

Sportsman Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date and Time	
Date of Meeting:	January 16, 2024
Time of Meeting:	1730 PM
Meeting Location	
Location of Meeting:	Graham Performance Center BLDG 2934 Fort Sill, Oklahoma 73503
Meeting Attendees	
Present/Absent at Meeting:	See attached Roster for those present and absent.

The meeting of the Sportsman Council was called to order at 1730 on January 16, 2023, at Graham Performance Center.

I. Approval of Agenda

The agenda for the meeting was distributed and unanimously approved.

II. Opening Remarks

1. Agenda and Business Rules
COL Tolbert
2. Opening Comments
COL Peay
 - Review establishment and selection of the Sportsman Council. The Garrison wanted to bring the council back in order to establish a two-way communication with the community. The Sportsman Council serves as a conduit for the community to voice constructive concerns and ideas.

III. Information

1. Review of 2023 Hunting and Fishing Season
Jeremiah Zurenda
 - Deer Harvests
 - Fort Sill makes up 10% of the land mass in Comanche County. In 2022, Comanche County harvested 1066 deer. Of those 1066 deer, Fort Sill harvested 332 of them.
 - In 2023, Fort Sill harvested 340 deer. There were 153 harvested via archery, 56 via muzzleloader, and 137 via rifle/shotgun. This is the largest number of deer harvested since 1988 which was just short of 390 deer.

- In 2023, there were 5,900 archery trips to the field with 469 unique hunting IDs. This translates to one deer for every 38.8 trips to the field.
- In 2023, there were 678 muzzleloader trips to the field with 177 unique hunting IDs. This translates to one deer for every 12.1 trips.
- In 2023, there were 930 rifle/shotgun trips to the field with 342 unique hunting IDs. This translates to one deer for every 6.7 trips.
- Elk Harvests
 - In 2019, we harvested 47 elk. Since 2019, we have had a 200% increase in harvest. The 2023 season will be the third season in a row that we will take over 100 elk. There were 47 elk harvested via archery, and 59 harvested via gun. If we harvest the elk quota of 112 elk for 2023, it will be the most elk taken in Fort Sill history.
 - In 2023, there were 1,400 archery trips to the field with 352 unique hunting IDs. This translates to one elk for every 30 trips to the field.
 - In 2023, there were 173 gun trips to the field with 82 unique hunting IDs. This translates to one elk for every 3 trips.
- Waterfowl Harvests
 - In 2023, there were 1300 trips to the field with 125 unique hunting IDs.
- Fishing
 - In 2023, there were just shy of 11,000 trips to the field with 809 unique hunting IDs.

2. Herd Health

Jeremiah Zurenda

- Elk
 - In the past, Fort Sill has used spotlight counts via vehicles on the road which have been very useful and beneficial, however the Natural Resources Environmental Division (NRED) wanted to perform an aerial elk survey to get a more accurate count of the number of elk on Fort Sill. The Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge provided the necessary equipment needed to perform the aerial survey. The numbers will be analyzed before the next season.
 - The bull to cow ratio is at a good number based on preliminary data and visual observation. The calf recruitment is closer to that of a Whitetail deer than that of a Rocky Mountain Elk.
 - NRED has a 5-year agreement to perform the aerial elk survey to get a better understanding of how harvests are affecting the herd. Spotlight counts will also continue.
- Turkey
 - There will be a youth turkey season in 2024. NRED will determine the number of tags issued for the youth hunt by mid-March. NRED is hopeful that there will be an adult turkey season and will post on the iSportsman page any updates regarding the adult hunt.
- Fishing

- There are over 150 managed ponds on Fort Sill. In 2023, there were 43 ponds stocked channel catfish ranging from 10 to 12 inches. There were a number of ponds that were not stocked in 2023 due to inadequate water levels.
- Whitewolf Crossing was stocked with just shy of 2,300 fish for the Youth Fishing Derby. The plan is to repeat this annually. The dates for the 2024 fishing derby will be announced via iSportsman.
- Monarch Butterflies
 - Elk hunters were asked to monitor Monarch Butterflies in 2023 while out in the field. This was a very good metric and survey for Fort Sill. During the spring seasons, there will be another survey(s) out for things of this nature. NRED is working on implementing a feature in iSportsman for users to be able to report the sightings.

