

Meeting Date: November 20, 2020

Agenda Item No. 12

Agenda Item: Moose Research Update

Bureau Chief Approval: TB

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Background:

Concern over declining moose populations has prompted managers to reduce moose hunting opportunity in most of the state. This issue is not unique to Idaho, as states across the northern USA have observed similar declines. In 2019, staff intensified moose monitoring and research programs in an effort to identify causes of poor moose population performance.

Staff will provide an update on our statewide moose health surveillance from hunter harvested moose and a new research project. The research project employs two University of Idaho graduate students and is designed to understand the survival, causes of mortality, and disease/parasite loads of adult moose across the state. In February-March 2020, staff radio-collared 113 adult cow moose across all major moose habitats in the state to examine whether mortality causes are similar statewide or if there are different factors impacting moose in different populations. We are also using ground surveys of collared females to document newborn moose calf survival. Staff will present information from the first year of this new effort and outline project plans for future years.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission administers state wildlife policy through supervision and management of the Department (Idaho Code 36-104).

Public Involvement Process:

We have asked successful moose hunters to provide samples from their harvested moose during the 2019 and 2020 hunting seasons to aid us in assessing moose health status.

Justification:

This agenda item is for Commission information on research and monitoring efforts to understand declining moose populations. Staff feels that frequent updates to the commission for this work is warranted because of the high public interest.

Staff Recommendation:

This agenda item is for Commission information only.

Action Requested:

No action is requested at this time.