

Meeting Date: November 16, 2021

Agenda Item No. 12

Agenda Item: Upland and Furbearer Season Setting Update (**Information only**)

Bureau Chief Approval: mw

Prepared by: Jeff Knetter, Upland Game & Migratory Bird Coordinator, and Cory Mosby, Furbearer Staff Biologist

Background:

The Commission typically sets upland game and furbearer seasons biennially for a two-year period in odd-numbered years. The Commission’s proclamation authority includes setting seasons, limits, sex, and harvestable species.

Staff recommendations for upland game and furbearer seasons are the result of a continual process based on the management direction and objectives in Commission-approved species management plans. Initial proposals for changes to seasons and bag limits result from annual population and harvest monitoring and from suggestions received from sportsmen. Proposals are vetted internally in discussions among regional biologists, conservation officers, and headquarters staff, then provided to the public statewide for input at open houses, through mailed (and/or emailed) surveys, and through the Department’s website during a 2-3 week period, typically during November and December.

After evaluation of public input, regional staff develop and submit their final recommendations to the Wildlife Bureau. Wildlife Bureau staff will consolidate regional proposals and ensure compliance with management plan direction, and compatibility and consistency across regional boundaries. With concurrence of Director’s office staff, a final package of recommendations will be developed for presentation to the Commission for action at the January meeting.

Staff will provide an overview of the season-setting process timeline at the Commission meeting and will provide the Commission with a preview of key preliminary proposals we anticipate taking to the public for changes to the 2022 and 2023 upland game and furbearer seasons.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

Idaho Code 36-104(2) grants authority to the Commission to determine when an open season may be declared for the taking of wildlife. IDAPA 13.01.09.300 establishes rules regarding the take of upland game birds, and IDAPA 13.01.01.16.400 establishes rules for the methods of take for furbearing animals. Species management plans provide Commission direction for population and harvest management.

Public Involvement Process:

Upland game and furbearer season proposals result from multiple levels of public involvement, starting with public input solicited in hunter opinion and preference surveys and during development of species management plans. Recommendations result from year-round public input received through Commission hearings, open houses, from individual sportsmen contacts, from collaborative work with sportsmen’s groups, as well as comments submitted on specific proposals through mail and email surveys and through our website.

Proposed changes to seasons, tag numbers, and bag limits for the 2022 and 2023 upland game and furbearer seasons will be posted on the Department website and input will be solicited during November-December. Staff will also provide opportunities for the public to interact with staff directly, either at open houses or on virtual platforms, as appropriate.

Staff Recommendation:

This agenda item is for information only. Staff will make recommendations for Commission action at the January meeting.

Justification:

Commission action will be required to set upland game and furbearer seasons at the Commission's January meeting. This agenda item is for Commission information on the process, timeline, and preliminary proposals.