3. Sportsman Council Information

COL Tolbert and SGM Studer

- Sportsman Council Charter.
- Sportsman Council Sub-Committees.
- Closed Council Meetings.
 - Happen once per month with the council members only to work on concerns and issues brought up by the hunting and fishing community and NRED.
- Open Council Meetings
 - Open council meetings will be held at a minimum twice per year to keep the community informed and allow opportunities for the community to speak with Senior Leaders. The next projected open council meeting will be in June 2024 – Specific date TBD. The 200-1 revision will be discussed during the June meeting to allow the public to know of the changes before the season begins.
- Sportsman Council Introductions
- Issues Resolved in Previous Council Meetings:
 - Conduct of elk and deer gun draws via the hybrid system.
 - Fee Structure Increases.
 - Validation of accounts in iSportsman.

4. 200-1 Revision

COL Tolbert

- Revisions and changes to the 200-1 will be heavily influenced by ICE comments and in person recommendations that will be looked at by the Sportsman Council from the 2023 season.
- Timeline
 - 22 March 2024 – ICE comments and recommendations are due. The Sportsman Council will begin studying these for revisions to the 200-1.
 - 1 May 2024 – Final Draft from the Sportsman Council due to the Garrison Commander for signature.

- 1 June 2024 – Published 200-1 with signature.

IV. Open Forum Questions and Answers

1. How do you register for iSportsman and be able to utilize the range for recreation on Fort Sill?
 - Answer – Jeremiah Zurenda
 - Create an account on iSportsman at <https://ftsill.isportsman.net> .
 - You must take the range safety course which is conducted on Thursdays at 1200 with the exception of the third Thursday of the month which is conducted at 1800.
2. What are the rules for bringing weapons onto Fort Sill? Specifically, what are the post procedures for coming through the gate? There has been something different every time I have come through each of the various gates which impacts my planning time to get out and hunt.
 - Answer – COL Tolbert and COL Peay
 - The 190-11 is being rewritten currently but we will take this back to the council meetings and address this issue.
3. Why do we not allow crossbow hunting to individuals under the age of sixty who do not have a medical letter when there was a survey done in another state which showed no significant impact in wounded animals?
 - Answer – Jeremiah Zurenda
 - That statistic depends on the type of bow used in the surveys (long bow vs recurve vs crossbow). Since Oklahoma changed state law to allow crossbows there has been a 1% decrease per year in number of archery hunters, but a 25% increase in the lethality of hunts statewide.
 - If we do adopt crossbows, it will dramatically impact the length of archery season. We need to consider what is desired from the hunting community - A higher success rate earlier in the season or longer seasons and more opportunities.
 - This has already been a topic among the council, but we need more community feedback on the desire to allow them or not.
4. Why isn't there a position on the council for spouses? Also, on the current 200-1, spouses cannot sponsor an individual to go hunting, but they can sponsor them to go to the POW range, why? This is pertinent to big game recovery if the active-duty spouse is in the field or deployed.
 - Answer – SGM Studer
 - The council number is being kept down currently to ensure we can make progress on discussions. Please offer any comments to current council members for discussion at the monthly meetings. We are also having the open meetings to allow for those that are not a member to voice their opinions and concerns.
 - This is an oversight that will be addressed in the Sportsman Council meetings.
5. Can we go back to a parking lot draw to mitigate the problems that happened during the first draw of the gun hunt? Why are we utilizing an information technology system if no

one in the NRED has a degree in information technology? Why are we investing so much money into iSportsman when the program doesn't work for our needs?

