



# 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 Moose Hunting Regulations, Season Structures, and Hunting District Boundaries

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 15 Minutes

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**Background:** Season structures and hunting district boundaries are adopted biennially by the commission for most game species. The proposed changes to moose seasons are described in the attached moose season summary and presented in detail for commission action within the regulation mockup. These documents are presented for public review and commission action. 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 moose regulation mockup to include opportunities, season dates, quotas, and quota ranges as presented by the department; and 2) all other moose 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 moose hunting seasons and districts.

**Alternative Motion:** I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission vote to amend: 1) changes identified in the moose 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 moose 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 moose hunting seasons and districts.

## Season dates

Season 2024	Date conventions
Moose/sheep/goat	9/15 – 12/1 (9/15 to Sunday after Thanksgiving; some districts vary)
Moose/sheep/goat archery	9/7 – 9/14 (First Saturday of September to 9/14; some districts vary)

Season 2025	Date conventions
Moose/sheep/goat archery	9/6 – 9/14 (First Saturday of September to 9/14; some districts vary)
Moose/sheep/goat	9/15 – 11/30 (9/15 to Sunday after Thanksgiving; some districts vary)

## Summary of proposed changes for moose

Add an archery-only season beginning the first Saturday of September through September 14 for moose seasons that do not have a rifle season that currently conflicts with those dates.

Eliminate Wise River-Grasshopper Portion in Moose HD 324 and associated either-sex license HD 324-20.

Within quota increase of antlerless license 324-00 from the current 1 antlerless moose to 2 valid in HD 324. This would result in comparable harvest pressure in the district.

Create antlerless moose license 326-00 with a quota of 1 and range of 1–4.

Create antlerless moose license 327-00 with a quota of 1 and range of 1–4.

Create one, either-sex license (quota range 1–2) valid from September 15 and closing concurrent to the general season, valid throughout administrative Region 7.

## Hunting district boundary changes

### Portion of HD324–Grasshopper Drainage

Page 38 of the 2022–2023 Hunting District Legal Description

Reason for Change: portion is no longer needed for management, so eliminate the Wise River Grasshopper portion.

~~Portion of HD 324 Grasshopper Drainage: That portion of HD 324 west of the following boundary: From the intersection of U.S. Highway 278 and Buffalo Creek, then north on said creek to Grasshopper Creek, then east on said creek to Dyce Creek, then north on said creek to the East Fork of Dyce Creek, then north on said creek to the Grasshopper Creek Divide at Baldy Mountain, then north on said divide (between the Grasshopper Creek drainage and Rattlesnake Creek, Birch Creek, Wise River drainages) to the Grasshopper Creek–Big Hole River Divide.~~

### HD 700

Does not appear in the 2022–2023 Hunting District Legal Description

Reason for Change: proposing the creation of a moose hunting district in Region 7 to be a supplement to the proposed either-sex moose license. Both the license and moose hunting district would be new to Region 7 as neither have previously existed.

Region 7: Those portions of Big Horn, Carter, Custer, Dawson, Fallon, Garfield, McCone, Musselshell, Prairie, Powder River, Richland, Rosebud, Treasure, Yellowstone and Wibaux Counties lying within the following described boundary: Beginning at the Musselshell River Bridge near Mosby on State Route 200, then north down the Musselshell River to the Missouri River, then east and north down the Missouri River to the Fort Peck Powerhouse, then south along the east shore of the Fort Peck Reservoir to Big Dry Creek, then south up Big Dry Creek to Little Dry Creek, then up Little Dry Creek to State Route 200, then west on State Route 200 to Brockway, then northeasterly along said route through Sidney to the Montana-North Dakota border, then south along said border to its intersection with the Montana-South Dakota-Wyoming junction, then west along the Montana-Wyoming border to the east boundary of the Crow Reservation, then north along said boundary to the Northern Cheyenne Reservation boundary, then east along said boundary to the Tongue River, then north down said river to the northeast corner of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation boundary, then west along said boundary to the east shore of the Bighorn River, then northerly along said east shore to its junction with Interstate 94, then west along said interstate to its junction with the Custer-Melstone Road at Custer, then north along said road to its junction with US Highway 12 at Melstone, then east on said highway to the Musselshell River, then north down said river to its intersection with State Route 200 near Mosby, the point of beginning.