

Big Game Hunting Review

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June 2020 Commission Update

Big Game Hunting Review

- Review project goals
- Online public forum
- Deer and elk hunter survey
- Proposals being considered for 2021 hunting season
- Public outreach and opportunity for input

Big Game Review Goals

- Improve customer service through simpler big game hunting seasons and associated regulations
- Allocate hunting opportunity fairly and consistent with hunter preferences
- Review hunting season structure and allocation of hunting opportunity to promote hunter recruitment, retention and reactivation (R3)
- Ensure hunting seasons meet biological objectives and maintain or improve hunter opportunity

Project Adjustments

- Focus on priority issues
 - Timing of West Cascade deer and elk season
 - Eastern Oregon archery deer and elk season
- Selection of issues based on public forum comments and Department management challenges
- Outreach effort prioritized to online resources

Online Public Forum

- Opportunity for input prior to proposal development
- Forum live for 30 days in February
- 1,393 comments from 9,820 unique visitors
- Beneficial tool and positive experience
- Public report of results available late-June

Deer and Elk Hunter Survey

- Prioritized collection of unbiased information on opinions and preferences of hunters
- Survey of resident deer and elk hunters completed this week
- Expected sample size of 2,000 but completed >4,000 surveys
- Survey focused on informing specific changes the Department is considering proposing
- Public report of results available late-June
- Looking at possibility of presenting results to Commission later this summer

West Cascade Deer and Elk

- Decades ago there were multiple, later and longer Cascade elk seasons
- Seasons moved from Nov to Oct due to challenges with maintaining bull ratios
- Less desirable time of year and shorter season
- Causes a 7-day break in Cascade buck deer season
- Declining participation and very low hunter success
- Opportunity to provide a better experience for customers and simpler regulations

West Cascade Deer and Elk

- Two options being considered
 - Move W. Cascade Elk Season to early-Nov
 - 7-day season, starting Saturday after deer season
 - Overlap youth 2-day deer season
 - Alternative - Current W. Cascade Elk dates, but eliminate break in Cascade Buck Deer
 - Both options would create consistent date for Western Oregon General Deer Season

