



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: Dec. 14, 2023

Agenda Item: 2024 and 2025 Bison Hunting Regulations, Season Structures, and Hunting District Boundaries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Minutes

Background: Season structures and hunting district boundaries are adopted biennially by the commission for most game species. The proposed changes to bison seasons are described in the attached bison season summary and presented in detail for commission action within the regulation mockup. The commission is considering all regulations and descriptions of boundaries for the 2024 and 2025 bison seasons, whether a change is proposed or not. All other regulations and descriptions of boundaries will remain unchanged unless addressed by the commission.

Public Involvement Process and Results: Public input was solicited through 34 public meetings during June and July where concepts for biennial season setting were discussed. Public comment will be solicited for a four-week period following the Oct. 19 commission meeting, and seven hybrid virtual meetings will be held (one in each region) between Oct. 30 and Nov. 10 to answer questions about proposals. Written public comments received during the comment period will be posted online and provided to commissioners at least two weeks prior to the December commission meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis: The department presented concepts for discussion for each species during June and July. Based on public feedback and legal analysis, the department refined the concepts and developed proposals for commission action.

Alternative A: The commission may approve the department's recommendation as presented.

Alternative B: The commission may amend the department's recommendation on any aspect of season structure, quota, or hunting district or on aspects of the regulations that are not proposed for change.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The department recommends the commission approve the proposed 2024 and 2025 hunting regulations and district boundaries as presented by the department and as detailed in the attached mockup. Any aspect unchanged from 2023 season will remain in effect for 2024 and 2025, except where affected by routine calendar rotations.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission vote to approve: 1) changes identified in the bison regulation mockup to include opportunities, season dates, quotas, and quota ranges as presented by the department; and 2) all other bison regulations contained in the 2023 regulations, except for those affected by regular calendar rotations, unless addressed in some other proposal to be adopted for the 2024 and 2025 bison hunting seasons and districts.

Alternative Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission vote to amend: 1) changes identified in the bison regulation mockup to include opportunities, season dates, quotas, and quota ranges as presented by the department as follows (insert changes here); and 2) all other bison regulations contained in the 2023 regulations, except for those affected by regular calendar rotations, unless addressed in some other proposal to be adopted for the 2024 and 2025 bison hunting seasons and districts.

Season dates

| Season 2024 | Date conventions |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Bison | 11/15 – 2/15 |

| Season 2025 | Date conventions |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Bison | 11/15 – 2/15 |

Summary of proposed changes for bison

The current season allows for 40 395-20 Either-sex Bison licenses with no current quota range established. The proposed season would have a quota of 25 395-20 Either-sex Bison licenses with a quota range of 5–50. Add into bison regulations for HD 395 this textual note: "NOTE: bison are migratory in this area and annual opportunity will vary based on weather conditions. Bison presence is not guaranteed."