MT Bowhunters December Meeting

Quick recap

The board meeting began with introductions and technical difficulties before addressing membership updates and financial reviews, including discussion of lapsed memberships and the future of the team camp program. The group reviewed event planning and budgeting for various activities including the Bridger Bowman shoot and youth programs, while also discussing the creation of a 501c3 foundation for disabled hunters. The conversation ended with discussions about organizational matters including board positions, land lease concerns, and convention planning, along with updates from various regions regarding hunting regulations and upcoming events.

Next steps

- Bethany: Send email with all contact information to entire board
- Ken: Follow up with Bill about Bridger Bowman naming rights and lifetime membership arrangements
- Ken: Contact Jack Racicot to continue crossbow discussion and offer draw lock alternatives
- Ken: Check with Billings Hotel about changing convention dates from Easter weekend and communicate final dates to board by Monday/Tuesday
- Bethany: Get insurance policy reinstated before Bridger shoot and other events
- Stephanie: Research creating 501c3 Montana Bowhunters Foundation organization
- Liberty: Create new website section for Bridger shoot with date and historical information
- Liberty: Update website with new convention information when received
- Liberty: Update website with summer shoots information after first of year
- Brian: Confirm May 29th-30th dates with Morton property owners for Bridger shoot
- Brian: Continue reaching out to bow makers for convention donations
- Kevin: Get cost details from Bill about Copper King venue for future conventions
- Kevin: Set up WhatsApp group for MBA trivia questions for convention
- Bethany: Provide final budget with discussed items for April meeting
- Bethany: Send profit/loss data and budget details to board via email

- Marlon: Schedule meeting with Francis Reishus about combined hunter/bowhunter education program after holidays
- Marlon: Contact PLWA, Montana Wildlife Federation, and Backcountry Hunters about French Basin state lands issue
- Marlon: Follow up on teen camp equipment and funds status
- All Region Reps: Reach out to lapsed members in their regions for renewals
- All Region Reps: Plan regional games for convention
- All Board Members: Submit magazine articles and photos to Julie by January 15th deadline
- All Board Members: Get convention donation items to organizing committee as soon as possible

Summary

Meeting Delays and Technical Challenges

The meeting officially started with plans to discuss board introductions and updates.

Membership Retention and Program Review

The board meeting covered introductions of all regional representatives and discussed the previous meeting's minutes, which were largely resolved. Mandy and Bethany reviewed the profit and loss statement from the last fiscal year, noting that membership numbers spike around conventions but decline afterward. The board discussed the need to identify and reactivate lapsed memberships, with Ken emphasizing that all directors, not just the membership committee, should be involved in this effort. The team camp's future was questioned due to Jackie's departure from the board, with Marlon reporting no current plans or interest in continuing the program. The board agreed to gather more information on the team camp's financial status and potential alternatives before the next meeting.

Budget Planning for Upcoming Events

The group discussed budgeting and planning for upcoming events, including teen camp and the Bridger Bowman shoot. They agreed to allocate $3,000 for the Bridger Bowman shoot and decided to potentially change the name to include the Montana Bowhunter Association. Liberty was tasked with updating the website and advertising for the shoot, which is scheduled for the last weekend in May. The group also discussed social media advertising and digital magazine expenses, with Liberty mentioning a $252 annual cost for the digital magazine. Marlon inquired about budgeting for bows and draw locks, but did not have specific numbers from the previous year. The conversation concluded with a brief discussion about potentially creating a new 501c3 organization to better manage funds.

Montana Bowhunters Foundation Planning Meeting

The board discussed creating a 501c3 foundation under the Montana Bowhunters Association to support archery hunting for disabled individuals, with Liberty making a motion that was approved by the group. They reviewed plans for the upcoming Bridger shoot, confirming it would be held May 29-30, and discussed website updates needed to better promote the event. The board also addressed convention planning for 2026 in Billings, with Brian confirmed as keynote speaker.

Youth Program Budget and Awards

> The board discussed budgeting for youth program donations, agreeing to set aside $5,000 with a maximum of $500 per organization per year to ensure funds are spread across regions and prevent excessive requests. They decided against creating a new award specifically for traditional female bowhunters, citing concerns about award dilution and insufficient nominations for existing awards. The board also reviewed a proposal from Jack Racicot regarding crossbow access for disabled hunters, with Ken and Jerry sharing that while Jack's concerns about draw systems were valid, they were working to guide him toward alternative solutions like building a boat for hunting rather than pursuing legislative changes.

Disabled Hunter Access Discussion

The group discussed a request from Jack Racicot, a disabled hunter from Whitehall, who is seeking hunting opportunities and potentially pushing for crossbow access during archery season. While the group agreed that disabled hunters should have access to hunting areas, they suspected Jack's true goal was to expand crossbow usage, which everyone viewed as a slippery slope. The group explored alternative solutions like creating designated hunting areas for disabled hunters, but agreed that Jack's primary motivation appeared to be advocating for crossbow access, which they expected would be pursued through legislative channels regardless of their response.

Board Positions and Land Leasing

The group discussed several organizational matters, including the need to fill key board positions following the departures of Jerry and Mandy, with Stephanie explaining that officer positions require prior board experience and emphasizing the importance of the second vice president role in overseeing conventions and managing out-of-state members. Marlon raised concerns about a potential commercial lease of state trust land in the French Basin, which could set a precedent for converting public land to private ownership, and reported that the DNRC is monitoring the situation but no formal paperwork has been filed yet.

Lease and Event Planning Discussion

Marlon discussed a potential commercial lease for a property that would require approval from DNRC, and suggested reaching out to groups like Public Land Water Access for support. He also proposed organizing an MBA Old Timers Reunion picnic and barbecue at Hellgate Campground, but Ken and others raised concerns about insurance coverage for the event since it would be private rather than sanctioned. The group acknowledged that their current insurance policy had lapsed in June 2025, and they would need to secure new coverage before events like the Bridger Bowman shoot and Magruder camp.

Acquisition and Convention Planning

The group discussed the potential acquisition of a Laporte aerial disc launcher for use at shooting events, with Brian proposing it as a money-making activity and Marlon noting the cost of around $2,500. They also discussed plans for the upcoming MBA convention, including bringing back regional games and potentially adding axe throwing and other activities. Kevin announced plans for an MBA/Pope and Young trivia night during the convention. Regional updates were briefly shared, with Mike reporting no attendance at his recent meeting in Region 1, and Marlon and Kevin mentioning their meetings in Region 4.

Regional Hunting Regulations and Updates

The meeting covered updates from various regions, with Region 5 having the most significant discussion, including concerns about crossbow issues and tag allocations. Stephanie provided a detailed summary of recent changes to hunting regulations, including new bear management systems, extended mountain lion seasons, and adjustments to various game quotas and boundaries. The commission also decided to reduce the sale of orphan deer tags to 50% and discussed potential resident license increases to offset non-resident pressure. The group emphasized the importance of meeting deadlines for the upcoming magazine and encouraged members to contribute content and photos.

Unit 417 and Education Challenges

The committee discussed concerns about Unit 417's low draw odds and outfitter influence, where MBA proposed rebundling units to increase archery tags but received negative feedback. Marlon reported challenges with combining Hunter and Bowhunter education classes, facing resistance from Francis Reishus who wants to handle the curriculum independently. The group also discussed convention dates, with concerns about Easter weekend timing, and Ken mentioned he would check on alternative dates. Kevin shared information about Copper King venue costs in Butte, which were more reasonable than other options.