

TO: Larry D. Voyles, Director

FROM: Mike Senn, Assistant Director
Wildlife Management Division

PRESENTER: Brian F. Wakeling, Game Branch Chief

TITLE: Consideration of Proposed Commission Orders 2, 5–10, and 26 for 2009–2010 Hunting 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 2009–2010 season. 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: March 26, 2009

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 (last amended April 19, 2008) for a two-year period that extends through spring 2010. Consequently, no public meetings discussing the guidelines were held prior to the April 2009 Commission meeting. Each Region hosted a public meeting in early March, prior to submitting their hunt recommendations, at which they presented the survey and harvest data used for each recommendation. Prior to the April Commission meeting, each Region also hosted 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 permits 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 seasons are recommended in accordance with approved guidelines, unless specifically noted under the species-specific information provided under the corresponding Commission Order.

COMMISSION ORDER 2 – DEER

The Department is recommending 43,730 general deer permits in 2009, an increase of 1,910 permits statewide from 2008. White-tailed deer permits are recommended for an increase of 1,070 permits. In white-tailed deer alternative management units, estimated harvest in the late December hunts is predicted to be up to 30% of the total harvest within those units. A total of 5.6% of all white-tailed deer permits are being offered in December (slightly above hunt guidelines). Antlered mule deer and any antlered deer permits are recommended for an increase of 840. Juniors permits are recommended at 2,105 (4.8% of general), a 35-permit increase over 2008. This recommendation includes a 400-permit antlerless deer hunt for juniors-only in Unit 12AW in response to continued high fawn production on the Kaibab Plateau. This hunt is consistent with the objective of allowing the Unit 12AW population to increase slightly. Unit 30B was added to the multi-unit juniors-only deer hunt in Region 5 (Units 28, 29, 30A, **30B**, 31, and 32). A 30-permit juniors-only muzzleloader deer season is recommended in Units 15A, 15B, 15C, 15D, moving that hunt out of Unit 16A in December. The December archery deer and general deer seasons are recommended to begin on December 11, 2009. A December archery deer season is recommended for addition in Unit 16A with the elimination of the juniors muzzleloader season from that unit. Muzzleloader permits are recommended at 1,010 permits, an increase of 5 from 2008.

Archery deer seasons for 2009 are recommended consistent with hunt guidelines approved in August 2007. In 2008, units where archery harvest comprised <10% of the total harvest, archery deer season length was extended. Units 4A, 4B, 8, 9, and 19A are recommended to retain a two-week January archery deer season added last year. Other units where archery harvest has exceeded 20% of the overall take had season lengths reduced or were permitted through the draw. The total number of permit tags recommended for archery seasons are 1,810, which is a

495-permit decrease from last year. Permit levels were originally recommended based on expected harvest and corresponding success rates based on benchmarking data from other states with similar permitted archery structures. Changes were made for fall 2009 based on actual 2008 hunt success and adjustments to bring the archery harvest to 10-20% of the overall harvest for a unit. Recommended decreases include Unit 7 (400 permits) and Unit 13A (5 permits) and combining the permitted archery hunt in Units 12A, 12B, and 12B West (90 permits). Similar to last year, 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

A 10-permit CHAMP hunt was offered in Unit 12A in 2008. The Department recommends that this 10-permit CHAMP season be offered again in Unit 12A during October 9-15, 2009.

Total permits for general, muzzleloader, and juniors-only season is 46,875, which is an increase of 16.5% (6,650 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 2-8, 2009 with 6,120 permits, which is an increase of 20 permits over 2008. There are seven units (Units 1, 6A, 8, 10, 12A, 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 2009, the Department is recommending fall javelina seasons for juniors during general seasons for which season dates coincide with a juniors-only deer season. The Commission directed the Department to provide at least 10% of the total javelina permits (both spring and fall) to juniors hunters and guidelines state that units within Region 5 will allocate 15% of the annual permits to an October 9–15 or a November 20–26, 2009 season. There are substantial changes recommended that differ from the current guidelines. A total of 1,075 permits are recommended for fall 2009 juniors-only general javelina hunts. This is a 1,545 permit decrease from 2008 and equals 6.4% of the total annual permits in Region 5. Total juniors-only javelina

tags represent 7.7% of the total javelina permits statewide. This deviation from guidelines is recommended because of the number of leftover, unsold permits in 2008. Recommended permit numbers were developed by combining blocks of units, which will provide juniors hunters with a greater geographic area in which to hunt, and by recommending more permits than were issued in each of the blocks of units in 2008. Units 28, 29, 30A, 30B, 31, and 32 were combined to match the combined units in the juniors-only deer hunts. Units 34A, 34B, 35A, and 35B were combined in one block, 36A, 36B, and 36C in another block, and 37A and 37B in a final block to allow hunters with those tags the flexibility of going into any of the open units.

Additional units in Region 3 (Units 16A, 17B, 18B, and 20A) will also offer this juniors-only opportunity. Unit 20A is recommended for a 25-permit increase to meet first-choice applicant demand.

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 6–15, 2009 and a juniors-only muzzleloader season with 10 permits during November 20–29, 2009. 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 87, a decrease of 3 from last year. Decreased permits are recommended in Units 13A (1 permit), 39 (1 permit), 40B Mohawk and Copper Mts. (1 permit), 45A (2 permits), 45C (1 permit), 46A (1 permit), 46B (1 permit), 23 and 24A (1 permit; no hunt is recommended for this unit); whereas permit increases are recommended in Units 12B East (2 permits), 13B South (1 permit), and 15D (3 permits). Units 12A and 12BW, 15A, 15B, 15C, 15D, 45A, 45B, and 45C have received recent surveys at more frequent intervals than standard units and hunt recommendations are based on these more recent 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 (2 permits each) are recommended for the fall season on the Raymond Wildlife Area herd. The first hunt (September 25-27, 2009) is

recommended for 2 yearling buffalo permits (2 adult cow permits in 2008). The remaining two hunts (October 9-11 and October 23-25, 2009) 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; companion tags for the deer hunts are addressed under Commission Order 26.

Recommendation:

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

COMMISSION ORDER 9 – BEAR

During 2009, fall bear seasons will occur during August 1–20, from August 21 for up to 38 days, or October 2 through the end of the 2009 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 21, 2009. This structure maintains open seasons while allowing Regions to manage female harvest and maintain sites to relocate nuisance bears if necessary. The 2009 recommendation is for a female harvest limit of 87 for general and 13 for archery season, which is an overall increase of 1 female bear from 2008.

Annual female harvest limits were established in August 2008 for the units with 2009 spring hunts. Those units that have both spring and fall hunts were considered in the spring 2009 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, 2009 to May 31, 2010 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 the following changes to the units or multiple bag limit from last year's hunt structures: Units 13BS, 16AS and 18BS, and Unit 27 Bear Canyon met the bighorn sheep population objectives and will revert to the standard season dates of September 1, 2009 to May 31, 2010. A new multiple bag limit hunt is recommended for eastern Unit 44A (harvest objective of 4 lions) in response to continued predation events on the bighorn sheep in this unit.

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 1,175 for general 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. However, about 15 buffalo were reportedly taken in 2009.

The Department recommends that these restricted nonpermit tags for buffalo be offered for cow and yearling buffalo only to facilitate buffalo population reduction in Unit 12A.

Recommendation:

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

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Attachments