

ELK MANAGEMENT CITIZEN ADVISORY GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS
FWP STAFF ASSESSMENT
AUGUST 31, 2022

Choose Your Weapon/Season

Division/Unit/Bureau	Staff Assessment
Accounting Bureau	No comment.
Comm Ed	<p>This proposal would require good communication with hunters on what the changes are and what they mean. Communication and Education staff would develop talking points, promotional materials, and other tools to help ensure broad understanding of the changes and why they are being made. We would also incorporate this change into our hunter/bowhunter education programs to ensure new hunters are aware of what this means.</p> <p>If the regulation change requires a six-week training course for a badge or certification, we would need to clearly evaluate the objective of the course as it relates to this recommendation to pick your season/weapon. A six-week course would have to be developed with clear objectives and outcomes in mind. If the course was online, that would be done through our contract with Kalkomey. If it was done in person, we would encounter issues with recruiting and retaining instructors. Once developed, an online course could be administered with current staffing. If it was an in-person course, more capacity would be needed to coordinate classes, work with volunteers, and ensure a consistent program delivery.</p>
Enforcement Division	Likely to be very unpopular with the public and may lead to additional “opportunistic” type violations.
Legal Unit	No comment.
Licensing Bureau	A bow and arrow license is required for hunters electing to hunt with a bow during archery only season for any species or an archery hunt in an archery equipment only area or hunting district. Customers are currently not required to designate weapon and/or season choice when purchasing a license. Licensing has no way of knowing if a customer purchasing a bow and arrow license also hunts with a rifle in regular season. Licensing staff would query other states that have elected a choose your weapon/season for input regarding potential change in revenue after electing weapon and or season choice.
Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division	This recommendation may improve hunter crowding, but increases in other outdoor recreational pursuits (hiking, biking, trail riding, etc.) also can impact elk distribution. Ideally, other recreational users and their uses of public lands would be factored into this analysis prior to implementation.
Technology Services Division	Development work would be needed in ALS, Regs, hunt planner, and the harvest survey systems to implement this recommendation
Wildlife Division	This proposal is likely to be controversial and unpopular with the public. As suggested, hunters should be surveyed to determine what level of support there would be for this recommendation. Overcrowding is a perception held by individual hunters and landowners; no data exists to support concerns expressed regarding overcrowding.

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	<p>An alternative to noticeably reduce any perceived overcrowding would involve limiting license permit types in number and issuing through a drawing. The need for a drawing would also necessitate a method by which license permit types would be issued (Arizona uses harvest success and application demand to allocate harvest proportionately). Without limiting the number of hunters that could obtain a specific license permit type, it is unlikely that this would reduce hunter numbers and crowding.</p> <p>Also, reducing hunter numbers is likely to reduce elk harvest while increasing elk population management concerns. Even when hunter numbers are reduced, there may still be enough hunting pressure on public lands to create unfavorable elk distributions. FWP estimated archery hunter numbers in 2018 and 2020; archers comprised ~30% of the total elk hunters. It is unclear how many of those hunted during archery AND rifle seasons. It is unclear which weapon those that use both would choose. FWP research has documented elk movement to secure areas, including private property, as early as the beginning of September. This is likely a response to hunting pressure during archery season. Since it is unclear how many people would choose archery equipment as their only option and it is unclear what impact this proposal may have on elk distributions, we recommend collecting information on hunter preference and support for a “choose your weapon” proposal prior to moving forward with a proposal to the Fish and Wildlife Commission.</p> <p>It is unclear if this would apply to deer as well elk. Some hunters may choose archery for elk and rifle for deer to hunt during the breeding season for both species. If that is the case, pressure may not functionally be reduced. The proposal also includes adjustments to the archery season and inclusion of a private land cow hunt between seasons. It may be difficult to determine if any impact to elk harvest or hunting pressure is due to these season adjustments or hunters choosing their season. It is also unclear if the 2-3 week cow hunting on private land hunt is a separate season a hunter would have to choose. For those lands that currently do not allow hunting because they outfit for bulls or hunt bulls themselves, the early cow season will likely not be used for fear of scaring the herd (and bulls) off their property before the bull opportunity opens.</p>