

Meeting Date: January 24, 2019

Agenda Item No. 5C

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

Bureau Chief Approval: 

Prepared by: Hollie Miyasaki, Wildlife Staff Biologist

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 at open houses and through the Department's website December 14 – January 3. Following assessment of public input, regional staff will submit recommendations to the wildlife bureau and a final package of recommendations will be developed for the 2019-2020 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 reductions in moose tags, primarily in the Panhandle and Southeast Idaho in response to long term declines in harvest success (Panhandle) and a decline in the number of moose observed during aerial surveys (Southeast Idaho). Proposed statewide changes total a reduction of 133 bull tags (from 669 to 536 total tags) and a reduction of 62 antlerless tags (from 136 to 74 total tags).

- Proposed decreases of antlered tags in the Panhandle, Clearwater, Southeast, and Upper Snake Regions.
- Proposed decreases of antlerless tags in the Panhandle, Clearwater, and Southeast Regions.
- Proposed increase in tags and a new hunt in the Magic Valley Region.

Bighorn Sheep

The Department is proposing increases in some Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep hunts in response to an increase in the number of mature rams observed in recent counts. Minor reductions are proposed in the number of California bighorn sheep tags. Proposed statewide changes total an increase in Rocky Mountain bighorn ram tags from 74 to 83 and a total decrease in California bighorn ram tags from 21 to 17.

- Proposed changes in Hunt Area boundaries in Hunt Areas 11, 20A, 26, and 55.
- Proposed increases in Rocky Mountain ram tags in the Upper Snake and Salmon Regions.
- Proposed new hunt in the Upper Snake Region.
- Proposed reduction of California ram tags in the Magic Valley Region.
- Proposed elimination of Hunt Area 54 in the Magic Valley Region.

Mountain Goat

The Department is proposing a few small increases and decreases in mountain goat tags in response to recent counts. Proposed statewide changes total a decrease of 5 mountain goat tags from 48 to 43.

- Proposed changes of Hunt Area boundaries in Hunt Areas 7, 27-2, 27-4, and 37A.
- Proposed reduction of tags in the Panhandle, Clearwater, Upper Snake, and Salmon Regions.
- Proposed increase of tags in the Magic Valley, Upper Snake, and Salmon Regions.
- Elimination of Hunt Area 1.
- Proposed new hunt, Hunt Area 51-1.

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 2019 and 2020 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. Public outreach efforts and input opportunities included open houses held in each Region and advertised through news releases in all media outlets, and public response to the regional proposals on moose and bighorn sheep posted on the Department's website. Proposals were posted on our Department website on December 14, 2018 for public review. Public comment ran from December 14, 2018 thru January 3, 2019.

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 2019 and 2020 seasons.

Staff Recommendation:

Preliminary recommendations were reviewed with the Commission in November and final proposals were scoped with the public in December and early January. Based on comments received during statewide open houses and through our website, final recommendations will be provided during presentation of the agenda item.

Action Requested:

Approve 2019 – 2020 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 2019 and 2020 seasons.