



AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The department is responsible for the long term conservation and management of big game populations, including deer, elk, bear, cougar, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, and Rocky Mountain goat. Management actions include monitoring and research to understand status and limiting factors, protection and restoration of habitat to improve population status. Additionally, for populations that are sufficiently healthy, the department manages for sustainable harvest consistent with our mission.

The department annually submits big game season and regulation proposals to the Commission for consideration and adoption. The department will overview big game population trends and recommend 2026 big game and western gray squirrel season dates and open areas, dates and locations of cooperative travel management areas, tag numbers for big game controlled hunts, and associated hunting regulations.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public outreach and opportunity for public input has been extensive. The department advised the public when draft proposals were published on the agency website in early July 2025 through a news release and has been accepting and reviewing public comment. The department held four regionally-focused web-based meetings and one in-person public meeting to provide information and solicit input on draft proposals.

ISSUE 1

Proposed 2026 game mammal seasons and associated hunting regulations.

ANALYSIS

A summary of staff proposals for the 2026 big game and western gray squirrel seasons and species-specific information is included in Attachment 3. Controlled hunt proposals for 2026 contain season date and structure changes including deletion of hunts, addition of new hunts, combining hunt areas, and expanding hunt boundaries. The majority of changes are to deer hunts necessary to implement the 2024 Mule Deer Management Plan but changes to elk, bighorn

sheep, pronghorn, black bear, and mountain goat hunts and reflect responses to local changes in both populations and animal distribution. Proposals for hunting regulation changes include calendar year date shifts and modification to cooperative travel management area rules.

ISSUE 2

Proposed tag numbers for 2026 controlled big game hunts.

ANALYSIS

Overall, total controlled hunt tag recommendations for 2026 are proposed to decrease by 4% from 2025. A summary of tag numbers and rationale for each of the big game species is provided in Attachment 3.

OPTIONS

1. Adopt staff recommendations
2. Amend staff recommendations

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

1. Option 1

DRAFT MOTION:

I move to adopt the staff proposals in Attachment 3 and amend OAR Chapter 635, Divisions 045, 060, 065, 066, 067, 068, 069, 070, 071, 072, 073 and 075 as proposed by staff.

Effective Date: *Upon Filing*