



## IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

*Date: November 7, 2024*

*Agenda Item No. 7*

*Agenda Item: Working Group Update*

*Bureau Chief Approval:*

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*Position/Title: Legislative and Community Engagement Coordinator*

### **Background:**

Earlier in the year, the Commission directed IDFG to put together two separate citizen working groups, the Non-Resident Tag Issuance Advisory Group and the Hunting and Advanced Technology Working Group.

### **Non-Resident Tag Issuance Advisory Group**

The Non-Resident Tag Issuance Advisory Group was the result of failed legislation that tried to move IDFG from the current non-resident OTC system to a draw, in an extremely abbreviated timeline. The purpose of the Non-Resident Tag Issuance Advisory Group (Advisory Group) is to review current processes for how the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) issues general season deer and elk tags to nonresidents, and to develop recommendations to the Commission on potential changes and improvements.

This group is reviewing options, including using a draw system and enhancing the current over-the-counter system. To ensure input from a range of perspectives, the Non-Resident Tag Issuance Advisory Group includes representation from the Idaho Legislature, Idaho hunters, rural economic interests, and the outfitting industry, totally 10 Idahoans. Recognizing modifications to the existing system may require legislation or rulemaking in 2025 and/or 2026, the intent is for the Advisory Group to finalize recommendations before the end of the year.

The Advisory Group is made up of 10 individuals, representing hunters, outfitters and guides, legislators, and rural businesses. Fish and Game staff present for every meeting have included Tara Reichart, Rick Ward, and myself to facilitate discussions and provide technical expertise. The Advisory Group has met 4 times thus far, twice virtually and twice in-person.

IDFG has created a one-stop shop page on the IDFG website that houses all working group information, including agendas, Zoom link for members of the public to view meetings, list of Advisory Group members with bios, Advisory Group charter, and a public feedback form that allows the public to submit comments to the Advisory Group for consideration. To date, the Advisory Group has received almost 300 public comments.



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Discussions have been data driven, respectful, and extremely thoughtful. The Advisory Group described what qualities a “perfect” non-resident tag system would have, which included the following:

- Fair
- Simple
- Transparent
- Trustworthy
- Reliable
- Consistent
- Reduces administrative burden
- Maintains demand
- Provides non-residents with the ability to plan ahead
- Meets outfitter needs
- Allows for party/group hunt opportunities
- Provides informative data
- Keeps IDFG fiscally solvent

The Advisory Group then proceeded to identify problems with the current system that needed to be addressed, which included the following:

1. Update outfitter tag allocation
2. In-person vs. online distribution
3. Proxy sales/tag mules
4. System failure
5. Multiple avenues to purchase tags (IDFG offices, vendors, on-line, phone)
6. Vendor challenges and discrepancies
7. Non-resident and resident frustration
8. Department integrity
9. Variability in tag types and quotas (e.g., mentored youth, DAV, lifetime licenses)
10. Staff capacity
11. Fairness

The Advisory then proceeded to score these problems in the context of an over-the-counter system or a draw system. They were instructed to assign a score of 0 if that problem is insoluble, 1 if it is solvable with high effort and additional resources, or 2 if it is solvable with current resources. Below are the results of that scoring exercise.



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	OTC	DRAW
<i>Problem 1</i>	1	1
<i>Problem 2</i>	0	1
<i>Problem 3</i>	1	2
<i>Problem 4</i>	1	1
<i>Problem 5</i>	1	2
<i>Problem 6</i>	1	2
<i>Problem 7</i>	1	2
<i>Problem 8</i>	1	1
<i>Problem 9</i>	1	1
<i>Problem 10</i>	1	1
<i>Problem 11</i>	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>

**Key:**

0 = Not solvable

1 = Solvable with high effort and additional resources

2 = Solvable with current resources

After the scoring exercise, a draw system scored better in addressing the identified problems with 16 total points. Therefore, the group collectively decided to focus their efforts on devising a non-resident draw system. Conversations are on-going on what that system could look like. Topics discussed have included requiring application fees, party/group hunt options, pre-authorization of credit card charges, left over tag OTC fire sale open to both resident and non-residents, updating outfitter tag allocation in capped elk zones, ensuring Idaho is first to close its application period to lock hunters in, requiring the purchase of a license to submit draw application, tag refunds, and more.

