of potential revenue and economic benefit and a general ignorance of the benefits of hunting.

Promotion and marketing of hunting would contribute to the general awareness of hunting as a positive tool in conservation. Additionally, it would raise the profile of the resource and those that make use of it.



5 'Meeting the Challenge to Increase Participation in Hunting and Shooting' – a final report/handbook to the National Shooting Sports Foundation and the International Hunter Education Association submitted by Jim Wentz and Phil Seng, Silvertip Productions, Ltd., 2000

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE HUNTER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Some of the factors affecting hunter recruitment and retention are completely outside of our control. Demographics, trends toward urbanization, gas prices, increased recreational opportunities and time obligations are all factors that we must recognize but cannot manipulate. The only course open to us is to try to offer hunting opportunities that will be attractive to a variety of people, compete well against other forms of recreation and be more likely to fit into the recreational time that people have.

1. Federal Firearms Laws and Hunter Education Requirements

Changes in the federal government have affected Canada's firearms laws. The proposed elimination of the long-gun registry will remove a major barrier to becoming a hunter.

Under current law, Canadians must pass the federal firearms course before they can own or in any way acquire a firearm. The material covered in this course is very similar to the firearms safety and handling section of the British Columbia hunter education course (C.O.R.E.), which is also mandatory. This situation forces prospective hunters to take two courses, one of which is largely redundant. The cost of these two courses can go as high as \$150 each. Education, despite the best of intentions, has become an expensive roadblock to recruitment.

RECOMMENDATION:

Seek a reciprocal agreement on firearms training with the federal government. If necessary, bolster the firearms section of the C.O.R.E. course to make it equivalent to federal training. Completion of C.O.R.E. should qualify hunters for a federal Possession and Acquisition Licence without having to pay for and attend a second course.

Most North American jurisdictions require their prospective hunters to undergo some form of hunter education. Concerns over safety, conservation issues and ethics are addressed through these hunter training courses. In British Columbia, such a course can cost up to \$150 and may involve up to eight sessions of two or more hours each. Alternatively, the course may be challenged. Students may study on their own and then contact a qualified examiner and arrange to write the exam. This approach costs \$50 plus the cost of the text book (optional, but usually necessary).

C.O.R.E. courses are offered when it suits instructors to offer them and challenging courses through self study with a text book is not a comfortable option for many people. Many people, especially the young, are used to interactive learning through computers and audiovisual media. People with limited time and tiring work schedules may be more open to learning by watching and instructional video in their own homes than to attending a course or studying a text.

RECOMMENDATION:

Put the entire C.O.R.E. course into a video production and make it available on DVD's and through a website. The website should be free and the DVDs minimally priced.

DVD and web-based training is not intended to replace formal C.O.R.E. courses. There will always be people who prefer to attend a course in a classroom setting. The intent is to provide a broad set of options for potential hunters to choose from.

Having C.O.R.E. training available on DVDs and the web will make the material readily available in a format that can be learned at the student's convenience. Furthermore, it would be an excellent way for hunters who have gone a number of years without hunting to "brush up" before trying it again. This may be a particular problem for young parents that have hunted and then been away from hunting for a number of years while they had families and dealt with small children. The opportunity to reacquaint themselves with firearm safety and other concerns at no expense and at a time they find convenient might well decide whether or not they ever return to hunting.

The fact that hunting is a predominantly male pastime carries certain implications for hunter education. In most C.O.R.E. courses, female students will find themselves to be a minority. Some women are intimidated by learning what they may perceive as a "male" skill in the presence of men. They may be reticent to ask questions because they are afraid of looking foolish, and they may think that the things they are unsure of are obvious to male participants. In fact, most male hunter education students are no more or less informed than most female students, but that may not be the view of female participants. A similar situation sometimes arises with various forms of physical exercise, and in response, all-women gymnasiums and exercise classes have become popular in recent years.

RECOMMENDATION:

Where possible, provide the option of C.O.R.E. courses for women taught by women. This recommendation will require the active support of the B.C. Wildlife Federation (the NGO that delivers the C.O.R.E. course) and its member clubs.

Prior to 1984, C.O.R.E. was an optional course in B.C. public schools and was delivered by government personnel. In 1984, it was removed from the public school curriculum and delivery of the course was privatized. Consequently, enrolment fell from more than 12,000 in 1983 to less than 2,000 in 1984, and it has never recovered to even half of what it once was. It does not seem likely that reintroduction of C.O.R.E. to the public school system would be allowed, however, some sort of training in basic ecology, fisheries management and wildlife management could be attempted.

RECOMMENDATION:

Develop a broader version of the C.O.R.E. course, not aimed at producing hunters but touching upon hunting (and angling) as part of the process of land and wildlife management.

A course with the proper balance could be considered for inclusion in the public school system. By presenting hunting as a management tool and presenting hunting as an ethical use of our resources, young people might come to see hunting in a positive light. Exposure to such a course, especially for urban children, might pique an interest in exploring hunting further. Such a course could even include field experience such as "stalking" animals with a camera or with binoculars. In addition to the public school system, other organizations such as Boy Scouts and Girl Guides might be interested.

