

Meeting Date: May 11, 2023

Agenda Item No. 10

Agenda Item: Hunter crowding study update

Bureau Chief Approval: JR

Prepared by: Dr. Kenneth E. Wallen, University of Idaho

Background:

Since April 2020, the Department and University of Idaho have collaborated on a longitudinal study to annually assess big game hunters' perceptions of congestion during general elk, regular deer, and white-tailed deer seasons (2019, 2020, 2021). Key takeaways from a summary of three years of statewide data include:

- Crowding is complex issue and not necessarily caused by a single factor; crowding is a multi-dimensional phenomenon experienced by individuals and groups differently.
- Crowding is a larger issue in southern Idaho compared to northern Idaho, but specific elk zones and GMUs have higher than average crowding scores, regardless of geography.
- Satisfaction is not necessarily associated with perceptions of crowding.
- All hunters, regardless of tag or species, perceive more hunters now than in the past.
- All public land hunters perceive higher levels of crowding than private land hunters.
- Hunters who purchase a regular deer tag to pursue mule deer experience the highest average level of perceived crowding.
- Exclusive whitetail hunters (purchased white-tailed deer tag) perceive the lowest levels of crowding.

Details of and modifications to the upcoming hunter congestions survey (2022 season) will be presented.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

N/A

Public Involvement Process:

IDFG staff and the University of Idaho Human Dimensions staff have conducted multiple surveys to solicit information from sportsmen on their activities and perceptions of crowding. We will continue to engage sportsmen to assess their perspectives on crowding and potential solutions in a phased approach.

Justification:

This agenda item is for Commission information on the status of the hunter congestion project being conducted in collaboration with the University of Idaho. Information from this agenda item will aid Commissioners as they respond to requests, recommendations, or other input from the public related to hunter congestion.

Staff Recommendation:

N/A. This agenda item is for Commission information.

Action Requested:

N/A.