

Big Game Regulation Proposal Overview
October 7, 2011

This overview is primarily an abbreviated version of proposals presented to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission on June 3, 2011.

This document focuses on:

- changes from 2011 regulations
- edits and changes to proposals made in June 2011 for 2012 regulations
- proposals which were not included in the June 2011 Commission packet

Many of the topics covered in this overview were covered in more detail in previous Commission packets. To reduce repetition this summary contains condensed discussions of those topics.

Proposed 2012 General Seasons

Because 2012 is a “leap year” a two day shift is proposed for most season dates for 2012 (Table 1).

Seasons and controlled hunts with “fixed” dates, including General Bear and General Cougar seasons remain unchanged for 2012.

Table 1. Proposed general season dates and bag limits for 2012.

Species/Season	Bag Limit	Proposed 2012 Dates
DEER		
Coast Buck	Buck, 2 point+	Sep 29 – Nov 2
Cascade Buck	Buck, 2 point+	Sep 29–Oct 12 & Oct 20 – Nov 2
BEAR (Cubs, sows with cubs protected)		
Western Oregon	1 Bear	Aug 1 – Dec 31
SW Additional Bear (Units 20 – 30)	1 Bear	Aug 1 – Dec 31
Eastern Oregon	1 Bear	Aug 1 – Nov 30
COUGAR (Spotted kittens, females with spotted kittens protected)		
Statewide Tag	1 Cougar	Jan 1 – Dec 31
Additional Statewide Tag	1 Cougar	Jan 1 – Dec 31
ELK (Note: Antler restrictions apply in certain units)		
Coast First	Any Bull ^a	Nov 10 – Nov 13
Coast Second	Any Bull or Spike ONLY ^a	Nov 17 – Nov 23
Cascade	Any Bull ^a	Oct 13 – Oct 19
Rocky Mt. First	Any Bull ^a	Oct 24 – Oct 28
Rocky Mt. Second	Any Bull or Spike ONLY ^a	Nov 3 – Nov 11
Columbia Basin - E Biggs	One Elk	Oct 24 – Nov 30
ARCHERY (Note: Antler restrictions apply in certain units)		
Western Deer	Buck, 2 point+ or One Deer (varies by Unit) ^b	Aug 25 – Sept 23
Saddle Mt. Deer Late Season	One Deer	Nov 24 – Dec 9
NW Deer Late Season	One Deer	Nov 17 – Dec 9
SW Deer Late Season	Buck, 2 point+ or One Deer (varies by Unit) ^b	Nov 10 – Dec 2
Eastern Deer	Buck with visible antler ^b	Aug 25 – Sept 23
Elk	Legal Bull, (varies by unit) ^a	Aug 25 – Sept 23
WESTERN GRAY SQUIRREL		
West & S Central Oregon	5/day - 15 in possession	Aug 25 – Nov 7
Hood & White R. Units	3/day - 6 in possession	Sep 8 – Oct 14

^a Bag limit for archery elk hunters and hunters with disabilities permits may be changed to include antlerless elk. See page 6.

^b Bag limit for archery deer hunters and hunters with disabilities permits may be changed to include antlerless deer. See page 6.

Proposed 2012 Application and Tag Sale Deadlines

Controlled hunt application deadlines are set to occur the same date each year (Table 2). Tag sale deadlines (Table 3) are set at 11:59 pm the day before each respective season opens, except general bear and general cougar tags which have the same tag sale deadline as for buck deer. For bighorn sheep and Rocky Mtn. goats the tag sale deadline is the last day of the hunt.

Table 2. Controlled hunt application and tag sale deadlines proposed for 2012.

Controlled Hunt Drawing	Application Deadline	Tag Claim Deadline
Spring Bear Draw	February 10	Day Before Hunt Opens
Big Game Draw ^a	May 15	Day Before Hunt Opens

^a Excludes Spring Bear.

Table 3. General season tag sale deadlines in place for 2011 and proposed for 2012.

Species or Season	<i>2011 Deadline</i>	<i>2012 Deadline</i>
Bear	Sep 30	Sep 28
SW Additional Bear	Sep 30	See Footnote*
Cougar	Sep 30	Sep 28
Additional Cougar	Sep 30	See Footnote*
Deer & Elk Bow	Aug 26	Aug 24
Western Deer Rifle	Sep 30	Sep 28
Cascade Elk	Oct 14	Oct 12
Coast 1 st Elk	Nov 11	Nov 9
Coast 2 nd Elk	Nov 18	Nov 16
Rocky Mt. 1st Elk	Oct 25	Oct 23
Rocky Mt. 2nd Elk	Nov 4	Nov 2

* Hunters must purchase the general season tag for that species to be eligible for the additional tag.