Although well intended and generally supported by all stakeholders, hunter education itself is a barrier to recruitment. As explained above, hunters are required to complete a fairly comprehensive course before they can even try hunting to see if they like it. If they are over 19 years of age, they have to complete two courses (C.O.R.E. and the federal firearms safety course). The time involved and the cost, an amount not insignificant to most young people, presents a considerable hurdle at a point when the potential hunter may have had no opportunity to decide whether or not they will enjoy hunting.

Research has repeatedly revealed that becoming a hunter is a protracted process comprised mostly of interaction with other hunters and accumulated field experience⁶. Merely attending a course does not make a hunter nor does it necessarily lead to a person seeing themselves as a hunter. Hunter education, depending on how it is presented, may actually be a significant barrier to potential hunters⁷.

Under current B.C. law, people must be at least 10 years of age in order to hunt. At that age, if they have completed the C.O.R.E. course, they may have their own basic hunting licence, species licences and bag limits but they must hunt under the direct supervision of a licensed adult until they are 19 years of age. After that, they can hunt unsupervised. Optionally, people over the age of 10 but under the age of 14 may have a junior hunting licence. They do not have to complete the C.O.R.E. course or any other training, must hunt under the direct supervision of a licensed adult and share the bag limit of that adult. This option allows very young hunters to find out if they enjoy hunting and to begin the social and participatory process of actually becoming a hunter before requiring them to go through a lot of course work. Note that both paths require direct supervision from a licensed adult. No notable safety concerns have arisen under this system.

RECOMMENDATION:

Extend the time range of the junior hunting licence from 10 years of age to less than 19 years of age. Junior licence holders would still have to be directly supervised by a licensed adult. Furthermore, give serious consideration to allowing them their own bag limit of one deer and their own bag limit of upland game birds and small game.

RECOMMENDATION:

Reduce the price of species licences for hunters less than 19 years of age.

Potential new hunters over the age of 19 face the same problem as those under 19; they have to go to a lot of trouble and expense before having any chance to determine whether or not they like hunting.

.....
 6 Numerous studies support this point. Some of the best can be found at the Responsive Management website: <http://www.responsivemanagement.com>

7 'Meeting the Challenge to Increase Participation in Hunting and Shooting' – a final report/handbook to the National Shooting Sports Foundation and the International Hunter Education Association submitted by Jim Wentz and Phil Seng, Silvertip Productions, Ltd., 2000

RECOMMENDATION:

Develop a new “test-drive” licence, similar to the junior licence proposed above for new hunters 19 years of age or older. This licence could be time-limited to one season, the prospective hunter would not have to pass C.O.R.E. and the prospective hunter would have to be directly supervised by a licensed adult⁸.

These two recommendations are options intended to introduce flexibility into recruitment. Since there is no significant safety issue related to the current junior licence (10 to 14 year olds), there is no obvious reason to believe that difficulties would arise with 14 to 19 year olds. At any point after 10 years of age, should a hunter wish to, they could still complete the C.O.R.E. course and become full fledged hunters with the only proviso being that they must be directly supervised by a licensed adult until they are 19. If these recommendations are adopted, some extra recruitment can be expected because some new hunters that initially have only a passing interest will find that they really like hunting and will then be strongly motivated to complete the C.O.R.E. course. Under the current system, many such people would never bother to go to the trouble and expense necessary to try hunting.

It may be possible to combine the junior licence and the “test-drive” licence into a single licence. This might be desirable in a streamlining sense, to reduce the total number of different licences and to keep things as simple as possible. If these recommendations are to be implemented, the practicality of combining the two should be explored.

With respect to recruitment, these last three recommendations are among the most important ones in this document.

2. Hunting Licences

Electronic issuing of licences is a must. Most American jurisdictions have already developed electronic licensing systems and most of those that have not are in the process of doing so. This is not the case in Canada. Most provinces, B.C. included, have only paper-based systems that require licences to be completed by hand and purchased in person from a vendor. This system is flawed in many ways and does not lend itself to the promotion of hunting or to innovative products or pricing.

RECOMMENDATION:

Develop and implement an electronic licensing system as soon as possible. This system should allow the purchase of licences through vendors, via the internet and over the phone.

For the most part, hunting privileges are sold as annual licences. This is the way it has been for a very long time and given that government tends to think in fiscal years, it is the paradigm accepted by most people. When you want to hunt for moose, you purchase an annual basic licence for \$32 (plus GST) and an annual moose species licence for \$25 (plus GST). However, suppose you can only hunt for one weekend. Under our current system, you have to pay for a year’s worth of licences to hunt for two days. It is likely that this situation discourages a lot of people from taking part in short hunting opportunities.

⁸ If firearms safety is considered to be too great a concern, an optional (but not recommended) condition could be to have only the licensed adult carry a firearm. The licenced adult would only pass the firearm to the “test-drive” licensee when a shot is to be taken.

If we were in private business and we lost more than half of our customers we'd be asking how we needed to change our products to regain our customers' interest. Up until now, we've simply been asking how we can attract people back to the same old product we've always sold. It may well be that many people in 2006 do not have the option to go hunting for extended periods of time. While licence types and their associated prices are definitely not the only factors that have driven people away from hunting, they are factors that are entirely under our control. Many people feel that the cost of licences is an insignificant part of the overall cost of hunting. For the most part, they're probably right, but there are many who disagree. People have their own ideas around how much things should cost, whether or not their view seems logical. Additionally, a parent faced with buying their own licences plus licences for several other family members may be facing a bill of several hundred dollars, an amount that most people would not find trivial, especially if they live in an economically depressed community.

