

FWP proposal to be amended: Elk Regulations

Commissioner: Brian Cebull

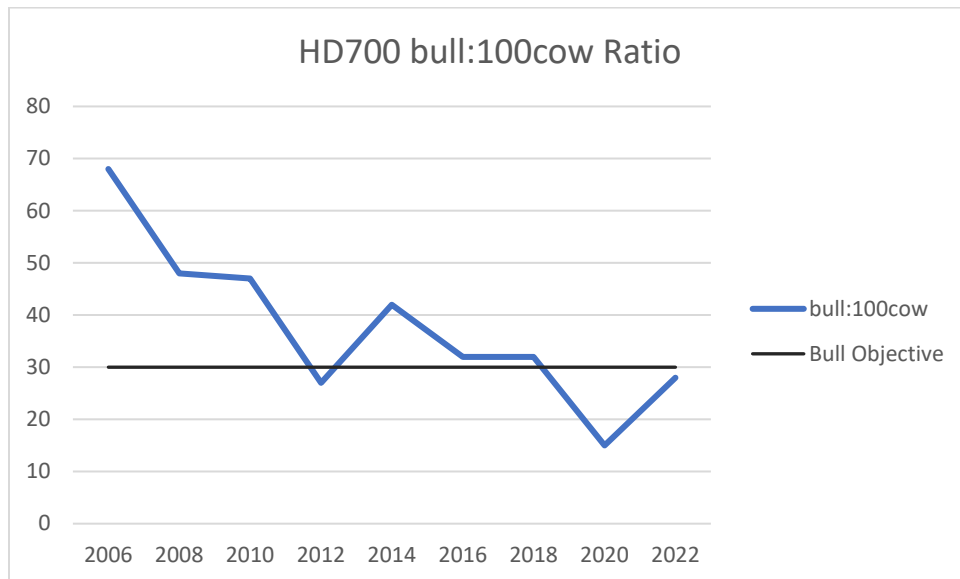
Date Received by Commission:

Proposed Amendment: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the following amendment to the proposed 2024 and 2025 Elk Regulations:

1. LPT 700-20: Increase either-sex elk quota from 200 to 250
2. LPT 700-21: Increase either-sex elk quota from 660 to 800

Requested by FWP: No

Rationale and Background: On April 4, 2023, Region 7 announced they were reducing the Commission approved rifle quota for HD 700-20 from 250 to 200 (-50) and reducing the archery quota for the HD 700-21 from 800 to 660 (-140). Together these actions removed a total of 190 either-sex permits. The justification provided by staff for the reduction was low bull to cow ratios citing the information in Figure 1 below:



“Figure 1. The bull per 100 cow ratios from 2006 – 2022, with the bull management objective of 30 bulls per 100 cows. The bull ratio has dipped below the bull management objective and from 2020 – 2022 has remained below the management objective.”

The change was unwarranted for the following reasons:

- The deviation from the stated objective (2% in 2022) was small and improving. When the precision of the overall estimation procedure is accounted for it is questionable if these estimates are in fact sufficiently different to warrant any action.
- There are two ways to attain bull cow ratios, one is to protect bulls and the other is to reduce cows. In HD 700, where elk numbers are increasing and beyond objective it makes sense to consider the latter strategy, however that option was not offered.
- The removal of 168 resident hunters and 19 nonresidents for a total of 187 hunters not only takes away sustainable public hunting opportunities, but has also cost rural communities, dependent on

hunter-oriented tourism, an estimated \$220,000 in tourism dollars this year alone from local businesses in the 700 Hunting District.

Department response:

The department does not anticipate any adverse biological effects as a result of this amendment. Bull to cow ratios will be assessed during 2024 spring surveys and recommendations to address population goals may be recommended by the department to the commission in future season setting proposals.