2012 Hunt Proposal Highlights and Changes

Pronghorn Antelope

One new youth hunt (Thief Valley) is proposed for 2012 and no hunts are proposed for deletion. The Department proposes changing the bag limit in one hunt, east Fort Rock – Silver Lake from one buck to either sex in 2012.

Bighorn Sheep

The Department proposes a number of season changes in California bighorn hunts for 2012. The two Upper Owyhee hunts and two East Trout Creek hunts will be combined into one East Whitehorse hunt. Similarly, the two Alvord-Buckskin hunts and East Beatys Butte hunts will be combined into two East Beatys Butte-Alvord Peaks hunts. Finally, one new hunt period will be added for the South Central hunt area.

Rocky Mountain Goat

One hunt, Cusick Mountain, will be deleted and one new hunt area, South Snake River, is proposed to be added in 2012. The Department is also proposing to expand the hunt area for the Hat Point hunts (currently 26 square miles) to include the northern portion of the Snake River WMU, a total of ~ 360 square miles.

Bear

Spring Bear

Hood Unit (Hunt #742): Season length is proposed to increase from April 15–May 31 during 2011 to April 1–May 31 during 2012. This is also intended to address early-season bear damage and maintain consistency with the White River Unit.

S. Blue Mts. (Hunt # 746A): Tag numbers are proposed to increase from 495 in 2011 to 550 in 2012. This adjustment was made because this hunt is proposed to include the Fossil and Heppner WMUs. See comments for 749A below.

W. Blue Mts. (Hunt Number 749A): No changes in tag numbers or season length, but a boundary change was made to exclude the Fossil and Heppner WMUs. This hunt is relatively difficult to draw and few of the tag holders hunt in the Fossil or Heppner units. These two units were moved to Hunt #746A to allow hunters interested in hunting these units the opportunity to hunt them more often as part of a hunt that is less difficult to draw.

General Bear

The Department is proposing to allow bear hunting in the Applegate Unit during elk season without an elk tag.

- The Applegate is an Elk De-emphasis Area with few elk

- 100 bears were checked in from the Applegate Unit in fall 2010; highest fall harvest for any unit in the state. Total mortalities (spring + fall) were 144, second only to the Siuslaw w/154.

The exception would read:

No Person Shall: Hunt with a centerfire or muzzleloading rifle without a valid (used or unused) deer or elk tag for that time period and area on their person during: the standard Eastern Oregon controlled buck deer centerfire firearm season (Sept. 29 – Oct. 10, 2012), Cascade bull elk.....

Exception(s): (1) Hunters are not required to have an elk tag to hunt bear or cougar in the Applegate WMU during elk seasons.

Cougar

No changes are proposed to season dates or the statewide quota of 777 cougars which has remained the same since 2006, and includes Zone A (Coast/North Cascades, 120), Zone B (Southwest Cascades, 165), Zone C (Southeast Cascades, 65), Zone D (Columbia Basin, 62), Zone E (Blue Mountains, 245), and Zone F (Southeast Oregon, 120).

Deer

At this time the Department is proposing to maintain existing general season structure for 2012. The archery bag limit is a legal buck except in units identified by the Commission each year. Factors considered to determine units recommended to have the bag limit expanded to legal buck or antlerless deer include:

- The deer or elk population characteristics in the unit, particularly;
 - Population level relative to the population Management Objective
 - Recruitment as measured by fawn or calf ratios
- The number of antlerless firearms tags authorized in the unit
- The distribution of firearms tags in the unit

In June 2011, the Commission authorized substantial reductions in antlerless deer tags for several WMUs in northwest Oregon. As a result of these reductions the Department proposes to close these units to antlerless harvest during the general archery season and for hunters with a Permanent Disability Permit in 2012. Affected units include: Scappoose, Saddle Mtn., Wilson, Trask, Stott Mountain, Alsea, and Siuslaw WMUs. Under this proposal there would continue to be a reduced number of unit-wide tags which allows landowners the opportunity to address property damage and provides some unit-wide youth hunting opportunity. Additional tags for antlerless deer would be focused on specific damage areas.