Once an electronic licensing system is in place, hunters can be offered products and opportunities that are currently unthinkable. Under the current system, any licences offered must be preconceived, pre-printed and distributed to all vendors. Offering a licence for a hunting opportunity that might interest only a small number of hunters is impractical and prohibitively expensive. With an electronic system, such licences can be generated on a "one-off" basis and a great many more types of hunting opportunities can be considered. Short-term licences could be offered and species "combo" licences could be considered. For example, a licence could be offered that is time constrained (for a given week, for example) and allows the bearer to shoot (one of) a moose or a deer or an elk at a price lower than the combined cost of individual licences for those species.

RECOMMENDATION:

Conduct a marketing survey to determine new types of hunting licences that would be of interest to hunters.

The skiing industry provides a good example of this type of marketing. Not all skiers are prepared to buy a season's pass (analogous to our annual hunting licence) even though they may see themselves as avid skiers. Realizing this, ski resorts offer "six-pack" tickets, three-day passes, single day passes, afternoon passes and in some cases, night passes. They have found ways to package their product in ways that will fit into the free time of their potential clients.

The sheer magnitude of the reduction in annual hunting licence sales demands that we reconsider our pricing. Faced with similar sales drops, private industry would certainly look at what they charge for their products. Reducing the prices of some, if not all licences, would likely result in increased sales. It is important to note that revenue generated through hunters does not only come from licence sales. Hunters buy gasoline and pay taxes on it. They buy equipment, some of which is very expensive, and pay sales taxes. They stay in hotels, eat in restaurants, have their vehicles repaired at service stations and do many other things that generate revenue for government and help to fuel the economies of many communities throughout B.C. Reducing licence fees might reduce overall revenue derived from licences (it might not even do that), but increasing the number of hunters would certainly increase revenue from their activities. Given that overall annual hunter activity has been declining for 25 years, revenue will certainly also decline if we do not take active steps to avoid it.

RECOMMENDATION:

Reduce the cost of a basic hunting licence and consider other possible cost reductions such as:

- **Combination prices, for example a 20% discount on species licences after the first one is purchased – e.g. a hunter pays full price for a moose licence and then receives a 20% discount on a mule deer licence and a black bear licence**
- **“Early-bird” sale – sell licences at a lower price prior to July 1**
- **Sell a basic hunting licence and an annual freshwater fishing licence together at a price lower than the price of buying them separately**
- **A new hunter’s first basic hunting licence could be free – this is done in some U.S. jurisdictions**

The marketing survey recommended above could help to determine other attractive pricing options for hunting licences. In fact, the marketing potential presented by an electronic licensing system is probably its most compelling feature.

There are a number of other possible ways to stimulate people to participate in hunting through alterations to licensing:

- *All licence purchasers could be eligible for an annual prize draw. This is done in New Brunswick. Each year, one lucky hunter wins 10 years of free hunting privileges. Alternatively, the prize could be cash or some item a hunter would consider desirable. A special “young hunter” category could be considered with a prize such as an Ipod or some other prize a young person would like.*
- *Offer free hunting days when you can hunt some game without a licence, similar to the free family fishing weekend now offered in B.C. A free hunting weekend might work well for upland game birds. Clearly, some rules concerning firearms competency and safety would have to be established. This is done in some other North American jurisdictions.*
- *Be wary of introducing new licences for things that have not previously required them. In any given case, a new licence may be desirable, but all cases should be carefully scrutinized because additional licences are likely to be barriers to participation.*

The marketing potential of an electronic licensing system cannot be overstated. Due to the dynamic nature of web-based services, an electronic licensing system will never be completed – it will be an on-going task to ensure that it co-evolves with technology. Employing it on a continual basis as a marketing tool should be a primary goal.

RECOMMENDATION:

Hire a full time professional marketer to fully exploit the potential of an electronic licensing system.

Like any other recreational opportunity, hunting can benefit from marketing. In addition to getting the most out of an electronic licensing system, a professional marketer could work at promoting the image of hunting and promoting hunting as a ‘cool’ thing to do. Wildlife managers have traditionally offered hunting opportunities, but have done little

to actively promote them. Marketing skills are not trivial and are outside the expertise of wildlife managers. Optimizing the marketing of hunting requires a trained professional.

3. Hunting Regulations

Hunting regulations may discourage participation in hunting. Complexity of regulations, unavailability of accurate, fine-scale maps and variation in regulations for a given species between regions all conspire against participation. If hunters are fearful of running afoul of the law because of confusion over regulations, they may pass up some hunting opportunities altogether. Indeed, simplification of hunting regulations has been a recurrent request from the B.C. Wildlife Federation and other hunting groups for many years. Paradoxically, many of the regulatory “quirks” currently in place were adopted at the request of hunters. Lobby groups within the hunting community have often pressured regional staff to implement new regulations intended to protect or otherwise regulate some matter of special concern to them. While it is nice to please everybody, in reality, that rarely happens. If we are to increase participation in hunting, then that should be the background against which new restrictions are considered. Special opportunities should only be adopted in ways that will not be detrimental to the overall goal of recruitment and retention.

