

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## Chapter 1



## Chapter 1 Program Overview

1. **General.** The mission of the Colorado Division of Wildlife Hunter Outreach Program is to recruit and retain current and future generations of hunters in Colorado by developing a system of programs that implement the Division of Wildlife Strategic Plan, enhances hunter skills and opportunities throughout the state and cultivates an informed consent of hunting by the general public.

2. **Need.** The number of active hunters in the state of Colorado has shown a significant decline since 1996. The number of total hunters in the state has decreased by 38 percent and the number of hunting days in state has decreased by 39 percent. (2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, Colorado, USFWS) This decline is



reflective of the national statistics that indicate per capita number of hunters is declining across the United States. The CDOW receives 67 percent of its financial support from the sale of licenses. A continued decline in license sales will have a negative impact on the Division's ability to fund wildlife

management programs. The good news is the Division has taken steps to reverse the decline in hunters and made a long-term commitment to regaining a stable population of hunters in the state. This approach to hunter retention and recruitment will take financial support from external organizations and a commitment by our many partners to providing an innovative approach to our recruitment plan.

3. **Our Vision.** In 2002, the Colorado Division of Wildlife embraced the future of hunting in Colorado by creating a staff position for the Hunter Outreach Coordinator. This position was tasked to design and support programs that would focus on a statewide set of objectives to improve retention of current hunters and recruit new hunters from all segments of



the population. The results of this program are future based, establishing a foundation for growth and to sustain our hunting population, improving hunter education and behavior and serving as a national model for partnerships with other conservation, corporate and sportsman's organizations. Our approach to providing unique hunting and shooting opportunities to the Colorado public, thereby encouraging them to continue their hunting and shooting interests in the future requires additional funds that are not available through Division funding alone. External partners and a large corps of trained volunteers must support this aggressive objective. The future benefit of meeting our objectives is reflected in increased public participation in hunting and shooting activities and a resulting increase in overall license sales for the state.

4. **Approach.** The statewide design demands a decentralized approach to implementation of the program objectives. Colorado developed the Partners in the Field program to afford a variety of partners with the opportunity to contribute their unique talents to this effort. The Partners in the Field program seeks to maximize the unique contributions of volunteers, landowners, businesses, conservation organizations and communities in a directed effort to support the growth of hunting and shooting sports in Colorado. Through this umbrella program, support of regional and statewide initiatives of our outreach effort is possible. The program has established four areas of concentration: Heritage, Opportunity, Mentorship and Education (HOME). These four areas are linked together as a synergistic effort to accomplish our statewide mission. We will discuss each program area separately.

**Heritage:** The link to our past as Americans has slowly eroded with the change of population centers to a more urban demography. Family units have changed over the past decade to a prevalence of single parent families, dispersal of family groups and less recreational time due to increased income requirements and changes in family priorities. Our focus on our heritage as hunters is meant to remind the Colorado public of her roots and the potential benefits of continuing our hunting heritage for future generations. Through the efforts of the Division Public Affairs section and our other partners, we seek to provide print media to inform the public of the strong ties to hunting and fishing found in many facets of our state history. The Division has developed a one-page essay used in many public venues to capture our focus on the importance of hunting to our state.

**Opportunity:** Colorado has vast resources of public land to support our hunting public. The Division manages over 300 state wildlife areas and trusts as well as state and national forests to afford all of her citizens the opportunity to experience the great outdoors. However, many of our citizens do not come from a hunting background. The novice and youth hunters of the state need a program to provide unique educational opportunities to gain experience and participate in organized hunting programs. As we grow in the future, our objective is to provide a variety of hunting experiences for youth and novice hunters.

**Mentorship:** As we work with private landowners to expand access to land and organizations to maximize the use of private clubs and shooting ranges, we are training a cadre of volunteers to meet the expanding need across the state. Our mentorship program has two distinct facets. First, we train citizen volunteers as certified Huntmasters. Huntmasters attend a formal course of instruction provided by the Division of Wildlife, then upon graduation are charged with planning, coordinating and running youth and novice hunts throughout the state. The Huntmaster teams are responsible for all elements of the hunt from safety, to education, to cultivating participation by landowners in their regional areas.

