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2008 & 2009 Big Game Hunting Regulations Proposal Information

DRAFT TAG PROPOSALS, expect minor changes due to rounding, corrections and changes
Table 1. Summary of controlled hunt tag numbers.

Species/Hunt Type	2005 tags	2006 tags	2007 tags	Proposed 2008 tags	*Percent Change
TOTAL DEER	81,614	80,313	80,507	77,348	-4%
Buck	64,448	64,533	64,987	62,146	-4%
Bow/Muzzleloader	3,023	3,154	3,113	3,057	-2%
Antlerless (600 Series)	13,232	11,652	11,088	10,806	-3%
Youth	944	974	1,319	1,339	+2%
TOTAL ELK	50,411	54,356	53,851	53,838	0%
Bull/Either Sex	35,289	38,698	38,409	38,524	0%
Bow/Muzzleloader	3,595	4,318	4,279	4,190	-2%
Rifle Antlerless	10,800	10,622	10,418	10,452	0%
Youth	721	718	745	672	-10%
BIGHORN	86	82	92	89	-3%
MT. GOAT	6	6	7	8	+14%
TOTAL PRONGHORN	2,920	3,029	3,094	2,893	-6%
Rifle Buck/Either Sex	1,665	1,780	1,828	1,713	-6%
Bow/Muzzleloader	1,005	1,016	1,020	946	-7%
Doe	208	205	215	205	-5%
Youth	28	28	29	29	0%
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Spring Bear				Proposed	*Percent
	2005 tags	2006 tags	2007	2008	Change
Controlled Spring Bear	6,778	7,283	7,375	7,812	+6%
Youth Spring Bear	198	201	198	198	0%
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			Proposed	Proposed	
	2005 Incl.	2006 Incl.	2007 Incl.	2008 Incl.	Percent
	06 Spr. Br	07 Spr. Br	08 Spr. Br.	09 Spr. Br.	Change^a
Grand total tags	142,013	145,270	145,124	142,186	-2%

*Percent change calculated for the difference between 2007 and 2008 tags for all species except bear which is calculated for the difference between 2008 and 2009.

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“Standard” season dates for 2009 hunts are as follows:

Archery.....	Aug. 29–Sept. 27
Cascade Buck Deer.....	Oct. 3–Oct. 16 & Oct. 24–Nov. 6
Coast Buck Deer.....	Oct. 3–Nov. 6
Western OR Antlerless Deer.....	Oct. 24–Nov. 6
Controlled Buck Deer.....	Oct. 3–Oct. 14
Eastern OR Antlerless Deer.....	Oct. 17–25
Cascade Bull.....	Oct. 17–23
General Coast 1 st Season.....	Nov. 14–17
General Coast 2 nd Season.....	Nov. 21–27
Rocky Mt. Bull Elk 1 st Season.....	Oct. 28–Nov. 1
Rocky Mt. Bull Elk Season 2 nd Season.....	Nov. 7–15
Rocky Mt. Std. Antlerless Elk.....	Nov. 21–29
Pronghorn (1 st Centerfire Season).....	Aug. 15–23

Some relevant 2009 holidays that may impact season dates are:

Labor Day.....	September 7
Veteran’s Day.....	November 11
Thanksgiving.....	November 26

Overview of Current Topics and Issues

Bag Limit During Archery Seasons and Disability Permits

In June of 2008 the Department will make projections on which units will have an antlerless animal in the bag limit for archers and hunters with disabilities permits for fall of 2009. If the Commission adopts this proposal the Department would list the Units to have an expanded bag limit in the 2009 Big Game Regulations. Currently there are no proposed changes to the list of Units for 2009.

Factors considered to determine Units recommended to have an expanded bag limit 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

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.

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Black-tailed Deer Management Plan, DRAFT Executive Summary

The purpose of the Black-tailed Deer Management Plan is to provide a framework to manage black-tailed deer populations in Oregon to be compatible with habitat capability, primary land uses, other wildlife species, and to provide recreational benefits to the public. This plan is the first effort by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) to develop a long-term management strategy for black-tailed deer.

The Columbian black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*) is one of two subspecies of mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) native to Oregon. Black-tailed deer are found from the Pacific Ocean coastline east to the forested portions along the east side of the crest of the Cascade Mtns. Since the 1980's the black-tailed deer population has been declining in part because of loss of habitat, the introduction of diseases, and an increased presence of predators.

