

MEMO

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**TO:** Larry D. Voyles, Director

**FROM:** Bob Broscheid, Assistant Director   
Wildlife Management Division

**PRESENTER:** Leonard L. Ordway, Game Branch Chief

**TITLE:** Consideration of Proposed Commission Orders 2, 5-10, and 26 for 2008-2009 Hunting Season, Commission Orders 11-18 for 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 Hunting Seasons, and Commission Order 23 for the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 Trapping Seasons.

**DESCRIPTION:** The Commission will consider and may vote to approve Commission Orders 2 (deer), 5-10 (turkey, javelina, bighorn sheep, buffalo, bear, and mountain lion), and 26 (population management) establishing seasons and season dates, bag and possession limits, permit numbers, and open areas for the 2008-2009 season. The Commission will also consider and may vote to approve Commission Orders 11-18 (tree squirrel, cottontail rabbit, predatory and furbearing mammals, other mammals and birds, pheasant, quail, chukar partridge, and blue grouse) establishing seasons and season dates, bag and possession limits, and open areas for the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 seasons. Additionally, the Commission will consider and may vote to approve Commission Order 23 (trapping), establishing season dates, legal species, open and closed areas, and bag and possession limits for the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 seasons. A detailed description of proposals is available for public review at Department offices. Spring turkey, spring bear, spring buffalo, and spring javelina Commission Orders are presented at the August Commission meeting, whereas elk and pronghorn antelope are presented at the December Commission meeting.

**DATE:** April 1, 2008

Summary:

The Department is recommending seasons, season dates, bag and possession limits, permit numbers, and open areas for Commission orders 2 (deer), 5-10 (fall turkey, fall javelina, bighorn sheep, fall buffalo, fall bear, and mountain lion), and 26 (population management seasons) according to hunt guidelines approved by the Commission during August 2007 for a two-year period. The Department is also recommending seasons, season dates, legal species, bag and possession limits, and open and closed areas for Commission Orders 11-18 (tree squirrel, cottontail rabbit, predatory and furbearing mammals, other mammals and birds, pheasant, quail, chukar partridge, and blue grouse) and 23 (trapping). The hunt guidelines were approved by the Commission for a two-year period that extends through spring 2010. Consequently, no public

meetings discussing the guidelines were held prior to the April 2008 Commission meeting. Each Region hosted, prior to the April Commission meeting, an open house where final recommendations were available for public review and discussion.

In early 2007, the Commission directed the Department to examine ways to increase general deer permit opportunities by 10% by fall 2009. This direction was addressed through the adoption of new hunt guidelines in August 2007. The Commission directed the Department through these hunt guideline changes to offer specific hunting opportunities.

Specifically, the Department was to allocate at least 3% of the general deer permits to juniors-only seasons. According to hunt guidelines, units with multiple deer hunts will have stratified 7-day seasons.

Statewide, white-tailed deer hunting opportunity in December will be limited to 5% of the total white-tailed deer permits, although alternative white-tailed deer units (Units 6A, 23, 30B, 31, and 36C) will be structured to harvest up to 30% of the expected take for that unit during December. Units 12A, 12B, 13A, 13B, 45A, 45B, and 45C will be managed according to the Alternative Deer Management Plan for mule deer. Archery deer seasons will be recommended for season length adjustments or permitting to attain 10-20% of the total deer harvest by archers.

Fall turkey hunts are recommended as limited-weapon-shotgun-shooting-shot seasons. Juniors-only turkey permits will be recommended as over-the-counter nonpermit tags in specific units. Archery turkey seasons have been adjusted to overlap with corresponding archery deer seasons.

All fall javelina hunts are to be offered during juniors-only seasons to provide for 10% of total tags (both fall and spring) for juniors hunters. Juniors-only seasons should coincide with a juniors-only deer season.

All bear seasons have specific female harvest limits that close a season on the following Wednesday when that number of female bears have been harvested. Each unit that provides a bear hunt will also have an annual female harvest limit. If the annual female harvest limit is met, this will close any open season on the following Wednesday or any subsequent season in that unit during the current calendar year, even if the subsequent season has not yet opened. The annual female harvest limit is comprised of female bears lethally removed through Department action (e.g., nuisance) and female bears harvested by hunters.