**Education:** The fourth and final area of the program focus is on education. As a wildlife agency, we believe through a dynamic public education program, we can make positive changes in the public's approach to hunting in our state. Across the state, regional managers are providing educational seminars for hunters and the general public. Our hunter skill seminars provide quality instruction on "how to hunt" a variety of species of game animals across the state. Qualified instructors and state biologists provide hunting seminars on elk, deer, grouse, pheasant and waterfowl to attendees. Our skill clinics are designed to be a hands-on application for the attendees. From youth duck calling clinics to shooting clinics, participants have the opportunity to actively participate in hands on skills under the watchful eye of a qualified instructor. Participants gain skills, confidence and a foundation for future education.



Our wing shooting program is designed to provide the opportunity for interested participants to gain basic shotgunning skills and nurture an interest in the shooting sports. The Division has fielded a shooting trailer to each regional area of the state. The trailer has all of the equipment

necessary to establish and run shooting clinics at state wildlife areas, private land or at volunteer shooting clubs throughout the state.

5. **Women Afield.** The Women Afield program was begun in 2006 and has become a strong outreach effort, as we expand our program to the fastest growing segment of the novice interest population. We provide women with opportunities to hunt big game, upland birds and waterfowl in all areas of the state. Huntmasters serve as guides and hunt organizers in the same manner in which they do for youth hunts. Women Afield is focused on the shooting sports, hunting and fishing activities for women.



6. **Skills Clinics and Seminars.** Growing rapidly to meet the public desire for education in hunting and shooting skills, the CDOW provides clinics and seminars across the state. Skill seminars about elk, waterfowl, upland bird and turkey hunting drew a record number of participants. The seminars are designed to educate the hunter about the specific game species they pursued, by understanding the biology, hunting techniques and specific wildlife regulations governing the management of the species. Several of our seminars, Sheep and Goat and Elk draw over 100 participants per seminar. Our “hands-on” clinics allowed participants to gain experience in shooting, waterfowl calling and turkey hunting skills. Women-only wing shooting clinics and youth waterfowl calling clinics targets the growing interest in hunting and shooting by our nontraditional participants.

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7. **Our commitment:** *We are committed to providing the citizens of Colorado with a dynamic program that meets the needs of our future hunters and helps to preserve our hunting heritage.*

### **Program Imperatives**

Any program, to become successful in the long-term must follow certain imperatives. If we deviate from these essential program elements, we risk losing credibility with the public we serve. The Hunter Outreach Program has five imperatives:

- ◆ Provide a safe, educational and memorable hunting experience for the novice and family
- ◆ Maintain the highest professional and ethical standards in all that we do
- ◆ Project a positive public image of hunters and hunting
- ◆ Teach sound skills, values and responsibilities to all program participants
- ◆ Promote wildlife conservation, management and enhancement through an experiential program

These imperatives are the fundamental considerations for all activities provided by CDOW Huntmasters. To accomplish the goals of the Hunter Outreach Program, all Huntmasters must understand and live these imperatives.

### **Five Factors in Building and Maintaining Interest and Participation in Hunting**

- 1. “Threshold experience” - an upbeat introduction into hunting**
- 2. Access to the resource**
- 3. Access to equipment**
- 4. Access to information / mentors**
- 5. A positive social contact - support from family and peer groups**

## **The Huntmaster and Outreach Volunteer**

The volunteer Huntmaster is the most important element of the Colorado Division of Wildlife Hunter Outreach Program. The quality of the educational experience for each novice hunter depends directly on the skill, dedication and organizational ability of the Huntmaster. The Huntmaster represents the overall strategy and philosophy of the Outreach Program and is critical to the effort to extend our hunting heritage to future generations. The process for becoming a certified Huntmaster begins with meeting the eligibility criteria and completing an application form:

### **1. New Huntmaster Application**

- a. Eligibility
- b. To be eligible to become a Colorado Division of Wildlife Huntmaster, an applicant must meet the following criteria;
  1. Be 25 years of age or older
  2. Have successfully completed a certified Hunter Education course and hold a valid hunter education card.
  3. Be of reasonable good health
  4. Be experienced in the use of firearms, outdoor skills, public speaking and teaching.
  5. Pass a criminal background check. Persons convicted of a felony, domestic abuse or crimes involving children are not eligible for consideration as a Huntmaster.
  6. Certification as a Huntmaster is available without regard to race, sex, creed, national origin or physical disability.
- c. Prior Experience and Training
  - i. Credit for previous experience as a Huntmaster in another state may be considered as a part of certification but the decision remains the sole discretion of the DOW Hunter Outreach Coordinator.
  - ii. Huntmasters who do not participate in an DOW sponsored hunt within two years of training may be required attend

another training course to become recertified as a Huntmaster.

