Meeting Date: July 26, 2018

Agenda Item: Sawtooth Elk Zone 2019 Seasons

Bureau Chief Approval: 

Prepared by: Daryl Meints, Deer and Elk Program Coordinator

Background:
Elk populations within the Sawtooth Zone (Units 33, 34, 35, and 36) have been improving, but remain below elk management plan objectives. The cap on A and B tags remains in place to limit hunter participation and harvest. This hunt has become very popular as elk numbers, and harvest, have increased. Tags are sold on a first-come, first-served basis with half being sold at Fish and Game offices and license vendors and the other half sold online. Tags sell out very quickly leaving many questioning the fairness of the process.

At the January 2018 Commission meeting, the Commission directed the Department to implement controlled hunts for the Sawtooth Elk Zone beginning in 2019, but in March asked Department staff to further develop options for their consideration as alternatives to converting to controlled hunts. At the May Commission meeting, the Commission directed the Department take the following two proposals out for public input.

Options for consideration:

1. Convert current A and B tags to controlled hunts

With Option 1 the A tags would be converted into 2 separate archery-only controlled hunts, one for Units 33, 34 and 35 with 375 tags, and one for Unit 36 with 200 tags. The B tags would be converted into 2 separate any weapon controlled hunts, one for Units 33, 34, and 35 with 975 tags and one for Unit 36 with 575 tags. Converting to controlled hunts would create up to 31 Landowner Appreciation Program tags in addition to the number of tags available through the controlled hunt drawing. Outfitters would be allocated tags based on their historic use in the prior 5 years.

Pros:
- Ability to easily adjust tag numbers to address population objectives.
- Addresses supply and demand/fairness issue for tag issuance by conducting a drawing.

Cons:
- Applicants for antlered-only hunts could not apply for controlled hunts for moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, or other antlered-only elk hunts in the same year.
- Successful applicants for an antlered-only controlled hunt in the Sawtooth Zone could not apply for another limited antlered-only controlled hunt for elk the next year.
- Concern by some that other capped zones would be converted to controlled hunts.
**Sawtooth Zone (Units 33, 34, 35, 36)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>August/September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Tag</strong></td>
<td>No A Tags in this Zone – See Controlled Hunts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B Tag</strong></td>
<td>No B Tags in this Zone – See Controlled Hunts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2019 Controlled Elk Hunts

#### Antlered Elk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hunt No.</th>
<th>Controlled Hunt Areas</th>
<th>Tags</th>
<th>Season Dates</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Hunt</td>
<td>33-1&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>975</td>
<td>Oct 15 - Nov 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hunt</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>Oct 15 – Nov 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Archery Only Elk - Archery Permit Required

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<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Hunt</td>
<td>33-1&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>Aug 30 - Sep 30</td>
<td>Either Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hunt</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Aug 30 – Sep 30</td>
<td>Either Sex</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Hunt Area 33-1: All of Units 33, 34, and 35. Hunt Area 36: All of Unit 36.

### 2. Modify hunts within the Sawtooth Zone

With this option, the cap on the A Tag would be removed zone-wide while maintaining the general season hunt with the existing dates. The B tag general season hunt structure would be maintained for Unit 36 only with a cap of 1,000 tags. The B-tag antlered only any weapon hunt in Units 33, 34, and 35 would be converted to a controlled hunt with 675 tags. Converting to a controlled hunt would create up to 11 Landowner Appreciation Program tags in addition to the number of tags available through the controlled hunt drawing. Outfitters would be allocated tags based on their historic use in the prior 5 years.

**Pros:**
- Ability to easily adjust tag numbers to address population objectives.
- Addresses supply and demand/fairness issue for tag issuance by conducting a drawing.
Cons:
- Replaces general season capped hunts with an any weapon controlled hunt in Units 33, 34 and 35.
- Applicants for antlered-only hunts could not apply for controlled hunts for moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, or other antlered-only elk hunts in the same year.
- Successful applicants for an antlered-only controlled hunt in the Sawtooth Zone could not apply for another limited antlered-only controlled hunt for elk the next year.
- Concern by some that other capped zones would be converted to controlled hunts.

### Sawtooth Zone (Units 33, 34, 35, 36)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>August/September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **A Tag**| Archery only — any elk  
Aug 30 - Sep 30 | Any weapon — antlered only  
**Unit 36 only**  
Oct 15 - Nov 8 |          |          |
| **B Tag**| Note: 1,000 B Tag Quota Available First-Come, First-Served.  
_Resident capped tag sales will be sold separately at vendors and online. For details see “What’s New” on page 6._ |          |          |


### 2019 Controlled Elk Hunts

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<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Hunt</td>
<td>33-2*</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>Oct 15 - Nov 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Hunt Area 33-2 – All of Units 33, 34 and 35.

**Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:**
Idaho Code 36-104 (b) 2 gives the Commission authority to set seasons and determine the manner in which tags are issued. IDAPA 13.01.08 establishes Elk A and B and rules associated with controlled hunt tag eligibility and nonresident limitations. IDAPA 13.01.04.505 establishes rules for allocation of tags for use by outfitted hunters in elk zones in which the number of tags is restricted and in controlled hunts. Rules pertaining to Landowner Appreciation Program registration, eligibility, and tag issuance are contained in IDAPA 13.01.04.400.

**Public Involvement Process:**
The Sawtooth Elk season and hunt format proposals, and options for tag distribution, were scoped with the public at meetings around the state, through online input opportunities, and through a random mail survey sent to past participants in the hunt during the big game season-setting process February-March 2017. Additionally, distribution of the tags has been on the Commission agenda for the July and November 2017 meetings and the January, March, and May 2018 meetings. In June 2018, a survey
was mailed to a sample of randomly selected elk hunters who had previously hunted in the Sawtooth Zone. Additionally, an open survey was posted on our Fish and Game web site to provide an opportunity for other hunters to provide input.

Results of public input were gathered from 683 of the 2,069 hunters randomly sampled from hunters who purchased the Sawtooth tags over the last three years. Of those, 62% selected Option 2, Modify A/B Tags. The same survey was made available on our Fish and Game web site for anyone to take. Of the 867 people who took the survey online, 590 (68%) supported Option 2, Modify A/B Tags.

Within the written comments received from the random survey (82), 21 people (26%) stated they would like the hunt format and tag distribution to remain in its current form (first-come, first-served with caps on the A and B tags). Within the written comments from the internet survey (361), 35 people (10%) stated that they would like the tag system to remain in its current form. In addition, 29 people (8%) expressed concern about removing the A tag cap in Option 2.

**Justification:**
This information will aid Commissioners as they respond to requests, recommendations or other input from the public regarding Sawtooth Zone tag options and allocation.

**Staff Recommendation:**
None at this time. This agenda item is for Commission information as they consider future changes to the hunt format for the Sawtooth Elk Zone.