

## Information for July 2023, Wildlife District Outreach

### Migratory and Upland Game Bird Updates

2023-2024 Migratory and Upland Game Bird seasons were adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Commission on April 21, 2023. Setting game bird seasons in April allows the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) to publish the Game Bird Regulations by early July. The 2023-2024 seasons will open somewhat later than usual this year, primarily to avoid conflict with the controlled buck deer opener. Specifically, eastside chukar, quail and partridge will open on October 14, 2023. This delay also results in concurrent openers for Zone 1 and Zone 2 duck seasons on October 14<sup>th</sup> to maximize total hunt days allowed within the federal framework.

Following is a list of major Commission adopted changes for 2023-2024 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. A summary of seasons covered by the framework is provided in the table below.

Upland Game Birds	Open Area	Open Season	Daily Bag Limit	Possession Limit
Ruffed and Blue Grouse	Statewide	Sept. 1 – Jan 31, 2024	3 each species	9 each species
Chukar and Hungarian (Gray) Partridge	Statewide	Oct. 14 – Jan. 31, 2024	8	24
Rooster Pheasant	Statewide	Oct. 14 – Dec. 31, 2023	2	8
Quail (California and Mountain)	Western Oregon	Sept. 1 – Jan 31, 2024	10	30
	Eastern Oregon	Oct. 14 – Jan 31, 2024	10 (may not include more than 2 Mtn Quail)	30 (may not include more than 6 Mtn Quail)

- The fee for the Western Oregon Fee Pheasant Permit will be raised from \$17 to \$25 to cover the increasing cost of purchasing pheasants for this hunt. This fee has not been raised since 2010. The average cost of one pheasant, including delivery, is \$25, and the average fee pheasant permit holder harvests one bird. Increasing the cost of the permit will allow pheasants to be stocked at the same rate, rather than decreasing the total number of contracted pheasants.
- A new Youth Western Oregon Pheasant Permit is created with a fee of \$10 per permit. Youth participation in this hunt is low, but the increased cost of the adult permit may dissuade families from bringing their youth hunters.
- The Western Oregon Fall Turkey season will begin on September 1, rather than the second Saturday in October. Managers are seeking to increase fall wild turkey harvest rates in western Oregon due to increasing flock sizes and landowner nuisance and damage complaints.
- A special Beardless Turkey Permit is created allowing hunters to harvest 3 hen wild turkeys and/or wild turkeys without a visible beard. Hunters will be allowed to harvest 3 turkeys per day on this permit and can purchase up to 3 permits over the season, which runs from November 1 – January 31 on private lands only in four WMUs associated with Grant County. This hunt was

created to address chronic nuisance and damage complaints due to wild turkeys wintering in the John Day Valley, removing some barriers to the cost of turkey tags. Turkeys harvested on this permit will not need to be tagged, but hunters will need to fill out the permit (similar to a fee pheasant permit) and report their harvest.

- Limited spring turkey hunting is allowed at E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area for hunters participating in a department-organized program, such as I&E mentored hunts or Hunt By Reservation. Previously, the wildlife area did not allow hunting between March 1 and July 31, which excluded opportunities for spring turkey season. The wildlife area does not host enough wild turkeys to allow unlimited hunting.
- Sage-grouse season length and bag limit are unchanged. Permit numbers will be finalized in late July but are projected to be similar to 2022. Application period is July 1 – August 12 and season dates are September 9-17, 2023.

## **Migratory Game Birds**

- There are no proposed changes to the migratory game bird seasons, other than regular dates shifting with the calendar and the concurrent openers for zone 1 and zone 2 duck seasons.

## **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 unprotected 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 subwatershed level, land ownership (state, federal, private), reason for harvest (recreation, damage), and water feature (river/stream, lake/pond, channel/ditch).
- 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.

## Mule Deer Management Plan Update

The department 1 ½ years into the process of re-writing the Mule Deer Management Plan to incorporate new research conducted over the past two decades on this species. The goals are to provide a framework for Oregonians to improve conditions for mule deer in eastern Oregon, provide a guide for natural resource agencies and landowners to create environments for the benefit of mule deer and other species with similar habitat needs, and to strengthen the scientific foundations directing management of the species.

