

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 15, 2018

Agenda Item: Annual Adoption of Elk Seasons in the Original (43) Hunting Districts with Shoulder Seasons in 2016

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 20 Min

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Background: Season structures are adopted biennially for most game species 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.**

FWP 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. This will affect the following hunting districts for the 2018-19 license year: 101, 109, 210, 212, 213, 215, 217, 290, 291, 292, 298, 312, 390, 393, 411, 412, 421, 422, 423, 445, 446, 449, 451, 452, 502, 510W, 511, 520NW, 530, 540, 560N, 570, 575, 580, 590N, 620, 621, 622, 630, 631, 632, 680, and 690.

FWP proposed 3 options:

Option 1- Performance-based shoulder seasons would be adopted annually in February, but generally rely on 3 years of harvest data, which is presented in August. This is according to the original criteria adopted in October 2015. Further adoption or removal of district specific shoulder seasons would be considered in December 2019 for 2020, and annually thereafter. This would mean the 2019 season (the fourth shoulder season) would run until Feb. 15, 2020. This option follows the original spirit of the adopted guidelines for biennial season setting and would not be confusing to hunters.

Option 2 - FWP would put notices in the body of the 2019 regulations for each shoulder season hunting district that warns hunters that the late portion of the ongoing season may be removed, or asks hunters to look for information about shoulder seasons after the August Commission meeting. **This would be very confusing to hunters.**

Option 3 - In August 2018 decide which hunting districts are unlikely to reach their harvest goals based on 2 years of data and end them after the third year.

Public Involvement Process & Results: Public comment on ran from Dec. 7 through Jan. 24, and we received 109 comments, which varied in their support for the 3 options. 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 2017 (status quo). No change would challenge the supporting justifications behind proposals.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the annual adoption in February of each year for these 43 shoulder seasons, and that the Commission adopt Option 1, to consider shoulder seasons as adopted wherein further adoption or removal would be considered in December 2019 for 2020.

Proposed Motion:

I move that, for the 43 hunting districts with shoulder seasons in 2016, the Fish and Wildlife Commission annually adopt elk hunting regulations in February for that year's season, that season evaluation generally rely on 3 years of harvest data, presented in August, and the Commission adopt the 2018 regulations for these districts as proposed by FWP. All other aspects remain unchanged unless addressed in other proposals.