

**Meeting Date:** January 28, 2021

**Agenda Item No.** 5. C.

**Agenda Item:** Season setting for Moose, Bighorn Sheep, and Mountain Goat (**Action**)

**Bureau Chief Approval:** TB

**Prepared by:** Hollie Miyasaki and Mike McDonald

**Background:**

Dates and tag numbers for moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat harvest seasons are established for a two-year period and are presented to the Commission for approval in January of each odd-numbered year. Regional staff scoped proposals for season changes and controlled hunt tag limits through the Department’s website, at regional live virtual meetings, and call-in events December 14 – 30. Following assessment of public input, regional staff submit recommendations to the Wildlife Bureau and a final package of recommendations will be developed for the 2021-2022 hunting seasons for presentation to the Commission.

Recommendations are not finalized at this time but a summary of preliminary recommended season changes scoped with public include:

**Moose**

The Department is proposing changes in moose tags in the Southeast and Upper Snake Regions in response to information indicating declining populations, low calf survival, low recruitment, and declining harvest metrics. Proposed statewide changes total a reduction of 18 bull tags (from 560 to 542 total tags) and a reduction of 71 antlerless tags (from 74 to 3 total tags).

- Proposed decrease of antlered tags in the Upper Snake Region.
- Proposed new antlered hunt in the Southeast Region.
- Proposed decrease of antlerless tags in the Southeast and Upper Snake Regions.
- Proposed new antlerless hunt in the Magic Valley.
- Proposed boundary change to Hunt Area 44 in the Magic Valley.

**Bighorn Sheep**

The Department is proposing changes in bighorn sheep tags using Bighorn Sheep Management Plan guidance, the number of rams observed in recent counts and harvest information. Proposed statewide changes a total decrease in Rocky Mountain bighorn ram tags from 80 to 78 and a total decrease in California bighorn ram tags from 17 to 16.

- Proposed changes in Hunt Area boundaries in Hunt Areas 21 and 28-2.
- Proposed decrease in Rocky Mountain ram tags in the Salmon Region.
- Proposed reduction of California ram tags in the Magic Valley Region.

**Mountain Goat**

The Department is proposing changes in mountain goat tags using Mountain Goat Management Plan guidance, recent counts and harvest information. Proposed statewide changes total a decrease of 3 mountain goat tags from 44 to 41.

- Proposed changes of Hunt Area boundaries in Hunt Areas 7 and 36-1.

- Proposed reduction of tags in the Clearwater, Southwest and Upper Snake Regions.
- Proposed increase of tags in the Magic Valley Region.

**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. Species management plans provide Commission direction for population and harvest management. This agenda item is to establish statewide hunting seasons and number of tags for moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat hunts for the 2021 and 2022 seasons.

**Public Involvement Process:**

Proposals were generated by in-house data analyses and discussions among biologists and law enforcement personnel. Proposed changes were scoped with the public statewide through the Department's website, at live virtual meetings, and call-in events. Public outreach efforts were advertised through news releases in all media outlets, email, social media, and the Department website. Proposals were posted on our Department website on December 14, 2020 for public review. Public comment ran from December 14-30, 2020.

Public input will be evaluated and a summary will be provided during presentation of the agenda item.

**Justification:**

Action is required to establish hunting seasons for moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat for the upcoming 2021 and 2022 seasons.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Preliminary recommendations were reviewed with the Commission in November and final proposals were scoped with the public in December 2020. After an assessment of public comments and regional input, the wildlife bureau and director's office will provide final recommendations during the presentation of this agenda item.

**Action Requested:**

Approve 2021 – 2022 moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat seasons and tag levels.

Suggested Motion: Commission adopt staff recommendations for moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat seasons and tag levels for the 2021 and 2022 seasons.