

Information for July 2022, Wildlife District Outreach

Migratory and Upland Game Bird Updates

2022-2023 Migratory and Upland Game Bird seasons were adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Commission on April 22, 2022. The 2022-2023 seasons are very similar to last year's seasons (major changes listed below). Most season opening dates are one day earlier than last year because of the calendar shift. For example, last year the chukar season opened October 9, 2021, this year chukar season will open October 8, 2022. Setting game bird seasons in April allows the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) to publish the Game Bird Regulations by early July.

Following is a list of major Commission adopted changes for 2022-2023 game bird seasons:

Upland Game Birds

- For most upland game birds, all aspects of the seasons (e.g. season dates, daily bag limits, possession limits) are covered by the 2020-2025 Upland Game Bird Hunting Season Framework. However, for some species like sage-grouse, there is a controlled hunt where the permit numbers are determined annually based on fall population projections. Fall turkey is another season where the hunts may be adjusted annually based on population trends or damage/nuisance issues. The following changes were adopted by the Commission: the daily bag limit for General Western Oregon Fall Turkey Season was increased to two turkeys per day with the season limit remaining two turkeys.
- As a reminder, this year SportsPac holders may select either a General Spring, General Eastern Oregon Fall, or General Western Oregon Fall turkey tag.
- Sage-grouse season length and bag limit are unchanged. Permit numbers adopted by the Commission continue to be very conservative, similar to 2021. Application period is July 1 – August 12 and 2022 season dates are September 10-18.

Migratory Game Birds

Goose Seasons

- The bag limit for the Northwest Permit Zone Goose Season has been reduced to three Canada Geese per day. This change was a result of the most recent three-year average of minima cackling goose fall population estimate decreasing to 206,763. The Pacific Flyway Council's minima cackling goose management plan directs impacted states to implement regulatory actions to regain the population objective of 250,000 if the three-year average estimated fall population is greater than 10 percent above or 10 percent below the objective.

Considerations for 2023-2024 Duck Season Opening Dates

During the past 30 years, a pattern has developed where the department has offered a general waterfowl season in two geographic zones, Zone 1 and Zone 2, where Zone 2 opens and closes a week prior to Zone 1 and the season splits are timed differently to account for bird abundance. This gives hunters two opening days to participate in if they are willing to travel, and it allows a slightly earlier season in Zone 2 where

functional season length is often dictated by freezing conditions. The start of these seasons are timed so the Zone 2 season (the first to open) opens the weekend after the any legal weapon buck deer opener.

In future seasons the department will not be able to hold separate opening days for any legal weapon buck deer season, Zone 2 waterfowl, and Zone 1 waterfowl in most years because the opening date for the buck deer seasons will be slightly later beginning in 2023 and federal waterfowl hunt frameworks mandate the seasons must end on or before January 31. Therefore, the waterfowl seasons cannot simply be shifted later. The department would like to hear from waterfowl hunters on some possible options for the opening of the waterfowl seasons in future seasons.

1) No changes to the current opening day structure

Under this option, Zone 2 would continue to open the Saturday after the any legal weapon buck deer season opens and open concurrently with the upland seasons. The Zone 1 season would continue to open the following Saturday, but only when the buck season opens on October 1, 2, or 3. In years that the buck season opened on October 4, 5, 6, or 7 the duck zones and the upland game bird seasons would all open concurrently, the second Saturday of October.

2) Hold concurrent duck openers in all years, on the second Saturday of October, and close Zone 1 on the last Sunday of January every year

Under this option, Zone 1, Zone 2, and the upland seasons would all open the Saturday after the any legal weapon buck deer season opens, in all years. Additionally, the current 3-day split in Zone 1 would be extended to 10 days in some years, ensuring the season to end on the last Sunday in January every year.

