

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 11, 2016

Agenda Item: 2016-2017 Hunting Season Dates

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background

Season dates are currently adopted biennially for all game species. This happens every other winter with adoptions in December and final adoptions in February. These dates are a combination of fixed dates (mountain grouse season Sept. 1 opener) and “formula” dates (general deer and elk is defined by counting backwards five weeks from Thanksgiving Sunday). For the “formula” dates, there is an annual change due to the progression of the calendar from one year to another. That means at least one day’s difference and, periodically, nearly a full week. In some cases, these annual movements can place season dates in conflict with public expectations or traditions. Some specific areas have exceptions to these general statewide dates by species. Those exceptions are also proposed again for 2016 and 2017 or are proposed to be different within individual species-specific proposals.

There are no proposed changes in date definitions from 2014-2015 and a table with the proposed 2016-2017 season dates is in the Commission packet. The proposed 2016 and 2017 two-day statewide youth deer hunting season scheduled during MEA days will not overlap the last Thursday and Friday of the statewide archery season and will occur on the Thursday and Friday of the week between archery and general seasons.

FWP proposes no changes to those adopted in December.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Public comment ran from Dec. 10 to Jan 22. We received 89 comments. One third of them spoke to shoulder seasons. There were a variety of other comments on longer or shorter deer and elk seasons, public access, seasons for buck deer management, a longer season on upland birds, and other topics. All comments are included in the Commission packet.

Alternatives and Analysis

Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, with additions, with deletions or no change from 2015 (status quo). If no change is adopted, that would result in seasons opening and closing on different weekdays (e.g. open on a Thursday rather than a Saturday).

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

Rationale for individual proposals was included in the Dec. 10th Commission information packets and may be further articulated at the Feb. 11th Commission meeting.

Proposed Motion

I move the Commission adopt the final 2016 and 2017 Hunting Season Dates as presented by FWP.