To date the department has released five draft chapters that are available for public comment on the department’s website. Staff will continue working on chapters throughout the summer and early fall. Public comments will be used to revise draft chapters for the final draft plan. The department is also hosting public webinars to discuss content of newly released draft chapters. Through this process, the department seeks to build support for the updated Plan from a broad range of interested people.

For more information on upcoming chapters, view past webinars, or to provide feedback, visit our website at: [www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/management\\_plans/mule\\_deer](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/management_plans/mule_deer)

## Big Game Regulation Overview and Species by Species Highlights

### Big Game Regulations Development Process

2024 Big Game Hunting Regulations, will be adopted at the September 15, 2023 Commission meeting in Bend, Oregon. The meeting format will include both an in-person and virtual attendance option with the latter requiring 48-hour advanced sign-up.

The deadline for hunters to apply for deer, elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, and Rocky Mountain goat controlled hunts is May 15<sup>th</sup> with revisions or corrections to applications allowed through May 25<sup>th</sup>. Starting in 2023, draw results were released on June 12, a release date eight days earlier than previous years, providing additional time for hunt preparation and decision-making. This timeline will be continued in 2024 and beyond.

### General Regulation Proposals for 2024

Because 2024 is a leap year (29 days in February), most 2024 hunting seasons will have a calendar shift of two days earlier in 2024 than in 2023. As a reminder, the hunting season framework was modified in 2020 so that the season dates are built off the buck deer any legal weapon season opening on the first Saturday in October. The current year, 2023, represents the latest calendar dates possible for big game seasons. Seasons will now start moving earlier in the year for a few years. To keep openers on the correct day of the week, the 2024 dates below are two calendar days earlier than 2023.

Pronghorn (1 <sup>st</sup> Centerfire Season).....	Aug. 17–25
Archery Deer and Elk.....	Aug. 31–Sept. 29
Western Buck Deer and Antlerless Deer.....	Oct. 5–Nov. 8
Controlled Buck Deer.....	Oct. 5–Oct. 16
Eastern OR Antlerless Deer.....	Oct. 19–27
Cascade Bull.....	Nov. 9 - 15
General Coast 1 <sup>st</sup> Season.....	Nov. 16-19
General Coast 2 <sup>nd</sup> Season.....	Nov. 23-Nov. 29
Rocky Mtn. Bull Elk 1 <sup>st</sup> Season.....	Oct. 30–Nov. 3

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Rocky Mtn. Bull Elk 2<sup>nd</sup> Season.....Nov. 9-17  
Rocky Mtn. Antlerless Elk.....Nov. 23-Dec. 1

Some relevant 2024 holidays that may influence season dates are:

Labor Day.....September 2  
Thanksgiving.....November 28

## Big Game Hunting Season Review

The department initiated a project to thoroughly review the Big Game Hunting Regulations, beginning with the 2018 Regulations and continued through 2023. For 2024, no major concepts are being proposed but evaluations of two major hunt concepts introduced in 2020 occurred. The first concept was the General Season Antlerless Elk Damage Tag (GSAEDT) hunt which is valid in specific areas for long periods to address elk damage issues. The GSAEDT hunt replaced nineteen controlled hunts and replaced the need for landowner damage tags in these areas during the open season. After three years of observation, the hunt was successful in helping to increase elk harvest and reduce landowner damage tags, so the department is proposing continuation of that concept and expansion where appropriate on a case-by-case basis.

The other concept was the inclusion of spike deer in the western Oregon bag limit by changing the bag limit from “one buck having not less than a forked antler” to “one buck with visible antler”, in concert with changes to the Oregon 600-series bag limits with a “one antlerless or spike deer” to “one antlerless deer”. The change made bag limits consistent throughout Oregon, reduced enforcement concerns, and focused the 600-series hunts on addressing damage and population control. After three years of implementation and observation, consistent representation of antler point classes in the harvest indicate the inclusion of spikes in the western Oregon buck harvest did not impact number of bucks in the higher point classes for black-tailed deer.

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 2024 tag numbers, deleted hunts, new hunts, etc.