3) Hold differential duck openers and close Zone 1 on January 31, regardless of the day of week

In this option, Zone 2 would open on the second Saturday of October and Zone 1 would open the third Saturday in October. The Zone 1 season would end on January 31, regardless of what day of the week the 31st occurred on. In some years, this would result in a Zone 1 season with fewer weekends (15) than currently (16), and a duck season split that was variable in length, from no split, up to five days.

Furbearer Trapping and Hunting Updates

Furbearer Trapping and Hunting Regulations are set for two-year periods. The July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2024 Oregon Furbearer Trapping and Hunting Regulations were adopted at the June 17, 2022 Commission meeting.

Following is a list of major commission adopted changes to the July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2024 Oregon Furbearer Trapping and Hunting Regulations:

Trap Check Times

Trap check times were changed for predatory animals and the following trap check requirements are currently in effect:

- All traps set or used for taking furbearers and protected mammals, and restraining traps or snares set or used for taking predatory animals, must be checked at least once every 48 hours and all animals must be removed.

- Killing traps and snares set or used for the taking of predatory animals must be checked at least once every 14 days and all animals removed.

Beaver

- Licensed furtakers will have to report additional details on each beaver they take under their license, including reporting location of take at the HUC4 subwatershed, land ownership (state, fed, private), reason for harvest (recreation, damage), and water feature (river/stream, lake/pond, channel/ditch).
- Several recreational beaver harvest closure areas were modified to clarify confusion regarding when harvest closures only apply to a waterbody verse both waterbody and uplands.
- A licensed furtaker, who is not the landowner or agent addressing damage, that traps a beaver on privately owned forestland other than “small forestland” may not sell or exchange the pelt of the beaver. Pursuant to Senate Bill 1501 (2022), “small forestland” means private forestland whose owner owns or holds common ownership interest in less than 5,000 acres of forestland in this state

Legislation passed during by the 2022 Oregon Legislative Assembly modified take allowances for beaver on private forestlands. Owners of private forestland experiencing conflict with beaver are advised to consult with their local department wildlife biologist prior the take of beaver to determine how they may be affected by these changes.

Mule Deer Management Plan Update

Currently, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is in the process of updating the 2003 Mule Deer Management Plan. Topics to consider in the new management plan were solicited from ODFW staff in February 2022 and from Sports Group Leaders in March 2022. Based on the feedback we received, a draft table of contents was compiled in June. The table of contents is divided into 5 main sections including: 1) Introduction/Background, 2) Oregon Mule Deer History, 3) Mule Deer Biology and Ecology, 4) Mule Deer Management Concepts and Issues, and 5) Economic and Social Values. The department will be sharing updates on this process via the department webpage and soliciting further public input as this plan is developed.

Since the development of the previous Mule Deer Management Plan, ODFW has conducted several projects that provided new and important information about mule deer populations, habitat, and movements. Wildlife management units (WMU) were historically used as the geographic unit for mule deer population monitoring and management. Recent data from mule deer fitted with GPS radio collars from across their range in Oregon provides a more informed understanding of how populations are distributed on summer, winter, and migratory habitats across eastern Oregon. Considering this new information, the updated Plan introduces more biologically meaningful herd ranges, which replace WMUs as the monitoring unit for mule deer management in Oregon. However, WMUs will remain the principal unit for managing mule deer harvest and hunting.

Herd ranges are comprised of multiple WMUs in order to include summer range, winter range and migratory routes for mule deer populations. Delineation of herd ranges such that data collected for population vital rates in winter and hunter harvest reports from summer-autumn apply to the same populations is critical for developing appropriate management recommendations.

Big Game Regulation Overview and Species by Species Highlights

Big Game Regulations Development Process

2023 Big Game Hunting Regulations, will be adopted at the September 16, 2022 Commission meeting in Burns, Oregon. The meeting format is expected to include both an in-person and virtual attendance option.

General Winter Conditions

Western Oregon: Winter 2021–2022 followed an unusually hot, dry summer. By mid-September, the entire state of Oregon was in drought with 99% of Oregon classified as severe to extreme drought. December 2021 brought above average rain and snow followed by mild temperatures and dry conditions through February. A late, wet spring resulted in northwest Oregon becoming drought free although much of southwest Oregon remains in drought. No significant overwinter mortality was observed in western Oregon deer and elk populations.