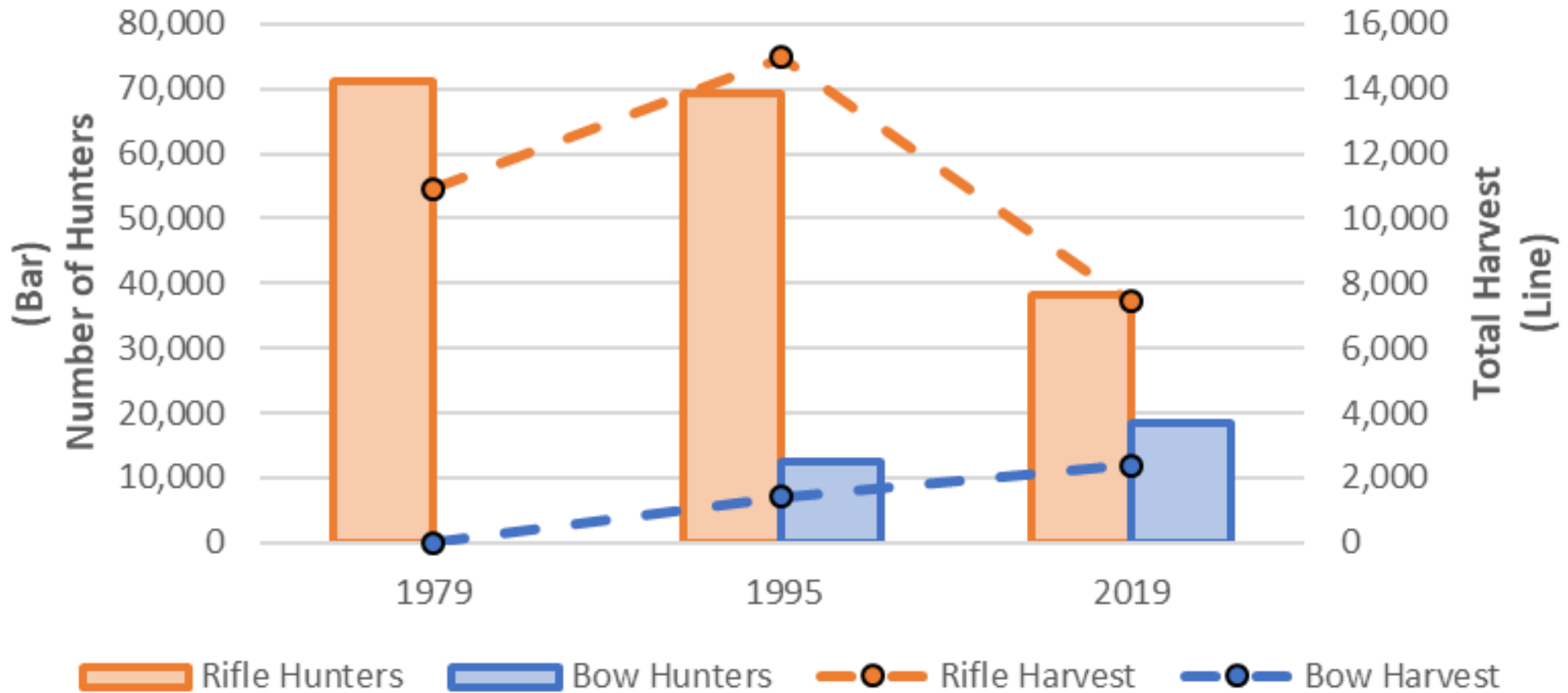
Eastern Oregon Archery Elk

- Statewide general archery season established in 1979
- 30-day season starting in late-Aug since 1983
- Created as a liberal season due to low hunter interest, limited technology and low harvest success
- Archery hunt originally designed to draw hunters away from crowded rifle seasons

Eastern Oregon Archery Elk

- Over the last 40 years archery hunting has become very popular
- Objective of drawing hunters away from rifle season was met >20 years ago
- Social and political pressures have led to little opportunity for adaptive management

Eastern Elk



Eastern Oregon Archery Elk

- Many benefits and challenges with current season
- Benefits of current general season
 - Quality experience for public land bull elk hunting
 - Significant amount of hunting opportunity
 - Unlimited tags so hunters are guaranteed a tag every year
 - Hunters can hunt their preferred unit while also accumulating preference points
 - Can hunt general season, if unsuccessful in controlled draw
 - Hunt east and west in same year
 - No limit on non-resident hunters

Eastern Oregon Archery Elk

- Challenges with current general season
 - High hunter density in most popular units
 - Elk distribution concerns – public vs. private land
 - Frequent hunter complaints on crowding
 - Growing inequity in opportunity and harvest in some units
 - When harvest changes are necessary, we can only change controlled rifle harvest
 - No limit on non-resident hunters
- Challenges caused by managing rifle elk hunting different than archery elk hunting

Eastern Oregon Archery Elk

- 2019 elk hunter survey on weapon preference
 - 75% prefer rifle
 - 21% prefer archery
- 3-year average Starkey, Ukiah, Heppner Units
 - 73% branch bull hunters during archery season
 - 55% branch bull harvest during archery season
- Differences in frequency of hunting opportunity
 - Archery – guaranteed ability to hunt bull elk every year
 - Rifle – accumulate preference points for 5 to 7 years until guaranteed

Eastern Oregon Archery Elk

- Objectives of proposals
 - Reduced archery hunter density where archery hunter density is believed to be impacting elk distribution.
 - Allow for tag changes for all weapon types when changes are appropriate to manage populations, bull ratio, and/or allocation of harvest
- Achieve objectives by using same management strategy for archery hunting as rifle hunting

Eastern Oregon Archery Elk

- Controlled archery elk in all eastern Oregon
- Manage archery elk controlled hunts similar to controlled rifle hunts
- Blue and Wallowa Mtns - unit scale hunts
- High Desert, E. Cascades, Columbia -multi-unit hunts