RECOMMENDATION:

As much as possible, simplify and standardize hunting seasons and regulations throughout the province.

One simple change that would be helpful is to extend all spring black bear seasons to the end of June. In many areas, roads are still blocked by snow until June, so a closing date of June 30 would provide more opportunity to hunters.

Black bears are considered an under-utilized game species. Furthermore, in many communities, they are a problem that must be dealt with at government expense. Increasing hunting opportunities will allow hunters to lessen the number of problem animals, which will save taxpayer’s money. At present, it is a legal requirement to remove the edible portions of a black bear taken while hunting. This was not always the case. In the 1980s and earlier, hunters were allowed to shoot black bears just for the hides. For ethical reasons, this was changed in 1991. However, given the cost of dealing with problem bears, it may be appropriate to reconsider this requirement. Many hunters have stated the view that they do not want the meat, they only want the hide and the current regulation discourages them from hunting black bears. Changing this regulation may be appropriate, but it should be given careful consideration, as it could be seen in a very negative light.

RECOMMENDATION:

Consider developing variable harvest density strategies for black bears based on proximity to towns and cities.

In areas where black bears are a serious problem, it may be desirable to try to exclude them altogether. Allowing hunters to take black bears within such areas without a species licence or through some other liberal management means could be considered. This would allow increased hunting opportunity while saving tax dollars spent on problem animals. It might be feasible to allow the hunting of black bears in these “exclusion zones” without the requirement of meat removal while retaining the regulation under other circumstances.

Maps of importance to hunters appear throughout both the Hunting and Trapping Regulations Synopsis and the Limited Entry Hunting Regulations Synopsis. These maps show regional boundaries, management unit boundaries, the boundaries of special zones and many other features pertinent to compliance with regulations. In most cases, these maps are small, the resolution and detail is poor, access information is limited and the boundaries are not clear. Well intentioned hunters, wishing to comply with regulations regularly request maps with greater detail but we cannot accommodate them because in most cases, nothing better exists. At the very least, this is a poor and frustrating level of service and at worst, it may discourage hunter participation.

RECOMMENDATION:

Develop an on-line mapping tool that will allow hunters to easily download high quality maps pertinent to regulations and access.

Limited Entry hunting is now widespread, controlling many of the best opportunities for most big game species. When it was originally introduced, Limited Entry was a strategy to allow hunting to continue in cases where it had to be closely controlled to avoid over-harvest. Throughout the years, Limited Entry has been applied more and more broadly. Regional staff often lack the resources to properly inventory their game populations and therefore turn to Limited Entry as a tool to ensure that hunting pressure does not exceed what can be sustained. This is a laudable intention, but it may be that wildlife managers are being excessively conservative in some cases. Some Limited Entry hunts attract very few applicants year after year and changing them to general open seasons should be considered.

RECOMMENDATION:

Form a Limited Entry Review Committee to review Limited Entry hunts on a regular basis and determine whether or not keeping them as Limited Entry hunts is justified.

Limited Entry is a useful and valuable tool, but it also limits hunting opportunity and should only be used when truly needed. Hunting is primarily a social activity, usually undertaken by small groups of people with a long history of hunting together. Under Limited Entry conditions, it is common for one or two members of such a group to be drawn while other members are not. This situation fragments the social fabric of hunting and is extremely detrimental to participation. One possible way to at least partially solve this problem would be to allow the sharing of Limited Entry hunts. A person drawn for a Limited Entry hunt could name a partner with whom they wish to share the opportunity. This would allow two people to legally hunt together and take one animal, thus preserving the social context of hunting. This approach is used in some other North American jurisdictions and seems to work well. Manitoba uses it for elk and moose, so if British Columbia were to adopt the idea, we would have an existing Canadian model to work from.

RECOMMENDATION:

Allow Limited Entry hunting authorizations to be shared with a partner chosen by the individual that was drawn.

Some Limited Entry hunting opportunities have very short seasons with no alternative options. For example, some antlerless moose seasons are only 10 days long with no

alternatives at other times. There is no obvious good reason for this. If wildlife managers are prepared to allow the harvest of a given number of animals, what difference does it make when they are taken? Very short seasons restrict opportunity because they may be offered at a time when some hunters cannot take advantage of them.

RECOMMENDATION:

Make Limited Entry hunting seasons at least a month long in cases where there are no alternative opportunities.

There is a downside to this recommendation. If a season is longer, the harvest level will probably be higher, so fewer authorizations can be offered. This creates a trade-off situation between the number of people drawn and the quality and timeliness of the hunting experience offered. This recommendation is a good example of an issue that could be explored by the Limited Entry Review Committee suggested above.

Along many highways, there is a 400 metre area closed to hunting on either side of the road. This is probably justifiable for most hunting, but not in the case of bow hunting.

RECOMMENDATION:

In the case of bow hunters, reduce the closed area to 100 metres on either side of these highways.

This recommendation would maintain the safety aspect that is the intent of the regulation while opening a unique opportunity for bow hunters. The 100-metre closed area would keep the killing of game away from the immediate sight of passers by.

4. Optimize Hunting Opportunity and Make Hunting More Fun

In order to be attractive, especially to young people, hunting must be fun. Older hunters may have other motivations such as tradition, hunting for food, stress relief, etc., but fun and success are vital motivators for young hunters. Early success is a major factor in “hooking” people, especially the young, on hunting. The following recommendations address this goal.