- iii. Once an application has been received at the Division of Wildlife, an applicant will be scheduled to attend a Huntmaster Training Course.
- d. Application Form.
  - i. Complete the application form provided by the DOW and submit it to the address listed on the application.

## **2. Huntmaster Training**

- a. A newly accepted Huntmaster will be scheduled to attend a Huntmaster Training Course and notified of the course dates and location. Every effort is made to host a minimum of three Huntmaster Courses per year in various regions around the state.
- b. The Huntmaster Training course consists of a minimum of two days of resident training for each Huntmaster. The focus of the course is to teach the new Huntmaster the skills to plan, organize and run an Outreach hunt for the Division of Wildlife.
- c. Upon graduation from a Huntmaster Training Course, the graduate is considered an Apprentice Huntmaster. Each Apprentice Huntmaster must successfully complete three evaluated hunts as an apprentice servicing in various positions of responsibility on the hunt.
- d. Upon completion of the evaluated hunts, an apprentice may apply to the Hunter Outreach Coordinator for certification as a Huntmaster.

## **3. Continuing Training**

- a. Workshops will be offered in order to maintain the highest level of professional standards for the Huntmaster program. These workshops will be offered on a rotating basis at locations around the state. All certified Huntmasters will be required to attend at least one workshop every two years to maintain their certification. The workshops are generally three to four hours in length focusing on skills and information updates for the Huntmaster.
- b. Advanced Training. Should the Program Coordinator deem it in the best interest of the program, additional training may be provided to Huntmasters. Information concerning additional training will be provided by the Coordinator.

4. **Standards of Conduct.** As a Huntmaster/Volunteer/Instructor for the Colorado Division of Wildlife Hunter Outreach Program, personal conduct and standards are key to the success of the program. The Code of Conduct below articulates the standards expected from all Huntmasters/Volunteers and Instructors. Persons who violate these standards are subject to dismissal from the Hunter Outreach Program.

- I will conduct myself in a manner that reflects positively upon the Program and the Colorado Division of Wildlife. I will refrain from engaging in conduct or making statements that may negatively impact the public's understanding or acceptance of the Outreach Program.
- I will respect different approaches to mentorship. I will honor the efforts and contributions of others and not misrepresent them as my own.
- I will be responsible for setting clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern any physical contact I may have with the student.
- I will accurately identify my qualifications, expertise and experience.
- I will not knowingly exploit any aspect of the coach/student relationship for my personal, professional or monetary advantage or benefit.
- I will seek to avoid conflicts between my interests and the interests of my students.
- I will dress professionally when participating in a CDOW sponsored event. If provided uniform items, they will be clean, neatly pressed and worn in an appropriate manner.
- I will not wear DOW clothing items to inappropriate business establishments, to include but not limited to bars or adult entertainment establishments.
- I will seek to foster quality family relationships and support of youth and novice interests in outdoor activities when coaching/mentoring students.
- I will not pursue personal relationships with students, outside the planned activity or event, which may be deemed inappropriate by the general public.
- I will not release or maintain personal information concerning students.

- I will at all times strive to recognize personal issues that may impair, conflict or interfere with my performance as a Huntmaster/Instructor/Volunteer or my professional relationships. Whenever the facts or circumstances necessitate, I will promptly take appropriate action, to include suspension or termination of my participation in the Outreach Program activities.
- I will actively participate in all planned activities during a hunt, assist in camp set up and tear down, cooking, general camp support. I will assist the Huntmaster in all areas of the hunt and provide support when needed. I will remain at the hunt for the entire duration of the hunt and depart only when released by the Huntmaster.