IDFG is currently in the process of scheduling the next Advisory Council meeting, in which the group hopes to wrap up the discussion on outfitter allocation, DAV, and mentored youth tags.



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### Hunting and Advanced Technology Working Group

Nationwide, state agencies are wrestling with balancing technology, hunter success, and wildlife management objectives, and Idaho is no different. If and when hunter success rates increase because of technology, agencies are left with only a few tools to ensure that hunters are not overharvesting game species and jeopardizing their long-term sustainability. Those tools include:

- 1) Equipment restrictions
- 2) Season timing and length
- 3) Number of tags

Idaho Department of Fish and Game has traditionally managed game species with a focus on providing greater hunter opportunity, including a higher number of available tags and longer seasons. Some members of Idaho's outdoor sporting community have begun to express concerns related to the advancement of hunting technology and the potential erosion of fair chase ethic. However, IDFG also acknowledges that other members of Idaho's outdoor sporting community do not share those same concerns.

Recognizing the widely varying opinions on the matter amongst Idaho's outdoor sporting community the Idaho Fish and Game Commission directed IDFG to organize and facilitate a citizen working group to delve into this complex issue. Additionally, timing was appropriate as IDFG was already scheduled to review IDAPA Chapter 8 – Rules Governing the Taking of Big Game through the ZBR process.

The purpose of the Hunting and Advanced Technology (HAT) Working Group is to assess public perspectives on what is and is not considered "fair" technology to use in the pursuit of big game and develop recommendations to the Commission that strike an appropriate balance between the use of hunting technology and fair chase ethic. Those recommendations would then be reviewed by the Commission and considered for implementation through the rules process.

During the 2-week application period, IDFG received over 750 applications. In that application, individuals were asked if they were a hunter, their gender, birth year, name, phone number, email, city and state of residency, and a 250 or less explanation as to why they should be a member of the HAT Working Group. After extensive review, IDFG selected 24 people to serve on the HAT Working Group, including 4 people from Region 1, 3 people from Region 2, 5 people from Region 3, 3 people from Region 4, 3 people from Region 5, 4 people from Region 6, and 2 people from Region 7. Of those 24 people, 4 are female, 23 are self-identified hunters, and their experiences range from traditional archery to competitive extreme long-range shooting, and everything in between.



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Recognizing the importance of this topic, IDFG has secured the services of Wendy Green Lowe of p2 Solutions, a third-party professional facilitator to moderate and lead the HAT Working Group. IDFG will serve on the HAT Working Group in an ex officio capacity, providing technical expertise, relevant information, and to answer questions throughout the process. Members of the HAT Working Group can expect the first 3 meetings to be heavy on presentations from the perspective various state agencies, members of the hunting technology industry, and leading “fair chase” hunting organizations to allow for well-informed future discussions.

With the members selected, IDFG has published a HAT Working Group webpage on the IDFG website. There, interested members can access all relevant information for the HAT Working group including meeting schedule, Zoom link, member list, working group description, and a public feedback form where members of the public can submit their comments for consideration by the working group. The first meeting will be held on November 2, in person at IDFG HQ in Boise. All meetings will be streamed through Zoom for interested members of the public to view.

To help inform the HAT Working Group as they tackle this multifaceted issue, IDFG is working with Dr. Kenny Wallen to create a Technology and Fair Chase Survey that will be sent to a subset of Idaho’s big game hunters. The results of this survey will help IDFG and the HAT Working Group to establish a baseline understanding of how Idaho’s larger big game hunting community generally views advanced hunting technology, fair chase, and the relationship between the two. The survey is another opportunity for Idaho big game hunters who are not members of the working group to have an active voice in HAT Working Group discussion.

### **Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:**

IDAPA Chapter 8 - Rules Governing the Taking of Big Game and Idaho’s non-resident hunting framework.

### **Public Involvement Process:**

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Commission routinely solicit and receive public input.



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**Justification:**

Fish and Game Commission directed IDFG to formulate two working groups, the Non-Resident Tag Issuance Advisory Group and the Hunting and Advanced Technology Working Group.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Information only.



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