Eastern Oregon: The east side of Oregon experienced an extremely hot and dry summer in 2021 with severe to extreme drought conditions across the region. Summer forage conditions were poor. Most eastern Oregon watersheds experienced above average snowfall in December 2021 and early January 2022 before conditions moderated for the remainder of the winter. The prolonged, wet spring of 2022 has reduced drought conditions in parts of eastern Oregon but severe drought conditions remain in central and southern portions of the region. Surveys conducted in spring 2022 indicate lower than normal deer fawn and elk calf ratios in much of the region.

Statewide: Drought conditions dominated Oregon during the summer and fall of 2021. Winter conditions were relatively harsh early in the winter but moderated with very little precipitation occurring from the second half of January through March. A wet spring improved forage conditions heading into the summer of 2022, however, the majority of Oregon remains in severe to exceptional drought.

General Regulation Proposals for 2023

Controlled Hunt Draw Results and Application Revision Deadline

The deadline for hunters to apply for deer, elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, and Rocky Mountain goat controlled hunts is May 15 with revisions or corrections to applications allowed through June 1. Draw results are currently released on June 20.

The department is developing a proposal to reduce the amount of time applicants have to revise controlled hunt applications and move up the controlled hunt draw results release date. The proposal would move the application revision deadline to May 25, providing applicants at least 10 days to make revisions to their applications. Draw results would be released on June 12. This proposal would not change the May 15 application deadline or affect the spring bear application process.

Cooperative Travel Management Areas

The department is considering date changes to several Cooperative Travel Management Areas (TMAs). Changes to TMAs also require approval by the respective land management agencies. Modifications being considered include:

- Expand the effective period of the Rager TMA in the Ochoco unit to begin on August 20. The intent of this change would be to protect wildlife habitat and decrease disturbance of elk resulting in increased elk utilization of public lands.
- Expand the effective period of the Camp Creek TMA in the Northside unit to include archery seasons.
- Improve consistency in northeast Oregon TMAs. TMAs affect motor vehicle use by both hunters and nonhunters. However, many nonhunters may not be aware of season dates for the various hunting seasons. Utilizing set date restriction periods rather than referencing the opening day of various seasons would improve the understanding of TMA restrictions for nonhunting recreationists. For the Chesnimnus, Imnaha, Starkey, Catherine Creek, Pine Creek, Keating, and Sumpter units, the following staff proposals are being considered:
 - Modify the Clear Creek, Trail Creek, Indian Creek/Gorham Butte, Dark Canyon, and Chesnimnus TMAs effective period to August 20 through November 20.
 - Modify the Lake Fork – Dutchman, Okanogan – Fish, and Patrick Creek TMAs effective period to August 20 through November 20 and May 1 through July 1.
 - Modify the Grouse-Lick-Canal Creek TMA effective period to August 20 – December 1.
 - Extend the McCarty Winter Range closure effective period to December 15 through April 30. This closure currently ends on March 31.
 - Addition of Bald-Angel TMA in the Catherine Creek and Keating units. This addition would improve awareness and enforcement of existing US Forest Service restrictions.

2023 Big Game Hunting Regulations Proposal Information

In 2020, the framework for big game seasons was modified so that opening day of the standard any legal weapon buck deer season would fall on the first Saturday in October rather than the Saturday closest to October 1. For 2023, the first Saturday in October will fall on October 7, the latest opening date possible under the framework. As a result, the department anticipates the “Standard” season dates for **2023** hunts are likely to be as follows: Note: Most season dates will be one week later in 2023 than in 2022.