- Answer – Jeremiah Zurenda and COL Tolbert
 - NRED and the Sportsman Council acknowledged there were issues with iSportsman and its randomization. Those issues were fixed once identified and there were no further issues seen during the season. The current randomization is verified by multiple people.
 - The goal for the upcoming years is to continue to refine this system, and not make any changes during mid-season next year.
 - There are only two DoD approved programs for utilization by NRED and recreating community – RecAccess and iSportsman. iSportsman is here to stay, but the current hybrid system will be the draw system going forward to allow for the comradery and in person draws that everyone loves.
- 6. A disabled hunter called in to Sportsman Services and asked for help getting out into the field and he was told that there wasn't help for that. Why?
 - Answer – Jeremiah Zurenda
 - NRED tried to offer the same help to all of those that call in asking for it but with NRED being a very small team of five, that isn't an option for everyone. Coming out of the 2023 season, NRED has a better understanding of how many people need the additional help getting out into the field. Contacts will be provided to those that need it hopefully going forward.
 - The State of Oklahoma has clearly defined non-ambulatory and mobility impaired. Going forward, the state definition for a disability will be used because within DoD, there are many definitions to the word disabled. ODWC has the instructions and the forms on their website that will need to be filled out and sent in to be able to have the disabled status applied to your iSportsman account. Once these have been approved and you have the paperwork stating that you are non-ambulatory or mobility impaired, you will present these to NRED for the status to be applied to your account in iSportsman. Please do not wait until right before season to try to get this done. It does take some time.
- 7. What is the status of the buffer zone exception to policy memo?
 - Answer – COL Peay
 - In the past, there has been an exception to policy (ETP) regarding the non-dudded impact areas or buffer zones. Army Regulation 385-63 is the Army regulation that covers exercised with range operations and the use within the buffer zones. 10 years ago, Fort Sill submitted the first ETP to hunt within those buffer zones. It took about 16 months to complete the ETP. Over the last 10 years, we have used that same initial ETP to be able to operate out of the buffer zones. We as an installation failed to realize that according to the 25-30, the ETPs have to be renewed annually. Last spring it was brought to the attention of command that we were out of compliance with our ETP.
 - We are in the process now of reworking this ETP. Once the ETP is completed and put together at the Garrison level, it will go to the

Commanding General (CG). If the CG approves, it will then leave the installation for higher approval. It is expected to leave Fort Sill within 30 days.

- There is also an ETP for it to be renewed every two years instead of annually. The goal is to have the ETP in place before next hunting season.
8. Currently we cannot select waterfowl for areas / fields. The only option is ponds. Can that be changed? Also, can we see what others are hunting or hunting with in areas? We would like to be able to hunt fields if we see waterfowl eating there, but also know if there is someone big game hunting or someone already fowl hunting so we don't disturb their hunts.
- Answer – COL Tolbert
 - We will look into these concerns and see if we can come up with a solution.
9. We need the status and accessibility for TPU, Reserve, Guard, etc. addressed immediately. I am currently a TPU Soldier, and father, whose son wants to go fishing. However, with the account validation as of 01JAN24 I am no longer permitted by interpretation of the regulation to hunt on Fort Sill. If this is addressed in the FS 200-1 changes, that means I lose almost half the year worth of recreation with my family.
- Answer – COL Peay and Jeremiah Zurenda
 - Garrison and the council will work with JAG to get feedback on the intent of the verbiage used to define active duty in the regulation currently and make a decision based on that.
10. Is it possible to see activity in training areas? Specifically, I am talking about both units and training or any environmental efforts such as tree clearing in the area. I was signed in to hunt in an area, and people were cutting trees all weekend there which disrupted hunting. I would have used another area if I knew that prior to signing in.
- We don't have the capability to list specific parts of training areas undergoing maintenance or where a unit will be. We could however provide info that in a group of training areas there would be activity. This takes a decent number of resources to keep track of, so it may not be the level of detail you want, but we will work on implementing it as much as possible.

V. Closing Remarks

1. Closing Remarks

COL Tolbert, SGM Studer, and COL Peay

- Please be sure to submit your recommendations and ICE comments before 22 March 24 to ensure that they are looked at for the 2024 revision of the 200-1. Please ensure that your contact information is on the ICE comment.
- Thank you everyone for coming out to be a part of the open council meeting.

VI. Agenda and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at 1700 on February 21, 2024.

BLDG 1465

Fort Sill, Oklahoma

73503

The meeting was adjourned at 1912 by COL Tolbert

Minutes submitted by: Brianna Wilcox

Minutes approved by: COL Tolbert And Sgt Maj Studer