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Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks

# Montana Fish & Wildlife Commission

MINUTES - Amended 1/14/16

Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting

Montana WILD  
2668 Broadwater, Helena

December 10, 2015

Commission Members Present: Dan Vermillion, Chairman, Richard Stuker Vice-Chairman,  
and Gary Wolfe; Richard Kerstein and Matt Tourtlotte via video

Fish, Wildlife and Parks Staff Present: Jeff Hagener, Director and FWP Staff.

Guests: Dec 10, 2015 - See Commission file folder for sign-in sheet.

#### Topics of Discussion:

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Minutes of Nov 12, 2015 Commission Meeting
3. Approval of Commission Expenses
4. Commission Reports
5. Director's Report
6. Lease Agreement for Three-Stall Fishing Access Site, Blackfoot River - Endorsement
7. Bynum Reservoir Fishing Access Site Acquisition - Endorsement
8. Lake Helena and Canyon Ferry Reservoir Five-Year Commercial Carp Fishing Permit - Proposed
9. Beaverhead and Big Hole River Recreation Rules - Proposed
10. Waters Approved for Commercial Bait Seining Annual Rule - Final
11. Mandatory Angler Kill and Reporting for Walleye Caught in Swan Lake and River - Final
12. South Whitefish Range Conservation Easements (Haskill Basin) - Final  
*HD 313 Elk Proposal Scheduled for 10:00 AM*
13. 2016-2017 Elk Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries - Proposed
14. 2016-2017 Antelope Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries - Proposed
15. 2016-2017 Deer Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries - Proposed
16. 2016-2017 Moose Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries - Proposed
17. 2016-2017 Bighorn Sheep Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries - Proposed
18. 2016-2017 Mountain Goat Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries - Proposed
19. 2016-2017 Black Bear Hunting Seasons, Quota Ranges HD Boundaries and Quotas - Proposed
20. 2016-2017 Bison Hunting Seasons and HD Boundaries - Proposed
21. 2016-2017 Mountain Lion Hunting Seasons and HD Boundaries - Proposed
22. 2016-2017 Upland Game Bird Hunting Seasons, Quotas and HD Boundaries - Proposed
23. 2016-2017 Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons (contingent upon Federal frameworks) - Proposed
24. 2016-2017 Hunting Season Dates - Proposed
25. 2016-2017 Helena Urban Deer Plan Quota Ranges and Quota - Proposed
26. 2016-2017 Game Damage/Management Season/Wildlife Health Authorizations Quotas - Proposed
27. Public Comment - For Issues Not On This Agenda

1. Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Vermillion called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Minutes of Nov 12, 2015 Commission Meeting

Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion to postpone the approval of the minutes until the Jan 2016 meeting. Motion passed.

3. Approval of Commission Expenses

Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion to approve the Commission expenses. Motion passed.

4. Commission Reports

Commissioner Wolfe reported he met with Region 2 staff to discuss the Region's to hunting season proposals; unable to attend the Region 1 Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) meeting. Received calls on the Department's

walleye mandatory kill in Swan Lake proposal; positive comments and supportive. Attended a portion of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee meeting (IGBC); good meeting. Received numerous phone calls and correspondence from all over the world regarding hunting district (HD) 313. Met with representatives from disabled hunter groups to discuss antlerless elk permit to hunt from vehicles option.

Vice-Chairman Stuker reported he received numerous correspondences from the public regarding the proposed HD 313; mostly opposed to the Department's position. Looked at the proposed land trade property for White Bear Fishing Access Site (FAS); if trade can be done, it should be pursued; nice piece of property. Met with Region 4 and Region 6 staff to discuss the proposed season settings and will meet with Region 6 staff again at a later date. Spoke at a grazing meeting. Received several calls on the bison Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) proposal. Shoulder seasons are happening; so far a good success. (amended 1/14/16)

Chairman Vermillion reported he has been consumed with HD 313 issues; a lot of concerns; big issue the Commissioners are taking very seriously. Region 3 had a good harvest during the general season; goals seemed to be met. Received calls on the walleye situation in Swan Lake. Shoulder seasons are in progress and so far, have been a success.

Commissioner Kerstein reported it has been a phenomenal season for upland game bird hunting; good year for deer hunting; issues with hunters trespassing onto private lands and not properly getting permission, need to get more information out to hunters.

Commissioner Tourtlotte reported he has received an abundant amount of correspondence on HD 313; appreciated Karen Loveless's insight on the proposal. Few calls from hunters and non-hunters regarding the shoulder seasons. Department has to find a way to get to get a handle on unethical hunters; hunters have to help out as well. Hunters are optimistic with the extended goose season.

#### **5. Director's Report**

Director Hagener stated good reports on general hunting season and shoulder season; not locked into shoulder seasons for four years, can be looked at every year. Attended the Western Governors Association meeting; discussions on issues with the Endangered Species Act. Dingle-Johnson funding has solidified the Department's funding for five years instead of annually. Pitman-Roberston funding is down this year, but should go up in the next year. Working diligently with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for the delisting of grizzlies in the Greater Yellowstone area.

#### **6. Lease Agreement for Three-Stall Fishing Access Site, Blackfoot River – Endorsement**

Joel Tohtz, Fisheries Management Bureau Chief, explained the Blackfoot Corridor Agreement was renewed with Commission approval in 2015. During this process, it was discovered two of the main FAS in the Blackfoot Corridor - Round Up and Three Stall - were privately owned properties being managed by FWP with no formal agreement. In Nov, the Commission endorsed FWP's request to pursue a formal lease with the private landowner to manage the Round Up FAS; FWP asks for the same endorsement to include the Three Stall FAS in this negotiation. FWP is managing both sites for public use, very few additional maintenance resources would be necessary. The landowner has requested trash receptacles be placed and maintained at these locations. Any mutually acceptable lease agreement drafted after Commission endorsement would later be proposed for public comment with additional Commission approval.

*Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission endorse negotiation of a lease agreement between FWP and the private owner of the Three Stall Fishing Access Sites to formally secure FWP long-term management of the site.*

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

*Action on Motion: Motion Passed.*

#### **7. Bynum Reservoir Fishing Access Site Acquisition – Endorsement**

Joel Tohtz, Fisheries Management Bureau Chief, explained FWP has a 20-year, no-fee permit with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to maintain a 40-acre FAS on Bynum Reservoir. FWP has invested more than \$51,000 in capital improvements; the current permit expired in May. FWP approached BLM to renew the lease and BLM offered the option of acquiring the original 40-acre parcel and another 40-acre parcel adjoining the FAS. Since FWP is a government agency and provides public recreation opportunities at this site, FWP can acquire the 80 acres for only a \$100 filing fee. The formally leased 40-acre parcel is already functional and has been maintained by FWP for the past 20 years. The other 40-acre parcel has legal access to the entire parcel, borders the existing FAS, and will require minimal improvements under FWP management. FWP will conduct an environmental assessment (EA) with a 30-day public comment period. FWP can manage both parcels with minimal increase in maintenance cost or staff time; the boundary would be fenced and properly signed. No major maintenance would be required.

*Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Commission endorse FWP's request to perform due diligence in order to acquire 80 acres of property from the BLM at Bynum Reservoir.*

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

*Action on Motion: Motion Passed.*

**8. Lake Helena and Canyon Ferry Reservoir Five-Year Commercial Carp Fishing Permit – Proposed**

Joel Tohtz, Fisheries Management Bureau Chief explained FWP received an application for a commercial fishing permit to harvest carp via active seining from Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena. By statute, the Commission is authorized to approve one commercial fishing operation for each body of water and to establish specific regulations. This application is for a Class B Permit that requires a fee of \$200 annually plus a \$1,000 Surety Bond. The Commission has approved the commercial fishing regulations for Canyon Ferry and Lake Helena annually for the past eight years. The current applicant, Tracy Fortner, has held the permit for the past five years. This year Fortner has requested a five-year permit (2016-2020). Commercial fishing regulations for Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena were originally approved by the Commission in 2005 following public notice and an opportunity for public comment; an EA was prepared to evaluate any potential impacts on the human environment.

*Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission approve for public comment the proposed regulations for a commercial fishing operation for carp on Canyon Ferry Reservoir and Lake Helena for 2016-2020.*

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Commissioner Kerstein asked where the carp go after they are caught.

Vore stated 250 carp were removed from Canyon Ferry last year and then processed into fertilizer.

*Action on Motion: Motion Passed.*

**9. Beaverhead and Big Hole River Recreation Rules – Proposed**

Joel Tohtz, Fisheries Management Bureau Chief, explained the Beaverhead and Big Hole river recreation rules were established in 1999 to address concerns about crowding on these two rivers. In 2005, the Commission inserted language stating it would review the rules every five years. FWP conducted two public scoping meetings on Oct 21-22, 2015 in Dillon and in Butte; members of the public unable to attend were encouraged to submit written comments; forty individuals were in attendance and 21 written comments were received; most comments indicated no changes should be made to the rules; changes that were suggested included: opening of the river reaches currently closed to commercial float fishing; changing rules to allow commercial outfitters to lease their allocated days to other permitted outfitters; allowing outfitters to sell off a portion of their allocated days rather than selling the entire business permit; changing the allocation strategies of temporary client days and prevent outfitters that sell their Big Hole and Beaverhead business permits from applying for temporary client days; changing float restrictions on Beaverhead to allow more than three boats below Henneberry FAS; and terminating the five-year review process. FWP recommends no changes be made to the Big Hole and Beaverhead River Recreation Rules. These rules have been successful in mediating user conflict and have served the purpose and intent for which they were developed by the Big Hole/Beaverhead Citizens Advisory Committee.

*Action: Chairman Vermillion moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission approve FWP's recommendation with two exceptions: 1) ARM 12.11.206 - One-boat outfitters may apply on an annual basis for up to 60 temporary client days on the Beaverhead River and an outfitter who has surrendered, transferred, or had a Beaverhead commercial use permit revoked may not apply for temporary client days; 2) ARM 12.11.211 One-boat outfitters may apply on an annual basis for up to 60 temporary client days on the Big Hole River and an outfitter who has surrendered, transferred, or had a Big Hole commercial use permit revoked may not apply for temporary client days, and direct FWP to offer the recommendation for public comment.*

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Robin Cunningham, Fishing Outfitters of Montana (FOAM), supports motion.

Chairman Vermillion explained his reasoning for the motion.