Black-tailed deer are difficult to survey because of their secretive life history and the dense cover they inhabit. Therefore, populations are managed based on trends in populations, buck ratios, and damage reports, and not on actual counts of deer.

This Oregon Black-tailed Deer Management Plan provides an overall management framework and direction for the black-tailed deer program for the next five years. This plan emphasizes the need to estimate black-tailed deer populations and habitat management as well as identify future data needs.

Over the next five years, the Department will develop improved population estimates for black-tailed deer in western Oregon. Population estimates would be used to develop Management Objectives. The Department will also work with land managers to increase understanding of black-tailed deer habitat relationships and recommend management actions to improve black-tailed deer habitat on public and private lands within primary uses of the land.

This plan presents a brief historical overview, describes black-tailed deer biology and habitat requirements, and discusses several concepts that are used in black-tailed deer management. Economic values associated with black-tailed deer hunting are also presented. Issues related to black-tailed deer management are identified along with suggested strategies to address many of these issues and concerns.

Because many individuals will not read this entire plan but only sections of specific interest to them, two central concepts will be found in more than one section of this plan:

- 1) Black-tailed deer are difficult to survey.
- 2) Changes in habitat availability and quality have contributed to declining populations since the early 1980's. Habitat changes include both quantity of early seral habitat (particularly on federal lands where mature timber stands still have deer, but at reduced numbers), and quality influenced by changing reforestation management practices. Reforestation techniques have also been affected by regulation changes in response to public demands. The primary use of the land (agriculture, forestry, etc.), is also an important consideration when discussing black-tailed deer habitat.

The entire DRAFT plan is available on the Department website: <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/>

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New Hunter Harvest and Effort Surveys

Hunters Asked to Report 2007 Harvest Efforts

The new hunter reporting system is now available for use. Hunters are asked to report on tags they had for 2007 seasons (“last year”) by July 31, 2008. Hunters are asked to provide information regarding last year’s hunts even if they did not hunt, were not successful, or were contacted during the telephone survey the Department conducted. Information provided will help compare the results of the new system to the telephone surveys used for the past 20+ years. Hunters with tags for 2008 hunting seasons can report beginning June 1, 2008.

Hunters can report either by telephone or through the ODFW Web site. Although both telephone and internet are functional, feed-back from hunters indicates it is easier for some hunters to successfully complete surveys on the internet. The Department is working with the contractor to make the phone system more user-friendly. Hunters can access the hunting report form through the Hunter Resource section of the Web site, <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/hunting/reporting/index.asp> , or call 1-866-947-ODFW (6339) for the automated phone system.

Hunters who purchased bighorn sheep and Rocky Mountain goat tags do not have to report as these hunters are required to check out of the hunt area.

Prepare For Reporting

There is a worksheet on page 31 Of the 2008 Big Game Regulations which will help prepare for the survey. The worksheet is general; there are additional questions for some hunts. Before calling the phone line or logging into the new online system, hunters should have the following information ready:

- Hunter/Angler ID number (located on ODFW licenses, tags and applications)
- The two-digit Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) number of the unit hunted. If the hunt area included more than 1 WMU, use the number of the unit hunted in most of the time.
- The total number of days hunted—including mentoring youth
- The number of days hunted in the WMU hunted most

With all hunters reporting, and providing accurate information, the new system will improve the quality and quantity of hunting effort and harvest information.

For additional information, visit ODFW’s Web site, www.dfw.state.or.us

Surveys for 2008-09 and Future Seasons

Completing the Hunter Harvest and Effort Survey is mandatory. However, because the process is new to hunters they will not be penalized during the first year as they learn to use the system.

Surveys for 2008 Spring Bear and Spring Turkey hunts should be completed between June 1 and June 15, 2008. Surveys for all other hunts and seasons listed in the 2008 Big Game Regulations and Fall Turkey Tags should be completed within 15 days of the end of the hunt/season.

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At some point in future, the ultimate penalty being considered is that a hunter will not be able to purchase a tag or apply for hunts or a point saver for species for which they did not complete a survey for a tag they had the previous season.

One concept being considered is for the Department to implement an administrative fee which would allow hunters to “buy back in” and purchase tags or applications if they failed to report the previous year. The administrative fee could start low (possibly \$10.00/tag) and be increased in the future as necessary to encourage compliance. Action by the Oregon Legislature would be needed to authorize charging an administrative fee.

Agents for Black Bear and Cougar Control

The 2007 Oregon Legislative Assembly passed House Bill 2971 which authorized the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) to develop rules necessary to appoint individuals as Department agents for black bear and/or cougar control work. These rules were approved by the Fish and Wildlife Commission in February 2008.