For 2012, the following changes are proposed to controlled deer hunts. Overall, Department proposals would delete two hunts and add five new hunts. Proposed changes include:

- Add one new hunt in Walla Walla Unit (155A Mill Creek Watershed) with a bag limit of one deer,
- Delete hunt 616A (W Santiam) and replace it with two hunts, NW Santiam and SW Santiam to better control hunter distribution
- Delete 619B Little Fall Creek in the McKenzie Unit

- Add one new muzzleloader hunt in the Fossil Unit
- Add one new hunt, Paisley Youth, to help address damage in the area
- One youth hunt area (Malheur County Youth) is being expanded to better address damage caused by deer and landowner concerns

Elk

At this time the Department is proposing to maintain existing general season structure with standard calendar adjustment to most season dates for 2012. The archery bag limit is a legal bull except in units identified by the Commission each year. Factors considered to determine units recommended to have the bag limit expanded to include antlerless animals are the same factors described in the deer section above.

Elk bag limit changes in Tioga and Sixes units: The Department proposal is to remove the Tioga WMU from the group of units with expanded bag limit for archers and hunters with an Oregon Disabilities Hunting and Fishing Permit and add the Sixes WMU to the list of units that include an antlerless animal in the bag limit for archery hunters and hunters with a disabilities permit.

- The Tioga WMU elk population is estimated to be ~1,000 elk below the MO of 8,000; there are 10 unit-wide antlerless tags for a youth hunt. Other antlerless hunts in the unit are focused on areas with damage caused by elk. Bag limits for controlled bow and muzzleloader hunts are now 3pt.+.
- The Sixes WMU elk population is estimated to be ~1,500 over the MO of 2,500. Antlerless tags, ~220, are mostly focused on areas where much of the land is private.

There is some risk which the Department believes is manageable in setting antlerless areas a year ahead of seasons. If an extreme winter was to occur causing a major reduction in deer and/or elk herds in areas with antlerless animals in the bag limit, the Department would propose an emergency rule change by April 15th (same reporting deadline as for canceled hunts) to protect antlerless animals in the impacted areas.

For 2012, the following changes are proposed to controlled elk hunts. Overall, Department proposals would delete two hunts and create four new controlled elk hunts. Proposed changes include:

- Delete the Steamboat and Tokatee hunts
- Add the Central Alsea Private Lands, North Starkey, and Mt. Harris rifle hunts
- Add one new muzzleloader hunt in the Heppner Unit

Zumwalt Elk Hunt: A third hunt period is proposed for the Zumwalt hunt area to better address elk damage in the Chesnimnus Unit. Hunt 258A3 would have an estimated 100 tags with proposed 2012 season dates of Dec. 10, 2012 – Jan. 6, 2013.

Grant County Elk Season Modifications: The Department, considering information including recommendations from the Grant County Wildlife Advisory Committee outlined in an August 22nd news release, and comments from the public regarding those recommendations, has developed proposals for changes to elk hunting seasons in the Northside and Murderers Creek units. The Grant County Wildlife Advisory Committee is a panel of local hunters, landowners, and interested persons appointed by the Grant County Court that advises ODFW on wildlife

issues. Depending upon tag numbers adopted in June, 2012, the proposed changes could increase hunting opportunity for the purpose of reducing elk populations in the Northside and Murderers Creek units which are currently estimated at 4,400 animals (Murderers Creek 1,900, Northside 2,500) , which is 700 above the Management Objective of 3,700 (Murderers Creek 1,700, Northside 2,000). Proposals for the hunt periods in the affected hunts are:

Northside Unit

- Retain 247D1, West Grant Private #1, (Aug.-Sept.)
- Retain 247D2, West Grant Private #2, (Oct -Dec.)
- Shorten 247D3, West Grant Private #3, to Jan.-Feb. (currently Jan.-Mar.)
- Add 247D4, West Grant Private #4, August 1, 2012-March 31, 2013, est. 25 tags
- Add 247E1, East Northside Private #1, August 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013 (currently Aug. 1-Sept. 30), est. 10 tags
- Retain and renumber 247E2, East Northside Private #2, (Aug.-Sept.)
- Add 247E3, East Northside Private #3, December 1, 2012-January 31, 2013, est. 50 tags

Murderers Creek Unit

- Retain and renumber 246E1, Murderers Creek Private lands Plus #1, (Aug.-Sept.)
- Add 246E2, Murderers Creek Private lands Plus #2, December 1, 2012-January 31, 2013, est. 50 tags
- Increase the hunt area for 246T2, Flat Creek Youth Hunt, to include all of the Phillip W. Schneider Wildlife Area

Youth Hunt change

- Delete Grant Youth Hunt (contains Murderers Creek, Northside, and Desolation units)
- Create Desolation Youth Hunt with an est. 10 tags
- Create a Northside/Murderers Creek Youth Hunt with an est. 50 tags

The Department estimates that if the total tags in the Northside and Murderers Creek units were increased by 750; using success rates from 2010 elk seasons, the estimated increase in harvest would be about 180 more elk taken in 2012. As noted above, tag numbers will be adopted June, 2012, and will take into consideration the results of spring 2012 elk population surveys.