Chairman Vermillion stated he has received calls from fishermen regarding algae or cloudy water on the Beaverhead; top 15 miles are unfishable; wondering what the Department's role is in the process.

Travis Horton, Region 3 Fisheries Manager, stated the Department has been actively involved in the Beaverhead situation.

*Action on Motion: Motion Passed.*

**10. Waters Approved for Commercial Bait Seining Annual Rule – Final**

Joel Tohtz, Fisheries Management Bureau Chief, stated the final proposal is unchanged from the tentative proposal (see minutes from the Oct 8, 2015 Commission meeting). No public comments were received.

*Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission approve the Commercial Bait Fish Seining Waters list recommended by FWP for the 2016 fishing season.*

*Action on Motion: Motion Passed.*

#### 11. Mandatory Angler Kill and Reporting for Walleye Caught in Swan Lake and River – Final

Joel Tohtz, Fisheries Management Bureau Chief, explained walleye were recently illegally introduced into Swan Lake. Swan Lake contains native bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout and introduced lake trout, kokanee salmon, northern pike, yellow perch, and rainbow trout. ARM 12.7.1503, concerning unauthorized placements of fish, provides guidance for how FWP responds to recent unauthorized fish introductions. Instituting mandatory catch-and-kill regulations is one of the identified management actions in the ARM. There currently is no harvest limit for walleye in the Western Fishing District. The proposed regulation is designed to act as a disincentive to unauthorized fish introductions and provide FWP with captured walleye for subsequent analyses. Anglers will not be able to release caught walleye and must turn in the whole fish to FWP; reporting and turn-in time periods are standard for regulated wildlife species. Below is the proposed mandatory catch-and-kill harvest and reporting regulation for walleye on Swan Lake, the Swan River, and its tributaries:

*Walleye: All walleye caught must be killed immediately, kept, and the entire fish turned in to FWP. Anglers must report the walleye harvest within 24 hours of capture by calling the Kalispell FWP Headquarters Office (406-752-5501). Arrangements will be made to turn in the whole fish within 10 days. Within regular weekday business hours, walleye may be turned in to any FWP Office.*

FWP produced press releases, participated in numerous multi-media interviews, and provided information to news subscribers and via social media platforms. The issue was well covered and received wide distribution across newspapers, television, radio and social media. No public process prior to the Commission meeting occurred for the proposed change in fishing regulations. FWP recommends approval of the proposed regulation in an effort to help limit the potential harm from this unauthorized species introduction, and to provide a disincentive to future unauthorized fish introductions.

**Action:** *Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission approve a mandatory kill, report, and turn-in fishing regulation as recommended by FWP for walleye caught from Swan Lake or the Swan River and its Tributaries.*

Chairman Vermillion commended the Department for acting quickly on this issue; this is becoming a big issue; substantial reward from different user groups is being offered; hopefully the legislature will consider increasing penalties for this kind of illegal activity.

Commissioner Wolfe commended Mark Deleray, Region 1 Fisheries Manager for his quick action on this issue.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Bruce Farling, Montana Trout Unlimited (MTU), thanked the Department and Commission for their support of this proposal; would like the Department to elevate this issue much like wildlife crimes are treated. Issue at Noxon Reservoir is exactly the same as Swan Lake. Marl Aagenes is no longer associated with Trout Unlimited.

Nick Gevok, Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF), echoes Farling's comments; not about walleye, it is about illegal introductions; commends walleye community for offering a reward; strongly support.

Mike Brumble, Walleyes Unlimited (WU), supports proposal; opposes unauthorized illegal introduction of fish in Montana waters.

Wade Fredenberg, FWS, endorses the proposal; no action would encourage the illegal activity.

Jim Vashro, Kalispell, pleased with raising the profile and taking more aggressive steps of illegal activity; supports proposal.

Robin Cunningham, FOAM, supports proposal.

**Action on Motion:** *Motion Passed.*

Ken McDonald, Wildlife Administrator, stated the information being presented is months of hard work by several Department employees; acknowledge all staff for the work.

#### 12. South Whitefish Range Conservation Easements (Haskill Basin) – Final

Ken McDonald, Wildlife Administrator, explained FWP has been negotiating two conservation easements (CE) with F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Co. in Haskill Basin (3,020 acres) and Trumbull Creek (7,150 acres). The Haskill Basin project received Commission endorsement in Nov 2013 and the Trumbull Creek project in May 2015. Both properties are located on the southern end of the Whitefish Range between Whitefish and Columbia Falls. Given their similarities of habitat, location, ownership, and management, both proposed CE's were analyzed by FWP within the same EA and Decision Notice (DN). Haskill Basin project is in the latter stages of completion and is separated for final Commission action. The Haskill Basin property provides winter range for mule deer, white-tailed deer, and moose and habitat for westslope cutthroat trout and 17 species of conservation concern. The CE would secure approximately 80% of the water supply for the City of Whitefish, conserve important fish and wildlife habitat from expanded development or unsustainable forest management, and would sustain high levels of public recreation. The estimated appraiser value of the easement is \$20,600,000; purchase price would be based on a final appraisal. Funding sources are as follows: \$7M from the Forest Legacy Program, \$2M from the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Program, \$7.7M from the City of Whitefish, and approximately \$3.9M in donated value by the landowner. FWP worked with The Trust for Public Land and the City of Whitefish on public scoping in 2014. An EA was released for public comment and included a public hearing in Whitefish; two legal notices were published in four local newspapers, 161 notices were mailed to neighboring landowners and interested parties, and the EA was

posted on the FWP webpage. Fifty-six public comments were received; 29 comments supported, and none opposed the project; the remaining 27 comments, along with 15 people who expressed support for the project, identified questions, issues or concerns in 12 different categories that are addressed in the Decision Notice. Given the value of this land and demand for residential development, if the proposal is not approved, it is likely the property would ultimately be sold and developed, with subsequent impacts to wildlife, public access, and the water supply of Whitefish.

**Action:** *Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission approve the purchase of the Haskill Basin conservation easement from F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company.*

Commissioner Wolfe and McDonald discussed the Forest Legacy funding; \$7M is not subject to congressional action.

Chairman Vermillion, Vice-Chairman Stuker, Director Hagener, Dick Dolan, Northern Rockies Division of Trust for Public Land (NRDTPL), and McDonald discussed logistics and fair market value of the proposal.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Nick Gevok, MWF, this is a great example of the Land and Water Conservation funding; supports proposal.

John Muhlfield, Mayor of City of Whitefish, explained in detail why this project is important to the City of Whitefish.

Chairman Vermillion commended all parties involved; excellent use of Land and Conservation Funding.

**Action on Motion:** *Motion Passed.*

Chris Clasby, Blackfoot Access Group (BAG), explained the history of the Permit to Hunt from a Vehicle program; has had constructive conversations with Region 2; asked the Commission to consider allowing an individual who have a significant mobility impairment, to harvest an elk, only in districts where the wildlife population can sustain it.

Vore stated the Department has proposed a whitetail deer opportunity for 14 HDs in Region 1; opportunity in 17 HDs in Region 2 and 27 HD in Region 3 that would be suitable and in supportive of.

Chairman Vermillion explained the Department is putting together a list of appropriated HDs for this opportunity and any hunter who has a PTHFV endorsement will have the antlerless opportunity in those HDs if the Commission adopts the final proposal in Feb; asked the Department to supply the Commission a list of available HDs for all seven Region at the Jan meeting.

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained season structures and hunting district boundaries are adopted biennially for most game species. This happens every other year between Dec and final adoptions in Feb. In proposing regulations to the Commission, FWP proposes adopting the existing (2015) structure except for specific changes. Proposals are based on population status and/or other circumstances. Public comment for all hunting season proposals will run through 5 p.m., Jan 22, 2016 with any final adoption at the Feb Commission meeting.

### **13. 2016-2017 Elk Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries – Proposed**

#### **HD 313**

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief gave a lengthy explanation for the 2016 and 2017 season structure and the Department's reasoning for HD 313 proposal. Specific proposed changes for 2016-17 are:

- HD 313:** Establish bull permit 313-45 (quota 75, range 50-150) 1<sup>st</sup> choice only.  
Establish 313-01 B License (quota 30, range 15-50).  
Establish 313-00 youth-only B License (quota 30, range 15 - 50).  
Eliminate 313-10 youth-only brow-tined bull or antlerless permit.

**Action:** *Chairman Vermillion moved and Commissioner Tourtlotte seconded the motion that the Commission approve the Department's proposal to limit Hunting District 313 to 75 permits over the course of 2016 and 2017.*

Commissioners and Vore had a lengthy discussion on the proposal. (recording of the discussion is available in the Dec 12, 2015 Commission file folder).

Chairman Vermillion stated meetings will be held in Livingston at the Pioneer Lodge on Jan 7; Jan 12, Gardiner high school; and Jan 19, at the Holiday Inn in Bozeman. Encourages to write, call or email the Commission.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Mac Minard, Montana Outfitters and Guide Association (MOGA), appreciates the conversations with the Department and Commission; difficult to figure out what needs to be fixed; gave a lengthy explanation on the concerns MOGA has.

Rob Arnaud, MOGA, explained the evaluation and alternative recommendations from MOGA handout (copy of handout is available in the Dec 12, 2015 Commission file folder).

Frank Rigler, Gardiner, worried about elk herd; opposes proposal.

Representative Alan Redfield, Livingston, has received several phone calls regarding proposal; meeting was held in Gardiner, multiple issues were discussed; other options are available.

Elaine Allesrad, Big Timber, don't have to accept proposal, take a more modified approach through the comment period; opposes proposal; real attention needs to be put on wolves.

Mark Lembrecht, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF), issue is moving at a rapid rate; recommends the Department assemble a stakeholder discussion prior to the public meetings; would help if check stations were reinstated.

Sandy Salle, Emigrant, not comfortable with estimations of kill; elk numbers are rebounding; proposal is decisive.

Nick Ricardo, Gardiner, look at other alternative options; opposes majority of proposal.

Jack Davis, Livingston, hunting opportunity is not justified; suggests a Mar 15 deadline.

Kiel Korvash, Gardiner, drastic action that will hurt the community; not accurate trend data; need more sound biology.

Sue Johnson, Gardiner Chamber of Commerce, proposal would create undue hardship to the local economy; less drastic and more moderate solution.

