

Hello,

My Name is David Bender. I was the successful bidder of one of the 2016 Statewide Elk tags, as well as a 2015 Statewide Deer tag.

I am bringing my concerns to the **Commission** in hopes to extend the Statewide seasons. These tags are auctioned at a premium dollar to improve wildlife and habitat in Oregon. I feel that to continue to increase the revenue generated by these auction tags, the successful tag holder should have the best opportunity possible to harvest a trophy animal. The number one way to increase the ability to harvest a trophy animal is to extend the seasons. The generous individuals that bid on these tags should be at a minimum the **first** ones in the woods and more importantly the **last**.

Here are some of my observations and recommendations:

- There are two best times to harvest a trophy Deer and Elk, early season before they shed their velvet when they are patternable and not as nocturnal, and late in the season when they migrate to their wintering grounds.
- Oregon currently has the earliest closing Statewide tag of **all** the western states that have a statewide tag. (see exhibit A)
- In the NE zone alone there are 26 Elk hunts, resulting in **4,141** tags allocated past November 30th!!!! (see exhibit B)
- There is little to no additional impact to the wintering grounds by the very small handful of statewide tags.
- Oregon's Statewide tags bring far less at auction than other states.
- I see no reason to not extend the seasons if the goal is for the Auction tag holders to be successful. I propose August 15th - December 31st at a minimum.

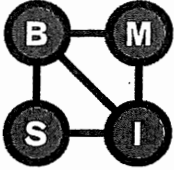
In 2015 when I had my Deer Tag, I began scouting in late spring. I was diligent throughout the summer glassing and operating trail cameras at water holes in various units across the state. I put in countless hours and days in pursuit of a trophy Mule deer. I located a buck that I had decided would be a great shooter. I patiently kept tabs on the buck and waited for September 1st to arrive. Unfortunately five days prior to September 1st was the opener of the Archery general season. Camps, hunters, and overall pressure pushed the deer out of their pattern and my big buck was gone. Incredibly frustrating to know that all my hard work was foiled because of an over the counter hunt, after spending a large sum of money for this tag.

This year with my 2016 Elk tag the weather came late and the elk were not moving into the lower grounds until the last few days of November and into December. The lack of weather as well as the additional pressure from the later hunt seasons made this very frustrating as well. Additional time would have made all the difference in the world.

In conclusion, let's try and make these tags what they should be, an opportunity to have the best chance possible to harvest a Trophy animal in Oregon. Let's put Oregon on the map as a sought after destination for hunters, and subsequently raise more money for habitat and conservation along the way.

Thank you,

David A. Bender



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Mr. Curt Melcher, Director
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE
Salem, OR 97302

January 17, 2017

Dear Director Melcher,

My Name is David Bender. I was the successful bidder of one of the 2016 Statewide Elk tags, as well as a 2015 Statewide Deer tag.

I am bringing my concerns to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in hopes to extend the Statewide seasons. These tags are auctioned at a premium dollar to improve wildlife and habitat in Oregon. I feel that to continue to increase the revenue generated by these auction tags the successful tag holder should have the best opportunity possible to harvest a trophy animal. The number one way to increase the ability to harvest a trophy animal is to extend the seasons. The generous individuals that bid on these tags should be at a minimum the **first** ones in the woods and more importantly the **last**.

Here are some of my observations and recommendations:

- There are two best times to harvest a trophy mule deer, early season before they shed their velvet when they are patternable and not as nocturnal, and late in the season when they migrate to their wintering grounds.
- The same holds true for the Elk Tags. The misconception is that hunting the rut is when you will harvest a trophy bull especially being able to use any weapon. The truth is that it is the best time to harvest a bull for sure but not a trophy.
- The best time to harvest a trophy bull especially in Oregon is in the late season. The weather will push these bachelor groups of bulls into the wintering grounds with nothing on their minds but feeding to replenish themselves from the rut and prepare for the winter. This moves the bulls into areas of not only better access but makes them much more visible. November 30th is just too early to gamble on the weather.
- Big bulls are also best hunted in August while either still in velvet or shortly after going hard horned. The bulls are patternable in the summer grounds and able to be harvested before traveling upwards of 20 miles to rut.
- I see no reason to not extend the seasons if the goal is for the Auction tag holders to be successful. I propose August 15th- December 31st at a minimum.

David A. Bender
Tony@bendermechanical.com
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Sent via Electronic Mail

Dear Mr. Bender,

Thank you for your letter on statewide auctions tags. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) greatly appreciates your support of wildlife management thru the purchase of auctions tags. I appreciate your interest in extending the season to make them more desired by buyers and to enhance the experience.

Below is an explanation why our statewide tags, and controlled hunts for antlered animals end November 30.

- Disturbance on deer and elk on their winter range is something we strive to avoid.
- All of our controlled hunts for deer except a few select hunts for damage reduction end before December. Those damage focused hunts that do extend into December end prior to the 15th. These late hunts are typically for antlerless animals.
- Deer can begin to lose their antlers in late December.
- Winter range protection is especially critical in Eastern Oregon where winters are more impactful.
- Our bull elk hunts end before December. There are a few antlerless elk hunts in agricultural areas, again to reduce damage that extend to the end of December – a couple even later.
- Area closures and road closures begin in December to protect deer and elk from disturbance on the winter ranges. It is not desired that we reopen these areas for statewide tag holders or create complex regulations.

Past Discussions:

- There have been discussions with the Access & Habitat Board in the past regarding season changes, specifically increasing season duration. The Board has to date never agreed to request a season date change by the Commission.
- The issue has come up in a similar manner to the Commission several times over the years, but no action took place.
- The most recent Commission action on season date changes was to reduce the bighorn sheep hunt dates to end earlier in November – to protect bighorn sheep in the rut.
- As has been discussed potentially hunts could end later in Western Oregon, as winter range is not as critical. However, deer lose their antlers beginning late December and the Commission has never shown a desire to complicate the regulations and split the statewide tags into two areas with different season lengths.

Exhibit A

Western State Season Closures for Statewide Tags

Arizona- August to August (12 months)

Colorado- December 31

New Mexico- January 31

Nevada- December 31

Utah- January 15

Washington- December 31

Idaho has a "Super Hunt"

Montana has a "Super Hunt"

Wyoming has a "Commissioner" tag

Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming's programs are not Statewide, they are hunt code specific or hunt dates coinciding with the hunts taking place. Subsequently they generate a **fraction** of the Statewide tag proceeds that other states do.

Exhibit B

Northeast Area Elk Hunts That extend past November 30th:

Hunt# 245D2- 121 tags
Hunt# 245D3- 66 tags
Hunt# 245E- 660 tags
Hunt# 246D- 101 tags
Hunt# 246E- 138 tags
Hunt# 247D1- 600 tags
Hunt# 247D2- 150 tags
Hunt# 248C- 66 tags
Hunt# 248E- 60 tags
Hunt# 249B- 79 tags
Hunt# 251D- 191 tags
Hunt# 252F- 10 tags
Hunt# 253A2- 210 tags
Hunt# 253C2- 165 tags
Hunt# 254A- 125 tags
Hunt# 255B- 15 tags
Hunt# 257C- 48 tags
Hunt# 258A5- 110 tags
Hunt# 258A6- 110 tags
Hunt# 258A7- 110 tags
Hunt# 259- 165 tags
Hunt# 260A- 80 tags
Hunt# 261A2- 83 tags
Hunt# 264A2- 165 tags
Hunt# 265B3- 382 tags
Hunt# 265C- 131 tags

There are 26 hunts resulting in 4,141 tags or hunt parties past November 30th impacting the winter grounds.