

Meeting Date: March 18, 2021

Agenda Item No. 12.

Agenda Item: Hunter crowding study update

Bureau Chief Approval: TB

Prepared by: Dr. Kenneth E. Wallen, University of Idaho

Background:

To continue the process of addressing hunter crowding, the Department began a statewide, regionally stratified elk, mule deer, and white-tailed deer hunter survey in March 2020 with the objective of assessing resident hunters' experiences with and perceptions of crowding. A report of the 2019 crowding survey (year one) is now available. Key takeaways from the report include:

- Crowding is complex issue and not necessarily caused by a single factor; crowding is a multi-dimensional phenomenon experienced by individuals and groups differently.
- Crowding is a larger issue in southern Idaho compared to northern Idaho, but specific elk zones and GMUs have higher than average crowding scores, regardless of geography.
- Hunters who purchased a regular deer tag to pursue mule deer experienced the highest average level of perceived crowding during the 2019 season.
- Elk hunters (A/B tag) in the Magic Valley region and the Smoky-Bennett zone perceive the highest levels of crowding, on average, in 2019.
- Exclusive whitetail hunters (purchased white-tailed deer tag) perceive the lowest levels of crowding, on average, in 2019.
- Hunters who pursue elk and mule deer are likely to report higher crowding levels relative to hunters who pursue other ungulate species.
- All hunters, regardless of tag or species, perceive more hunters now than in the past.
- All public land hunters perceive higher levels of crowding than private land hunters.
- Satisfaction is not necessarily associated with perceptions of crowding.

In March 2021, a year two (2020) survey will be implemented to collect longitudinal trend data. Modifications and details of that survey process will be presented. Additional comparable surveys are planned for the 2021, and 2022 general elk and deer seasons.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

N/A

Public Involvement Process:

IDFG staff and the University of Idaho Human Dimensions staff will engage sportsmen to assess their perspectives on crowding and potential solutions in a phased approach.

Justification:

This agenda item is for Commission information on the status of the hunter congestion project being conducted in collaboration with the University of Idaho. Information from this agenda item will aid Commissioners as they respond to requests, recommendations, or other input from the public related to hunter congestion.

Staff Recommendation:

N/A. This agenda item is for Commission information.

Action Requested:

N/A.