IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

November 2026 Commission Meeting ***Agenda Item No.:*** *12*
Agenda Item: *Deer and Elk Scoping Results* ***Supervisor Approval:*** *SR*
Presented by: *Rick Ward*
Position/Title: *State Wildlife Manager*

Background:
In summer 2026, staff conducted a pre-season scoping process to gather input from deer and elk hunters on potential season-setting alternatives for the 2027/2028 seasons. Abundance surveys have indicated deer and elk populations are above management objectives in some areas and the scoping questions asked hunters how they would most like to take advantage of the additional opportunity. Invitations were sent to 21,971 unique email addresses, targeting hunters with relevant licenses in three management areas: the Brownlee Zone (elk), Island Park (mule deer and elk), and Mountain Valley mule deer in GMUs 58, 59, and 59A. The Department received more than 1,700 comments across five scoping questions, and follow-up emails summarizing results were sent to all participants on October 9 thanking them for their participation.

All proposals allowed respondents to choose up to two preferred alternatives, including a "none of the above" option, followed by an opportunity to provide written comments. For Brownlee Zone elk, hunters selected extra elk tags and additional controlled hunts as preferred alternatives, with a notable proportion of respondents selecting "none of the above". For Island Park mule deer and elk, extending the general season and expanding either-sex controlled hunts received the strongest support, along with broad interest in additional youth hunting opportunities. For Mountain Valley mule deer, either-sex controlled hunts and youth-only antlerless seasons were the top preferences among the approximately 80% of respondents who supported reinstating antlerless opportunity.

Staff will present results from the scoping process, including response summaries for each proposal and key themes from written comments. Staff will incorporate input received through this process alongside current harvest data and recent abundance surveys to develop season proposals for public scoping in February 2027.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:
Idaho Statute 36-104 authorizes the Commission to establish rules for the taking of wildlife consistent with state policy.

Public Involvement Process:
Staff have conducted a pre-season scoping process on select deer and elk hunting opportunities and will present results to the Commission. The public may provide input on this informational topic at the public hearing prior to the Commission meeting. Proposals and additional information will be developed and circulated statewide for public review during the January-March 2027 season-setting process. Public input will be summarized

and considered to guide development of IDFG's recommendations to the Commission in March 2027.

Justification:
Information will aid Commissioners as they respond to requests, recommendations, or other input from the public.

Staff Recommendation:
N/A – Informational only.

Suggested Motion:
N/A – Informational only.