In many regions, deer populations are in good condition and does are especially abundant. Antlerless hunts for mule deer and white-tailed deer for hunters under the age of 19 and hunters participating in their first season should be considered wherever possible. This is already being done to some degree, but there is room for improvement. If at all possible, these hunts should be general open seasons rather than Limited Entry seasons. Furthermore, they should be scheduled at a time when success is likely, include times when young people can get away from school (early September or Thanksgiving weekend, for example) and coincide with a general open season that provides a hunting opportunity for their guardian as well. A general open season during the rut is ideal. If there are over-harvest concerns, this can be dealt with by adjusting the duration of the season.

RECOMMENDATION:

Wherever possible, provide general open seasons for mule deer and white-tailed deer does for hunters under the age of 19 and hunters participating in their first season.

Hunting opportunities such as this will allow better chances for early success and increased sightings of potential game, both of which will make hunting more exciting and enjoyable. Additionally, these opportunities will foster the social bonds of

hunting between young/new hunters and their mentors. Valuable field experience, acquisition of hunting skills, direct instruction from an experienced adult and the social aspects of hunting and hunter development are benefits that would stem from this recommendation.

In general, wildlife managers should adopt a quantity over quality philosophy for deer, moose and elk. Hunting success is strongly related to continued participation, and there are far more hunters that are happy to shoot an average animal than there are hunters whose specific purpose is to bag a trophy. Really skilled hunters are capable of finding impressive animals if they put their minds to it, but hunters of lesser skill find their chances for success greatly limited by trophy management practices. Furthermore, managing for animals with impressive antlers pushes opportunity away from general open seasons and towards Limited Entry hunting, restricting participation even further.

RECOMMENDATION:

In general, the Fish and Wildlife Branch should pursue a quantity over quality direction in its management of deer, moose and elk.

Providing hunting opportunities close to where people live will encourage participation, especially among young and elderly hunters. This is particularly true of upland game bird hunting and small game hunting. Generally, upland game bird and small game hunting requires little preparation or expenditure, so hunting close to home can be done on a whim as allowed by weather, leisure time or any other factor. Some types of habitat, such as that favoured by blue grouse could be enhanced through minor manipulations such as small scale burns. Such a strategy might be compatible with land management practices intended to reduce the amount of “fuel” for potential forest fires in close proximity to inhabited areas.

RECOMMENDATION:

Look for ways to enhance hunting opportunities close to communities, especially for upland game birds and small game.

Numerous American studies have stressed the importance of bird hunting and small game hunting to hunter recruitment and retention⁹. In general, greater management emphasis should be placed on bird hunting. Upland game birds are probably an underutilized resource. Waterfowl hunting is another area with growth potential. The Waterfowl Heritage Days program has been a good start and its momentum should be used to further promote waterfowl hunting. Canada geese are particularly abundant, to the point of being pests in many areas, and additional hunting opportunities should be considered. Programs supporting private land hunting, especially linked to farming, should be pursued.

RECOMMENDATION:

Promote goose hunting, especially in areas where goose populations are causing problems.

Development of small game opportunities can in some cases be pursued with the intent of reducing crop or livestock damage. In many farm or urban areas, some animals cause problems that may be partially solvable through hunting. For example, coyotes

⁹ Two such references are: ‘New Hampshire Lapsed Hunter Survey’, Responsive Management, 2004 and ‘Factors Related To Hunting Participation In Pennsylvania’, Responsive Management, 2004

in the Fraser Valley are numerous and are an ongoing problem not only to farmers, but actually within greater Vancouver itself. Clearly, hunting within heavily populated urban centers is generally untenable, but increasing hunting pressure on problem animals immediately outside urban areas and in farmland will help to reduce the problem. Hunting on private land to reduce crop damage is already going on in B.C., even for big game.

RECOMMENDATION:

Look to hunting as a solution to problem wildlife and wildlife related agricultural problems.

This recommendation has a lot of potential latitude and could be applied to many species and situations. Agricultural problems can be used to justify hunting opportunities in areas where they might otherwise not be considered. Hunting could be used to reduce bird and animal problems around airports, reduce introduced species such as starlings or grey squirrels, and even to lower safety concerns with black bears.

RECOMMENDATION:

Allow hunting of Schedule C animals without a basic hunting licence.

Hunting of these species could be justified via agricultural management concerns. Such opportunities would allow young and novice hunters some readily available field experience at minimal expense. In order to satisfy safety requirements, hunter number regulations and the supervision of young or novice hunters would still have to be observed.

The decline of black-tailed deer on Vancouver Island has been a serious blow to hunter recruitment and retention. In the 1970s, the annual black-tailed deer harvest on Vancouver Island exceeded 10,000. By 2004, the annual harvest had dropped to just over 1,700. There are many factors that contributed to this collapse, some of which are beyond control. Regional staff believe that the deer populations are recovering, but the recovery is modest and slow. Declining deer populations are not the only reason for the drop in harvest. Another significant factor is a lack of access. Many roads, especially on the southern part of Vancouver Island are gated and locked. Even if these areas held good deer populations, hunters would not be able to get to them. Vancouver Island is second only to the Lower Mainland as a major human population center, and good local deer hunting opportunities allowed a lot of people to participate and stimulated recruitment. Recovery of Vancouver Island black-tailed deer populations and the associated hunting opportunities would help greatly with hunter recruitment and retention.

