



Big Game Outlook for Idaho's 2012 Hunting Seasons

Deer and elk numbers are meeting management objectives in many parts of the state.

"We're having trouble in some areas, but overall things are looking pretty good," big game manager Jon Rachael recently told the Idaho Fish and Game Commission.

Female elk numbers meet or exceed objectives in 21 of

29 elk management zones and are below objectives in eight zones. Bull elk meet or exceed objectives in 20 zones and are below objectives in nine zones.

Fish and Game plans to conduct aerial surveys in the Panhandle, Elk City, Brownlee, Weiser and Pioneer zones this winter to update elk herd information.



A hunter takes aim at a distant group of mule deer.

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Mule deer exceed management objectives for buck to doe ratio. It's too early to tell how the mulies will fare this winter, but Fish and Game hopes to get a better idea from the 195 fawns biologists recently captured, weighed and radio-collared. Their body condition was excellent.

White-tailed deer are meeting management objectives for buck harvest throughout the state.

So far it has been a mild winter, and that bodes well for big game winter survival – but there's a ways to go yet.

In the Magic Valley, January storms resulted in a rapid accumulation of snow in the Big Wood drainage. Fish and Game has been feeding about 210 elk at Bullwacker since January 20.

In the Southeast, feeding has been authorized at one feeding site because of concerns about temporary habitat loss after the Drive-In Fire.

No other winter feeding operations have been recommended by feeding advisory committees.

Fish and Game also has started revising its elk management plan, which dates to 1999. The new plan would include short- and long-term objectives. One short term goal is to stabilize declining populations, such as the Lolo zone which has been in a long downward trend.

Wildlife Bureau Chief Jeff Gould told commissioners that efforts to stabilize declining populations would include reducing the impacts of predation. Long term plans will be aimed at building or maintaining elk herds at population objectives and include habitat improvements that take a long time.

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A Mild Winter May Brighten Deer Outlook This Year



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Mule Deer:

Most population management zones exceed 15 bucks per 100 does.

From mid-December to mid-January, Fish and Game biologists captured and radio-collared 277 mule deer, including 195 fawns, in 20 game management units. They are now monitoring 796 radio-marked mule deer in 39 units in 12 population management units as part of annual mule deer survival monitoring.

Dry conditions and the unusually open winter statewide so far this year, have led Fish and Game to change its aerial survey plans because deer are spread widely rather than confined to winter range.

Aerial surveys are planned or underway to estimate populations in Smoky-Bennett, the western part of Central Mountains, and the Island Park Population Management Unit. Mountain Valley has been postponed.

Harsh winter conditions last year resulted in the lowest over-winter fawn survival, at 32 percent, since Fish and Game began monitoring in 1998-99. Adult doe mortality was as high as 26-36 percent in four eastern Idaho population management units.

In response to mule deer monitoring results last year, antlerless hunt tags and some buck hunt tags were reduced. Because of low survival of fawns, a lower buck harvest was predicted for 2011 – few yearling two-points were available. With better winter conditions this year, the yearling two-point age class seen this fall will improve.

White-Tailed Deer:

All whitetail data analysis units are meeting management plan objectives for buck harvest and percent of five-points in the harvest.

Data Analysis Unit 4 was slightly below objectives for hunter number and hunter days, but whitetails are not the major focus for hunters in these units.

Whitetail numbers have been improving since the losses during 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 winters in the northern part of state. So far the outlook is positive for good numbers next fall.

No formal population surveys were conducted for whitetails.

HARVEST STATS: 2000 – 2010

Year	Deer	Elk	Pronghorn	Moose	Black Bear	Bighorn Sheep	Mtn. Goat	Mtn. Lion
2000	45,200	20,200	1,325	774	1,855	50	48	728
2001	53,000	19,500	1,350	918	1,887	48	48	628
2002	44,650	18,400	1,350	870	2,390	34	41	514
2003	43,500	18,400	1,300	933	2,415	36	33	569
2004	46,160	20,800	1,340	928	2,443	46	32	459
2005	54,050	21,470	1,410	835	2,425	42	48	466
2006	51,700	20,040	1,480	811	2,231	48	46	480
2007	54,200	19,100	1,460	847	2,660	57	36	440
2008	43,605	16,017	1,427	794	2,169	48	39	416
2009	42,189	15,813	1,335	781	2,091	53	42	432
2010	44,360	17,470	1,453	767	2,508	49	39	469