Pronghorn (1 st Centerfire Season).....	Aug. 19 – 27
Archery Deer and Elk.....	Sept. 2 – Oct. 1
Western Buck Deer and Antlerless Deer.....	Oct. 7 - Nov. 10
Controlled Buck Deer.....	Oct. 7 – Oct. 18
Eastern OR Antlerless Deer.....	Oct. 21 – 29
Cascade Bull.....	Nov. 11 - 17
General Coast 1 st Season.....	Nov. 18 - 21
General Coast 2 nd Season.....	Nov. 25 - Dec. 1
Rocky Mtn. Bull Elk 1 st Season.....	Nov. 1 - 5
Rocky Mtn. Bull Elk 2 nd Season.....	Nov. 11 - 19
Rocky Mtn. Antlerless Elk.....	Nov. 25 - Dec. 3

Some relevant 2023 holidays that may influence season dates are:

Labor Day.....	September 4
Thanksgiving.....	November 23

Big Game Hunting Season Review

The department initiated a project to thoroughly review the Big Game Hunting Regulations, beginning with the 2018 Regulations. For 2023, review efforts were focused on developing a controlled youth archery elk opportunity and to evaluate late season deer hunting opportunities in western Oregon. Resulting draft staff proposals can be found in the species highlights below and in the controlled hunt tables for **Deer, Elk, Pronghorn, Bighorn Sheep, Rocky Mountain Goat, and Black Bear**, which include draft changes to 2023 tag numbers, deleted hunts, new hunts, etc.

Controlled Hunt Tag Numbers Summary

Total proposed controlled hunt tag numbers for 2023 seasons (150,143) (Table 1) are an increase of 1% from 148,776 in 2022. See Table 1 below and the attached tables for controlled hunt tag number details for each species/hunt series.

Initial DRAFT Proposals for Public Review

July 06, 2022

Table 1. Summary of proposed controlled hunt tag numbers for 2023.

Species	Series	Weapon/Type	2022 tags	Proposed 2023 tags	% Change 2022-2023
DEER	100	ALW ¹	42,255	42,626	1%
		Muzzleloader	2,642	2,722	3%
		Bow	15,793	15,857	0%
		Youth	147	184	25%
	600	ALW ¹	8,040	8,680	8%
		Youth	1,354	1,392	3%
	L Premium	ALW	67	67	0%
Total			70,298	71,525	2%
ELK	200	ALW ¹	45,663	46,051	1%
		Muzzleloader	1,936	2,250	15%
		Bow	16,775	16,056	-5%
		Youth	1,308	1,336	0%
	M Premium	ALW ¹	64	64	0%
	Total			65,768	65,757
PRONGHORN	400	ALW ¹	1,400	1,406	0%
		Muzzleloader	127	138	9%
		Bow	451	436	-3%
		Youth	35	37	-0%
	N Premium	ALW ¹	27	27	0%
Total			2,132	2,105	0%
BIGHORN	500	Cali Ram	69	72	4%
		Cali Ewe	12	22	83%
		RM Ram	6	5	-17%
	Total			87	99
MTN GOAT	900	ALW ¹	29	30	3%
	Total			29	30
BEAR	700	ALW ¹	10,258	10,420	2%
		Youth	204	207	1%
	Total			10,462	10,627
TOTAL			148,776	150,143	1%

¹ Any Legal Weapon Season (ALW)

Species by Species Highlights

For species with controlled hunts (**Deer, Elk, Pronghorn Antelope, Bighorn Sheep, Rocky Mountain Goat, and Black Bear**) the details of changes to tag numbers, deleted hunts, new hunts, etc., can be found

in the attached controlled hunt tag tables for each species which are also available online. Controlled hunt tag numbers are summarized in Table 1 (above).

Buck Deer – 100 Series

Attachment 1 identifies draft proposed changes to controlled Buck Deer/100 Series hunts. Proposed major changes include:

- Addition of two new controlled any legal weapon late season buck deer hunts in western Oregon.
- Deletion of the Starkey Experimental Forest controlled buck deer hunt (152B).
- Addition of one new controlled archery buck deer hunt that includes the Dixon, Applegate, Evans Creek, and Rogue units. This would be an early August hunt and hunters with this tag would not be able to participate in the general archery deer season.
- Addition of one new youth buck hunt in Mt. Emily.
- Open the Powers unit for traditional bow only during the late period of general archery season with a bag limit of one buck. The Powers Unit is not currently open during the late period of general archery season.