RECOMMENDATION:

Make the recovery of Vancouver Island black-tailed deer populations and the associated hunting opportunities a top Fish and Wildlife Branch priority.

Vancouver Island, more than any other area, presents an opportunity for good, affordable deer hunting in close proximity to large urban areas. Regional staff are doing their best, but making this goal a major initiative, with specially allocated funding would greatly accelerate the process. The more time goes by with poor hunting opportunities, the more people will give up hunting. This not only goes against retention, but it also reduces the number of mentors that could be involved in the recruitment of new hunters. The timely recovery of this unique hunting opportunity, so close to so many potential hunters, should be a major goal.

Access to hunting areas is a problem throughout many parts of British Columbia. Deactivated roads, active logging, liability and other issues all conspire to limit hunting access. In many cases, there is little or nothing that the Fish and Wildlife Branch can do to change this, but information can be made available. Access information can be made available in regulations synopses and on the Branch website.

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide access information in regulations synopses and on the Branch web site. Contact information for Ministry of Forests district offices and logging companies should be provided. Link this information to the on-line mapping tool mentioned earlier in this document.

Access problems especially frustrate hunters after lengthy waits for Limited Entry Hunting opportunities. A hunter that is finally drawn after years of waiting may be very angry or even feel betrayed if access is severely limited without prior warning.

5. Provide Hunting Advice

Earlier in this document the provision of on-line mapping was recommended. Properly done, on-line maps and cleverly linked information can be a powerful tool for promoting hunting. Many useful features and types of information can be linked to these maps, including:

- *Management unit boundaries and Limited Entry hunt boundaries*
- *Hunting season dates and associated regulations by species*
- *Access information*
- *Harvest and hunter success information*
- *Information on private land hunting*
- *Links to hunter oriented services such as Compulsory Inspectors, butchers and taxidermists*
- *Fishing information*
- *Camping information*

RECOMMENDATION:

Ensure that links to useful hunting information are included in any on-line mapping tool that is developed for hunters.

Some hunters lack the skills necessary to pursue some or all game species. During the past few decades, white-tailed deer have increased both their numbers and their range within British Columbia and are now being hunted in areas such as the Cariboo, where local hunters have little familiarity with them. Hunters schooled on mule deer hunting techniques may have difficulty adjusting to the new opportunities presented by white-tails. Readily available information on the behaviour of white-tailed deer and techniques for hunting them would be helpful to some hunters. Unquestionably, the best way to learn such techniques would be through practical experience in the company of another hunter familiar with the game species in question, but this option may not always be available. Once again, this information can be provided over the internet and linked to on-line mapping, hunter education and the Fish and Wildlife Branch website.

Many Fish and Wildlife Branch staff are accomplished hunters. This is a pool of knowledge that should be utilized for the promotion of hunting. Branch staff should be encouraged to attend outdoor shows and other public events and present workshops on hunting techniques. This would have the added benefit of showing clients that our staff are not just bureaucrats, but hunters too, just like them.

RECOMMENDATION:

Encourage Branch staff that are knowledgeable hunters to present hunting workshops and training sessions.

Mentorship is critical to the acquisition of hunting skills and the socialization process involved in becoming a hunter. Development of mentorship programs of this nature is beyond the delivery capability of government and must be undertaken by NGO's. Several BC Wildlife Federation member clubs, most notably the Chilliwack Fish and Game Protective Association, have developed mentoring programs for young people. They are in the process of putting the "formula" of their program on DVDs so they can share their methods with other clubs. Most BC Wildlife Federation clubs provide the "Becoming an Outdoors Woman" program. Both of these initiatives are big positive steps in hunter recruitment and should be encouraged and assisted by ministry personnel in any way possible.

RECOMMENDATION:

Fish and Wildlife Branch staff should constantly bring up the subject of mentoring programs with BC Wildlife Federation members and encourage them to develop and share such programs among their member clubs. Keeping the subject in focus will help to maintain momentum and produce results. Encourage continuation and expansion of the "Becoming an Outdoors Woman" program.

A hunting simulator was demonstrated at the BC Wildlife Federation's 2006 annual convention in Penticton. This simulator consisted of a large TV screen driven by a computer and linked to an electronic "rifle" that looked like a real rifle and could be aimed at the screen. The "hunter" holding the "rifle" was presented with a huge variety of hunting opportunities and field conditions and coached by the operator of the system. In addition to presenting animals in various situations, the system also provided feedback on when a well-placed shot was possible and safety considerations. This simulator was extremely popular, with people of both genders and all ages lining up to try it.

Simulators are an excellent tool for introducing people to hunting in a comfortable, non-threatening manner. They allow exposure to people who might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience hunting in any way. Additionally, they help to dispel negative stereotypes by showcasing the concern hunters have with safety, ethics and humane kills.

RECOMMENDATION:

Buy several more simulators and provide them to the BC Wildlife Federation for the purpose of promoting hunting.