## Controlled Hunt Tag Numbers Summary

Total proposed controlled hunt tag numbers for 2024 seasons (149,739) (Table 1) are a decrease of less than 1% from 150,096 in 2023. See Table 1 below and the attached tables for controlled hunt tag number details for each species/hunt series.

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Table 1. Summary of proposed controlled hunt tag numbers for 2024.

Species	Series	Weapon/Type	2023 tags	Proposed 2024 tags	% Change 2023-2024
DEER	100	ALW <sup>1</sup>	42,606	42,096	-1%
		Muzzleloader	2,722	2,737	1%
		Bow	15,857	15,515	-2%
		Youth	184	291	58%
	600	ALW <sup>1</sup>	8,680	8,701	<1%
		Youth	1,392	1,408	1%
	L Premium	ALW	67	67	0%
<b>Total</b>			<b>71,508</b>	<b>70,815</b>	<b>-1%</b>
ELK	200	ALW <sup>1</sup>	46,051	45,860	>-1%
		Muzzleloader	2,250	2,294	2%
		Bow	16,056	16,017	>-1%
		Youth	1,321	1,675	27%
	M Premium	ALW <sup>1</sup>	64	64	0%
	<b>Total</b>			<b>65,742</b>	<b>65,910</b>
PRONGHORN	400	ALW <sup>1</sup>	1,406	1,405	>-1%
		Muzzleloader	138	138	0%
		Bow	491	492	<1%
		Youth	37	37	0%
	N Premium	ALW <sup>1</sup>	26	26	0%
	<b>Total</b>			<b>2,098</b>	<b>2,098</b>
BIGHORN	500	CA Ram	71	77	8%
		CA Ewe	22	40	82%
		RM Ram	5	5	0%
	<b>Total</b>			<b>98</b>	<b>122</b>
MTN GOAT	900	ALW <sup>1</sup>	23	21	-9%
	<b>Total</b>			<b>23</b>	<b>21</b>
BEAR	700	ALW <sup>1</sup>	10,420	10,555	1%
		Youth	207	218	5%
	<b>Total</b>			<b>10,627</b>	<b>10,773</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>150,096</b>	<b>149,739</b>	<b>&gt;-1%</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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 one new late season controlled archery white-tailed buck deer hunt that includes portions of the Northside and Desolation Units.
- Addition of five new youth buck hunts: Beulah, Malheur, Steens Mt, Juniper, and Silvies Units.
- Bag limits on the Warner and Interstate Unit youth hunts moved from ‘one deer’ to ‘one buck with visible antler’.

### Antlerless Deer – 600 Series

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

- Increase tags in Hood River Unit to address damage.

### Elk – 200 Series

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

- Addition of new muzzleloader bull hunt in the Sixes Unit.
- Delete three antlerless elk hunts because two (i.e. 235A, 258A4) are no longer needed to address damage and one (i.e. 257A) is covered by General Season Antlerless Elk Damage Tag.
- Increases in tags for two controlled youth elk hunts to address damage (228T, 241T).
- Addition of a new controlled youth elk hunt in the Interstate-Silver Lake Units.
- Expansion of General Season Antlerless Elk Damage Tag hunt areas in the Melrose and Chetco Units.

### Pronghorn – 400 Series

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

- Delete one hunt (473B) due to low population numbers and hunter interest.
- Increase in tags for the Beulah Unit.

## **Bighorn Sheep – 500 Series**

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

- Delete one hunt in the Heppner Unit (Potamus) for 2024, which has already been cancelled for 2023 due to a redistribution of animals.
- Increase in California bighorn ram tags for some hunts due to increasing ram populations and additional ewe tags to manage overall population levels.

## **Rocky Mountain Goat – 900 Series**

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

- Cancellation of the Hat Point No. 1, Hat Point No. 2, Goat Mtn No. 1, and Goat Mtn No. 2 due to low numbers and a redistribution of animals. These hunts have already been reduced for 2023.

## **Bear – 700 Series**

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

- Slight tag increases in the South Central (731A) and Pine Creek-Keating-Catherine Creek (762A) hunts.

## **Premium Hunts**

Staff are proposing no changes to Premium Hunts for 2024, and Attachment 8 identifies all proposed tags.

## **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 2024 western gray squirrel seasons.