Nick Gevok, MWF, data is clear, FWP did try a interim step with unlimited licenses and it didn't work; supports proposal.

Gary Chastain, Livingston, no disabled access in any proposals.

Amy Johnson, Gardiner, questions and opposes proposal.

Glenn Hockett, Gallatin Wildlife Federation (GWF), loss of hunting opportunity is significant; implement for two years and reevaluate.

Edwin Johnson, Gardiner, reconsider reinstating the boundaries; need to form a committee to reach a consensus prior to soliciting public comment.

MaryEllen Schnur, Townsend, very extreme and opposes proposal.

Jeff Herbert, Montana Sportsmen Alliance (MSA), appreciates the Department's outreach; a lot of questions need to be answered.

Gayle Joslin, Helena, supports proposal.

Gary Duffy, Pray, extreme and questions proposal.

Tom McGrath, would like to dismiss the brow-tined quota for the 2016 season; missing data and questions the Department's credibility; opposes proposal.

Jim Kremer, Gardiner, need more information; hunters have given up a lot of opportunity in 20 years; permit system does not work.

Mike Dailey, Paradise Valley, proposal is insane; no better access than HD 313; opposes proposal.

Chris Kelly, Paradise Valley, something needs to be done but questions proposal; hunters have sacrificed enough; predators are a big issue.

Representative Kerry White, Bozeman, consider removing elk from over populated areas within the state and supplement the Yellowstone elk herd; will impact the economy of the state if approved.

Ken Sinay, Bozeman, history is significant; need to keep the opportunity for all hunters; more intense management.

Rowdy Yates, Gardiner, check station data is important; data is not complete; need mandatory check station.

Michael Bent, Gardiner, opposes proposal; need more wardens out in the field.

Kathryn QannaYahu, Enhancing Montana's Wildlife and Habitat (EMWH), commented on apex predators and predation within the state.

Michael Reed, Bozeman, predators are a big issue in this area.

Matt Cunningham, supports the idea of creating a working group to work out a different proposal.

*NOTE: Majority of all commenter's stated they respect and appreciate Karen Loveless's work on this issue.*

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated he appreciates all the comments; if the motion stands, there is still the opportunity to change the proposal at the Feb meeting; all suggestions need to be considered.

Chairman Vermillion stated the Department and Commission are considering other alternatives; explained his concerns with the proposal; urges the Commission to move the proposal forward with explicate direction to the Department to solicit comments on different alternatives.

Commissioner Wolfe stated he would not support this proposal it was a final proposal; the proposal the Department has brought forward is the quickest and best way to restore the historic demographic structure; not willing to support the status quo.

Commissioner Wolfe and Becky Dockter, Chief Legal Counsel discussed what would happen if there is a considerable change in the proposal at the Feb meeting.

Commissioner Wolfe explained he supports the antler-point restriction; would like to have other alternatives included in the proposal that is released for public comment.

*Amended Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded to amend the motion to add to the following alternatives to the original motion and solicit for public comment, so comments are received on all issues.*

- *Unlimited Brow-tined bull permits by drawing 1<sup>st</sup> choice only with no sales after Mar 15<sup>th</sup>. Hunters may not hunt antlered elk in any other hunting district.*
  - ❖ *Unlimited Brow-tined bull permits as described above with a 6-point bull regulation*
  - ❖ *Unlimited Brow-tined bull permits as described above with a shorter season*
  - ❖ *Unlimited Brow-tined bull permits as described above with a harvest quota monitored at the Slip and Slide Check Station*
  - ❖ *Unlimited Brow-tined bull permits as described above and close Deckard Flats/Eagle Basin*
- *Readjust the HD 313/314 boundary*

Chairman Vermillion stated there is not enough time to put together a working group.

Vice-Chairman Stuker asked \$1.9 million was mentioned as what Gardiner will lose; is this the actual effect will be.

Chairman Vermillion read the Commission's mission statement and explained the Commission's role on this issue; will support this motion.

*Action on Motion and Amended Motion: Motion Passed.*

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained for the 2016 and 2017 elk-season structure, some of the significant proposed changes include the establishment of early and/or late shoulder seasons in 44 HDs or portions thereof; establishing more liberal general season opportunities in many HDs; establishing two new hunting districts, HD 217 in the North Flints out of a portion of HD 212 and HD 451 out of the eastern portion of HD 391; and eliminating the 900-00 bundled B Licenses valid in a number of HDs in Regions 4, 5, and 7 because they are redundant, undersubscribed, underused, and doing so would simplify the regulations. No changes are proposed for the elk archery permit structure. Elk season comments were received during scoping and included interest in antlerless opportunities, archery permits, and public/private land management. Specific proposed changes for 2016-17 are listed below. All other season components except calendar rotation are proposed unchanged from 2015.

**Statewide:** Require a person to already have a Bow and Arrow license when applying for any archery-only deer, elk or antelope license or permit, e.g. the antelope 900-20 archery license, the Breaks 900-20 archery elk permit, the Bitterroot 260-01 deer B License.

**Region 1**

HD 101/109: Establish early shoulder season to address game damage primarily in the Tobacco Plains area with 50 199-00 B-licenses (range 5-100) for antlerless elk valid on private land only excluding Plum Creek, Stimpson, and Stoltze Timber lands Aug 15 - Oct 16.

**Region 2**

All R2 HDs with elk B Licenses:

Eliminate the stipulation that a B License holder may not take an antlered bull in that HD.

HD 200: Change 200-00 B Licenses to antlerless permits (quota 5, range 5-100). Holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 200.

HD 201: Change B Licenses to antlerless permits and increase quota, 201-00 from 60 to 85 (range 5-300) and 201-01 from 30 to 50 (range 5-100). Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 201.

- Change 201-00 and General License youth opportunity from only valid on private land to only valid in Ninemile/Sixmile area (subdistrict 201-00).  
Add antlerless to general license for all HD 201 for archery only season.
- HD 202: Change 202-00 B-licenses to antlerless permits (quota 15, range 5-100). Holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 202.
- HD 210: Remove 210-00 B Licenses.  
Remove 210-01 B Licenses (Only valid on private land).  
Define northern and a southern portions.  
Establish Shoulder Season:  
Add 210-02 antlerless permits (quota 50, range 5-500) for archery and general. Only valid in southern portion of HD 210. Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 210.  
Add 210-03 B Licenses (quota 200, range 5-1000) valid Aug 15 - Jan 01. Only valid in southern portion of HD 210 outside of the National Forest Boundary.  
Add 210-04 antlerless permits (quota 150, range 5-1000) for archery and general. Only valid in northern portion of HD 210. Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 210.  
Add 210-05 B Licenses (quota 400, range 5-1000) valid Aug 15 - Jan 01. Only valid in northern portion of HD 210, outside of the National Forest Boundary.
- HDs 211/213/214/216: Convert existing B Licenses to permits at existing levels. Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in that HD.
- HDs 212: Establish new HD 217 Rock Cr to Douglas Cr in north part of HD 212.  
Define new portions of redefined HD 212.  
Remove 212-03 B License.  
Convert existing 212-00 and 212-01 B Licenses to permits at existing levels valid in the new portions. Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 212.
- HDs 215, 318 and 335 (Deer Lodge EMU): Remove (215-00, 215-01, 318-00, 335-00) B Licenses in these HDs.  
Establish 394-00 antlerless permit (quota 800, range 200-2000) valid in HDs 215, 318, and 335 during both archery and rifle season. Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in any of these HDs.  
Establish Shoulder Season in HD 215 with 215-02 OTC B Licenses not valid on USFS or the Spotted Dog WMA valid Aug 15 - Feb 15.
- HD 217 – New HD: A new HD created from the north part of HD 212 between Douglas Cr. and Rock Cr.  
Establish Shoulder Season:  
Establish 217-00 OTC B-licenses valid Aug 15 to Jan 15.  
Establish 217-20 either sex permits (quota 100, range 5-200) valid in archery and general season.  
Establish 217-21 either sex permits for youth only (quota 25, range 5-200) valid in archery and general season.  
Establish General License for HD 217 as follows:  
ArchEquip only for antlerless elk Aug 15- Jan 15.  
No general firearms season.  
Youth opportunity any weapon for antlerless elk Aug 15 to Jan 15.
- HD 250: Increase bull permits from 25 to 40.
- HD 260: Add 260-00 B License (quota 20, range 1-75). 1st choice only. Private land only. ArchEquip, shotgun, traditional handgun, muzzleloader, or crossbow only. Not valid west of Highway 93 in Missoula County.  
Change general license to include the area west of Hwy 93.
- HD 261: Change private land description for the 261-01 B-licenses from "Private land only." to "Only valid outside the National Forest boundary and NOT valid on Calf Creek WMA."  
Establish quota range for 261-01 B Licenses (currently undefined) of 10-200.
- HD 262: Add general license opportunity so that archers can harvest antlerless elk Aug 15 - Jan 15. Establish 262-01 B License quota range (currently undefined) at 10-300.
- HD 270: Establish quota ranges for elk B Licenses as follows (establishing ranges was an oversight when these licenses were established):  
270-00 (Rye north): 10-200                      270-01 (Rye north youth): 10-200  
270-02 (East Fork): 10-400                      270-03 (East Fork youth): 10-400  
270-04 (west of 93): 5-100                      270-05 (west of 93 youth): 5-100
- HD 281: Establish 281-00 B-license during archery and general season (quota 25, range 5-150).
- HD 290: Remove 298-00 B-license.  
Establish Shoulder Season 290-01 OTC B-license. Only valid on private land. Aug 15 - Feb 15.
- HDs 291 and 298: Remove 291-00 B License.  
Establish Shoulder Season. Establish 299-00 B License (quota 400, range 5-1000) valid in HDs 291 and 298 valid Aug 15 - Jan 1 and not valid on BLM land.  
Establish 297-00 antlerless elk permit (quota 800, range 5-2000) valid in HDs 291 and 298.  
Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in HD 291 but may do so in HD 298.
- HD 292: Establish Shoulder Season. Establish 292-00 antlerless permit (quota 300, range 5-500) valid only on private land in the Blackfoot watershed Aug 15 - Nov 27.

- HD 293: Remove either-sex on private land on general license and make it Brow-tined bull entire HD.  
Remove 293-00 B License.  
Establish new Southern Portion of HD 293.  
Include in the 396-00 antlerless permit bundle for HDs 339, 343 and southern portion of 293 (quota 600, range 200-1500) valid archery and general seasons. Holders may not hunt antlered in any of these HDs.

