

**Meeting Date:** January 17, 2018

**Agenda Item No. 10**

**Agenda Item:** Shed Antler Hunting briefing

**Bureau Chief Approval:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Prepared by:** Jon Rachael, State Game Manager

**Background:**

Hunting for shed deer and elk antlers is a popular winter-spring recreational activity enjoyed by many sportsmen. Sale of collected antlers can result in a significant amount of additional income, and provides additional incentive for participants. The apparent increase in popularity of shed antler hunting in recent years has renewed concerns among some sportsmen, Department Staff, and the Commission about the effects of the activity and the associated disturbance to wintering big game.

Intuitively, additional disturbance, particularly when deer and elk are heavily concentrated in years with deeper snow pack, results in greater energy expenditures of these animals during their greatest period of stress. However, it is extremely difficult to establish a direct correlation between specific disturbance caused by antler hunters and the over-winter survival of deer and elk, and even more difficult to tease out the effects of disturbance caused by antler hunters vs. the cumulative effects of other winter recreationists such as upland game bird hunters, skiers, snowshoers, snowmobilers, joggers, dog-walkers, etc. Nonetheless, any additional activity that results in disturbance likely has a contributing negative effect on the survival of animals.

In 1994 Department regulations restricted the pick-up of shed antlers of deer, elk, and moose in Units 60, 60A, 66, 67, and 69 to May 1 through December 31. All units in the Southeast Region were added to this regulation in 1998. This rule was discontinued after 2002.

In response to concerns about disturbance to deer and elk potentially caused by shed-antler hunters and other recreationists during the severe winter of 2017, the Department closed several WMAs in eastern Idaho to all public access.

**Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:**

IDAPA 13.01.10.300 allows the possession and sale of deer and elk antlers legally killed, salvaged from road-killed animals, or animals found dead of natural causes. Idaho Code 36-1101 addresses harassment of wildlife with motorized vehicles and dogs, but burden of evidence for molestation of big game by people on foot is difficult to achieve. Idaho Code 36-106 established authority of the Director to close seasons or public access to wildlife management areas in the event of an emergency.

**Public Involvement Process:**

No formal public involvement has been conducted at this time. Numerous sportsmen have expressed concerns to Department personnel, Commissioners, and legislators about the impacts of shed antler hunters to wintering big game through time.

**Justification:**

This agenda item is for Commission information and discussion. Commissioners have requested a briefing and an opportunity to discuss options for addressing concerns about the effects of shed antler hunting.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Provide policy guidance to staff for any further rulemaking to revise current rules or to further communicate concerns related to shed antler hunting to the public.