



**IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

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Brad Little / Governor  
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## **Hunting and Advanced Technology (HAT) Working Group MEETING MINUTES**

November 11, 2024

Wendy Green Lowe, Facilitator with P2 Solutions, called the virtual meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. mountain time.

Ellary TuckerWilliams, Legislative and Community Engagement Coordinator, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Members attending virtually included: Alex Martin, Bryce Oldemeyer, Chelsea Merriman, Derick Attebury, Dillon Halvorsen, Doug Talbot, Dustin Webster, Halli Hemingway, Jason Topp, Jeff Choules, Jeff Shinn, Jeremiah Mani, Ken Crane, Kevin Rogers, Kimberly Johnson, Larry Hatter, Matt Borg, Nathan Guy, Nicole Swafford, Tal Sampson, and Tim Frost.

IDFG staff in attendance included: Ellary TuckerWilliams, Greg Wooten, Toby Boudreau, and Elizabeth Page.

Guest speakers and presenters included: Abram Summerfield, EOTECH, Jon Zinnel, The Kinetic Group, Nephi Cole, The National Shooting Sports Foundation, and Dan Forster, The Archery Trade Association.

In compliance with open meeting law, members of the public had the opportunity to attend virtually, through a Zoom meeting link.

### **Welcome and Orientation**

Wendy Lowe shared the objectives for the November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024, meeting, and reminded members of the ground rules set in the prior meeting.

#### *Objectives:*

- Welcome all and provide an orientation to meeting via Zoom
- Share a summary of comments submitted via the online feedback form
- Continue to provide the opportunity for everyone to begin to get to know each other
- Receive presentations about hunting industry technology and provide the opportunity for Working Group members to ask questions about the information shared
- Discuss Working Group members' initial reflections on the information provided
- Identify the next steps to continue moving forward.

### *Ground Rules:*

- Participate with Intention
- Appreciate the Diversity of Perspectives
- Treat Others with Respect

### **Public Comments Submitted Through the Online Feedback Form**

*Ellary TuckerWilliams*

Members of the public had the opportunity to submit public comments, which were summarized and provided to the advisory members prior to the meeting. Public comments received after November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024, will be summarized and provided to the working group at the next meeting. A total of 67 unique comments were submitted, primarily from Idaho residents.

Key themes emerged from the comments:

- *Restrictions on Hunting Technology:* Many commenters expressed a desire to ban or restrict the use of thermals, night vision, drones, and long-range optics. Some also advocated for tighter regulations on trail cameras and motorized vehicles, including e-bikes. Contrastingly, many commenters expressed that they would be disapproving of any additional hunting technology restrictions.
- *Concerns about Humane Hunting:* Several individuals voiced concerns about the potential for increased wounding and unrecovered animals due to the use of advanced hunting technologies. Others argued that restrictions on long-range hunting equipment could hinder hunters' ability to make ethical shots.
- *Enforcement and Education:* Some commenters emphasized the need for increased enforcement of hunting regulations and education initiatives to promote ethical hunting practices.
- *Economic Impacts and Access:* A few individuals expressed concerns about the potential negative economic impacts of restrictive regulations on local businesses and the potential for such regulations to disproportionately affect disabled hunters.

Additional comments were received on topics outside the HAT Working Group's charter, including season length, hunter numbers, predator management, antler point restrictions, tag prices, and the working group's structure and membership.

### **Presentation: Optics**

*Abram Summerfield, Principal Electro-Optical Engineer for EOTECH*

Abram Summerfield, an experienced optics expert, provided a detailed analysis of various optical devices used in hunting. He emphasized the superior resolution and detail offered by traditional optics compared to thermal or night vision devices. While acknowledging the potential benefits of these technologies, he also highlighted their limitations, such as their reliance on specific conditions and their lower resolution.

Summerfield addressed the ongoing debate surrounding hunting technology, arguing that tools like binoculars, spotting scopes, and trail cameras, while enhancing a hunter's ability to observe wildlife, do not necessarily create an unfair advantage. He contended that these tools simply provide information that would otherwise require significant effort to obtain.

### **Presentation: General Tech.**

*Jon Zinnel, Director of Community Relations at The Kinetic Group*

The Kinetic Group, a major ammunition manufacturer, is committed to innovation and sustainability. The company contributes to wildlife conservation through federal excise taxes, which fund the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund.

