

FWP proposal to be amended: Deer-Elk Regulations

Commissioner: Pat Tabor

Date Received by Commission:

Proposed amendment: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission reestablish the historic boundary for HD417, switching the northwestern boundary back to its original location of the Stafford Ferry Road.

Requested by FWP: No

Rationale and Background:

- The redrawn 417 created a very large hunting district with diverse terrain and a mix of more private areas thrown in with public areas.
- The eastern portion of the unit contains vast areas of accessible public land with limited agriculture, and the deer numbers there have plummeted to the point that the Department has proposed Limited Entry Permits for bucks only.
- However, as stated above, the northwestern portion of unit 417 which got added due to boundary line adjustment two years ago is quite different. That portion is primarily private land and land-locked public with a higher concentration of farm fields, homesteads, and limited public access. The deer population in the northwestern portion of 417 does not appear to be under any stress.
- The end result of the Limited Entry Permit without redrawing the boundary will result in the complete loss of business livelihood for a number of licensed outfitters, an impact of which is unnecessary given the geographical and game distributions attributes that can be remedied by district boundary adjustment.

Department response:

Although the boundary change in 2021 was recommended to better reflect contemporary knowledge of elk movements, the department does not anticipate any adverse biological effects as a result of this amendment. Permit quota adjustments may be recommended in future season setting processes if needed.

Because the 2021 change to the boundary of deer-elk hunting district (HD) 417 also influenced HD 426, the department recommends both hunting districts should be returned to the prior legal description if this amendment is adopted by the commission. The recommended hunting district legal descriptions for 2024 and 2025 would be described as follows:

417 Armells Creek: Those portions of Fergus County lying within the following-described boundary: Beginning at Hilger, then easterly and northerly on US Highway 191 to the Missouri River, then westerly up said river to the Stafford Ferry Road, then south on said road to the DY Trail, then westerly on said road to Route 236 at Winifred, then south on said route US Highway 191 at Hilger, the point of beginning.

426 Winifred: Those portions of Fergus and Judith Basin Counties lying within the following-described boundary: Beginning at Suffolk, then north following Route 236 to Winifred, then northeasterly on the DY Trail to the Stafford Ferry Road, then northerly along said road to the Missouri River, then up said river in a westerly direction to the mouth of Arrow Creek, then up said creek to State Route 80, then south on said route to State Route 81, then easterly along said route near Denton to the Plum Creek County Road, then

northerly and easterly along said road to the Salt Creek Road, then southeasterly along the Salt Creek Road to its junction with Route 236 approximately three miles north of Hilger, then north on the Winifred Road to Suffolk, the point of beginning.