

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 amendments to the proposed 2024 and 2025 Elk Regulations:

1. Modify quota range on LPT 555-00 from 15-50 to 15-100 (Page 111 of draft regulations)
2. Add LPT 005-00 Elk B License to HD 555. Not valid on National Forest lands. (Page 111 of draft regulations)

Requested by FWP: No

Rationale and Background: The June 2021 Robertson Draw fire dramatically changed the east face of the Beartooth Mountains with nearly 100% of the conifer and sage brush cover destroyed in the affected area. The grass cover that replaced the sage and conifers has begun to draw large herds of elk, some of which are likely from Wyoming, to the area. During the regular rifle season in 2023, Department staff noted large herds of elk congregated in HD555 totaling between 600-800 head. The updated Elk Management plan requires low densities of elk in HD555 to manage for the prevalence of brucellosis, which has been detected in the Wyoming elk herd immediately south of HD555, and for CWD. The Plan also calls for maintaining an elk population of between 150-200 head, so the area is currently well over objective. HD555 is predominantly public land with good access, so elk hunting opportunities for the public are good.

The proposed Amendments above will help the Department address the overpopulation of elk in HD555 thru both Elk B licenses, with the quota set by the Department, as well as adding the other-the-counter cow licenses which will extend the cow harvest efforts into the shoulder season.

Department response:

The department does not anticipate any negative biological effects as a result of this amendment.