



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

**Meeting Date:** October 17, 2019

**Agenda Item:** Shoulder Season Fundamental Objectives Review

**Action Needed:** Informational

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 1 hour

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## **Background:**

Performance-based elk shoulder seasons are firearms seasons that occur between August 15 and February 15, outside the five-week general firearm season. They are intended to reduce over-objective populations by supplementing existing harvest and are not meant to replace or reduce harvest during the general archery and firearm seasons. Shoulder seasons are performance-based with criteria for the number of animals harvested and how well they address the 11 fundamental objectives listed below. It is important to note that both elk harvest and the fundamental objectives are to be considered in evaluating shoulder season performance.

The *Final Elk Season Guidelines Flexible season structure with performance-based shoulder seasons*, adopted by the commission in 2015, direct a comprehensive evaluation of how well shoulder seasons are performing after three years of implementation. This presentation is the three-year evaluation of the fundamental objectives in the 43 hunting districts, which had shoulder seasons beginning with the 2016-17 season. Harvest criteria were addressed at the August commission meeting. Among other data, the evaluation compares surveys of hunters, landowners, and staff conducted in 2015, the year before the shoulder seasons were implemented, and 2019, immediately after the third year of implementation. The presentation will use the online story-map format, which will then be available to the public on the FWP website.

## **The fundamental objectives are:**

### **Elk considerations:**

- **Manage elk populations to objective as rapidly as possible.**
- **Increase harvest of elk, where appropriate.**

### **Hunter and landowner considerations:**

- **Address problematic distributions of elk and elk harvest.**
- **Enhance free public access to bulls and cows on private land during the general seasons.**
- **Reduce exclusive access to elk.**
- **Enhance landowner flexibility to manage elk hunting on their property.**
- **Reduce game damage.**
- **Reduce hunter impacts on landowners** (e.g., cost of hiring additional staff, loss of productivity, property damage from hunters, etc.).
- **Simplify rules and regulations.**

### **Logistical considerations:**

- **Balance statewide consistency with local flexibility of regulations, rules, and policies.**
- **Keep staff time and cost down.**