All other small game, trapping, and big game seasons are recommended in accordance with the approved guidelines, unless specifically noted under the species-specific information provided under the corresponding Commission Order.

## **COMMISSION ORDER 2 – DEER**

The Department is recommending 41,815 general deer permits in 2008, an increase of 2,160 permits statewide from 2007. Archery deer seasons for 2008 are recommended consistent with hunt guidelines approved in August 2007. In units where archery harvest comprised <10% of the

total harvest, archery deer season length was extended. Units 4A, 4B, 8, 9, and 19A will now have a January 1-16, 2009 archery deer season added to the existing season dates, adding archery opportunity when compared with previous years. Other units where archery harvest has exceeded 20% of the overall take have had permit recommendations or shortened season length: Units 1 (190 permits), 3A and 3C (150 permits), 3B (60 permits), 7 (800 permits), 12A (1,000 permits), 12B (15 permits), 12BW (75 permits), and 13A (45 permits) are recommended for limitation through the lottery draw. Unit 13B has not had an archery season but is recommended to have a 40-permit archery season. The total number of permit tags for archery seasons are 2,375. Permit levels were recommended based on expected harvest and corresponding success rates based on benchmarking data from other states with similar permitted archery structures. Archers that draw a permit tag will not be required to report their harvest through the phone line, and the 10% cap on nonresident participation will apply to these draw hunts.

In specific units, archery seasons will be shortened if archery harvest exceeds 20% of the overall harvest to equitably redistribute take into other seasons. Those units that will not have a December archery season, but retain a January 1-31, 2009 season include Units 15A, 15B, 15C, 15D, 17A, 20A, 22, 23, and 37A. Except Unit 37A, these units also will have an August 22-September 11, 2008 archery season.

White-tailed deer permits are recommended for an increase of 1,095 permits. Antlered mule deer permits are recommended for an increase of 1,065. Juniors permits are recommended at 2,100 (5% of general), a 370 permit increase over 2007. This recommendation includes a 600-permit antlerless deer hunt for juniors-only in Unit 12AW in response to continued high fawn production on the Kaibab Plateau. A 30-permit juniors-only muzzleloader deer season is recommended in Units 15A, 15B, 15C, 15D, and 18A. The December archery deer and general deer seasons are recommended to begin on December 12, 2008. Muzzleloader permits are recommended at 1,015 permits, an increase of 85 from 2007.

A 10-permit CHAMP hunt has been offered in recent years on Fort Huachuca in Unit 35A. At the request of Fort Huachuca, that hunt will not be offered this year. The Department recommends that this 10-permit CHAMP season be offered in Unit 12A during October 10-16, 2008.

Total permits for general, muzzleloader, and juniors-only seasons is 44,990, which is an increase of 11.9% (4,795 permits) above 2006 levels.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 2 – DEER AS PROPOSED.**

### **COMMISSION ORDER 5 –TURKEY**

The fall limited weapon shotgun-shooting-shot turkey season is recommended to run October 3-9, 2008 with 6,100 permits, which is an increase of 230 permits over 2007. There are six units (Units 1, 6A, 8, 10, 23, and 27) recommended for juniors-only seasons where over-the-counter nonpermit tags will be offered. These seasons will run concurrently with the permitted turkey season in the unit.

#### Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 5 – TURKEY AS PROPOSED.**

### **COMMISSION ORDER 6 – JAVELINA**

For fall 2008, the Department is recommending to offer the fall javelina seasons to juniors only during general seasons for which season dates coincide with a juniors-only deer season to accommodate Commission direction to provide at least 10% of the total javelina permits (both spring and fall) to juniors hunters. Units within Region 5 will allocate 15% of the annual permits to either an October 10-16 or a November 21-27, 2008 season. Additional units in Region 3 (Units 16A, 17B, 18B, and 20A) will also offer this juniors-only opportunity.

