

Meeting Date: November 14, 2019

Agenda Item No. 14

Agenda Item: Furbearer and Upland Game Season
Setting Preview

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

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Background:

The Commission has unique authority to establish seasons via proclamation rather than through IDAPA rulemaking. The Commission typically sets upland game and furbearer seasons biennially for a two-year period in odd-numbered years. Although seasons are set biennially, the Commission has authority to make season adjustments to address critical needs in off-cycle years. The Commission’s proclamation authority includes setting seasons, limits, sex, and harvestable species.

Staff recommendations for upland game and furbearer seasons are the culmination of a continual year-round process that starts with the management direction and objectives in Commission-adopted species management plans. Initial proposals for changes to seasons and bag limits result from annual population and harvest monitoring. Additionally, year-round public input received at Commission hearings and open houses, from individual sportsmen, and from collaborative work with sportsmen’s groups may initiate change. Proposals are vetted internally in discussions among regional biologists, conservation officers, and headquarters staff, then provided to the public statewide for their input at open houses, through mailed (and/or emailed) surveys, and through the Department’s website during a 2-3 week period, typically November-December.

After evaluation of public input, regional staff will develop and submit their recommendations to the Wildlife Bureau. Wildlife Bureau staff will consolidate regional proposals and will 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 2020 and 2021 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 2020 and 2021 upland game and furbearer seasons will be posted on the Department website and input will be solicited during November-December. Multiple open houses will be held in each region around the state to allow the public an opportunity to interact with staff, ask questions, and provide input.

Staff Recommendation:

This agenda item is an update for Commission information. Staff will make recommendations for Commission action at their March 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.