



## FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AMENDMENT

**FWP proposal to be amended: 2026-2027 nonresident general deer licenses**

**Commissioner:** Chair Lesley Robinson

**Date Received:** December 3, 2025

**Proposed Amendment:** I move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission direct the department to implement a sales cap for the nonresident general deer licenses separated from the nonresident big game combination when a nonresident applies for only the elk combination, leaving the detached general deer license unsold. The sales cap shall be one half of the number of general deer licenses detached from the elk combination licenses. I further move that the Fish and Wildlife Commission direct the department to assess and develop enhanced drawing capacity such that these licenses could potentially be allocated by region for the 2027 license year contingent upon completion of the department's successful efforts towards enhanced drawing capacity and additional commission action specifically addressing regional allocation of these licenses.

**Requested by FWP:** [ ] YES [X] NO

**Rationale and Background:**

Historically there have been approximately 5000 elk combination licenses sold, resulting in the same number of detached general deer licenses. Assuming the number and type of applications remain unchanged, this sales cap would result in approximately 2500 nonresident general licenses not being offered for sale.

Relative to residents, the number of nonresident hunters, their hunting effort, and their harvest have become points of focus for the legislature, commission, and the public, including landowners. Recent legislation has limited the number of deer B licenses a nonresident may hold. At the same time, mule deer are at relative lows in some areas across the state and white-tailed deer experienced an EHD die-off earlier this fall. The commission has reduced antlerless deer B licenses and restricted antlerless mule deer harvest to private lands in eastern Montana in response to disease die-off and low population levels. Reducing the number of nonresident general deer licenses by approximately 2500 would further reduce general license harvest pressure while still offering more than 12,000 nonresident general deer licenses statewide.

**Department Response:**

The department does not anticipate any adverse impact to Montana's deer population with this amendment. The department assumes much of this license reduction would be realized in Regions 6 and 7 given the current large representation of nonresident deer hunters in these regions. Over 11,000 nonresident general deer licenses are estimated to have been in Regions 6 and 7 during the 2023 hunting season, with roughly that same number in Regions 1 – 5 combined.

The department projects a \$1.7 million annual shortfall in license revenue with the anticipated loss of approximately 2500 nonresident general deer licenses sold. This includes reduction in general and earmarked license revenue. The



department has been assembling data to assess a potential license fee increase proposal to the 2027 legislative session and to study impacts on Montana’s hunting seasons related to block management, season structure, and resident and nonresident license allocation (House Bill 568). This annual revenue loss would add urgency to that effort and timeline.