The Department is also recommending the continuance of two juniors-only opportunities in Region 6 (Unit 39): a juniors-only archery javelina season with 15 permits during November 7-16, 2008 and a juniors-only muzzleloader season with 10 permits during November 21-27, 2008. This hunt will target the javelina population occupying the Robbins Butte Wildlife Area.

#### Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 6 – JAVELINA AS PROPOSED.**

### **COMMISSION ORDER 7 – BIGHORN SHEEP**

Bighorn sheep permits are recommended for a total of 90, a decrease of 6 from last year. Decreased permits are recommended in Units 12A and 12B West (1 permit), 13A (2 permits), 13B North (1 permit), 15C South (2 permits), Unit 27 Foote Creek area (2 permits), 40A (1 permit; no hunt is recommended in this unit), 44B South (1 permit), and 45A (2 permits), whereas permit increases are recommended in Units 15C North (1 permit), 28 South (1 permit; new hunt recommended in this unit), 40B Mohawk area (1 permit), 41E (1 permit), 44BN (1 permit), and 45B South (1 permit). Units where recent declines have been detected or suspected, specifically 12A and 12BW, 13A, 15A, 15B, 15C, 15D, 45A, 45B, and 45C, have received recent surveys and hunt recommendations are based on these data.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 7 – BIGHORN SHEEP AS PROPOSED.**

**COMMISSION ORDER 8 – BUFFALO**

Six buffalo permits evenly distributed among three hunts are recommended for the fall season on the Raymond Wildlife Area herd. The first hunt (September 27-28, 2008) is recommended for 2 adult cow permits. The remaining two hunts (October 4-5 and October 11-12, 2008) are recommended for 2 yearling buffalo permits in each hunt.

No general fall hunts are recommended on the House Rock Wildlife Area herd because structured hunts have been ineffective in harvesting buffalo. As directed by the Commission last August, the Department will be recommending spring hunts with increased season length on the House Rock Wildlife Area herd at the August 2008 Commission meeting to provide maximum hunter opportunity and success.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 8 – BUFFALO AS PROPOSED.**

**COMMISSION ORDER 9 – BEAR**

During 2008, fall bear seasons will occur during August 1-21, from August 22 for up to 38 days, or October 3 through the end of the 2008 calendar year. General seasons may occur during any of these season dates and archery seasons may occur during the 38 day season beginning on August 22, 2008. This structure maintains open seasons while allowing Regions to manage female harvest and maintain sites to relocate nuisance bears if necessary. The 2008 recommendation is for a female harvest limit of 86 for general and 13 for archery season, which is an overall increase of 6 female bears from 2007.

This is the first fall season for which the annual female harvest limit will apply to fall seasons. Annual female harvest limits were established in August 2007 for the units with 2008 spring hunts. Those units that have both spring and fall hunts were considered in the spring 2008 hunt formulation. Harvest that applies to annual female harvest limits includes any take by a hunter or Department action that occurs within a calendar year. Implementation of the annual female harvest limit may result in the closure of a hunt before it opens if the annual female harvest limit is reached before the start of a season. Hunters will need to contact the Department before they go hunting to determine if a specific hunt unit is open, and notification of this need will be plainly identified within the regulations. Compliance with the mandatory physical check for bear remains high.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 9 – BEAR AS PROPOSED.**

**COMMISSION ORDER 10 – MOUNTAIN LION**

The Department recommends that the mountain lion season be opened from September 1, 2008 to May 31, 2009 in all units except those units with a multiple bag limit. Units with a multiple bag limit are recommended to remain open yearlong in accordance with the approved hunt guidelines. Compliance with the mandatory physical check for mountain lion remains high.