**Region 3**

HDs 300, 302 and 328 (Tendoy EMU); 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327 and 330 (Gravelly EMU); and 320 and 333 (Tobacco Root EMU) (12 HDs total):

Remove 300-00, 302-00, 320-00 and 328-00 B-licenses.  
Establish 399-00 B License (quota 500, range 400-1000) valid during archery and general season in all 12 HDs.  
Move the Tendoy EMU (HDs 300, 302 and 328) general season from BTB to BTB/antlerless.  
Maintain the 6-week BTB/antlerless archery season.  
Maintain either-sex youth opportunity in the Tendoy EMU.

- HD 301/309: Establish 395-00 B-licenses (quota 100, range 25-500) not valid on Nat'l Forest lands during archery and general seasons to address game damage in Gallatin Valley.

HD 311: Establish 311-00 B-licenses (quota 500, range 100-1000) not valid on Nat'l Forest lands.

HD 312: Establish Shoulder Season.

Remove 312-00 B-license.

Include in the OTC 397-00 B License bundle (HDs 312, 390, 393) valid Sep 03 - Feb 15. Not valid on Nat'l Forest lands.

HD 313 (See Above):

Establish bull permit 313-45 (quota 75, range 50-150) 1<sup>st</sup> choice only.

Establish 313-01 B License (quota 30, range 15-50).

Establish 313-00 youth-only B License (quota 30, range 15 - 50).

Eliminate 313-10 youth-only brow-tined bull or antlerless permit.

HD 314: Establish youth-only brow-tined bull or antlerless south of Big Creek.

HDs 318/335: Delete existing 318-00 and 335-00 B Licenses in these HDs.

Include these HDs in the 394-00 antlerless permit (quota 800, range 200-2000) bundle valid in HDs 215, 318, and 335 during both archery and rifle season. Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in any of these HDs.

HDs 293, 339 and 343 (Granite Butte EMU):

Remove 293-00, 339-00, 343-00 B Licenses from these 3 HDs.

Establish new Southern Portion of HD 293.

Establish 396-00 antlerless permits for HDs 339, 343 and southern portion of 293 (quota 600, range 200-1500) valid archery and general seasons. Non-youth holders may not hunt antlered elk in any of these HDs.

HD 340: Remove 340-00 B-licenses.

Establish 340-10 Brow-tined or antlerless permits (quota 150, range 50-400) valid archery and general seasons.

Increase antlerless opportunity on general license from first week to first 3 weeks.

HD 350/370: Increase antlerless opportunity on general license from first week to Brow-tined Bull/Antlerless entire archery and general season in each HD.

HD 360/362: Rename 360-01 B License to 398-00 for consistency where B Licenses and/or permits are valid in 2 or more HDs.

Eliminate mandatory phone reporting requirement for harvest in these HDs. The requirement is poorly adhered to and yields poor, redundant data.

HD 380: Portion description change. Expand South Portion to include the area outside the National Forest Boundary between Muskrat Creek and Prickly Pear Creek.

HD 390: Establish Shoulder Season.

Remove 390-00 B-licenses.

Include in the OTC 397-00 B License bundle (HDs 312, 390, 393) valid Sep 03 - Feb 5. Not valid on Nat'l Forest lands.

General season to go from Brow-tined Bull or Antlerless for the entire season to Brow-tined Bull or Antlerless for the first 4 weeks and Antlerless-only for the last week to match neighboring HD 391.

General license shoulder season for antlerless elk Nov 28 - Feb 15 not valid on National Forest land.

HD 391: Establish shoulder season.

Establish 391-00 B License (quota 350, range 100-600) valid district-wide during archery and general seasons and not valid on USFS lands during Nov 30 - Dec 31 shoulder season.

General season to go from Brow-tined Bull to Brow-tined Bull or Antlerless for the first 4 weeks and Antlerless-only for the last week to match neighboring HD 390.

Boundary change in 391: east boundary moves west to Belt Mtns divide to accommodate new HD 451 and north boundary move north from Duck Cr. to Magpie/Avalanche Cr. to accommodate new definitions of HDs 391 and 392.

HD 392: Remove 392-01 B-license.

Change 392-00 B-license to be valid entire redefined HD.

Reduce 392-00 quota from 300 to 75 and range from 50-400 to 50-250.

Boundary change in 392: South boundary moves north from Duck Cr. to Magpie/Avalanche Cr. to accommodate new definitions of HDs 391 and 392.

Boundary change in 392: Northeast boundary changes to put the upper reaches of Beaver Creek that are next to Jim Ball Basin and Elk Ridge into HD 446 to facilitate elk management in the way that elk use the area. Most elk that use this area are associated with HD 446.

- HD 393: Establish Shoulder Season.  
Remove 393-01 B-licenses.  
Include in the OTC 397-00 B License bundle (HDs 312, 390, 393) valid Sep 03 - Feb 15. Not valid on Nat'l Forest lands.  
General License shoulder season for antlerless elk Nov 28 - Feb 15 not valid on National Forest land

**Region 4**

- HD 410: Establish Shoulder Season.  
During the Jan 1 - Feb 15 shoulder season Either-sex 410-20 permits valid for ANTLERLESS ELK ONLY and not valid on CMR.

Increase quota range of 410-00 B License from 200-800 to 200-1000.  
410-00 B-licenses also valid Jan 01 - Feb 15 but not on the CMR.

- HD 411: Establish Shoulder Season.  
General license valid Aug 15 - Feb 15 but not valid on National Forest lands.  
Make 411-00 B License (quota 400, range 100-600) valid in HDs 411, 511, and 530.  
004-00 B Licenses valid Aug 15 - Feb 15. Not valid on National Forest lands or FWP WMAs.
- HD 412: Establish Shoulder Season for either-sex permit (412-20) holders, and antlerless elk license (004-00) holders.  
Either-sex permits during Nov 28 - Feb 15 shoulder season valid for ANTLERLESS ELK ONLY.  
004-00 B-licenses valid Sep 3 - Feb 15.

- HD 416: Remove 416-00 B-license - not used much and will decrease pressure on limited public land.

- HD 417: Establish Shoulder Season.  
417-20 permits valid Nov 28 - Feb 15 for ANTLERLESS ELK ONLY. Not valid on CMR.  
004-00 B-licenses valid Sep 3 - Feb 15. Not valid on CMR.

- HD 421: Establish Shoulder Season for 004-00 B-Licenses valid for any weapon Aug 15 - Nov 27 and Jan 1 - Feb 15.

- HD 422: Establish Shoulder Season with 422-00 and 004-00 B Licenses.  
422-00 B License also valid Jan 1 - Feb 15 but not valid on National Forest lands during the shoulder season.  
004-00 B Licenses valid as follows:

Sep 03 - Oct 16 - Antlerless Elk. Archery Only Season.  
Oct 22 - Nov 27 - Antlerless Elk.  
Jan 01 - Feb 15 - Antlerless Elk.

- HD 423: Establish Shoulder Season for 004-00 B-Licenses as follows:  
Sep 03 - Oct 16 - Antlerless Elk. Archery Only Season.  
Oct 22 - Nov 27 - Antlerless Elk.  
Jan 01 - Feb 15 - Antlerless Elk.

- HD 426: Eliminate the 426-20 ES permit.  
Create general license either-sex opportunity during both archery and rifle seasons.  
Remove HD 426 as a valid HD from the 900-20 (Archery Bundle).  
Remove HD 426 as a valid HD from the 900-00 LPT.

- HD 442: Reduce 442-00 quota range minimum from 100 to 50.

- HD 445: Establish Shoulder Season on the general license as below:  
Aug 15 - Oct 21 - Antlerless Elk. Not valid on National Forest land or FWP WMAs.  
Sep 03 - Oct 16 - Either-sex Elk. Archery Equip Only Season.  
Oct 22 - Nov 06 - Either-sex Elk.  
Nov 7 - Nov 27 - Antlerless Elk.  
Nov 28 - Feb 15 - Antlerless Elk. Not valid on National Forest land or FWP WMAs.

004-00 B-license good Aug 15 - Feb 15 not valid on USFS, FWP WMA's or CMR.

Adjust the HD boundary after addition of Whitetail Prairie to the Beartooth WMA.

- HD 446: Establish Shoulder Season on the general license as below:  
Aug 15 - Oct 21 - Antlerless Elk. Not valid on National Forest land or FWP WMAs.  
Sep 03 - Oct 16 - Brow-lined Bull or Antlerless Elk. Archery Equip Only Season.  
Oct 22 - Nov 27 - Brow-tined Bull or Antlerless Elk.  
Nov 28 - Feb 15 - Antlerless Elk. Not valid on National Forest land or FWP WMAs.

004-00 B-license good Aug 15 - Feb 15 not valid on USFS, FWP WMA's or CMR.

Adjust the hunting district 446/392 boundary for deer, elk, mountain lion and furbearer.

Boundary change in 446: Northwest boundary changes to put the upper reaches of Beaver Creek that are next to Jim Ball Basin and Elk Ridge, currently in HD 392, into HD 446 to facilitate elk management in the way that elk use the area. Most elk that use this area are associated with HD 446.

- HD 449 and 452: Establish Shoulder Season on the general license as below:  
Aug 15 - Oct 21 - Antlerless Elk. Not valid on National Forest land or FWP WMAs.  
Sep 03 - Oct 16 - Either-sex Elk. Archery Equip Only Season.  
Oct 22 - Nov 27 - Either-sex Elk.  
Nov 28 - Feb 15 - Antlerless Elk. Not valid on National Forest land or FWP WMAs.

- HD 451: 004-00 B-license good Aug 15 - Feb 15 not valid on USFS, FWP WMA's or CMR.  
New HD. Establish Shoulder Season Aug 15 - Feb 15 not valid on National Forest lands, FWP WMAs, or CMR.  
Aug 15 - Oct 21 - Antlerless Elk. Not Valid on National Forest lands  
Sep 03 - Oct 16 - Brow tined Bull or Antlerless Elk. Archery Only Season.  
Oct 22 - Nov 27 - Brow tined Bull or Antlerless Elk.  
Nov 28 - Feb 15 - Antlerless Elk. Not Valid on National Forest lands.  
004-00 B-Licenses valid Aug 15 - Feb 15 not valid on National Forest lands, FWP WMAs, or CMR during shoulder seasons.
- HD 455: Adjust the HD boundary after addition of Whitetail Prairie to the Beartooth WMA.

