

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 15, 2018

Agenda Item: 2018-2019 Elk Hunting Seasons

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 Min

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Background: Season structures and hunting district boundaries are adopted biennially for most game species. This happens every other year between December and final adoptions in February. In proposing regulations to the Commission, FWP proposes adopting the existing (2017) structure except for specific changes. Proposals are based on population status and/or other circumstances. **Changes from the December meeting are highlighted.**

In general, the proposed 2018 and 2019 elk season structure offers more liberal opportunities, simplification of regulations and more consistent season dates for shoulder seasons with an eye to simplification and harvesting more elk in over-objective districts. Changes include many more opportunities statewide with a general license; more and expanded opportunities with B Licenses or antlerless permits; Permits to Hunt From a Vehicle in Region 1; establishing a regional B License and seven new shoulder seasons in Region 2; additional B License opportunity and **2 new shoulder seasons and all shoulder seasons to go to 2/15** in Region 3; two new shoulder seasons and consistent dates in Region 4; one new shoulder season and all shoulder season dates in Region 5 to run from 8/15 to 2/15; and more opportunities in Regions 6 and 7. **Different than the December proposals, FWP is not proposing any shoulder hunt activities on the Spotted Dog WMA.**

FWP also proposes to adopt elk season structure for the 43 hunting districts that had shoulder seasons in 2016 on an annual basis rather than biennial to facilitate evaluation of their efficacy and revisiting their adoption on a 3-year cycle. **Those HDs are addressed in a separate cover sheet and Commission action.**

All proposed changes are on the Commission Elk Master List in the Commission packet.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Elk season comments were received during the Aug. 20 – Sept. 21 scoping and included interest in antlerless opportunities, special muzzleloader and senior citizen seasons, access, and comments both pro and con on shoulder seasons. Public comment on proposed changes ran from Dec. 7 through Jan. 24, and we received 230 comments. Many spoke to shoulder seasons, and were varied, with quite a bit of landowner support for extending these to Feb. 15. All comments are in the Commission packet.

Alternatives and Analysis

Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, with additions, with deletions or no change from 2017 (status quo). No change would challenge the supporting justifications behind proposals.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends the Commission adopt the 2018 and 2019 elk hunting seasons and hunting districts as presented by FWP, and that all other aspects remain unchanged unless addressed in other proposals.

Proposed Motion

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the 2018 and 2019 elk hunting seasons and hunting districts as presented by FWP, and that all other aspects remain unchanged unless addressed in other proposals.