## 5. Huntmaster Materials.

- a. The Hunter Outreach Program provides certified Huntmasters with a variety of materials to assist them in their outreach mission. Some materials are issued on a one time or as needed basis, others are available upon request from the Denver office.
  - i. Huntmaster Manual. Issued to each Huntmaster at the Huntmaster Training Course and updated annually with changes
  - ii. Hat and Shirt. A distinctive hat and shirt are issued to each Apprentice Huntmaster upon completion of their evaluated apprentice program.
  - iii. A Huntmaster Coin and Creed are issued to each Huntmaster.
  - iv. Belt Buckle. A Distinctive buckle is issued to each Senior Huntmaster upon acceptance to the Senior level.

## 6. Huntmaster Levels.

- a. The Huntmaster Program has three levels of certification. Each level is key to the success of the program and the experience gained by the Huntmaster.
  - i. **Level 1. Apprentice Huntmaster.** Once a Huntmaster has completed the in class course provided by the Hunter Outreach Program and successfully passed the course, he/she is considered to be an Apprentice Huntmaster. The Apprentice Huntmaster should take every opportunity

during the first year of entry into the program to volunteer to participate in a variety of hunts as a guide, cook, photographer or assistant Huntmaster. This time allows the Apprentice to see how hunts are planned and organized in the field. The Apprentice Huntmaster must complete three hunts in various positions to move to the next level of certification. Apprentice Huntmasters must keep a Field Training Log (Form: HM Level 1). The Field Training Log is provided as a record of hunts performed for the Apprentice. The apprentice will also complete a Field Evaluation Form for each of the hunts in which he/she participates. The Field Evaluation Form is used to provide feedback to the Apprentice Huntmaster and provide an evaluation record to the Hunter Outreach Coordinator. It is the responsibility of the Apprentice Huntmaster to insure the Field Evaluation is completed at each hunt. The Huntmaster who is running an approved hunt is responsible for completing the evaluation form and providing a copy of the form to the Apprentice to send to the Hunter Outreach Coordinator upon completion of the three required hunts. An Apprentice Huntmaster is not eligible to run an approved hunt until certified as a Huntmaster.

- ii. **Level 2. Huntmaster.** The Huntmaster is the cornerstone of the Outreach Program. Huntmasters are needed to plan, run and organize youth and novice hunts for the program. The Huntmaster has completed his apprenticeship, been approved by the Hunter Outreach Coordinator and is now ready to run program hunts in all venues of the program. Prior to running a hunt, the Huntmaster must have served as a apprentice on a hunt for the same species as they are planning, ie. a Huntmaster must have participated in a big game hunt prior to actually running one themselves. The Huntmaster should seek opportunities to work with new landowners to develop new hunts each year. Program

growth is dependent on the dedicated efforts of our Huntmasters. Each Huntmaster should seek the opportunity to involve Apprentice Huntmasters and Volunteers in planned hunts to the extent possible. Huntmasters are responsible for providing a written evaluation of all Apprentice Huntmasters and Volunteers at the conclusion of each hunt. The Huntmaster is expected to be a mentor to the new apprentices and help them acquire the planning and management skills necessary to become a successful Huntmaster. As ambassadors of the program, Huntmasters should make every effort to meet and involve Wildlife Officers in their efforts to locate and work with landowners. The program coordinator will provide each Huntmaster with a “marketing” package to take along when meeting potential landowners that will help explain the program and assist the Huntmaster in working with new landowners.

- iii. **Level 3. Senior Huntmaster.** The Senior Huntmaster has completed five hunts as the lead Huntmaster and passed a written examination concerning the program elements. The Senior has planned, developed and run each hunt and documents these hunts using the hunt plan submitted to the Hunter Outreach Coordinator. Senior Huntmasters are key to the mentoring process of the program and should share their expertise with the other members of the program. Senior Huntmasters should make every effort to include Apprentice Huntmasters in their hunts as team members, teaching and mentoring the new Huntmasters and passing along program knowledge and standards. Senior Huntmasters assist in management of the program by serving on policy boards, providing recommendations for program improvement and assisting with instruction of student Huntmasters. Senior Huntmasters will be asked to volunteer to teach Huntmaster courses and attend volunteer orientations as guest speakers. A long term program

objective is for Senior Huntmasters to teach some of the Huntmaster certification courses. A Senior Huntmaster is awarded a Division of Wildlife buckle upon his/her completion of the required hunts and acceptance as a Senior Huntmaster by the program coordinator.