#### Region 5

All R5 (except HD 500):

502, Portion of 510 west of HWY 310, 511, Portion of 520 north and west of West Fork of Rock Creek, 530, 540, 560 Portion north of Falls Creek, 570, 575, 580, Portion of 590 north of Yellowstone River.

Establish Shoulder Season with general license:

- Aug 15 - Oct 21 - Antlerless elk. Private land only
- Sep 3 - Oct 16 - Either-sex or Spike bull/antlerless (depending on HD). Archery only.
- Oct 22 - Nov 27 - Either-sex or Spike bull/antlerless (depending on HD).
- Nov 28 - Feb 15 - Antlerless elk. Private land only

005-00 B-Licenses (1200) valid Aug 15 - Feb 15 on private land only.

Individual R5 HD B-licenses as below:

Valid district wide in each HD to address situations where elk are expected to concentrate on National Forest lands adjacent to private lands and be otherwise unavailable for harvest. Valid Sep 3 - Oct 16. Archery only then Oct 22 - Feb 15.

HD 502 and 510 portion: Create 502-01 B-Licenses (quota 50, range 5-150).

HD 511 and 530: 411-00 B-Licenses valid (quota 400, range 100-600).

HD 520: Create 520-01 B-Licenses (quota 50, range 5-150).

Increase the 520-20 ES permit quota range from 25-30 to 25-50.

HD 540: Create 540-01 B-Licenses (quota 100, range 50-300).

HD 560: Create 560-01 B-Licenses (quota 100, range 50-300).

HD 570: Create 570-01 B-Licenses (quota 50, range 5-150).

HD 575: Create 575-01 B-Licenses (quota 50, range 5-150), increase ES 575-20 quota range from 10-15 to 10-50.

HD 580: Create 580-01 B-Licenses (quota 100, range 50-300).

HD 590: Create 590-01 B-Licenses (quota 100, range 50-300).

#### Region 6

HD 680 and 690: Establish Shoulder Season:

Create 696-00 B-License (quota 100, range 100-500) valid 12/15-12/31 in both HDs. Not valid on CMR Refuge.

Create antlerless elk permit 697-00 (quota 100, range 100-300) valid during archery and general seasons in both HDs.

Only valid on private land outside of Block Management Areas.

HDs 620, 621, 622, 630, 631 and 632 (Missouri Breaks EMU):

Establish Shoulder Season.

Create 699-00 B-License (quota 500, range 100-1000) valid in all HDs Dec 15 - Dec 31. Not valid on CMR.

Create 698-00 antlerless permit (quota 300, range 100-500) valid in all HDs during archery and general. Not valid on CMR.

#### Region 7

All R7: Create 007-00 B-License (quota 500, range 500-1500) valid archery and general. Not valid on National Forest lands or CMR Refuge.

HD 701: Simplify the regulations referring to the southwest portion of the HD by removing the language, "Valid in portion of HD 701 north of Yellowstone River, south of Hwy 12 and west of Sumatra-Myers Rd." It is not needed.

Change the archery-only and general elk regulation in the southwest portion of the HD north of the Yellowstone River, south of Hwy 12 and west of Sumatra-Hysham Rd from Antlerless Elk to Spike Bull or Antlerless Elk to match the regulation in adjacent HD 590. The rest of the HD will remain Either-sex.

HD 702, 704 and 705:

Increase 799-20 Either-sex permit from 175 to 225.

Change language for general season in these HDs from "Only valid outside Natl Forest Administrative boundary. Boundary maps available at: Forest Service Office in Ashland; FWP-R7 HQ 406-234-0900 in Miles City; License Providers in area; and on FWP website." to "Not valid on National Forest Lands"

#### Regions 4, 5 and 7

HDs 401, 403, 411, 412, 426, 447, 450, 500, 502, Portion of 510 west of HWY 310, 511, Portion of 520 North and west of West Fork of Rock Creek, 530, 540, 560, 570, 575, 580, Portion of 590 north of Yellowstone River, 701 north of Yellowstone River, south of HWY 12 and west of Sumatra-Myers Road, 702, 704 and 705:

Eliminate 900-00 B Licenses. It is redundant, undersubscribed, underused, and doing so would simplify the regulations.

Commissioners and Department discussed the specific regulations change during Vore's proposal presentation.

**Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission adopt for public comment the 2016 and 2017 Elk Hunting Seasons and Hunting Districts, with the exception of HD 313, as presented by FWP.**

Commissioners and Department had a lengthy question and answer discussion on the proposal.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Rod Bullis, Helena Hunter and Anglers (HHA) and Randy Arnold, Region 1 Supervisor discussed HD 290,291, 293 and 298 proposal.

Representative Kelly Flynn, Townsend, Department has not had any contact with landowners in Broadwater County nor have they asked for input on the proposals; expressed his concerns with the Region 3 proposals and shoulder seasons.

Chairman Vermillion and Representative Flynn discussed how the Department can reach out and improve communications with the Broadwater County landowners.

Vice-Chairman Stuker and Vore discussed why a week was eliminated in HD 390.

Commissioners, Burt and Quentin Kujala, Wildlife Management Section Chief discussed matters in Region 3 and issues Representative Flynn brought forward.

Jeff Brozovich, G Bar T Ranch and surrounding landowners, not in favor of shoulder seasons, not enough enforcement for illegal issues; want to work with the Department to come up with a solution.

Brian McCulloch, Helena, supports shoulder seasons.

Steve Schindler, Traditional Bow Hunters of Montana (TBHM), has concerns with the HD 411 proposal.

Ron Wetsch, Drummond, no change to proposal in his area; new HD 217 does not help situation, needs to be reevaluated.

Joel Selk, TMBA, has concerns with HD 290 archery only areas; requests to allow lighted nocks in the archery regulations, was brought to the Commission's attention at the Nov meeting.

Glenn Hockett, GWA, has concerns with the Tendoy area proposals; hold off on approving shoulder seasons until pilot project is completed.

Charles ??, Townsend, opposes shoulder hunts.

Cody McDaniel, Townsend, questions shoulder season hunts; hunter traffic is out of control in the Townsend area; management hunts make more sense.

Mark Lembrecht, RMEF, supports moving proposals forward.

Nick Gevok, MWF, season shoulder proposal is to soon; need to see the data on the pilot project first.

Toby Dundas, Townsend, has issues with HD 391, 392 and 393 landowner; does not allow public access.

Chairman Vermillion, Commissioner Wolfe, Kujala and Jeff Herbert, MSA, discussed the Commission's discretion to change the management direction criteria in the future.

Ben Lamb, Helena, has concerns with the shoulder seasons; moving too quickly; need to take a conservative approach.

Ryan Smith, opposes shoulder season; proposal is not thoughtful.

Commissioner Wolfe discussed the conversations he has had with different individuals concerning the shoulder seasons; all landowners have asked for shoulder seasons.

Vice-Chairman Stuker stated he has heard from landowners who are concerned they not involved as much as they should be; do not feel welcomed at the public meetings; considering closing their property.

Vice-Chairman Stuker and Vore discussed shoulder seasons requirements.

Vore clarified HD 391s proposal.

Chairman Vermillion stated hunters should focus and comment on HD 426 proposal, dramatic change on how elk is managed in central Montana; a lot of concerns from landowners on how to move forward on shoulder seasons; Department needs to figure out how to improve communications with stakeholders in these decisions.

**Action on Motion: Motion Passed.**

#### 14. 2016-2017 Antelope Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries – Proposed

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained the 2016 and 2017 antelope season structure changes include increased quotas and quota ranges to address increased and growing populations. A new hunting district, HD 313, is proposed in the upper Yellowstone because a new population of antelope has become established over the past several years. *For information only and does not require Commission action:* the antelope drawing will be moved to the first week of Aug to accommodate biologists' surveys, which cannot begin before mid-July because of antelope biology; hunters who apply for the 900-20 archery license will not learn if they drew it until shortly before the season opens on Aug 15. Antelope season comments were received during scoping and included interest in fewer licenses in response to lower populations. Specific proposed changes for 2016-17 are listed below. All other season components except calendar rotation are proposed unchanged from 2015.

- Statewide: Require a person to already have a Bow and Arrow license when applying for any archery-only deer, elk or antelope license or permit, e.g. the antelope 900-20 archery license, the Breaks 900-20 archery elk permit, the Bitterroot 260-01 deer B License.
- HD 310: Increase DF quota range from 150-250 to 150-400.
- HD 313: Open new district - Upper Yellowstone.
- HD 318: Increase ES from 350 to 425 and DF from 300 to 375.
- HD 339: Add 2nd opportunity D/F (quota=200, range=0-300) and Increase ES quota range from 100-250 to 100-300.
- HD 340: Add 2nd opportunity D/F (quota=150, range=0-250).
- HD 341: Increase ES quota range from 100-300 to 50-350.
- HD 360: Increase ES quota range from 400-500 to 200-700 and get 2nd opportunity D/F quota=100 and range = 25-300 on books.
- HD 370: Increase ES quota range from 50-100 to 25-150 and DF from 50-100 to 25-250.
- HD 371: Increase ES quota range from 35-100 to 25-200 and DF from 50-150 to 25-250.
- HD 380/390: Remove 2nd opportunity D/F, remove Canyon Ferry WMA restricted area.
- HD 381: Increase ES quota range from 25-50 to 5-50.
- HD 388: Increase ES quota range from 25-75 to 15-75.
- HD 440: Increase ES quota range from 50-300 to 25-300.
- HD 444: Increase ES quota range from 50-350 to 25-350.
- HD 513: Increase ES quota range from 300-1000 to 100-1000.
- HD 530: Increase ES quota range from 300-1500 to 100-1500.
- HD 630: Increase ES from 10 to 100 and DF from 5 to 10.
- HD 670: Increase ES from 25 to 100 and DF from 10 to 25.

**Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Commission adopt for public comment the 2016 and 2017 antelope hunting seasons, hunting districts and antelope license permit quotas presented by FWP.**

**Action: Chairman Vermillion moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission adopt for public comment the 2016 and 2017 elk license permit quotas presented by FWP.**

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

**Action on Motion: Motion Passed.**

#### 15. 2016-2017 Deer Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries – Proposed

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained deer populations in much of the state are recovering from lows of a few years ago and growing substantially. For the 2016 and 2017 mule deer and white-tailed deer season structure, some of the significant proposed changes include liberalizing seasons. Region 1 is proposing going to antlerless white-tailed deer opportunities the first and last week of the general season, many HD in Regions 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 propose going to either-sex mule deer during the general season, and there are a number of proposed mule deer B License opportunities. Region 1 is also proposing offering handicapped hunters with PTHFV the opportunity to take either-sex white-tailed deer during the entire general season in most hunting districts. Deer season comments were received during scoping and included interest in antlerless opportunities and buck harvest management. Specific proposed changes for 2016-17 are listed below. All other season components except calendar rotation are proposed unchanged from 2015.

**Statewide:** Require a person to already have a Bow and Arrow License when applying for any archery-only deer, elk or antelope license or permit, e.g. the antelope 900-20 archery license, the Breaks 900-20 archery elk permit, the Bitterroot 260-01 deer B License.  
Require a person to already have a deer license when applying for any deer permit, the same as is currently the case for non-resident applicants and for all applicants for elk permits.

**Region 1 - White-tailed Deer**

All R1 HDs except 140/141/150/151/170: WTD either-sex on general license the first week everywhere and last week on private land only excluding Plum Creek, Stoltz and Stimpson. Rest of the season antlered-buck.

All R1 HDs except 140/141/150/151/170: Allow antlerless to handicapped hunters with Permission to Hunt From a Vehicle (PTHFV) season-long.

HD 100/103/104: Establish WTD B-licenses in each HD (quota 100, range 5-600) in each.

HD 123: Establish WTD B-licenses (quota 50, range 25-300).

HD 130: Establish WTD B-licenses (quota 50, range 10-1000).

HD 170: Allow antlerless harvest on Kuhns WMA.

**Region 2 - Mule Deer**

HD 217: New HD. Establish Unlimited Buck permits.

HD 250: Reduce buck permits 40 to 25.

HD 261: Increase 261-50 buck permits 25 to 40 valid in HDs 261 and 262.

HD 262: Increase 261-50 buck permits 25 to 40.  
Reduce 262-00 B License from 200 to 100 but successful B-license applicants may purchase 1 more B. Establish quota range for 262-00 of 25-300.  
Add antlerless MD to general tag 8/15-1/1 Arch Equip only.

HD 270: Increase buck permits 45 to 60.

HD 290: Establish quota range for 290-51 Antlered buck permits at 5-100.

**Region 2 White-tailed Deer**

HDs 204/240/250/261/270 (Bitterroot Valley) WTD:

Remove current limited B-licenses from HDs 204(204-01), 240(240-01), and 261(261-00).  
Remove either-sex harvest during the first week of general rifle season in HDs 240 and 250  
Remove HD 250 from the list of districts valid for the 260-01 license (archery-only, 3 licenses per hunter).  
Add new limited B Licenses that allow a late season (12/1-1/1) harvest on private land only with special weapons where hunters who draw the license may purchase up to 2 additional licenses as below:

260-02: (quota 100, range 50-400) in HD 260 1<sup>st</sup> choice only. Not valid west of Highway 93 in Missoula County.

299-00: (quota 400, range 50-500) valid in HDs 204, 240, 261, and 270 (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choice).

HD 210: Establish WTD 210-00 B License (quota 75, range 5-200).

HD 212: Establish WTD 212-01 B License (quota 100, range 5-200).

HD 213: Establish WTD 213-01 B License (quota 25, range 5-200).

HD 215: Establish WTD 215-01 B License (quota 50, range 5-200).

HD 216: Establish WTD 216-00 B License (quota 25, range 5-200).

HD 217: First nine days ES, rest of the season buck only.

HD 250: Eliminate 1<sup>st</sup> week either-sex.

HD 291: Establish WTD 291-00 B License (quota 50, range 5-200).

HD 285: Increase WTD B-licenses from 50 to 75.

HD 292: Increase WTD B-licenses from 75 to 100.

**Region 3 - Mule Deer**

HDs 300/302/320/322/325/326/328/329/330/331/333 (Tendoy and Tobacco Root Mtns):

Remove 75 MD 300-01 B-licenses from HD 300.  
Remove 200 MD 331-02 B-licenses from HD 331.  
Remove the unlimited mule deer buck permit 302-50 from HD 302.  
Eliminate the three-week mule deer buck season in HDs 320 and 333.  
Implement a season-long either-sex mule deer on a general deer license in HDs 300, 302, 320, 322, 325, 326, 328, 329, 330, 331, and 333. With the exception of HDs 300 and 329, which will maintain respective limited and unlimited mule deer buck permit regulations.

HD 309: Reintroduce B-license, 309-01 (quota 25, range 25-100).

HD 311: Reintroduce B-license, 311-01 (quota 100, range 25-300).

HD 312: Reintroduce B-license, 312-01 (quota 50, range 25-200).

HD 313: Reintroduce B-license, 313-01 (quota 50, range 25-200).

HDs 318/335/339/343 (Helena Area): Reintroduce MD B Licenses:

318-01 (quota 50, range 25-150).  
335-01 (quota 50, range 25-150).  
339-01 (quota 50, range 25-200).  
343-01 (quota 50, range 25-200).

HD 319: Establish 319-01 B License quota range of 10-100.

HDs 321/334/340/341/350/370 (Butte HDs): Allow ES during archery, implement B-licenses:

- 321-01 (quota 10, range 10-30).  
334-01 (quota 10, range 10-30).  
340-01 (quota 50, range 10-200).  
341-01 (quota 20, range 10-100).  
350-01 (quota 10, range 10-30).  
370-01 (quota 10, range 10-30).
- HD 380: Reintroduce B Licenses 380-02 (quota 50, range 25-200) valid only on private land outside of Nat'l Forest Service boundary and on DNRC land.
- HD 388, City of Helena: Helena Urban Deer Plan. Approve removal of 130 deer within the city limits between Nov 15 and Mar 31. If the proportion of mature bucks is disproportionately high, allow for an additional 50 deer, bringing the total to 180. We do not recommend the release of any bucks captured in the additional 50 if it is warranted.
- HD 390: Reintroduce B Licenses 390-01 (quota 50, range 25-200) not valid on National Forest Land.
- HD 391: Reintroduce B Licenses 391-02 (quota 100, range 25-200) not valid on National Forest Land. Remove Canyon Ferry WMA Weapons Restriction Area to clean up and reduce complexity. Language is ambiguous and open to interpretation.

**Region 3 - White-tailed Deer**

- HD 301: Remove 301-00 B License. It is redundant and little used.
- HDs 320/322/324/325/326/330/333/340/360 (Tobacco Roots, Highlands, Madison):  
WTD - Remove individual district B Licenses and establish 399-00 OTC B Licenses for the bundle, (quota 3, range 1-5 per hunter).

**Region 4 - Mule Deer**

- In 23 of 36 R4 districts – HDs400/401/403/404/405/406/410/411/412/413/417/419/421/422/423/426/432/442/444/445/447//450/471:  
Change from antlered buck mule deer to either-sex.  
HDs 422, 423, and 442 for outside National Forest lands only.
- HD 401: 401-00 B-license reduction, 200 to 100, and establish quota range 100-500.
- HD 403: 403-00 B-license (valid for either species) reduction, 175 to 75, and establish quota range 25-300.
- HD 405: 405-00 B-license reduction, 200 to 50, and establish quota range 25-250.
- HD 406: Change 406-00 B-license to MD only and reduce from 200 to 100 with range 25-500.
- HD 413: 413-00 B-license reduction, 200 to 50, and establish quota range 5-250.
- HD 419: Establish 419-00 B-license (quota 25, range 5-100).
- HD 426: Establish 426-00 B-license (quota 25, range 5-100).
- HD 451: New HD carved out of HD 391. Establish antlered buck MD and ES WTD archery and general.

**Region 4 - White-tailed Deer**

- HDs 406/441/450: Establish 495-00 B license (quota 300, range 100-800) valid in all 3 HDs. HD 406 closes Nov 13. HDs 441 and 450 close Nov 27.
- HDs 411/412: Eliminate 411-00 WTD B License.  
Establish 497-00 B license (quota 300, range 100-500) valid in both HDs.
- HDs 413/445: Establish 496-00 B license (quota 100, range 5-500) valid in both HDs.
- HDs 422/444: Eliminate 444-00 B Licenses and establish 498-00 B license (quota 400, range 50-500) valid in both HDs.
- HDs 416/446/449/452/454: Eliminate the current five individual B Licenses (416-00, 446-00, 449-00, 452-00 and 454-00) and establish a single 499-00 B License (quota 400, range 50-1500) valid in all 5 HDs to simplify the regulations.

**Region 5 - Mule Deer**

- HDs 500/570/590:  
Change from antlered buck to either-sex.  
Reintroduce B Licenses as below:
- Most of R5:  
HD 500: Quota 100, range 5-200.  
HD 502: Quota 25, range 5-150.  
HD 510: Quota 75, range 5-150, Not valid on Nat'l Forest lands.  
HD 511: Quota 10, range 5-50, Not valid on Nat'l Forest lands.  
HD 520: Quota 50, range 5-150, Not valid on Nat'l Forest lands.  
HD 530: Quota 10, range 5-50, Not valid on Nat'l Forest lands.  
HD 540: Quota 10, range 5-50, Not valid on Nat'l Forest lands.  
HD 560: Quota 25, range 5-150, Not valid on Nat'l Forest lands.  
HD 570: Quota 25, range 5-150.  
HD 575: Quota 100, range 5-200.  
HD 580: Quota 25, range 5-200, Not valid on Nat'l Forest lands.  
HD 590: Quota 100, range 5-250.

**Region 5 - White-tailed Deer**

HDs 500/530/590:

Introduce 597-00 B License (quota 200, range 100-800) valid in all 3 HDs. Not valid on Nat'l Forest lands.

HDs 511/540/570/580:

Reintroduce 598-00 B License (Quota 500, range 400-1000) Valid in all 4 HDs.

**Region 6 - Mule Deer**

HDs 600/611/621/622:

Go to either-sex on a general license.

HDs 630/631/632:

Establish 630-00 B Licenses (quota 100, range 100-1000).

HD 640:

Establish 640-00 B Licenses (quota 100, range 100-900).