Proposed Boundary, TMA, and Area Regulation Changes for 2012

TMA Designation of Roads: Previously two methods were used to mark which roads were open or closed in a TMA, green dots marking open roads and signs designating closed roads. Since different methods are being used by some landowners, the TMA description in the Big Game Regulations is being updated to recognize alternatives. New wording is incorporated below:

Through cooperative agreement, motor vehicle use is limited to specific roads for dates and areas listed below. Maps of most areas will be available by Sept. We do not carry maps of areas that are easily plotted on forestry maps. Old maps should not be relied on because roads open to vehicles may change.

There are two methods of posting roads for motorized travel:

- 1) Negative marking in which closed roads are marked by signs, gates, berms, etc.
- 2) Positive marking in which open roads are marked by round green reflectors, orange carsonite posts, etc.
 - a) Many TMAs with positive markings also use signs for some situations, such as confusing intersections.

Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area change to allow deer hunting: Under current regulations, the Beneke Tract of the Jewell Meadows WA is closed to all public entry during any open Saddle Mt. Unit elk season. With changes to the elk seasons starting in 2010, the Beneke Tract is now closed to entry from August 1 through March 15 each year. The proposed change would allow black-tailed deer hunting during the general rifle season. The following proposed language would restore some hunting opportunity while still addressing the problems associated with elk hunting the regulations originally addressed.

“All areas posted as “Refuge” are closed to public entry. The Beneke Tract is open to hunting only during game mammal and game bird seasons. Posted portions of the Beneke Tract are closed to public entry during any open Saddle Mt. Unit elk season except black-tailed deer hunting is allowed during the general western Oregon firearms season with a valid unused general western Oregon firearms season deer tag. The Humbug Tract is open to hunting only during game mammal and game bird seasons. It is unlawful to shoot firearms and bows from or across open fields during any open Wilson Unit elk season.”

Expand Metolius Winter Range: The Metolius Winter Range was first established in the mid 1990’s. The purpose was to protect wintering mule deer from motorized vehicle harassment, therefore, increasing overall winter survival of deer and at the same time protecting and improving rangeland habitats. This area was expanded to approximately 40 square miles in the early 2000’s to include most of the USFS managed Crooked River National Grasslands west of the Deschutes River.

The “Westside Forest Strategy Workgroup”, composed of BLM, USFS, Portland General Electric, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, Wild Turkey Federation, OSP, Ponderosa Land and Cattle Company, and other private landowners, has requested the current TMA be expanded to include private lands as well as the publicly owned land. In addition, other private landowners have requested inclusion into the TMA. Closure dates (December 1- March 31) and objectives would remain the same. The proposal would increase the size of the TMA to about 101 square miles and would protect the most critical portion of the Metolius Winter Range from motorized vehicle harassment. The current TMA is difficult to enforce because of fragmented ownerships. OSP is very supportive because of the difficulty enforcing the fragmented closure pattern that now exists.

Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area: To be consistent with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) administrative rules for the Deschutes River Scenic Waterway the Department is proposing to modify the following rule as noted below:

(1) ~~Discharging firearms is prohibited except as authorized during game bird and game mammal seasons or by permit.~~ **The Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area is open to the hunting of big game, game birds and waterfowl during authorized seasons and by permit; except that discharge of firearms is prohibited within the Wild and Scenic waterway boundary from the third Saturday in May through August 31.**

The change will have minimal effect on hunting opportunity; the only season regularly occurring in the area during the closure period is cougar season. Cougar hunting could occur year-round on those portions of the WA outside the Wild and Scenic Waterway boundary which is generally ¼ mile from either side of the river.

Prineville Reservoir Wildlife Area: Proposed changes were developed in conjunction with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), which owns the land, OPRD, OSP and Crook County Sheriff and would update the OARs for the area to be consistent with posted regulations. The Prineville Reservoir Wildlife Area is open to wildlife-oriented public use unless otherwise excluded or restricted by the following rules:

(1) The area is closed to motorized vehicle access from November 15 or December 1 (as posted at each gate) through April 15 annually for resource protection.

