



IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

March 2026 Commission Meeting

Agenda Item: *History of Outfitter Allocation*

Presented by: *Rick Ward and Brad Compton*

Position/Title: *State Wildlife Manager; Commission Representative on Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board*

Agenda Item No.: 10
Supervisor Approval: SR

Background:

Deer and elk tags for hunters using outfitter services were first allocated for the 1998 hunting season, which also marked the introduction of capped elk zones. At that time, the purpose of outfitter allocation was to keep outfitters whole when deer or elk tags were reduced or limited, such as when elk zones were capped or general seasons were converted to controlled hunts. This approach was developed by the Allocation Team, a stakeholder group formed by the Department in 1996 to “develop a process to fairly allocate deer and elk tags to the outfitted public in situations or areas where hunter numbers are restricted.”

Since 1998, the number of allocated deer and elk tags has steadily increased as more elk zones have been capped and additional controlled hunts established. General-season allocations also expanded with the introduction of nonresident tag limits at the elk zone and deer unit level, beginning in the 2021 season.

This presentation will outline the origins of outfitter allocation in Idaho, how it has evolved over time, and its current status. It will also review the role of the Idaho Outfitters and Guide Licensing Board in approving and licensing outfitter use areas, along with the outfitter set-aside and relevant Idaho statutes and rules.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Idaho Code 36-408 authorizes the Commission to set limits on numbers of game tags issued, including limits specific to the number of tags issued to nonresidents statewide or by hunt area. It further authorizes the Commission to set aside a maximum of 25% of statewide nonresident tag limits for use by hunters with agreements with licensed outfitters and authorizes the Commission to allocate tags for use by outfitted hunters when it limits tags by unit or zone, based on outfitted hunter tag use history.

IDAPA 13.01.04.500 provides:

The Commission will set by proclamation numbers of nonresident general hunt deer tags and nonresident general hunt elk tags to be set aside and reserved for sale to persons who have entered into an agreement to utilize the services of an outfitter licensed under Chapter 21, Title 36, Idaho Code.



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IDAPA 13.01.04.506 provides:

For general hunts first limited for nonresidents while unlimited for residents in 2021 or subsequent years, the Initial Tag Use Number for outfitted hunters is the higher tag use number of the Two-Year Verified Outfitter Use History for 2021-2022, or the two (2) years immediately preceding the first year the hunt area is limited, whichever period is later. The Initial Tag Use Number will remain the same for the zone, unit, or hunt area for subsequent consecutive years in which nonresident tag limits apply. The Commission will allocate an additional number of tags reserved for outfitted hunters corresponding to the number by which the higher tag number from the Two-Year Verified Outfitter Use History exceeds the Initial Tag Use Number for the hunt area, subject to a maximum of fifty percent (50%) of the remaining nonresident tag limit.

Public Involvement Process:

Department staff continue to work closely with IOGA leadership and IOGLB staff on outfitter use data and tag allocation. The Department and Commission receive input from deer and elk hunters year-round, in the field, by phone and email, and through input received through surveys, online, and at public meetings and open houses during season setting processes, management plan development, and through testimony at Fish and Game Commission meetings. Comments were also solicited during multiple formal public input periods during the administrative rule-making process.

Justification:

The information presented will inform Commissioners of the background, reasoning, and statute and rule behind allocating deer and elk tags for outfitted use.

Staff Recommendation:

None.

Suggested Motion:

None – Informational only.