



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: Dec. 14, 2023

Agenda Item: 2024 and 2025 Mountain Lion Hunting Regulations, Season Structures, and Hunting District Boundaries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Minutes

Background: Season structures and hunting district boundaries are adopted biennially by the commission for most game species. The proposed changes to mountain lion seasons are described in the attached mountain lion season summary and presented in detail for commission action within the regulation mockup. The commission is considering all regulations and descriptions of boundaries for the 2024 and 2025 mountain lion seasons, whether a change is proposed or not. All other regulations and descriptions of boundaries will remain unchanged unless addressed by the commission.

Public Involvement Process and Results: Public input was solicited through 34 public meetings during June and July where concepts for biennial season setting were discussed. Public comment will be solicited for a four-week period following the Oct. 19 commission meeting, and seven hybrid virtual meetings will be held (one in each region) between Oct. 30 and Nov. 10 to answer questions about proposals. Written public comments received during the comment period will be posted online and provided to commissioners at least two weeks prior to the December commission meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis: The department presented concepts for discussion for each species during June and July. Based on public feedback and legal analysis, the department refined the concepts and developed proposals for commission action.

Alternative A: The commission may approve the department's recommendation as presented.

Alternative B: The commission may amend the department's recommendation on any aspect of season structure, quota, or hunting district or on aspects of the regulations that are not proposed for change.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The department recommends the commission approve the proposed 2024 and 2025 hunting regulations and district boundaries as presented by the department and as detailed in the attached mockup. Any aspect unchanged from 2023 season will remain in effect for 2024 and 2025, except where affected by routine calendar rotations.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission vote to approve: 1) changes identified in the mountain lion regulation mockup to include opportunities, season dates, quotas, and quota ranges as presented by the department; and 2) all other mountain lion regulations contained in the 2023 regulations, except for those affected by regular calendar rotations, unless addressed in some other proposal to be adopted for the 2024 and 2025 mountain lion hunting seasons and districts.

Alternative Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission vote to amend: 1) changes identified in the mountain lion regulation mockup to include opportunities, season dates, quotas, and quota ranges as presented by the department as follows (insert changes here); and 2) all other mountain lion regulations contained in the 2023 regulations, except for those affected by regular calendar rotations, unless addressed in some other proposal to be adopted for the 2024 and 2025 mountain lion hunting seasons and districts.

Season dates

Season 2024	Dates conventions
Deer/elk/lion archery	9/7 – 10/20 (first Saturday in September to Sunday before general deer/elk opener)
Mountain lion fall	10/26 – 12/1 (37 days ending Thanksgiving Sunday—Saturday start)
Mountain lion winter	12/1 – 4/14

Season 2025	Dates/Process
Deer/elk/lion archery	9/6 – 10/19 (first Saturday in September to Sunday before general deer/elk opener)
Mountain lion fall	10/25 – 11/30 (37 days ending Thanksgiving Sunday—Saturday start)
Mountain lion winter	12/1 – 4/14

Summary of proposed changes for mountain lion

Eliminate the fall and archery quota for mountain lion and simply retain quotas (with associated subquotas) for the entire season.

Mountain lion in LMU 141 and 150 – Allow hunting during the winter season with any valid hunting license. To be consistent with the current regulations in Region 1 in the Bob Marshall Wilderness (LMU 150) we are proposing the following changes in the Scapegoat Wilderness Portion of LMU 280:

- Change the end of archery season to Sep. 14
- Remove the Fall Season Without Dogs opportunity and start the Winter season on Sept. 15 and run through April 14 the following year.
- Allow hunting during the winter season with any valid hunting license.

Change the following Region 3 mountain lion LMUs that use a total quota with a female sub-quota to separate quotas for males and females with no total quota for each LMU, so that the hunting season will close for each sex independently when the quota for that sex is reached:

LMUs: 301, 304 312, 313, 314, 315, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 339, 340, 350, 380, 391

LMU	Male	Female
301	13	7
304	11	6
312	6	6
313	3	1
314	7	4
315	2	1
317	3	4
318	4	2
319	3	2
320	3	4
321	2	1
322	4	4
339	6	2
340	3	1
350	2	1
380	5	6
391	6	4

Hunting district boundary changes

Split mountain lion management unit (LMU) 620 into two LMUs. Using the deer, elk, and antelope hunting district as a boundary reference, we propose to separate HD 621 and create a separate LMU 621 from LMU 620.