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Deer tag sales

2008 – 145,869
 2009 – 137,907
 2010 – 133,154
 2011 – 133,586

Elk tag sales

2008 – 92,565
 2009 – 87,021
 2010 – 84,765
 2011 – 84,369



ELK HUNTER SUCCESS RATES FOR 2010

ELK ZONE	A TAG	B TAG
Panhandle	18.7%	18.2%
Palouse	31.4%	19.2%
Dworshak	29.9%	20.1%
Lolo	10.2%	16.7%
Hells Canyon	Controlled hunts only	
Elk City	19.5%	22.7 %
Selway	8.2%	14.2%
McCall	16.4%	10.8%
Middle Fork	22.2%	16.6%
Salmon	18%	19.6%
Brownlee	16%	No B tag
Weiser River	22%	20.8%
Sawtooth	10.7%	12.7%
Boise River	10.9%	12.7%
Smoky Mountains	15.4%	No B tag
Bennett Hills	36.2%	No B tag
Owyhee-South Hills	Controlled hunts only	
Snake River	22.7%	No B tag
Big Desert	12.9%	No B tag
Pioneer	19%	No B tag
Lemhi	22.9%	No B tag
Beaverhead	27%	No B tag
Island Park	15.3%	No B tag
Palisades	17.5%	15.5%
Teton	18.2%	7.4%
Tex Creek	26.9%	22%
Diamond Creek	19.2%	No B tag
Bannock	16.5%	No B tag
Bear River	26.2%	14.7%
Controlled hunt success rates in Idaho averaged 35% in 2010		

Idaho Wolf Hunting and Trapping Season Summary

Idaho’s second wolf harvest season opened statewide on August 30.

Wolves were removed from the endangered species list in Idaho and Montana on May 5, 2011, after President Barack Obama signed legislation that reinstated the 2009 federal rule, turning over wolf management responsibility to Idaho and Montana.

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission adopted wolf hunting and trapping seasons and regulations on July 28.

Harvest limits were established for five of the 13 wolf management zones. Seasons closed December 31, 2011, in the Island Park and Beaverhead wolf management zones, and are scheduled to close in the other nine zones on March 31, unless harvest limits are met first. Seasons in the Lolo and Selway zones will close June 30, 2012.

Idaho’s first wolf trapping season opened November 15. All individuals interested in trapping wolves are required to complete a wolf trapper education class held by Fish and Game before trapping for wolves. Capitalizing on experienced wolf trappers and biologists, Fish and Game developed a course similar to what has been provided to trappers in Alaska. The course focuses on trapping rules, ethics, wolf management and effective wolf trapping.

From September 30 through December, Fish and Game conducted 25 classes around the state and certified 577 individuals to trap wolves. Interest has been high, and additional classes will be held to meet demand.

Fish and Game sold 32,273 hunting tags for the 2011 hunting season, and as of January 31, Fish and Game has sold 7,057 tags for the 2012 hunting season.

Fish and Game also has sold 416 wolf trapping tags for the 2011-2012 trapping season.

As of January 31, 269 wolves had been legally harvested – 209 by hunters and 60 by trappers.

Wolf seasons are open through the end of March, except in the Lolo and Selway zone where the hunting season is open through the end of June.

Idaho Fish and Game Policy

Idaho wildlife management policy is set by seven volunteer commissioners. The Idaho Fish and Game Commission’s policy decisions are based on research and recommendations by the professional staff of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and with input from the governor’s office, the state Legislature, hunters, anglers and the public.



IDFG photo



Secret to Drawing an Elk Controlled Hunt Tag: There Isn't One



IDFG photo

How the Controlled Hunt Drawing System Works

Here is a simplified version of how the controlled hunt drawing system works:

The procedure has been computerized since 1973 and was certified random by Boise State University professors in 1977. Every applicant has the same chance of drawing. Officials verify that applicants meet all of the eligibility requirements to draw a tag. Each application is then assigned a randomly generated number, which is then scrambled and coded before being drawn by the computer system.

The computer, located in the state controller's office, selects the successful

applicants from the entire file of eligible applicants.

When a group of people enter on the same application, the group is assigned a single application number, and the system will recognize only one application number.

The controlled hunt drawing system processes all first choice hunts in the first round. The system then does a second drawing to fill any open hunts with second choice hunts. No person can draw a second choice before that hunt has been filled by first choice people.

When residents and nonresidents enter

on the same application, the chances of drawing are limited to the nonresident chances. Nonresidents are limited to up to 10 percent of the tags available in any individual controlled hunt. In a controlled hunt with 100 tags, for example, nonresidents can draw up to 10 tags. If, after drawing 90 applications, the computer draws an application and finds it includes a nonresident, it checks to see whether a tag is available for a nonresident. If 10 nonresidents already have drawn tags for that hunt, the computer simply goes to the next application.

Selecting Tags for General Season Elk Hunts is Simple as A, B

Why are there A and B tags for general season elk hunts; what's the difference?

The simple answer is that generally A tags favor archery and muzzleloader hunts, and B tags favor rifle hunts.

The A-B zone tag system was established as an effort to offer elk hunters the most general season choices. An example: an archery hunter with an A tag can hunt elk in any unit within the zone. With a B tag, the early archery

season would be about two weeks shorter and for spikes and cows only. But the later any-weapon season for a bull would be longer, running from mid-October into November.

This example doesn't hold for all elk management zones, and some have no general hunts for elk. In the end, hunters should decide what they want to hunt and where, and find the hunts that suit them, be that an A tag or B tag.