The Department recommends no change to the units or multiple bag limit from last year's hunt structures.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 10 – MOUNTAIN LION AS PROPOSED.**

**COMMISSION ORDER 26 – POPULATION MANAGEMENT SEASONS**

Population management seasons are recommended for buffalo to be available to permitted deer hunters in Unit 12A. These permits are popularly known as "companion" tags. Buffalo population management restricted nonpermit tags are recommended at 1,225 for general seasons, 50 for muzzleloader seasons, and 1,000 for archery seasons. These permits will be available only to hunters that successfully draw a deer tag in the coincidental Unit 12A deer hunt. Permit holders for these companion tags routinely have very low hunt success. During this past year, about 10 buffalo were reportedly taken.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 26 – POPULATION MANAGEMENT SEASONS AS PROPOSED.**

**COMMISSION ORDER 11 – TREE SQUIRREL**

The Department recommends that the general and archery tree squirrel season should reflect changes made to the Commission approved hunt guidelines. Those guidelines specify a closing date of December 31 for general tree squirrel, which is 5 weeks longer than the previous guidelines. For 2008, the new guidelines recommend a season of October 3 – December 31,

2008 with a daily bag of 5 squirrels per day and a 10-squirrel possession limit a year long season in Unit 31 with the same bag and possession limit as above. In Unit 33, the Department recommends a season of September 1, 2008 to May 31, 2009 to avoid possible hunter identification confusion with Arizona gray squirrels in summer, where Arizona gray and tassel-eared squirrels can occupy adjacent habitats in that unit. The Department recommends archery-only tree squirrel seasons of August 22-October 2, 2008 statewide, and an August 22-September 11, 2008 season in Units 12A and 13A. All 2009 seasons would remain the same except small adjustments to opening and closing days so that seasons open on Friday within the same week as the 2008 recommendations as reflected in the Commission Orders provided.

#### **COMMISSION ORDER 12 – COTTONTAIL RABBIT**

The Department recommends no change to the cottontail rabbit seasons for 2008-2010.

#### **COMMISSION ORDER 13 – PREDATORY AND FUR-BEARING MAMMALS**

The Department recommends no change to the predatory and fur-bearing mammal seasons for 2008-2010.

#### **COMMISSION ORDER 14 – OTHER BIRDS AND MAMMALS**

The Department recommends a change to the open areas where Gunnison's prairie dog may be hunted to exclude Units 29, 30A, 30B, 34A, 34B, 35A, and 35B for the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 hunting seasons. This recommended closure includes the area where preparation for reintroduction efforts for the black-tailed prairie dog is ongoing and the Gunnison's prairie dog is absent. The Department recommends no other change to the other birds and mammals seasons for 2008-2010.

#### **COMMISSION ORDER 15 – PHEASANT**

The Department recommends increases in pheasant permits for the 2008-2010 seasons. All pheasant hunts in Units 40B are draw hunts. Dates for the individual hunts are adjusted periodically to accommodate local agricultural practices and conditions to maximize hunter success. Four limited-weapon shotgun-shooting-shot seasons are each scheduled to increase from 30 permits each to 40 permits, which yields an overall increase of 40 permits to total 160. Juniors-only seasons remain unchanged, as do archery and falconry seasons. Dates for the hunts in 2008 and 2009 are specified in the attached Commission Orders.

#### **COMMISSION ORDER 16 – QUAIL**

The Department recommends quail seasons to reflect changes within the Commission approved hunt guidelines. Those guidelines specify that seasons start one week earlier for Gambel's and scaled quail than previous years. This results in a 2008-2009 season of October 3, 2008 to February 8, 2009. The earlier season allows some increased hunter opportunity. Seasons for Mearns' quail remain unchanged from previous years with a November 28, 2008 to February 8,

April 1, 2008

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2009 season. All 2009 seasons would remain the same except small adjustments to opening and closing days so that seasons open on Friday within the same week as the 2008 recommendations as reflected in the Commission Orders provided.

**COMMISSION ORDER 17 – CHUKAR PARTRIDGE**

The Department recommends no change to the chukar partridge seasons for 2008-2010.

**COMMISSION ORDER 18 – BLUE (DUSKY) GROUSE**

The Department recommends no change to the blue (dusky) grouse seasons for 2008-2010. The Department continues to recommend Units 4A and 5A remain closed to allow grouse transplants to proceed in those units.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDERS 11–18 AS PROPOSED.**

**COMMISSION ORDER 23 – TRAPPING**

The Department recommends no change to the trapping seasons for 2008-2010.

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 23 AS PROPOSED.**

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Attachments