All means of exposing people to hunting in a positive light should be explored, but it is unlikely that any introductory method will be developed that will be better than simply going hunting with a seasoned hunter. Research shows that the vast majority of hunters

were introduced to the activity by a close relative, usually a father, uncle or grandfather. It is vital that experienced hunters take the time to introduce others to hunting. The Fish and Wildlife Branch and the BC Wildlife Federation should do everything possible to encourage experienced hunters to take their children, their children's friends, their spouses and their friends hunting. Articles encouraging this can be printed in the regulations and outdoors magazines. The message can be propagated through hunting clubs and it is even possible that incentives could be developed. For example, an experienced hunter could "sponsor" a new hunter and be given a discount on their hunting licence.

RECOMMENDATION:

Encourage established hunters to introduce others to hunting. Explore options for providing incentives.

6. Other Means of Promoting Hunting

The potential of e-licensing as a marketing tool and the hiring of a professional marketer were discussed earlier in this document. A number of other marketing and public relations opportunities should be pursued, including:

- *Actively promoting hunting. Brochures, advertisements, radio, internet, television and all other means of communication should be considered.*
- *Wild game is a healthy, organic, naturally renewable source of nutrition and should be promoted as such. Possible marketing avenues include health food stores, vitamin shops, gymnasiums, physicians, dieticians and any other health enterprise. A wide variety of literature caters to this area, some of which might be appropriate for advertisements.*
- *Conduct a marketing campaign to expose hunters as pro-conservation. Tell the story of hunting as a force for conservation and the development of the North American Wildlife Management Model.*
- *Develop a catch phrase like the Freshwater Fisheries Society has done to promote fishing. They use "Go Fish BC". We might try "Go Hunt BC" or "Hunting – give it a shot!"*
- *Hunters are potentially a skilled volunteer labour force who provide their own time and equipment. This can be promoted as a solution to agricultural problems, an aid in combating poaching, pollution and other environmental crimes and a source of assistance with many other problems.*
- *Promote the ethical side of hunting. Show hunters in a light that underscores their concern for their environment and their willingness to comply with hunting regulations.*
- *Involve Tourism BC. Not long ago, the phrase "Super Natural BC" was being promoted. A similar promotion for hunting could be pursued.*

One area that should be explored is a possible link with First Nations. While they too are resident hunters, they do not have to buy licences and thus there is no easy way to determine the level of their hunting activity. Their hunting activity may or may not be declining. Furthermore, they have broader hunting rights than other residents and generally do not report their activity. For these reasons, the suggestions in this document are less relevant to them. However, since hunting is a common interest, it might provide a "connection point" with First Nations. Some Native elders are interested in promoting an interest among their youth in their traditional cultural activities. This may offer an opportunity for partnership that should be explored.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approach First Nations leaders and attempt to develop a partnership to promote hunting.

A large amount of research has been done throughout North America on the phenomena of declining hunter activity. Surveys, focus groups, and other means have been used to assess the underlying causes. Journalists have written articles and books, and many newspaper columns have addressed the issue. So much has been covered, that it is unlikely that a major underlying cause is unknown.

Despite the fact that the causes are probably all known, a properly designed statistically valid survey should be conducted in B.C. The purpose of such a survey would not so much be to find new causes (although that could happen), but rather to rank their importance and to reveal regional differences. The main barriers and dissatisfaction factors related to hunting may very well differ from area to area. It is likely that the prime concerns in the Lower Mainland would be very different from the prime concerns in Smithers or Fort St. John. Regional breakdowns would help to shed some light on cultural differences within B.C. and strategies that might reach out to groups that do not have hunting as part of their culture. A survey of this nature should be contracted to a professional surveying company for credibility reasons.

RECOMMENDATION:

Hire a professional surveying company to conduct a survey of B.C. residents to determine the specific factors important to hunter recruitment and retention in British Columbia. This survey should be designed to reveal regional differences.

Throughout North America, research has consistently revealed that apart from First Nations, hunting is very predominantly a Caucasian activity. If hunting is to survive and an appreciation of wildlife and the natural world is to have a future in B.C., it is imperative that other cultures be introduced to hunting and other outdoor activities. The sooner this goal is pursued, the better. Earlier in this document it was recommended that a broader version of the C.O.R.E. course should be developed and made available through the school system. This would be a good first move in reaching out to other cultures, but a lot more needs to be done.

RECOMMENDATION:

Develop a task force devoted to raising awareness of B.C.'s environmental heritage among all citizens, but with a particular focus on residents of non-European descent.

British Columbia is lucky to still be in a position to maintain its natural wonders into the future; however, this will only happen if our citizens want it to. Spreading an appreciation among our citizens of the natural splendour of our province is critical to the long-term environmental health of B.C. Hunting is one of the channels through which this important message can be widely spread.



THE BIG SIX

All of the recommendations in this document are worthy of serious consideration but some will probably provide bigger returns than others. Without intending to diminish the value of any of the ideas presented above, the following six recommendations are considered particularly important.

1. RECOMMENDATION:

Seek a reciprocal agreement on firearms training with the federal government. If necessary, bolster the firearms section of the C.O.R.E. course to make it equivalent to federal training. Completion of C.O.R.E. should qualify hunters for a federal Possession and Acquisition Licence.

Without question, the necessity of completing two courses (one of which is largely redundant) in order to become a hunter is one of the biggest barriers to recruitment.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

Extend the time range of the junior hunting licence from 10 years of age to less than 19 years of age. Junior licence holders would still have to be directly supervised by a licenced adult. Furthermore, give serious consideration to allowing them their own bag limit of one deer and their own bag limit of upland game birds and small game.