HD 651:

Establish 651-00 B Licenses (quota 100, range 100-500).

HD 670:

Establish 670-00 B Licenses (quota 200, range 200-2000).

HD 680:

Establish 680-00 B Licenses (quota 100, range 100-1000).

HD 690:

Establish 690-00 B Licenses (quota 100, range 100-1000).

**Region 6 - White-tailed Deer**

All R6 HDs:

Introduce OTC 006-00 B Licenses, 1 per hunter, valid in all Region 6 HDs.

**Region 7 - Mule Deer**

All R7 HDs:

Go to ES with a general license.

Replace all individual HD B Licenses with 007-03 region-wide B License (quota 4500, range 1000-5000) valid in all Region 7 HDs.

***Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Commission adopt for public comment the 2016 and 2017 Deer Hunting Seasons and Quotas as presented by FWP.***

Chairman Vermillion, Vore and Dean Waltee, Region 3 Biologist discussed the Tendoy area proposal.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Glen Hockett, GWA, concerned about the Tendoy proposal.

Nick Gevok, MWF, concerned about the Tendoy proposal; would like to have a discussion with Waltee.

Commissioner Wolfe and Neil Anderson, Region 1 Biologist, discussed the liberal harvest for Region 1.

***Action on Motion: Motion Passed.***

**16. 2016-2017 Moose Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries – Proposed**

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief explained the 2016 and 2017 moose season structure changes includes reducing antlered bull licenses in HD 250 from three to one, some changes to quota ranges, and two proposals to combine adjacent individual hunting district licenses into one license valid in multiple hunting districts. Moose season comments were received during scoping and included interest in drawing odds and lower moose populations. All other season components except calendar rotation are proposed unchanged from 2015.

HD 250: Reduce Antlered Bull licenses from 3 to 1.

HD 323: Increase quota range for 323-50 Antlered Bull license from 1-10 to 1-15.

HD 325: Increase quota range for 323-50 Antlered Bull license from 1-6 to 1-10.

HDs 308/313/360: Remove antlered bull licenses in these individual HDs that currently sum to 5.

Establish 398-50 antlered bull licenses (quota 5, range 1-15) valid in all 3 HDs.

HDs 361/362: Remove antlered bull licenses in these individual HDs that currently sum to 4.

Establish 399-50 antlered bull licenses (quota 4, range 1-10) valid in both HDs.

HD 380: Increase quota range for 380-00 antlerless license from 1-2 to 1-4.

Eliminate Canyon Ferry WMA Weapons Restriction/Closure area listing under the Weapons Restriction Area section

**17. 2016-2017 Bighorn Sheep Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries – Proposed**

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief explained the 2016 and 2017 bighorn sheep season, structure changes include changing the requirement for presenting harvested sheep in the region it was harvested to presenting it to FWP anywhere in the state except for Region 6 and the unlimited districts, removing the Gallatin Special Management Area closed area, adjustments to quotas and quota ranges, and re-opening the Beartooth WMA - Gates of the Mountains HD 455 with one either-sex license. Bighorn sheep season comments were received during scoping and included interest in drawing odds. Specific proposed changes for 2016-17 are listed below. All other season components except calendar rotation are proposed unchanged from 2015.

**Statewide:** Change requirement for presenting harvested sheep in the region it was harvested to anywhere in the state except for R6 and the unlimited districts.

**HD 300/302:** Remove Gallatin Special Management Area closed area.

- HD 301: Establish ewe licenses (quota 15, range 1-30).  
HD 340: Increase Either-sex from 1 to 2.  
HD 455: Re-open HD, Either-sex (quota 1, range 1-2).  
HD 482: Remove HD portions for ewes.  
Increase ewe quota from 20 to 35.  
Increase ewe quota range from 2-25 to 2-40.  
HD 501: Increase legal ram quota range from 2-4 to 1-4.  
HD 622: Increase Either-sex quota range from 3-20 to 3-30.  
Increase ewe quota range from 1-40 to 1-100.

#### 18. 2016-2017 Mountain Goat Hunting Season, Quota Ranges and HD Boundaries – Proposed

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief explained the 2016 and 2017 mountain goat season-structure changes include no longer requiring mandatory reporting and inspection; here is little biological reason for mandatory reporting because, via FWP's annual harvest survey, all license holders are contacted to estimate harvest, and too few animals are inspected to yield meaningful population biological data; some districts with specific management needs may still require it. FWP is proposing to introduce adult female-only (nanny) licenses for the first time to facilitate population reduction and maintenance in the Crazy Mountains where goat numbers exceed the objective of 300 by 25-75 goats since 2009. Nanny licenses have been used with success in Utah and Colorado for more than five years with minimal enforcement problems and high hunter participation. Online identification courses have helped hunters be confident and accurate in harvesting nannies. Other proposals include opening the Gallatin Special Management Area to hunting in HDs 314 and 362 and clarifying boundary language in HDs 327 and 328. Mountain goat season comments were received during scoping and included interest in drawing odds.. Specific proposed changes for 2016-17 are listed below. All other season components except calendar rotation are proposed unchanged from 2015.

Statewide: No longer require mandatory reporting and inspection. There is little biological reason for mandatory reporting because our annual harvest survey contacts all license holders to estimate harvest and too few animals are inspected to yield meaningful population data. Some districts with specific management needs (eg. 313 - the Crazies) may still require it.

HD 313 (Crazy Mtns): Introduce 313-30 Female-only licenses (quota 25, range 5-35).  
Adjust ES license quota from 50 to 30 and adjust range from 40-100 to 15-100.

HD 314: Eliminate the closure in the Gallatin Special Management Area.

HD 362: Redefine HD to open that portion of the Gallatin Special Management Area between Sage Creek and YNP.

HD 327/328: Clarify boundary as West Fork of Beaver Creek by Blue Danube Lake.

**Action:** *Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission adopt for public comment the 2016 and 2017 Moose, Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goat Hunting Seasons, Hunting Districts and Quotas as presented by FWP.*

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Steve Schindler, Glasgow, and Mark Sullivan, Region 6 Supervisor discussed HD 622 bighorn sheep proposal.

Steve Adkins, Helena, asked if the sheep in HD 622 have been in contact with domestic sheep and is the Department going to vaccinate the sheep with the new vaccine the University of Washington has developed.

Sullivan stated typically they are not in contact with domestic sheep; try to stay on top of this issue; not plans on using the vaccine.

Glen Hockett, GWF, opposes bighorn sheep proposal; in denial; best available science is not being use.

**Action on Motion:** *Motion Passed.*

#### 19. 2016-2017 Black Bear Hunting Seasons, Quota Ranges HD Boundaries and Quotas – Proposed

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained FWP proposes changes to the existing 2015 regulations and Bear Management Units. All other elements of the 2015 regulations are to remain unchanged. Black bear season comments were received during scoping and included interest in expanded opportunities. Specific proposed changes for 2016-17 are listed below. All other season components except calendar rotation are proposed unchanged from 2015.

Statewide: The mandatory reporting requirement for presenting a harvested bear for tagging to be changed from 5 days to 10 days to match reporting requirements for other species.

BMUs 280/300: Change BMU boundaries to match Regional boundaries.

BMUs 309/319/341: Create new BMU 309 in the Gallatin Valley Weapons Restriction Area out of portions of BMUs 319 and 341 to match Deer/Elk HD 309. Hunting in the new BMU 309 restricted to Arch Equip, shotgun, traditional handgun, muzzleloader, or crossbow only, EXCEPT on some private lands which are excluded from the weapons restrictions.

**20. 2016-2017 Bison Hunting Seasons and HD Boundaries - Proposed**

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained for the 2016 and 2017 bison season, structure changes include eliminating the separate time periods for licenses and making licenses valid for the entire season for the Gardiner and West Yellowstone HD 395. Specific proposed changes for 2016-17 are listed below. All other season components except calendar rotation are proposed unchanged from 2015.

**HD 385 (Gardiner –Absaroka Beartooth):** Eliminate different time periods. Season to run Nov 15 - Feb 15.

Adjust overall ES quota from 40 to 20 (range 15-50).

Introduce 385-10 Cow/calf license (quota 25, range 15-50).

Introduce 385-21 Either-sex Backcountry license (quota 5, range 1-10) valid only in the Absaroka Beartooth portion.

**HD 395 (West Yellowstone-Cabin Cr):** Eliminate different time periods. Season to run Nov 15 – Feb 15.

**21. 2016-2017 Mountain Lion Hunting Seasons and HD Boundaries – Proposed**

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained FWP proposes two changes for the 2016 and 2017 mountain lion season, both in HD 309: 1) allow fall season without dogs to extend from Sep 5 through Nov 30, and 2) allow resident hound training licenses in the HD. All other aspects of the 2015 season structure are to remain in place. Mountain lion season comments were received during scoping and included interest in liberalized harvest, expanded hunting opportunities, confusion in the regulations.

*Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Commission adopt for public comment the 2016 and 2017 Mountain Lion, Black Bear, and Bison seasons, Hunting Districts and Quotas as presented by FWP.*

Chairman Vermillion asked if there is a quota for BMU 341.

Vore stated there are no quotas in BMU 341.

Chairman Vermillion, Vore and Burt discussed the limited license allocation for bison near Yellowstone.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Commissioner Wolfe and Vore discussed orphaned black bear cubs.

*Action on Motion: Motion Passed.*

**22. 2016-2017 Upland Game Bird Hunting Seasons, Quotas and HD Boundaries - Proposed**

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained for the 2016 and 2017 upland bird seasons FWP proposes a number of changes to simplify the turkey regulations and expand opportunity. The changes include combining the spring and fall regulations into one brochure and eliminating permits, but offering three license types: General hunting area license available over-the-counter, regional turkey area licenses available over-the-counter, and only valid in a specific region valid spring and fall except spring-only in Region 5. Additional fall beardless turkey-only licenses available in Region 1, and Missoula and Ravalli counties in Region 2, and special drawing licenses valid in specific areas of Regions 2, 3 and 4. The four hunting districts in Region 3 are to be combined into one. A hunter could hold up to nine licenses per year: one general hunting area license; one regional area license in each of Regions 1, 2, 5 and 7; one beardless turkey-only license in Region 1, and one for Missoula-Ravalli counties in Region 2; one spring and one fall special drawing-only license. All other aspects except for calendar rotation are to remain unchanged from the 2015 regulations. Comments were received during scoping and included interest in expanded opportunities.