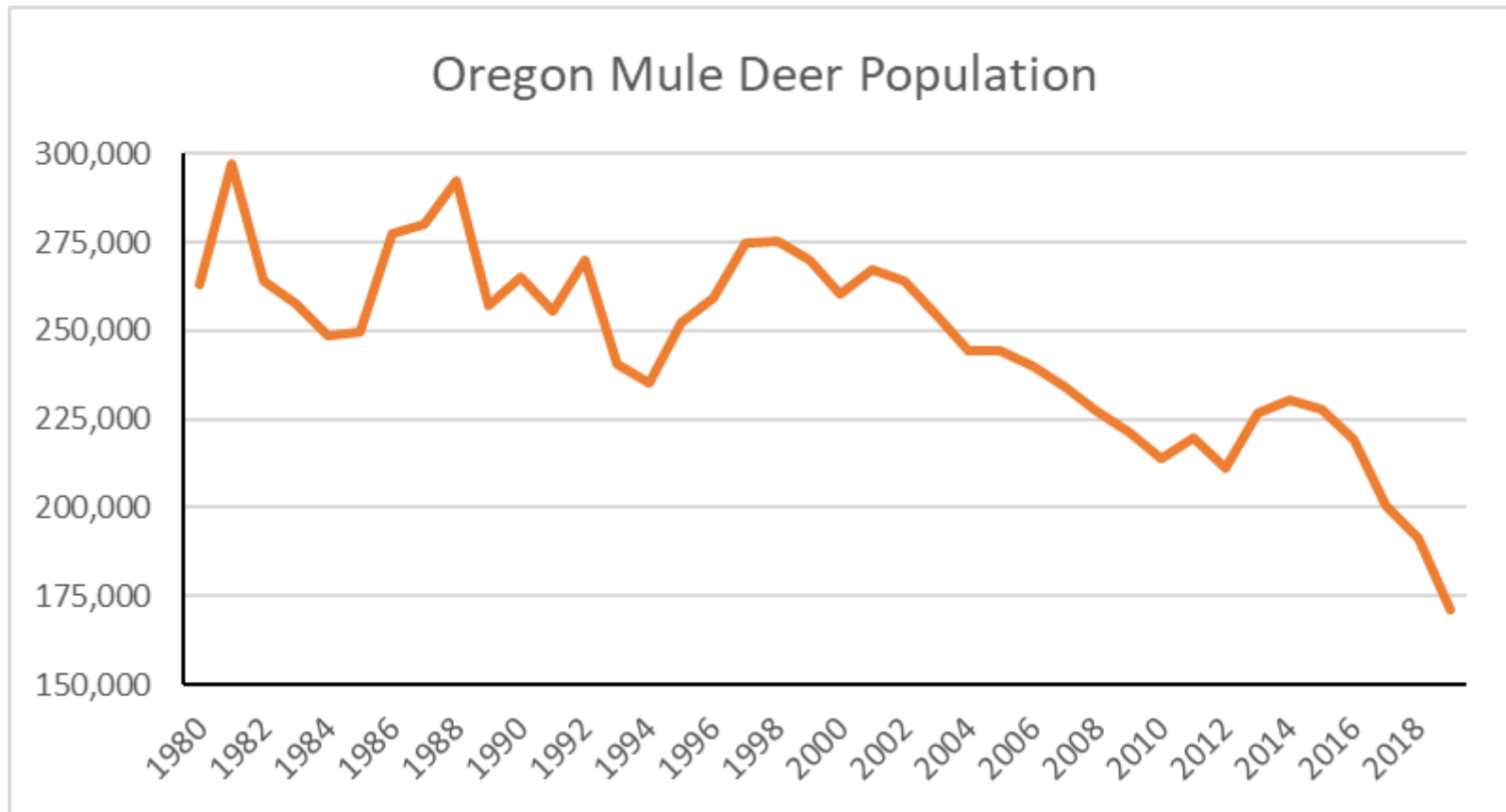
Eastern Oregon Archery Elk

- Considerations for controlled archery hunts
 - Maintain or increase opportunity where feasible
 - Reduce hunter density in problem areas
 - Make shifts in bull harvest allocation in areas with high archery harvest
- Reduction of hunters in some units, increase in others
- 2019 – 16,300 general season archery hunters
- 2021 – 15,600 tags proposed
- Controlled archery tags valid within the dates and area of the controlled hunt
- Eastern Oregon controlled hunt tags would not be valid during western Oregon general season

Eastern Oregon Archery Deer

- Currently general archery season with unlimited tags
- Mule deer declining in Oregon and throughout their range in U.S.
- Multiple factors influencing populations
- Recent research that nutrition is a limiting factor

Eastern Oregon Archery Deer



Eastern Oregon Archery Deer

- Unlimited tags is no longer an appropriate management tool for declining populations
- Proposal being considered
 - Manage archery deer hunting the same as rifle deer hunting
 - Controlled archery in all eastern Oregon units
 - Would allow biologist to make harvest adjustments to all hunts
 - Proposed tag numbers similar to previous general season archery hunters or decrease in units with significant population declines and corresponding decreases in controlled hunt tags

Public Outreach

- 2019 deer and elk hunter survey
- January 2020 Commission update
- 2020 online forum and survey
- Sport Group Leader meeting and detailed updates
- State and local outreach on proposals by July 1
- Launch dedicated information page on website
- July/August OHA magazine article

Website Information

- All outreach and information directing public to website
- Ability to sign-up for email updates and submit input online
- Hunter opinions and preferences – survey reports
- Details on changes being considered for 2021
- Final Department proposals available in late-August
- Commission process, comment, and testimony opportunity

Questions?