Quota:

- New LMU 621: same as 2023 LMU 620 quota
- New LMU 620: 30% of the 2023 LMU 620 quota (including 30% of female sub-quota)

Split mountain lion management unit (LMU) 690 into two LMUs. Using the 2019 deer, elk, and lion hunting district as a boundary reference, we propose to separate HD 680 and create a separate LMU 680 from LMU 690.

Quota:

- New LMU 690: 11 (sub-quota 4 females); which is 80% of the 2023 LMU 690 quota (including 80% of sub-quota)
- New LMU 680: 3 (sub-quota 1 female); which is 20% of the 2023 LMU 690 quota (including 20% of sub-quota)

LMU 620 South Phillips and Valley: *That portion of Phillips and Valley Counties lying within the following described boundary: Beginning at a point west of Dodson where US Highway 2 crosses the east boundary of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, then continuing southerly and westerly along said boundary to US Highway 191, then southwest along said highway to the Dry Fork Road, then easterly along said road to the Second Creek School and Midale Road, then south on Midale Road to the CMR National Wildlife Refuge (CMR) Road 212, then easterly along CMR Road 201, then south on CMR Road 219 to the Missouri River/Fort Peck Reservoir, then easterly along said river and reservoir to Fort Peck Dam and State Route 24, then easterly along said route to the Missouri River at Fort Peck*

Dam, then northeasterly down said river to the Milk River, then north along said river to Porcupine Creek, then north along said Creek to US Highway 2, then northwesterly along said highway to the point west of Dodson where the US Highway 2 crosses the east boundary of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, the point of beginning.

LMU 621 Upper Missouri Breaks-West: That portion of Blaine and Phillips Counties lying within the following described boundary: Beginning at the confluence of the Missouri River and Cow Creek, then north along said creek to Suction Creek, then northeast along said creek to Little Suction Creek, then southeast along said creek to the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation boundary, then south and east along said boundary to US Highway 191, then southwest along said highway to the junction with the Dry Fork Road, then east along said road to Second Creek School and Midale Road, then south on Midale Road to the CMR National Wildlife Refuge (CMR) Road 212, then easterly along CMR Road 201, then south on CMR Road 219 to the Missouri River/Fort Peck Reservoir, then westerly along said reservoir and river back to the mouth of Cow Creek, the point of beginning. NOTE: The Slippery Ann Elk Viewing Area is closed to all hunting: portions of Section 36, T22N, R24E and Sections 31 and 32, T22N, R25E, as posted.

LMU 680 Chouteau-Blaine: Those portions of Chouteau and Blaine Counties lying within the following-described boundary: Beginning at US Highway 87 and the Marias River at Loma, then east along said river to the Missouri River, then east along said river to Cow Creek, then north and west along said creek to the Lloyd Road, then south along said road to the Cow Island Trail West, then northwest along said trail to Warrick Road, then northwest along said road to Route 236, then north on said route to US Highway 87 at Big Sandy, then southwest along said highway to the Marias River at Loma, the point of beginning.

LMU 690 Hill-Blaine-Chouteau: Those portions of Hill, Blaine and Chouteau Counties lying within the following described boundaries (excluding the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation and portions of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation lying within the exterior boundaries of HD 690): Beginning at a point where the Hill-Liberty County Line meets US Highway 2, three miles west of Inverness, then south along said county line to the Marias River, then southerly along said river to US Highway 87 near Loma, then northeast on said highway to the junction with Route 236 at Big Sandy, then southeast along said route to the Warrick Road, then southeast along said road to Cow Island Trail, then southeast along said trail to Lloyd Road, then north on said road to Cow Creek, then southeast along said creek to Suction Creek, then northeast along said creek to Little Suction Creek, then east along said creek to the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation boundary, then north along said boundary to the Milk River, then east along said river to US Highway 2 at Fort Belknap Indian Agency, then north and west along said highway to the Hill-Liberty County Line three miles west of Inverness, the point of beginning.