Jon Zinnel highlighted the importance of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, a framework that prioritizes public trust, sustainable resource management, and equitable access to hunting. He also referenced the Boone and Crockett Club's support for using innovative tools to promote ethical hunting practices and enhance the overall hunting experience.

### **Presentation: Firearms**

*Nephi Cole, Director of Government Relations – State Affairs, National Shooting Sports Foundation*

Nephi Cole, representing the National Shooting Sports Foundation, presented on the complex relationship between hunting and technology. He emphasized the evolving nature of hunting, from a historical necessity to a modern pursuit with diverse motivations.

Key points from his presentation include:

- *Public Trust Doctrine:* Wildlife is a public resource, managed for the benefit of all citizens.
- *Balancing Conservation and Access:* State wildlife agencies must balance preserving wildlife populations with providing hunting opportunities.
- *Ethical Hunting:* Technology can enhance hunting experiences, but it must be used ethically and responsibly.
- *Adaptability:* Wildlife management practices must be flexible to accommodate changing conditions and technological advancements.
- *Individual Choice:* Hunters should have the freedom to choose their methods, within ethical and legal boundaries.

Cole advocated for a balanced approach that embraces innovation while upholding traditional values. He encouraged the working group to consider the potential benefits of technology, such as improved accuracy and reduced suffering, while also addressing potential concerns about fairness and accessibility.

### **Presentation: Archery**

*Dan Forster, Vice President and Chief Conservation Officer, Archery Trade Association, and Certified Wildlife Biologist*

The Archery Trade Association (ATA) is dedicated to promoting and preserving archery and bowhunting. They advocate for sustainable wildlife management and work to simplify complex hunting regulations. Dan Forster, emphasizes the importance of balancing tradition with innovation in hunting practices. He believes that technology can be used ethically to enhance the hunting experience while maintaining sustainable wildlife populations.

### **Small Group Discussions – Round One: What Did You Hear Today About Technology That Stands Out as it Relates to Hunting in Idaho?**

*All/Wendy*

The working group engaged in a small group discussion about what technology they heard about today that stands out as it relates to hunting in Idaho. Participants were divided into small groups and asked to record their thoughts. The responses were then categorized and shared with the entire group.

Overall, the groups generally expressed a desire for simple, non-restrictive regulations. They recognized the potential of technology to both enhance and complicate the hunting experience. Some of the small groups were concerned about the ethical implications of advanced technology, particularly thermal imaging, which could give hunters an unfair advantage. Others saw the potential benefits of technology, especially for recovering wounded animals. Overall, the groups emphasized the need for balance between traditional hunting practices and technological advancements, while also considering the impact on wildlife and the hunting experience.

### **Small Group Discussions – Round Two: What Ideas Do You Have About How Technology Impacts the Hunting Experience in Idaho?**

*All/Wendy*

The Working Group then shifted their focus to a second question: "What ideas do you have about how technology impacts the hunting experience in Idaho?" Participants again divided into small groups and recorded their ideas.

The groups discussed the impact of technology on the hunting experience in Idaho. They generally agreed that technology can both enhance and diminish the traditional aspects of hunting. While some groups emphasized the potential for technology to improve hunter efficiency and ethical practices, others warned about the dangers of overreliance on technology and the need to preserve traditional skills. There was a consensus that a careful and considered approach to regulating technology is necessary to balance the benefits and potential drawbacks.

### **Meeting Close: Evaluation and Next Steps**

Wendy Lowe shared the dates, locations, and focus of future working group meetings.

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Focus</b>
December 2, 2024	Online	Fair Chase Ethic
January 4, 2025	In-Person	Hunting Technology and Fair Chase Survey Results
January 27, 2025	Online	Possible Working Group Suggestions
February 17, 2025	Online	Continued Work on Suggestions
March 10, 2025	Online	Moving Towards Finalization of Working Group's Suggestions
March 22, 2025	In-Person	If needed, to Complete the Working Group's Suggestions

In-person meetings will be from 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. MT, and take place at the IDFG Headquarters Building, located at 600 S. Walnut Street in Boise, Idaho. Virtual meetings will be

held from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. MT, at the following zoom link:  
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85605146179>.

**Adjourn 9:00 p.m.**