Following are the steps that must be taken to qualify as an agent of the Department:

1. **Pass a criminal background check.**
2. **Provide a fingerprint record.**
3. **Provide a certified copy of your Motor Vehicles Driving Record for the last 5 years.**
4. **Complete a Black Bear and/or Cougar Agent Application** and return it to the local District Wildlife Biologist.

Once steps 1 through 4 have been completed, qualified applicants will be offered an in-person interview with the District Wildlife Biologist to see if they are suitable for appointment as an agent. If so, their name will be placed on a list of qualified applicants. The local District Wildlife Biologist will select individuals from this list to become black bear and/or cougar agents. This selection will be based on such items as your daily availability, response time, distance to the project area, equipment needs, etc. Those selected will be required to meet with the District biologist and successfully complete required training which could include Code of Conduct, Use of Firearms, Use of ATV's and Snowmobiles, and First Aid/CPR.

Immediately before being asked to take black bear and/or cougar control action, the agent and the District Wildlife Biologist will complete a Black Bear and/or Cougar Agent Appointment Agreement. This Agreement will establish specific work related duties, equipment requirements etc. for that particular project.

The application packet with all necessary forms is in the final stages of development. Application packets will not be distributed to the public until they have been through review by Wildlife District staff. If you have any questions, please contact your local District Wildlife Biologist.

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Regulation Overview and species by Species Highlights

The following is a more detailed summary of winter conditions and regulation proposals for 2008 controlled hunt tag numbers and 2009 hunting seasons.

General Winter Conditions: Herds went into winter in fair-good condition. Some areas of the state experienced dry conditions during fall 2007. Other areas received fall rains and had some green-up. Overall fawn ratios going into the winter were only fair. In general, winter ranges had normal winter conditions with considerably more snow than in recent years; however, there were not extended periods of extremely cold temperatures. Overall, animals present wintered well.

The 2008 spring surveys found good winter survival in many deer and elk herds; however, some herds went into winter with low-moderate fall fawn/calf ratios. Mule deer fawn and/or Rocky Mountain elk calf survival was down in some areas. Deer Hair Loss Syndrome continues to be a factor affecting black-tailed deer herds in some areas. Roosevelt elk in western Oregon continue to do well in most areas. Spring survey conditions were good-excellent; heavy snow concentrated animals on winter range where they were very visible.

Controlled Hunting Seasons

- Total proposed tags for 2008 controlled deer, pronghorn, and bighorn sheep are reduce slightly; proposed elk tags are stable; Rocky Mountain goat and 2009 Spring Bear tags are proposed to increase.

Species by Species Highlights

Black Bear

- In October the Department will be proposing a 1% increase in spring bear tags from 2008 levels to 7,812 tags for 2009.
- **“Limited” First-come First-served Spring Bear Season in Southwest Oregon.**

Beginning in Spring 2009, the Department is proposing to change the SW Oregon Spring Bear Hunt #722A from a controlled hunt to a “Limited”, first-come first-served season with a limit on the number of tags that will be authorized for sale. Tags will become available for purchase at the same time 2009 hunting licenses are available and be available until March 31, 2009, or until the authorized number of tags are sold. Hunters who purchase these tags before the application deadline for controlled spring bear hunts can not apply for spring bear preference points or tags for the 2009 season. However, if a hunter applies for a controlled spring bear hunt and is unsuccessful in the drawing they may purchase a Southwest Spring Bear tag if the authorized number of tags has not been sold.

- **Mandatory Check-in of Harvested Bears**

The Department has initiated mandatory check-in for all harvested bears. Historically the Department has monitored black bear populations by evaluating the age and sex composition of known mortalities. Harvest pressure is considered excessive if the median age of harvested bears is ≤ 3 years old, or that of males is ≤ 2 years old, or that of females is ≤ 4 years old.

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The Department has also initiated a statewide tetra-cycline study in which individual bear teeth can be ‘marked’ with a stain that is visible during the tooth aging process. This information can be used to provide more reliable estimates of the bear population in Oregon.

Both techniques used by the Department to monitor bear populations rely heavily on hunters voluntarily turning in teeth of harvested bears. However, voluntary tooth return rates have been below 30% since 2003. As stipulated in *Oregon’s Black Bear Management Plan 1993–1998*, “The Department will institute a mandatory check of harvested black bear if a tooth return rate of less than 30 percent is experienced for two consecutive years.” Therefore the Department has implemented mandatory bear check for all harvested bears beginning in 2008.

