

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: February 13, 2019

Agenda Item: Mule deer season changes in HDs 502, 510, 520 & 575 for 2019

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Minutes

Background: FWP proposes to change the 2019 mule deer hunting regulations in HDs 502, 510, 520, and 575 to address CWD, which was found in these HDs in 2017 and 2018. FWP is proposing this change outside of the regular biennial cycle because of CWD. Long-term CWD management, as described in the *Montana CWD Management Plan*, is aimed at maintaining low densities of deer and low buck:doe ratios in hunting districts with CWD and adjacent hunting districts to keep disease prevalence low and prevent disease spread. We are proposing to manage for lower buck:doe ratios because bucks are two to three times more likely to be infected with CWD and more likely to spread it through the population.

Specific changes proposed are:

- HD 502 change the general mule deer season from buck-only to either-sex.
- HD 510 eliminate the unlimited 510-50 buck mule deer permit and establish an either-sex mule deer season.
- HD 520 change the general mule deer season from buck-only to either-sex in that portion of HD 520 lying east of Highway 212.
- HD 575 increase 575-00 antlerless mule deer B license from 250 to 500 and increase the biennial range from 5-200 to 5-750. This proposal is outside the current biennial range and requires commission action.

Public Involvement Process & Results: Public comment was taken from Dec. 10 to Jan. 18, and we received 14 comments, which are included in the commission packet. Opinions varied, with some support and some opposed. It was clear that some commenters did not understand CWD, the effects it can have on populations, the latest in national guidance for management, or that FWP has been testing in a scientifically rigorous way and has a vetted and approved CWD Management Plan.

Alternatives and Analysis: Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, with additions, with deletions, or no change from 2018 (status quo). No change would challenge the supporting justifications behind proposals.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the commission adopt the mule deer season changes for hunting districts 502, 510, 520, and 575 as presented.

Proposed Motion:

I move the commission adopt the 2019 mule deer hunting regulations for hunting districts 502, 510, 520, and 575 as presented by FWP, and that all other aspects of the deer season remain unchanged unless addressed in other proposals.