(2) Motorized vehicle travel is restricted to designated open roads.

~~[(1)3]~~ Discharging firearms is prohibited except as authorized during game bird, game mammal, and furbearer seasons, or by permit.

~~[(2)4]~~ Camping is prohibited except ~~[on]~~ **in designated** areas ~~[designated for that use or by permit].~~

(5) Campfires or open burning is prohibited except in designated campsites.

(6) Open fires are prohibited during designated fire closures.

General Regulation Changes

Check-in of Bear or Cougar

Currently, the wording of the OARs regarding who is allowed to check-in a bear or cougar is not consistent with the language in the Big Game Regulations. OARs require the hunter who took the animal to check it in while the Regulations mention hunters but do not make it completely clear. The proposed rules below would:

- Standardize the wording
- Clarify the person who took the animal is responsible to have it presented for check-in
- Allow the flexibility for a person other than the hunter to present the animal provided they have the necessary information such as the tag or a Wildlife Transfer Record Form found on page 100 of the 2011 Big Game Regulations.

635-066-0010 (General Bear)

(5) The skull of any bear taken must be presented to an ODFW office or designated collection site; ~~by~~ the person who took the animal **is responsible to have it presented**, within 10 days of the kill to be checked and marked. Skull must be unfrozen when presented for check-in. Check-~~in out~~ at ODFW offices must occur during normal business hours (8-5, Mon-Fri.). Hunters are required to check in the skull only, for the purpose of inspection, tagging and removal of a tooth for aging.

635-066-0020 (Controlled Bear)

(4) The skull of any bear taken must be presented to an ODFW office or designated collection site; ~~by~~ the person who took the animal **is responsible to have it presented**, within 10 days of the kill to be checked and marked. Skull must be unfrozen when presented

for check-in. Check-in ~~out~~ at ODFW offices must occur during normal business hours (8–5, Mon-Fri.). Hunters are required to check in the skull only for the purpose of inspection, tagging and removal of a tooth for aging.

635-067-0004 (Cougar)

(3) (a) ~~[All hunters are required]~~ **The person who took the [animal]cougar is responsible to have it presented for** ~~to check-in,~~ **at a Department of Fish and Wildlife office within ten days of harvest[.]. Check-in must occur during normal business hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Friday).** ~~T[the hide with skull and proof of sex attached~~ **are required.** ~~[of any cougar killed within ten days of harvest at a Department of Fish and Wildlife office]~~ Hide and skull must be unfrozen when presented for check-in.

(b) Hunters are also required to submit the reproductive tract of any female cougar taken.

Use of Decoys for Hunting Game Mammals

As a matter of housekeeping the Department is proposing to exchange “game mammals” for “wildlife” to make the intent of the rule below clear. Although the OAR is in a Division specific to “game mammals”, as written it creates confusion because wildlife includes game birds and other mammals which have different or no restrictions on the use of decoys.

635-065-0733

Decoys

Except for purposes of law enforcement or wildlife management, the use of decoys with moving parts is prohibited. This prohibition includes, but is not limited to, decoys with parts that are powered by a motor, battery, human action (for example, cable or pull-string) or the wind. Flexible or adjustable parts that permit placement or adjustment of a decoy but do not otherwise move do not constitute "moving parts" for the purpose of this rule. This rule is intended to ban decoys that attract wildlife ~~wildlife~~ **game mammals** via movement.

Allow sale of preference points through November 30th

This concept was introduced by a member of the public; potential benefits include:

- Allows hunters to spread the cost of licenses, tags, and applications throughout the year.
- Reduces the rush at Point of Sale outlets during the May 15th tag sale deadline period which could reduce the risk of system slowdowns which have necessitated extending the application period in the past.
- Allows hunters who missed the deadline to continue their preference point history.
- Provides hunters (particularly new hunters) who decide after the deadline they would like to apply for controlled hunts the following year the opportunity to purchase a preference point.

The Department is developing an application process to allow hunters who did not apply for preference points by the May 15 Controlled Hunt Application Deadline to purchase only preference points for the current year, from July 1- November 30 each year. Preference Point Purchase Forms will be available on the Department Website and at Department POS outlets. Sales of preference points will be processed by the HQ Licensing/Controlled Hunt Section.