

West Knoydart Deer Management Group

Minutes of meeting held at Kilchoan Barn Monday 10th June 2013, 11.30am

Present: Iain Biggart, Jim brown, Davie Newton, Lester Standen, Angela Williams, Niel Taylor, Lewis Pate, Cathy Mayne, Richard Martin, Paddy Martin, Grant Holroyd, Lorna Schofield

1. **Apologies:**, Iain Wilson, Graeme Taylor, Eric Delwart, Rick Rhode

2. **Minutes of the last meeting** held on 5th March were agreed.

3. Review of action points

Develop count and cull database	DN	Ongoing
Look to use SNH Deer-line website for making cull returns and retrieving cull data.	All	Done
Record grid-refs in future cull records, starting next season.	JB/IB/IW/LS	To Implement
Make alterations to land management objectives spreadsheet, then circulate.	JB	Done
Allocate priority scores to land management objectives spreadsheet.	All	By end of June
Copy in neighbours to minutes, agendas, DMP planning, etc.	JB/DN	Ongoing
Habitat Monitoring Training.	GT/LS	TM & IB attended SNH
Set meeting dates for the year in advance.	All	To be done
Coordinate ownership boundary map for the group	LS/JB	Done
Provide shape files of ownership boundaries	GT	Done
Provide examples of DMG mapping from the Cairngorms	GT	To be done
Invite all interested parties to be members	JB/DN	Done

JB reported positive responses to invitations of membership had been received from Richard and Paddy Martin (Torr na h'Inse), Jamie Lindsay (Glaschoille), John and Nicky Abraham (Croulin), Peter Carr (Cnoc Gorm), Andy Tibbetts (Doune), Nigel Boston (Aior) and Berny Evely (Rheigh Dharrach). Most would probably not however be able to attend many meetings. Robert Gordon (Barisdale) had replied that they would remain as members of KDMG, but would stay in touch and collaborate fully with WKDMG.

4. Habitat Monitoring Progress

JB reported that KF had carried on with the existing circular tree regeneration plots, but not yet set up new heath and bog surveys. LP will be coordinating KF monitoring and hoped to carry out in July. IB is going to carry on with surveys started last year. LS has already carried out JMT monitoring with some interesting results. There had been up to 50% die back of heather and blaeberry in some areas, presumably due to the winter of prolonged cold easterlies affecting exposed heath protruding above snow cover. Browsing of tree seedling leaders was significantly reduced in some areas, sometimes even where surrounding heath species were still being targeted.

5. Natural Mortalities

IB reported that a number of mortalities had been reported by walkers, especially around the Mam Barisdale and Coire Dubh areas (?), totalling 10 beasts. LS had found 1 near the Sgamadail march burn, and JB reported 5 stags found on KF ground. KF will look to gather further data through reporting from members and visitors.

6. Final 2012/13 cull totals

Total culls to the end of March were confirmed. See appended spreadsheet.

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7. 2013/14 Cull Proposals

Member	Stags	Hinds
Knoydart Foundation	90	50 + calves
John Muir Trust	35 to 50	45 to 60
Inverguseran Farm	8?	6?
Kilchoan Estate	30 to 32	150 + Calves(75?) + 6
Total	Up to 180	Up to 272 + Calves

JB said that 8 had already been culled within the new Airor woodland, so only 12 more to get there + 10 for Fank Burn + 60 for the annual cull. LS thought that JMT might cull about 12 stags in season, and that the total would depend on neighbouring culls. IB said they still intended to reduce the hind population to about 500, but thought that only a small compensatory cull of about 6 additional hinds would be needed as a result of the proposed Torr Cuillin(?) woodland. NT said culling would be ongoing as necessary within the Sgamadail woodland, and tracking outside the fence would be monitored, so some culling might happen there if necessary to reduce pressure on the fence.

8. Data Recording Progress

Spreadsheet is now coming together, but more to be done.

9. Deer Management Plan development

Objectives Spreadsheet

There was discussion as to whether objectives should relate only to open range. It was highlighted that there are deer interactions between fenced/open areas at the time of fencing, by marauding deer, and again when fences are opened. It was thought that deer management specific objectives should be purely related to open range, but all others should relate to the land ownership/organisation as a whole.

General

There was a general discussion about the relationship between habitat monitoring, and condition and whether this should direct the deer management plan as opposed to setting target deer densities. It was thought by some that getting the community behind the plan might be easier if working towards population goals, as culling purely related to habitat condition might be a more difficult concept for people to grasp. CM said that both should work together as integral targets within the plan. There need to be various targets incorporated, including habitat condition (Favourable/improving/declining unfavourable/etc), habitat Impact (Low/medium/high), deer/other herbivore populations, economic and social. The plan then enables different objectives to collaborate, by overlapping management where possible. It needs to start with a habitat condition baseline data. A high habitat impact might be acceptable for a member with high deer population objectives, as long as this is with regard to neighbouring objectives. This requires understanding and negotiation. 'Best Practice' DMP to be looked at with a view to using as a basis for the group plan.

Next steps are to be objectives scoring done by end of June and habitat monitoring carried out by end of July.

AOB

LS reported that JMT were no longer members of the KDMG.

NT said he would pass on information and invitation of group membership to Doug Hawthorn.

Next Meeting: Monday 5th August, Inverie, 11.15am Next KDMG will be 17th June.

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Action Points

Develop count and cull database	DN
Record grid-refs in future cull records, starting next season.	JB/IB/IW/LS
Allocate priority scores to land management objectives spreadsheet.	All by end June
Set meeting dates for the year in advance.	All
Provide examples of DMG mapping from the Cairngorms	GT
Carry out habitat monitoring by end of July	LS/LP/IB
Natural Mortality recording	LP
Information to new members	JB
Information and invitation of membership to Doug Hawthorn	NT