

Meeting Date: May 11, 2023

Agenda Item No. 5I

Agenda Item: 2023 Big Game Hunt Modification
Proposals (**Action**)

Bureau Chief Approval: JR

Prepared by: Rick Ward, State Wildlife Manager

Background:

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission has authority to establish harvest seasons (including season dates, bag limits, size, gender, and harvestable species) via proclamation. The Commission considers proposed changes for season setting and publishes proclamations biennially for big game in March of odd-numbered years. The Commission set the 2023 big game seasons and tag numbers at their March 2023 meeting.

Although the Department focusses efforts for the season-setting process on a biennial cycle, the Commission has the authority to consider proposals and adjust annually if necessary due to fire, severe winter weather, disease, new data, or other factors. Information gathered on deer and pronghorn populations of the Southeast and Upper Snake Regions indicates above-average mortality rates in some populations subjected to severe snow and cold conditions this winter.

Staff have evaluated population status and recommend the following deer hunts be considered for conversion to buck only for the 2023 hunting season:

- **Controlled Hunt No. 1099 (Controlled Hunt Area 73A, 20 tags, either sex)**
- **Controlled Hunt No. 1100 (Controlled Hunt Area 74, 20 tags, either sex)**

Staff recommend the following deer hunt be considered for closure for the 2023 hunting season:

- **Controlled Hunt No. 1064 (Controlled Hunt Area 60-1, 100 tags, antlerless only)**

Staff recommend the following pronghorn hunts be considered for closure for the 2023 hunting season:

- **Controlled Hunt No. 4022 (Controlled Hunt Area 60A-1, 15 tags, either sex)**
- **Controlled Hunt No. 4025 (Controlled Hunt Area 76-1, 5 tags, either sex)**
- **Controlled Hunt No. 4043 (Controlled Hunt Area 60A-1, 40 tags, either sex)**
- **Controlled Hunt No. 4052 (Controlled Hunt Area 61-1, 25 tags, either sex)**

Staff recommend returned and unsold nonresident general-season Regular Deer tags and White-tailed Deer tags in the following 14 Game Management Units not be sold:

- **62, 64, 65, 66, 66A, 67, 69, 71, 72, 74, 75, 76, 77, and 78.**

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Idaho Code 36-104 grants authority to the Commission to promulgate rules for the taking of wildlife consistent with state policy. Species management plans developed by the Department and adopted by the Commission provide long-term direction for population and harvest management.

Public Involvement Process:

Recommendations for the 2023 seasons that were set in March 2023 resulted from year-round public involvement, and population and harvest monitoring. Proposals being considered for tag number modifications during the 2023 season were posted via gold sheet for the Commission meeting on the Department's website in May to inform the public and provide an opportunity to provide input.

Justification:

Commission action is required to adopt changes to the 2023 hunting seasons that were set by proclamation by the Commission in March 2023.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends closing deer hunt 1064 for the 2023 hunting season, changing deer hunts 1099 and 1100 to antlered-only for the 2023 hunting season, and closing pronghorn hunts 4022, 4025, 4043, and 4052 for the 2023 season. Staff further recommends returned and unsold 2023 nonresident general-season Regular Deer tags and White-tailed Deer tags in units 62, 64, 65, 66, 66A, 67, 69, 71, 72, 74, 75, 76, 77, and 78 not be sold.

Action Requested:

Approve adjustments to the 2023 big game hunting season.

Suggested Motion: Commission adopt modifications to the 2023 big game hunting seasons as proposed.