



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: December 20, 2022

Agenda Item: Adjustments to 2023 Seasons, Licenses, Quotas, Ranges, and Boundaries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 minutes

Background: Season structures and hunting district boundaries were adopted as part of the biennial season setting process in February 2022. Several license-permit types were overlooked during the process, and the department plans to recommend quotas and quota ranges for antelope, elk, and mule deer seasons that were inadvertently omitted for fall 2022 to address seasons for fall 2023. Additionally, some antelope, deer-elk, and moose hunting district boundaries were not accurately described as intended in the legal boundary descriptions. Due to these inadvertent errors, the department recommends amendments to license-permit type quotas and quota ranges in alignment with current biological data and to address errors in legal descriptions of hunting units.

Public Involvement Process and Results: Public comment alerted the department to several errors published in the 2022 hunting regulations prompting these amendments. Public comment will be solicited for a four-week period starting Oct. 21. Public comments will be posted online and provided to commissioners at least two weeks prior to the December commission meeting.

Analysis and Alternatives: Because members of the public have identified several errors within the published hunting regulations and legal descriptions, corrections for the fall 2023 season seem prudent to ensure the intent of the department and commission is accurately presented and public confusion is limited. Alternatively, if the commission chooses not to approve the amendments, the department could address discrepancies administratively as it did this year. Some hunting opportunities were denied due to no published quota or quota ranges, and in some instances, harvest may have been more liberal than originally intended. No biological harm to wildlife populations resulted from either scenario.

Alternative A: The commission may choose to approve the amendments to license-permit type quota and quota ranges and hunting district legal descriptions as proposed by the department.

Alternative B: The commission may choose not to approve the amendments proposed by the department and retain the season designations as printed in fall 2022.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The department recommends the commission adopt the amendments to license-permit type quotas and quota ranges as listed below and the amendments to hunting district boundaries on the attached amendment sheet.

Antelope license-permit types 340-30, 350-30, and 370-30 did not have approved quotas or quota ranges and hunting opportunities were denied. Elk license-permit types 380-01 and 380-02 did not have approved quota ranges and harvest could not be adjusted in accordance with surveyed availability of elk. Similarly, mule deer license-permit type 370-01 did not have an approved quota range and harvest could not be adjusted in accordance with surveyed availability of mule deer.

| SPECIES | SPECIES DESCRIPTION | OPPORTUNITY NAME | TOTAL QUOTA | MINIMUM QUOTA | MAXIMUM QUOTA |
|-----------|---------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| Antelope | Doe/Fawn | 340-30 | 250 | 50 | 400 |
| Antelope | Doe/Fawn | 350-30 | 100 | 25 | 100 |
| Antelope | Doe/Fawn | 370-30 | 100 | 25 | 200 |
| Elk | Antlerless | 380-01 | 350 | 50 | 400 |
| Elk | Antlerless | 380-02 | 250 | 50 | 400 |
| Mule Deer | Antlerless | 370-01 | 50 | 50 | 150 |

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the amendments to the license-permit type quotas and quota ranges and hunting district legal descriptions as presented by the department in this cover sheet and accompanying amendment sheet.