

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 10, 2011

Agenda Item: 398-80 antlerless elk licenses in HD 360 and 362

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Approval of Final Quota and Structure

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

The elk population in HD 360 and HD 362 continues to decline in response to several years of general season harvest, an unlimited antlerless-elk license, late-season management, and game-damage hunts. The 2010 hunting season showed record high harvests in these districts, in part due to unusually severe winter weather, resulting in further declines to the population. Sportsmen have expressed concern about overharvest of elk on the public lands in this unit since 2009, and have further petitioned FWP to limit this license to private lands only to address game damage concerns.

The very liberal season package has been in place is designed to reduce elk numbers, and the designed reduction may have been reached in a shorter time than expected. The severe snowstorms in 2010 resulted in higher elk availability and record high harvests, which, when subtracted from an already declining population, justify this procedural exception to the biennial season setting process.

Specifically, this proposal is to move to 500 licenses, with a proposed quota range of 100-1,000. This limited license offering would be valid on private lands only in order to address landowners' game-damage concerns and sportsmen's concerns of overharvest on public lands.

Public Involvement Process & Results

A public meeting in the Madison Valley attended by nearly 25 area sportsmen, landowners, ranchers, and outfitters occurred Jan. 5, demonstrating strong support for this proposal. Opportunity for public comment will run through 5 p.m, Feb. 7 with comments being presented to the FWP Commission on Feb. 10. A concerted effort has been made to communicate the proposed change and comment opportunity to the public.

Alternatives and Analysis

Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, with additions, with deletions or no change from 2010 (status quo) as per staff justifications, public comment and FWP Commission discussion.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

Given the observed population size, measured decline, unusually successful harvest, limited recruitment, and Elk Plan guidance, there is significant justification to pursue this adjustment. Offering an unlimited antlerless license is no longer warranted, nor advisable, in these districts. Public awareness surrounding this elk population—to include this proposed change—has been maintained with this proposal expected to be generally supported by the public.

Proposed Motion

I move the FWP Commission adopt the final season adjustment in elk HD 360 and 362 as presented by FWP.