

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: December 10, 2018

Agenda Item: Proposed performance-based elk shoulder seasons for 2019

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 40 Minutes

Background: FWP proposes three options for the 2019 hunting season for the Commission's consideration about performance-based shoulder seasons in the original 43 hunting districts. Those options are:

1. Maintain the current season structure in all districts, including early and late performance-based shoulder seasons for the 2019 license year, to allow for a more comprehensive three-year evaluation of season performance in late summer or early fall 2019.
2. Discontinue performance-based shoulder seasons in all districts until a full evaluation of their performance against the established criteria is completed.
3. Change the season structure for the 2019 license year in the five hunting districts most egregiously over-objective and falling well short of the cow harvest criteria. The other remaining districts would remain as is.

Option 3 proposes to change season types and licenses in hunting districts 411, 511, 530, 540, and 580 (all of which have performance-based shoulder seasons that have failed to meet harvest criteria after two years and are unlikely to meet those criteria in a third year), and to make the 004-00 and 005-00 B licenses over-the-counter instead of limited draw. The purpose is to increase harvest, especially of antlerless elk, by focusing more antlerless harvest during the general firearms season by changing these HDs to antlerless-only harvest during the last three weeks of the general season, and by increasing availability of B licenses. In general, this proposal:

- Maintains current performance-based shoulder seasons because of the substantial antlerless harvest that occurs. In the last two years, 32 percent of adult cow harvest totaling 590 cows in these five HDs was during shoulder seasons.
- Maintains the current archery season.
- Changes the general license opportunity during the general rifle season to the first two weeks being either-sex or spike/antlerless, as the case may be, and the last three weeks being antlerless-only.
- Converts the limited-draw regional 004-00 and 005-00 B licenses to over-the-counter to allow additional opportunity if/when hunters desire.
- Retains special either-sex opportunity permits such as the 900-20, 411-20, 580-21, and 580-22 through the entire archery and general seasons.

The five HDs in Option 3 were identified among all HDs with performance-based shoulder seasons as the most egregiously over-objective and fell short by 400 or more of the needed adult cow harvest for 2016 and 2017 combined.

This proposal comes outside of the regular biennial cycle and is necessitated by FWP and commission interest in managing elk to population objective. These proposed changes are further explained in the justification in the commission packet for the December 10 meeting.

Public Involvement Process & Results: In addition to public comment on proposed elk season changes taken during the Dec. 10 commission meeting, public comment will run through 5 p.m., Jan. 18, 2019, and any final adoptions will take place at the February 2019 commission meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis: Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with additions or deletions, or with no change from 2018 (status quo).

Proposed Motion: I move the commission adopt for public comment (Commission inserts option), and that all other aspects of the elk seasons remain unchanged for the 2019 license year.