The skull of any bear taken must be presented to an ODFW office or designated collection site within 10 days of the kill to be checked and marked. Checkout at ODFW offices must occur during normal business hours (8-5, Mon-Fri.). Biologists will remove a small premolar tooth and will take measurements of canine and second molar teeth. For the measurements to be taken and the premolar extracted, the skull must be presented in an unfrozen condition. Removal of the premolar will not impact the quality of any taxidermy work. Hunters will receive a postcard telling the age of their bear, but it takes about one year. The Department is interested in working with local businesses that would like to be trained to check in bear skulls.

Cougar

- Three Target Areas (TAs) were established in the fall of 2006. Through March 31, 2008, 40 Cougar had been administratively removed from the Heppner TA, 10 from the Jackson TA, and 12 from the Beulah TA.

Bighorn Sheep

- The Department is proposing a 3% decrease in tags from 92 in 2007 to 89 in 2008.
 - No change to Rocky Mtn. Bighorn tags (12 tags).
 - California Bighorn tags decreasing by 3 to 77 tags.
 - A new W Deschutes River hunt is proposed for 2009.

Mountain Goat

- Rocky Mountain Goat populations are increasing. The Department is proposing 8 tags for 2008.
- In 2009 the Department is proposing two new hunts, W Hurricane Creek and Elkhorn #2.

Pronghorn Antelope

- Pronghorn continue to do well in most areas. However; fawn ratios are down in some areas and proposed tags for 2008 are reduced to 2,893, down 6% from 2007. The downturn was expected, coyote numbers are very high and two of their important prey items, jackrabbits and small mammals, have declined since last year.

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Deer

- Disease Updates:
 - Deer Hair Loss Syndrome is a condition affecting black-tailed deer and Columbian white-tailed deer. First described in Western Washington in 1996, Deer Hair Loss is now found throughout low – moderate elevations (generally below 1800 ft.) of Western Oregon. The condition produces hair discoloration, hair loss, weight loss, and lethargy. The syndrome can ultimately result in the death of some animals, primarily from exposure. Fawns are impacted more than adults resulting in poor recruitment in some areas.
 - AHD (Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Disease) seems to have a continuing affect on mule deer herds in central Oregon. Since a substantial die-off in the Crooked River Ranch area 6 years ago, herds in the area have not recovered as quickly as expected given the favorable weather patterns.
- General season black-tailed deer hunter participation increased by 2,600 hunters (3%) to approximately 76,000. Total harvest increased from 13,500 to 16,000 and the hunter success rate increased from 18% in 2006, to 21% in 2007.
- The Department is proposing a 4% decrease in the number of controlled buck mule deer tags (62,146) for 2008.
- The Department is proposing to reduce controlled rifle antlerless deer tags by 3% to 10,806 for 2008.
- Proposed new controlled deer hunts include a Baker muzzleloader hunt for white-tailed deer. The McKenzie Unit antlerless hunt is proposed to be changed to a West McKenzie Hunt focused on private lands. A third hunt period in the North Bank Habitat Area. A “Territorial” youth hunt in the SW corner of the Siuslaw WMU near Curtin.

Elk

- Populations and calf recruitment remain low in northeast Oregon. Proposed controlled antlerless elk tags are similar to last year
- Proposed controlled rifle bull and either sex elk tags are similar to last year.
- In the SW Oregon the rotation of centerfire rifle, muzzleloader, and archery hunts is proposed to continue among Sitkum, Elliot, and Lake Creek hunts resulting in three hunts deleted and three new hunts added.
- The Department is proposing to add two youth hunts, Flat Creek (near Dayville) and Sixes.
- Two new muzzleloader hunts are proposed for 2009, Elkhorn Ag., and a second period for the Union Ag. hunt.
- New antlerless hunts proposed include Willamette Plus #2, Lower Siletz, Pengra (south of Springfield), Murderers Creek Private, splitting the West Grant Private into three time periods, three Schleur-Park hunts, and North Juniper.

Miscellaneous Regulation Concepts being Considered

- Require bear and cougar carcass or parts be in an unfrozen condition when checked in.
- OSP Fish and Wildlife Division and the Department will be discussing a regulation requiring hunters to show enforcement personnel the kill site upon request. Such a regulation would be helpful to investigate trespassing and hunting in the wrong hunt area.
- Minor boundary change (5mi²) from Keating WMU to Catherine Creek because road used as boundary is overgrown and completely gone.