

Meeting Date: July 27, 2023

Agenda Item No. 12

Agenda Item: CWD Update

Bureau Chief Approval: SR

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Background:

IDFG has been monitoring for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in deer and elk since 1997 and have tested approximately 26,000 animals over the last 26 years.

CWD was first detected in the state in Unit 14 in late 2021. The Commission designated a temporary CWD management zone as Units 14 and 15 and IDFG staff increased CWD surveillance efforts in the area. A CWD Surveillance Area was identified as all of Units 14 and 15 and portions of Units 11A, 13, 18, and 23. Emergency CWD surveillance hunts were employed in those units in December 2021 to collect additional CWD samples. In total, five deer and one elk tested positive for CWD during the 2021-2022 sampling season, all in Unit 14.

At their March 2022 meeting, the Commission adopted modifications to the 2022 hunting seasons in Unit 14 and also implemented a mandatory check requirement for all deer, elk, and moose harvested in Units 14 and 15 for the 2022 hunting season. Samples collected from hunter-harvested deer and elk and deer and elk found dead in Unit 14 resulted in 15 deer testing positive for CWD over the course of the 2022 hunting season. No elk tested positive in 2022. All positive samples were within approximately six miles of lower Slate Creek in Unit 14.

With Commission direction, and in accordance with the *Idaho Department of Fish and Game 2021 Strategy for Chronic Wasting Disease*, Department staff collaborated with USDA Wildlife Services to implement a control action in the Slate Creek drainage and adjoining drainages beginning on February 13, 2023. The goal of this action was to reduce deer density in and around what the evidence to date suggests is the CWD focal area, thereby reducing the risk of spread. Operations concluded on March 30, 2023. In total, 555 animals were removed and 27 tested positive for CWD.

At their March 2023 meeting, the Commission adopted modest changes to the 2023 and 2024 hunting seasons in Unit 14 by splitting controlled mule deer and controlled white-tailed deer seasons into two seasons each. The mandatory check requirement for all deer, elk, and moose harvested in Units 14 and 15 remains in effect for the 2023 and 2024 hunting seasons.

For the CWD sampling period July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, Department staff collected and tested the following CWD samples:

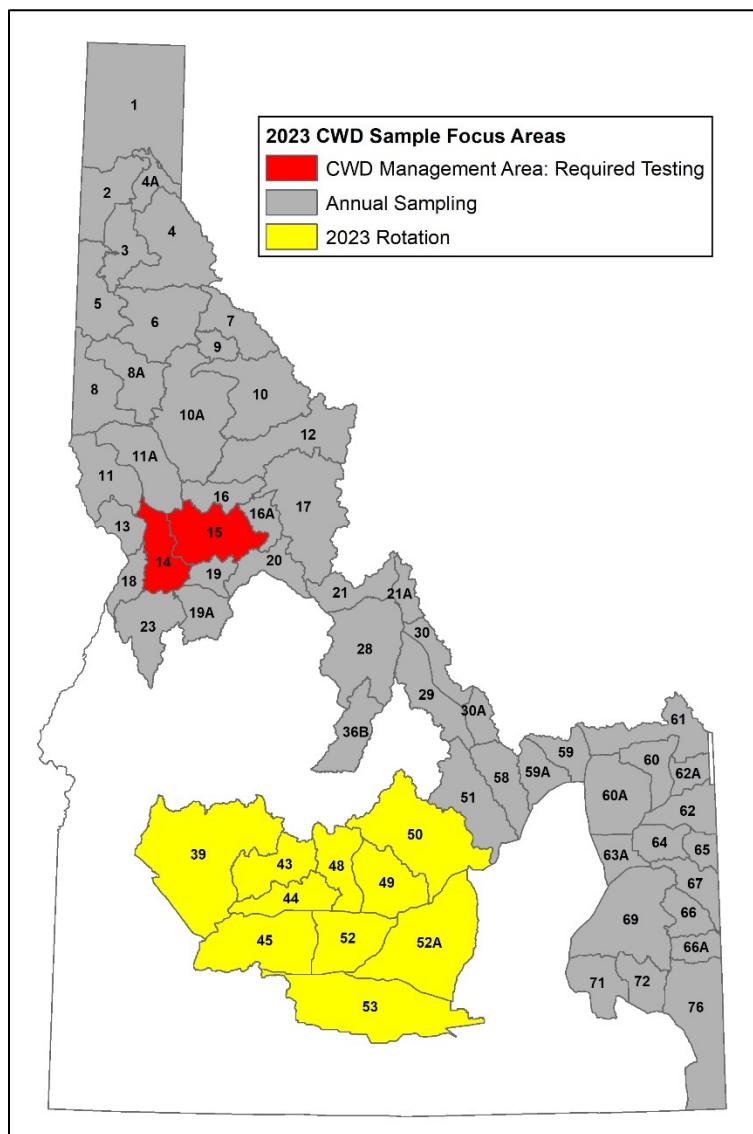
Species	Number of Samples Collected
Mule Deer – Statewide	1,473
Mule Deer – CWD Management Zone	426
White-tailed Deer - Statewide	1,643
White-tailed Deer - CWD Management Zone	1,089
Elk - Statewide	615
Elk - CWD Management Zone	267

In total, 37 white-tailed deer and 6 mule deer tested positive for CWD during this sampling period. All CWD-positive deer were harvested by hunters during the regular

hunting season or taken during the control action, except for one white-tailed deer that was found dead. All positives were in Unit 14 and within or adjacent to the Slate Creek drainage.

CWD Sampling Plans: July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

In addition to the mandatory sampling of all harvested deer, elk, and moose from Units 14 and 15, the *2021 Strategy for Chronic Wasting Disease* prescribes surveillance that includes sampling animals from portions of the state that are sampled every year because they border CWD positive states (Annual Sampling in figure below) and a rotating focused sampling area from the remainder of the state (2023 Rotation in figure below). Focus sampling areas rotate throughout the portion of southern Idaho not included in annual sampling, on a three-year rotation. The 2023 focus sampling area includes Units 39, 43, 44, 45, 49, 50, 52A, and 53.



At this meeting, staff will present an update on CWD sampling plans for the upcoming 2023 hunting season, both within the CWD management zone and statewide, and will include a discussion on hunter outreach, additional staff time dedicated to CWD,

facilitation of sample submission in mandatory units, statewide sample rotation, and voluntary sample submission across the state.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Monitoring and management of chronic wasting disease is described in the *Idaho Department of Fish and Game 2021 Strategy for Chronic Wasting Disease*.

Proclamation or emergency hunt order may designate seasons and areas in which portions of a carcass must be presented to the Department within a specified timeframe (IDAPA 13.01.08.350.03).

Public Involvement Process:

The Department has conducted outreach on CWD sampling efforts, CWD status, CWD surveillance hunts, and through local public meetings. Public input was solicited and received on the proposed season changes and reporting requirements during big game season-setting in March 2022 and March 2023.

Justification:

This agenda item is for Commission information on the status of chronic wasting disease testing and management in Idaho.

Staff Recommendation:

None. This agenda item is for Commission information.

Action Requested:

None.