Antlerless Deer – 600 Series

Attachment 2 identifies all proposed changes to Antlerless Deer/600 Series hunts. Proposed major changes include:

- Increase in tags for some northwest and northeast hunts.

Elk – 200 Series

Attachment 3 identifies all draft proposed changes to Elk/200 Series hunts. Proposed major changes include:

- Addition of a new controlled youth elk hunt. Tag would be valid in all units statewide except for the Walla Walla, Wenaha, Mt. Emily, Sled Springs and Chesnimnus units. The bag limit would be “one elk”. Youth with this tag would have the opportunity to hunt multiple units, allowing them to join friends and family archery hunting in most units in the state, and would offer an expanded bag limit opportunity in many units. The draft proposal anticipates a recommendation of 300 tags.
- Addition of two antlerless elk hunts, one any legal weapon in the Starkey unit and one muzzleloader only in the Catherine Creek unit.
- Addition of late period any legal weapon “one elk” tag in the Lookout Mountain unit. Reduction in tags in existing Lookout Mountain “one elk” hunts.
- Delete two antlerless elk hunts and one youth elk hunt no longer needed to address damage.
- Shift the Cascade muzzleloader (200M) hunt back one week creating a break between the general any legal weapon season and this muzzleloader hunt.

Pronghorn – 400 Series

Attachment 4 identifies all proposed changes to Pronghorn/400 Series hunts. Proposed major changes include:

- Restructuring pronghorn hunt opportunities in the Beatys Butte unit to account for changes in pronghorn distribution during periods of drought and low water availability.
 - Delete E Beatys Butte (470A), W Beatys Butte No. 1 and No. 2 (470B1 and 470B2).
 - Replace with two Beatys Butte unit any legal weapon hunts
 - Delete W Beatys Butte Bow (470R2) and add new Beatys Butte unit archery hunt.
 - Delete E Beatys Butte Muzzleloader (470M) and replace with a new muzzleloader opportunity in the Steens Mountain unit.
- Other changes to controlled hunts for pronghorn consist of minor tag number adjustments and date shifts in some hunts.

Bighorn Sheep – 500 Series

Attachment 5 identifies all proposed changes to Bighorn Sheep/500 Series hunts. Proposed major changes include:

- 1 Rocky Mountain bighorn hunt (Wenaha) is being deleted in 2023.
- Increase in California bighorn ram tags for some hunts due to increasing ram populations and increased ewe tags in to manage overall population levels.

Rocky Mountain Goat – 900 Series

Attachment 6 identifies all proposed changes to Rocky Mountain Goat/900 Series hunts.

- Increase of one tag in Elkhorn No. 2 (950A2).

Bear – 700 Series

Attachment 7 identifies all proposed changes to Bear/700 Series hunts. Proposed changes consist of:

- Slight tag increase in one hunt (White River – Hood).

Premium Hunts

Staff are proposing no changes to Premium Hunts for 2023.

Western Gray Squirrel

Regulations for western gray squirrel seasons can be found in both the Big Game Regulations and Game Bird Regulations. No changes are proposed for 2023 western gray squirrel seasons.

Staff are proposing the following western gray squirrel seasons for 2023:

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North-central Oregon

Open Season: Sept. 15 – Oct. 31

Bag/Possession Limit: 3/6

Open Area: Hood, Metolius, Paulina, Upper Deschutes, and White River Units

Remainder of Oregon

Open Season: Sept. 1 – Nov. 15

Bag/Possession Limit: 5/15

Open Area: All units outside of the North-Central hunt area. Exception: There would continue to be no bag limit or closed season in the portion of the Rogue Unit south of the Rogue River and South Fork Rogue River and north of Hwy 140.