Allowing young people to develop a feel for the experience of hunting and begin the socialization process of becoming a hunter is vital to recruitment. This recommendation will allow teenagers more flexible options to experience hunting before committing to formal hunter training.

3. RECOMMENDATION:

Develop a new “test-drive” licence, similar to the junior licence proposed above for new hunters 19 years of age or older. This licence could be time-limited to one season, the prospective hunter would not have to pass C.O.R.E. and the prospective hunter would have to be directly supervised by a licensed adult.

As with the recruitment of young people, it is important that people of all ages have an opportunity to “feel out” the experience of hunting before having to commit a lot of time and money to formal hunter training.

4. RECOMMENDATION:

Develop and implement an electronic licensing system as soon as possible. This system should allow the purchase of licences through vendors, via the internet and over the phone.

An electronic licensing system will allow much more convenient access to licences, timely availability of licence information and most importantly, the opportunity to offer more enticing hunting opportunities, licence options and pricing.

5. RECOMMENDATION:

Conduct a marketing survey to determine new types of hunting licences that would be of interest to hunters.

Insightful marketing information and planning is pivotal to optimally exploiting the opportunities that will be opened up by electronic licensing. Additionally, a professional marketer should be hired to conduct such surveys, explore other marketing opportunities and promote hunting as a desirable thing to do.

6. RECOMMENDATION:

Wherever possible, provide general open seasons for mule deer and white-tailed deer does for hunters under the age of 19 and hunters participating in their first season.

Retention of new hunters is considerably strengthened by early success. In many areas, there is an abundance of does that can be managed with this goal in mind.



CONCLUSION

While certain inalterable factors have conspired against hunting over the past three decades, there is a great deal that can be done to bolster the activity. Approximately 385,000 resident hunter number cards have been issued since their inception in 1982. Some of these card holders have left the province or are deceased or infirm now, but the majority are not. Since only about 80,000 – 85,000 hunters are active in any given year, there are approximately 150,000 – 200,000 additional hunter number holders that are potentially interested in hunting. Imaginative approaches to providing hunting opportunities may lure some of them back to activity.

Recruitment can be enhanced by removing barriers, marketing hunting as an attractive activity and motivating established hunters to mentor new ones. Attracting inactive hunters back to hunting will help with recruitment because it will provide more potential mentors and rekindle enthusiasm. Hunters have always been at the forefront of those interested in and concerned with the health of our environment and wildlife populations. A healthy, vibrant hunting community will be a significant factor in ensuring the survival of our wildlife heritage for generations to come.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This strategy is based on the ideas and contributions of many people. The author would like to thank the following contributors.

The Hunter Recruitment and Retention Advisory Group:

Kim Brunt

Wilf Pfleiderer

John Elliott

Darryl Reynolds

Jack Evans

Tara Szkorupa

Doug Heard

Irene Teske

Les Husband

Mark Williams

Doug Jury

Additional individuals and groups that provided ideas and advice:

Paul Adams

John Metcalfe

Gary Biggar

Jeff Morgan

Bob Boswell

Rick Morley

Geoff Chislett

Bob Morris

Bob Clark

Garth Mowat

Darlene Clark

Dave Narver

Laura Darling

Bill Otway

Chris Dodd

Kent Petovello

Don Doyle

Ralph Ritcey

Dale Drown

Don Robinson

Dave Dunbar

Greg Sawchuck

Ross Everatt

Geoff Swannell

Dylan Eyers

Tony Toth

Valerius Geist

Don Trethewey

Paul Haley

Bill Warkentin

Jeff Hanratty

Glen Watts

Rick Hildebrand

Rod Wiebe

John Holdstock

Guy Woods

Bob Hooton

Jesse Zeman

Trevor Jeanes

Denis Zentner

Dave Low

The BC Wildlife Federation

Hugh Markides

Tanya Kleywegt and the BCWF Youth Delegates and numerous hunters that have provided comments and observations

Particular thanks is extended to Tom Ethier, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Branch, Al Martin, Executive Director for Fish and Wildlife Branch and Ecosystems Branch, Nancy Wilkin, Assistant Deputy Minister of Environment, Resource Stewardship Division and the Honourable Barry Penner, Minister of Environment, for having the vision and will to promote this strategy.

John P. Thornton

April 16, 2007

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every sale, purchase, and payment must be properly documented to ensure the integrity of the financial statements. This includes keeping receipts, invoices, and bank statements in a secure and organized manner.

Next, the document outlines the process of reconciling the company's books with the bank statements. This involves comparing the company's records of deposits and withdrawals with the bank's records to identify any discrepancies. Any differences should be investigated and resolved promptly to avoid errors in the financial reporting.

The document also covers the preparation of the income statement and balance sheet. It provides a step-by-step guide on how to calculate net income, gross profit, and other key financial metrics. It also explains how to determine the company's assets, liabilities, and equity at the end of the reporting period.

Finally, the document discusses the importance of reviewing the financial statements and providing a clear explanation of the results to the management and stakeholders. It stresses that transparency and accuracy are essential for building trust and making informed business decisions.



Ministry of
Environment