

Meeting Date: May 16, 2024

Agenda Item No. 15

Agenda Item: Motorized Hunting Rule

Bureau Chief Approval: JR

Prepared by: Greg Wooten, Chief, Enforcement Bureau

Background:

The Motorized Hunting Rule applies to 30 big game units. It started in a single Magic Valley unit in 2002. Initially it restricted hunting of wildlife including game retrieval. Implementation included guidance to consider removal of the rule in units where land managers implement travel plans. In 2005 the U.S. Forest Service restricted all motorized travel to designated roads and trails nationwide. That same year the Commission revised the rule to be specific to hunting big game animals, clarifying exceptions for upland game, game retrieval, packing in hunting equipment, disabled permits, and private lands.

Increased recreational OHV presence is not affected by the motorized hunting rule. Rule exceptions and differing jurisdictional interpretations strain our resources and ability to effectively implement and seek compliance. These circumstances may be exacerbating hunter/OHV conflict. There were 70,760 registered OHVs in 2002 when the Commission implemented the motorized hunting rule. In 2019 there were 167,760 registered OHVs. Some units have low trail miles where the motorized hunting rule has little impact. Factors to consider include trail density, hunter density, and management goals in deer and elk management plans. National Forests and BLM districts continue to develop and implement motorized vehicle use plans.

An increase in hunter complaints initiated a new interest and discussion on the rule. Recently, 8,273 hunters responded to a survey sent to everyone who reported hunting in a unit with the motorized hunting rule, and anyone who had purchased a tag for a unit with the motorized hunting rule during the last two years. Survey results will inform changes proposed during the upcoming rulemaking process.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

The Commission has statutory authority for rulemaking regarding this subject. Idaho Code 36-104(b)2 provides Commission authority to make rules and prescribe under what circumstances and by what means wildlife may be taken. The Motorized Hunting Rule appears in IDAPA 13.01.08.411 with designated units listed in 13.01.08.412.

Justification:

IDAPA Chapter 8, Rules Governing the Taking of Big Game Animals is scheduled for review in accordance with the Governor's Zero-Based Rule Making process.

Staff Recommendation:

This agenda item is for Commission information. There is no staff recommendation at this time. The Department is considering developing and proposing changes to the rule. Recommended scoping options include retaining the rule as is, discontinue the rule completely, and options to include all wildlife game species (not just big game), change the effective end dates from December 31 to November 15 or November 30. We additionally propose scoping removing the motorized hunting rule from units with new or revised motorized vehicle use plans/maps and where the motorized hunting rule has little to no affect due to the low number of trail miles.

Action Requested:

None. This agenda item is for Commission information.