



IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

July 2025 Commission Meeting

Agenda Item: Sage Grouse Falconry Discount Order #25-19

Agenda Item No.: 5E

Supervisor Approval: SR

Presented by: Jennifer Struthers

Position/Title: Sage-grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse Staff Biologist

Background:

Legislation enacted in 2021 added sage-grouse to the list of species requiring game tags under Idaho Code 36-409. This legislation was a revised version of Commission-sponsored legislation, with the goal of better regulation of sage-grouse harvest and distribution of hunting activity to align with sage-grouse populations across Idaho.

At its July 2025 meeting, the Commission will set sage-grouse season dates and tag limits by zone based on spring 2025 biological data, with a requirement that hunters purchase tags specific to the zone(s) they choose to hunt. This includes tags for falconry hunting of sage-grouse from August 15, 2025 – March 15, 2026.

Under Idaho Code Section 36-403(a), all game tags are valid only during the time the corresponding annual license is valid. As such, 2024 sage-grouse tags will expire December 31, 2025. The requirement for game tags for sage-grouse became effective July 1, 2021, applicable to seasons in the second half of calendar year 2021 and subsequent years. The Commission adopted tag discount orders (Order No. 21-67, 22-64, and 24-19) applicable to the 2021–2022, 2022–2023, 2023–2024, and 2024–2025 falconry seasons for sage-grouse, with discounted tags issued to falconers in the first quarter of the calendar year expiring March 15 of the same calendar year.

Falconers and staff identified the enactment of a game tag requirement for sage-grouse as potentially reducing or confusing tag use for falconer participation. Under the prior permit framework, falconers simply purchased an annual sage- and sharp-tailed grouse permit that allowed falconry hunting of sage-grouse from January 1 – March 15 and from August 15 – December 31 in a calendar year. Staff identified a need to address the use of game tags for the remainder of the 2025–2026 falconry season (January 1 – March 15, 2026) such that their use aligns with the Commission's tag allocation for each of those seasons.

Staff present a discount order for Commission consideration to address sage-grouse tag use for the remainder of the 2025–2026 falconry sage-grouse season. This discount order would allow the Department to issue tags for the winter portion of the 2025–2026 season at no charge to falconers who do not fill their 2025 sage-grouse tag(s) by the end of the calendar year. Newly issued tags would be valid for the 2026 portion of the 2025–2026 falconry season: January 1 – March 15, 2026.



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A falconer who has a license and falconry permit valid for hunting in 2026, but who did not purchase a sage-grouse tag for the fall portion of the 2025–2026 falconry season or who does not surrender an unused sage-grouse tag, is eligible to purchase an undiscounted sage-grouse tag valid through March 15, 2026, subject to the applicable tag limits set for the season and other applicable requirements.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Idaho Code 36-403 and 36-409, along with related administrative rules, establish the valid dates and requirements for use of game tags for sage-grouse and other identified species. Idaho Code 36-415 authorizes the Commission to discount tags for specific species, units, areas, zones or gender to encourage licensed sales or to encourage hunting, fishing or trapping.

Public Involvement Process:

The public has had an opportunity to comment on this issue during season-setting for upland game and falconry and during rulemaking. Public may also comment on this topic during the July Commission public hearing.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommend the Commission adopt a discount order for sage-grouse game tags effective for the winter portion of the 2025–2026 season to falconers who do not fill their 2025 tag(s) by the end of the calendar year. Discounted tags would be valid for the 2026 portion of the 2025–2026 falconry season: January 1 – March 15, 2026.

Suggested Motion:

I move the Commission adopt the discount order for sage-grouse tags for falconry for the calendar year 2026 portion of the 2025-2026 sage-grouse season as presented by staff.