**23. 2016-2017 Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons (contingent upon Federal frameworks) – Proposed**

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained migratory bird hunting regulations pertain to cranes, snipe, ducks, geese, swans, and coots. Montana participates in both the Central and Pacific Flyways and adheres to the federal frameworks established by the FWS in cooperation with the flyway councils. The frameworks include season dates and bag limits and are proposed at the federal level in mid-Dec and finalized in late Feb. States may be more conservative than these frameworks, to include local area closures, but may not exceed them. The inclusion of migratory bird regulations in this biennial season setting process expands public process for season elements that may be adopted at this time pending confirmation or finalization of federal frameworks in late Feb. For the 2016 and 2017 migratory bird regulations, FWP proposes to expand sandhill crane hunting opportunities by establishing 15 drawing-only permits valid in Carbon County; no other changes are proposed and all other elements of the 2015 season are proposed to remain unchanged except for calendar rotation. Migratory bird season comments were received during scoping and included an interest in varying goose hunting opportunities.

Vore reported the Commission approved in 2014, turkey transplants for two years, from Nebraska to Region 4; 2016's transplant will include up to 100 turkeys in the Loma area.

Vice-Chairman asked to be contacted when the transplant will take place; would like to attend.

*Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission adopt for public comment the 2016 and 2017 Upland Game Bird and Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons, Regulations, Hunting Districts and Quotas.*

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

**Action on Motion: Motion Passed.**

**24. 2016-2017 Hunting Season Dates – Proposed**

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained there are no proposed changes in date definitions from 2014-2015. 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. Proposed season dates are:

**Proposed 2016 Season Dates**

Season	Dates/Process
Antelope 900	Aug 15 – Nov 13 (Aug 15 to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Nov)
Antelope archery	Sep 3 – Oct 7 (First Saturday of Sep to Friday of Columbus Day weekend)
Antelope general	Oct 8 – Nov 13 (Saturday of Columbus Day weekend to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Nov)
Moose/sheep/goat	Sep 15 – Nov 27 (Sep 15 to Sunday after Thanksgiving; some districts vary)
Sheep archery	Sep 3 – Sep 14 (First Saturday of Sep to Sep 14)
Bison	Nov 15 – Feb 15
Black bear spring	Apr 15 – May 15 (some districts end later)
Black bear fall – archery	Sep – Sep 14 (First Saturday of Sep to Sep 14)
Black bear fall	Sep 15 – Nov 27 (Sep 15 to Sunday after Thanksgiving)
Deer/elk/lion archery	Sep 3 – Oct 16 (First Sat in Sept to Sunday before general deer/elk opener)
Deer/elk backcountry	Sep 15 – Nov 27 (Sep 15 to Sunday after Thanksgiving)
Deer youth	Oct 20– Oct 21 (MEA days; 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday and Friday of Oct)
Deer/elk general	Oct 22 – Nov 27 (37 days ending Thanksgiving Sunday—Saturday start)
Deer/elk shoulder seasons	Aug 15 – Feb 15 (Varying dates before and/or after the archery and general seasons.)
Mountain lion fall	Oct 22 – Nov 27 (37 days ending Thanksgiving Sunday—Saturday start)
Mountain lion winter	Dec 1 – Apr 14
Sage grouse	Sep 1 – Sep 30
Sharp-tailed grouse	Sep 1 – Jan 1
Mountain grouse	Sep 1 – Jan 1
Partridge	Sep 1 – Jan 1 (Sep 1 to Jan 10 for portion of Carbon County)
Pheasant	Oct 8 – Jan 1 (Saturday of Columbus Day weekend to Jan 1)
Youth Pheasant/Youth Waterfowl	Sep 24 – Sep 25 (weekend before start of general waterfowl)
General Waterfowl	Oct 1 Start date (Saturday nearest Oct 1; End date to be adopted late summer 2016 per federal frameworks)
Turkey spring	Apr 9 – May 15 (2nd Saturday in Apr to 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday in May)
Turkey fall	Sep 1 – Jan 1

**Proposed 2017 Season Dates**

Season	Dates/Process
Antelope 900	Aug 15 – Nov 12 (Aug 15 to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Nov)
Antelope archery	Sep 2 – Oct 6 (First Saturday in Sep to Friday of Columbus Day weekend)
Antelope general	Oct 7 – Nov 12 (Saturday of Columbus Day weekend to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Nov)
Sheep archery	Sep 2 – Sep 14 (First Saturday of Sep to 9/14)
Moose/sheep/goat	Sep 15 – Nov 26 (Sep 15 to Sunday after Thanksgiving; some districts vary)
Bison	Nov 15 – Feb 15
Black bear spring	Apr 15 – May 15 (some districts end later)
Black bear fall – archery	Sep 2 – Sep 14 (First Saturday of Sep to Sep 14)
Black bear fall	Sep 15 – Nov 26 (Sep 15 to Sunday after Thanksgiving)
Deer/elk/lion archery	Sep 2 – Oct 15 (First Sat in Sep to Sunday before general deer/elk opener)
Deer/elk backcountry	Sep 15 – Nov 26 (Sep 15 to Sunday after Thanksgiving)
Deer youth	Oct 19 – Oct 20—(MEA days; 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday and Friday of Oct)
Deer/elk general	Oct 21 – Nov 26 (37 days ending Thanksgiving Sunday - Saturday start)
Deer/elk shoulder seasons	Aug 15 – Feb 15 (Varying dates before and/or after the archery and general seasons.)
Mountain lion fall	Oct 21 – Nov 26 (37 days ending Thanksgiving Sunday - Saturday start)
Mountain lion winter	Dec 1 – Apr 14
Sage grouse	Sep 1 – Sep 30
Sharp-tailed grouse	Sep 1 – Jan 1
Mountain grouse	Sep 1 – Jan 1
Partridge	Sep 1 – Jan 1 (Sep 1 to Jan 10 for portion of Carbon County)
Pheasant	Oct 7– Jan 1 (Saturday of Columbus Day weekend to Jan 1)
Youth Pheasant/Youth Waterfowl	Sep 23 – Sep 24 (weekend before start of general waterfowl)
General Waterfowl	Sep 30 Start date (Saturday nearest Oct 1; End date to be adopted late summer 2017 per federal frameworks)
Turkey spring	Apr 8 – May 21 (2nd Saturday in Apr to 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday in May)
Turkey fall	Sep 1 – Jan 1

**Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion that the Commission adopt for public comment the 2016 and 2017 Hunting Seasons Dates as proposed by FWP.**

Chairman Vermillion and Vore discussed moving the upland game bird season and the reasoning why it cannot be done.

Chairman Vermillion and Vice-Chairman Stuker discussed possibly changing the statute, if the season is in statute.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

**Action on Motion: Motion Passed.**

**25. 2016-2017 Helena Urban Deer Plan Quota Ranges and Quota – Proposed**

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained in 2003, the Montana Legislature authorized cities to create plans to control wildlife to address public health and safety within city limits, and must be approved Commission. The City of Helena subsequently developed an Urban Deer Management Plan seeking to remove deer to achieve an objective of 25 deer per square mile. FWP completed a third EA in 2009 that confirmed objectives and methods relative to urban deer management in Helena. The current proposal is to establish the quota range for the 2016-2017 bienniums and would cover deer removals during the Nov 15, 2016 - Mar 31, 2017 and Nov 15 - Mar 31, 2018 time periods. If the number of deer prescribed to be taken in any one year is within the quota range, then no Commission action is required regarding that number; the current action is only to adopt the quota range within which to operate. FWP is proposing no change to the existing quota range of 0-250; quotas do not apply to individual deer removed under urgent public-safety situations. For the Commission's information only, and not requiring Commission action, the number proposed to be removed during Nov 15, 2015 - Mar 31, 2016, is 130 deer, which could go up to 180 if removal of males is disproportionately high. The City of Helena conducted extensive public involvement in developing its plan and the previous urban deer EAs; FWP provided separate 30-day public comment periods; public support was split.

**Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Commission adopt for public comment the 2016 - 2017 quota range for take of urban deer by the City of Helena as presented by city staff and FWP.**

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

**Action on Motion: Motion Passed.**

**26. 2016-2017 Game Damage/Management Season/Wildlife Health Authorizations Quotas – Proposed**

John Vore, Game Management Bureau Chief, explained Game Damage/Management Season/Wildlife Health quotas have been adopted for each region for deer, elk and antelope. The quotas represent authority and limits to prescribed harvest from any future game damage hunts and/or management seasons and hunts to address wildlife health issues such as brucellosis. The quotas represent the upper limits to potential prescribed harvest, not necessarily permit/license numbers or hunter numbers. FWP proposes changing the deer quota in Region 1 from 500 to 800, all other quotas are to remain unchanged from 2014-2015. Game Damage/Management Season/Wildlife Health maximum harvest quotas for 2016 and 2017 are:

Region	Deer	Elk	Antelope
1	<del>500</del> 800	500	0
2	400	1000	20
3	1400	2000	200
4	750	1000	450
5	1400	600	300
6	2000	500	100
7	2000	200	500

**Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Commission adopt for public comment the 2016 and 2017 Game Damage and Management Season Quota authorizations as proposed by FWP.**

Vice-Chairman Stuker asked if there was any data available on how many animals were taken in each region.

Vore stated there is nothing currently assembled.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

**Action on Motion: Motion Passed.**

Vore stated there are 42 season setting public meetings scheduled across the state.

**27. Public Comment – For Issues Not On This Agenda**

Brian McCullough, Helena, BLM is currently taking comments on the future of sage grouse; predators are a big issue for different species.

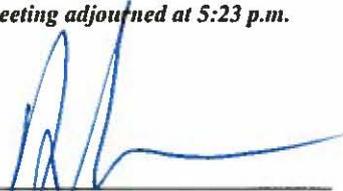
Steve Adkins, Helena, would like changes to the archery laws; explained reasoning.

Joelle Selk, TMBA, in response to Mr. Adkins comment, requests to have a more involved discussion with the Commission and Department.

Chairman Vermillion stated a lot more discussion needs to take place before anything can be proposed.

**Action: Commissioner Wolfe moved and Vice-Chairman Stuker seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion Passed.**

**The meeting adjourned at 5:23 p.m.**



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Dan Vermillion, Chairman



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M. Jeff Hagner, Director

