



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: June 8, 2023

Agenda Item: Amendments to fall 2023 deer regulations

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, and amendments to seasons are generally presented for the commission during regular scheduled meetings prior to publication of annual hunting regulations. The department is proposing changes to our published regulations for fall 2023 mule deer regulations based on spring survey results following drought and a relatively severe winter of 2022–2023.

Public Involvement Process and Results: The department has not been able to share results of most surveys with the public prior to the June commission meeting, however several members of the public have expressed concern to the department about the effect of the drought and recent overwinter survival and recruitment of mule deer. Public comment will be received at the June commission meeting.

Analysis and Alternatives: Due to prolonged drought combined with the relatively severe winter and snow accumulations in portions of Montana, the department is recommending changes to existing regulations for fall 2023 to limit the harvest of female deer. Limiting harvest of antlerless deer through a buck-only season structure may result in a reduction of buck to doe ratios in these hunting districts.

Alternative A: The commission may choose to approve the department's proposal to reduce female mule deer harvest as proposed through changes to opportunity.

Alternative B: The commission may choose to amend the department's proposal and adjust licenses and permits in another manner.

Alternative C: The commission may choose to not approve the department's proposal and maintain existing structures and opportunities.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: The department recommends the commission adopt proposed changes to general license regulation in hunting districts (HDs) 410, 411, 412, 417, 419, 426, 471, 621, 622, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, and 705 from either-sex mule deer to antlered buck mule deer, while maintaining either-sex opportunity for white-tailed deer. The department would also recommend excluding HDs 621 and 622 from the opportunity available to license-permit type (LPT) 620-00. These changes would limit the take of antlerless mule deer.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the department's recommendation to amend mule deer license-permit type opportunities, to include changing the opportunity prescription from either-sex mule deer to antlered buck mule deer in HDs 410, 411, 412, 417, 419, 426, 471, 621, 622, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, and 705 and excluding HDs 621 and 622 from the opportunity available to LPT 620-00, as presented.