## **7. Huntmaster Awards**

- a. Recognition for volunteer service is an important part of a quality program. The Hunter Outreach Program seeks to provide recognition for Huntmasters and Outreach Volunteers who provided dedicated service to the program.
- b. The following awards will be presented on an annual basis:
  - i. Rookie of the Year Award. Presented to a Huntmaster who is within his/her first two years as a Huntmaster and has competed a full hunt as the lead Huntmaster.
  - ii. Huntmaster of the Year. Presented to the Huntmaster who is nominated by his/her peers as the most outstanding Huntmaster for the calendar year.
  - iii. Outreach Volunteer of the Year. Presented to the Outreach Volunteer who has contributed the most to the program during the calendar year.

## **8. Conflict of Interest**

- a. Many opportunities are presented to Huntmasters during the performance of their duties. Landowner contacts, business contacts and personal contacts are typically made in the performance of their duties that may not otherwise have been made available to the individual Huntmaster. Huntmasters should not use those contacts for personal gain if they would potentially detract from or harm the program.
- b. Questions concerning a potential conflict of interest should be addressed to the Hunter Outreach Coordinator at the Denver office.

## **9. Grounds for Dismissal as a Huntmaster.**

- a. Irresponsible or illegal behavior by a Huntmaster will not be tolerated and is grounds for dismissal. Huntmasters must comply with all program policies and rules outlined in this manual and published program directives. The Hunter Outreach Program Coordinator has absolute discretion to deny or terminate

Huntmaster or Volunteer certification based on unacceptable conduct.

- b. Failure to represent the Hunter Outreach Program and the Division of Wildlife in a positive and professional manner is grounds for dismissal from the program.
- c. Complaints concerning the conduct of a Huntmaster will be investigated by the Hunter Outreach Coordinator. When appropriate, an outside investigator may be appointed to resolve the complaint.

## **Colorado DOW Hunter Outreach Program Policies and Rules**

### **POLICIES**

1. Safety of all participants is the primary focus.
2. To participate in a DOW sponsored hunting activity, all hunters must:
  - a. Have passed and possess a valid Hunter Education certificate.
  - b. Have a valid and proper hunting license for the species they are hunting.
  - c. Have attended any orientation training provided by the Huntmaster.
  - d. Must complete all liability waivers, health history forms and other documents as provided by the DOW and Huntmaster.
  - e. Must be accompanied by a parent, legal guardian or assigned guardian.
3. If a youth activity, the accompanying sponsor must be present with the youth at all times. Unless otherwise approved prior to the activity, each youth must have a sponsor. In some cases it may be possible for a sponsor to accompany two youth hunters, upon approval.
4. A youth hunter will not be left alone with an adult other than his/her sponsor.
5. All laws and regulations (state and federal) will be strictly followed and enforced.
6. Illegal drugs and alcoholic beverages are prohibited at a sponsored activity.
7. Only youths are permitted to hunt. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Huntmaster and the Hunter Outreach Coordinator prior to the hunt.
8. All animals wounded but not recovered are considered part of the bag limit. In the case of big game animals, any sign the animal has been wounded by the hunter is cause for termination of the hunt. The hunter will make every attempt to recover the animal. If unsuccessful in recovery, the hunter's license will be voided and the hunt terminated.
9. No participant in a DOW sponsored activity will ask a sponsoring landowner, corporation or organization for permission to return to

the property or club to hunt as a personal request. The Huntmaster will shield landowners from such requests.

### **RULES**

1. Huntmasters will control safety.
2. All firearms will be transported cased or with open actions.
3. All youth hunters will use factory loaded ammunition only.
4. All hunters will wear fluorescent orange during the entire hunt.
5. All firearms will be inspected and test fired before a hunt.
6. All hunt participants will contribute to required work and participate in all activities.
7. All participants will remain at an activity for the entire time of the planned event.
8. All game will be properly processed for transport, storage and consumption IAW Colorado law and policy.
9. Treat all participants with respect and courtesy.
10. The Huntmaster is the final decision authority on an activity.
11. Violations of rules or policy are grounds for dismissal from an activity.