

## Information for May 2010, District Meetings

### Game Birds

Since the framework for upland game bird seasons were adopted in 2009 there is not much new to report. However, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is in the process of revising the Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon. The plan was first adopted in 2005 and is undergoing a 5-year review. The department expects that the first draft of the revision will be available for public review and comment in June 2010. The plan will be presented to the Commission for proposed adoption later in the summer, possibly at the August meeting.

Following, for your convenience are the proposed season dates for 2010-11 Upland Game Bird Seasons (from page 24 in the 2009-10 Game Bird Regulations). These proposed dates are consistent with the Commission adopted Game Bird Season Frameworks.

### **Pheasant**

- Statewide: Oct. 9 – Dec. 31, 2010

### **California (Valley) Quail**

- Western Oregon: Sept. 1 – Jan. 31, 2011
- Umatilla and Morrow Counties: Oct. 9 – Dec. 31, 2010
- Remaining Eastern Oregon Counties: Oct. 9 – Jan. 31, 2011

### **Mountain Quail**

- Western Oregon including Hood River and Wasco Counties: Sept. 1 – Jan. 31, 2011
- Wallowa, Grant, Wheeler, Gilliam, Crook and Klamath Counties: Oct. 9 - Jan. 31, 2011
- Umatilla and Morrow Counties: Oct. 9 – Dec. 31, 2010
- Remaining Eastern Oregon Counties: No Open Season

### **Ruffed and Blue Grouse**

- Western Oregon including Hood River and Wasco Counties: Sept. 1 – Jan. 31, 2011
- Eastern Oregon: Sept. 1 – Dec. 31, 2010

### **Turkey**

- General Fall Season: Oct. 15 – Dec. 31, 2010
- Statewide Spring Season: Apr. 15 – May 31, 2011

### **Chukar and Hungarian (Gray) Partridge**

- Umatilla and Morrow Counties: Oct. 9 – Dec. 31, 2010
- Remaining Eastern Oregon Counties: Oct. 9 – Jan. 31, 2011

Just a reminder, proposals for 2010-11 Migratory Game Bird (Duck, Goose, etc.) Seasons will not be available until after the federal season frameworks are established in July.

## Furbearer Regulations:

The Department has been working towards guidelines for determining the structure of the bobcat season in Oregon. Avoiding excessive take that would cause a long term impact to the bobcat population is ultimately what both furtakers and the Department are striving for. Following is a discussion of some potential furbearer regulation changes.

Note: unless noted otherwise the following discussion is directed at eastern Oregon bobcats since there is no bag limit for bobcats in western Oregon.

### 1) Harvest Management Guidelines

- **Annual Harvest Objective (Total Take):** Set a target number for total eastern Oregon bobcat catch/year ( $\pm 20\%$ )

Total bobcat take is heavily influenced by a number of factors that are difficult to predict or control such as weather conditions during the season, pelt price, and total effort. These factors may affect harvest independent of the bobcat population. For example, when pelt prices drop, harvest is likely to decline regardless of whether the bobcat population increases or decreases. It is therefore possible that relying solely on total take could lead to frequent unwarranted changes to bobcat seasons. Frequent changes to bobcat regulations and seasons would complicate the bobcat management process, potentially confuse furtakers, and make it more difficult to evaluate the results of regulation changes.

The Department is considering a Harvest Objective of 1,250 bobcats per season in eastern Oregon. Harvest adjustments would occur if the take is more than 1,500 (+20%) for two years or less than 1,000 (-20%) for four years. The average take per season from 1989-90 to 2008-09 was ~1,200 bobcats per year.

- **Percent females in the harvest, percent juveniles in the harvest, and average age of the harvest** as secondary harvest guideline considerations.

Due to differences in susceptibility to harvest between males and females, harvest tends to be biased toward males. Because of this bias it should be remembered that male/female ratio in the harvest is not necessarily the same as the male/female ratio in the population. As a criteria Utah uses 45 % females in the harvest as a consideration for harvest reduction; Montana uses 40%. The Department proposes to use 45% females in the harvest as a secondary consideration for harvest adjustments.

Generally a low proportion of young of the year (YOY) in the take may indicate low production, and a high proportion of YOY in the take cannot occur without good production in the population. However, when the proportion of YOY in the harvest is  $\geq 30\%$ , or the proportion of juveniles (YOY plus yearlings) is  $\geq 50\%$  (Utah uses 49% as a mean) the Department has concerns that the potential gain from the high reproduction is being removed from the population by high harvest pressure; particularly if the proportion of females in the harvest is also high ( $\geq 45\%$ ) and the average age of the harvest is low ( $\leq 2.5$ , a criteria used by Montana) indicating few animals are surviving to older age classes.

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The harvest objective ( $1,250 \pm 20\%$ ) will be reviewed after 4 seasons. The harvest objective could be reduced if any two population parameters show a negative trend compared to the long term mean. If harvest is below the annual harvest objective and population parameters are stable or show positive trends increasing the bobcat bag limit will be considered.

This type of harvest strategy provides triggers to prevent long term over harvest, and applies adaptive management that will hopefully achieve stability to season structure and harvest.

## 2) Season Length:

There are a number of factors to consider related to using season length rather than bag limit to manage total harvest.

- Harvest data from Oregon indicates that with the current season length typically ~15% (12%-21%) of the bobcats harvested are taken during the last three weeks of the season. A three week reduction in season length as proposed by some furtakers is not likely to achieve the desired effect of significantly reducing total bobcat harvest.
- Bobcat populations and associated management are different in eastern and western Oregon. There is no indication that total take in western Oregon warrants a season change. Shortening the season statewide would unnecessarily restrict furtakers in western Oregon.
- Shortening the season in only eastern Oregon, when data indicates the need, but not western Oregon would complicate law enforcement relative to bobcats.
- Currently all bobcat seasons (trapping, hunting, and pursuit) have the same opening and closing dates. Removing the last three weeks of the bobcat season would also reduce opportunities for individuals to hunt or pursue bobcats without taking them during the pursuit season. The alternative of different dates would complicate seasons and enforcement.
- There is a long history of bag limits in eastern Oregon and furtakers are familiar with the strategy.
- Using bag limits allows for longer seasons and provides more flexibility for furtakers to go when and where time and weather conditions allow.
- Many trappers would compensate for shorter seasons by starting trapping earlier and/or setting more traps.
- Reducing the late portion of the season eliminates the opportunity for furtakers to go late to avoid conflicts with bird hunters (chukar seasons ends Jan. 31) and others more active during the early season.

For the reasons outlined above, at this time the Department is not proposing to manage bobcat harvest based on season length.

## 3) Bag Limit increase:

The Department will consider the bag limit for 2010-11 after the harvest information from the 2009-10 season is compiled and a decision has been made regarding the total harvest objective.

## 4) Open Otter Trapping in Grant County

- The closure has been in place for since 1983, it occurred simultaneously with the closure of some areas to beaver trapping. River otter are now found throughout the county in appropriate habitat
- The Department sees no biological reason to continue the otter season closure in Grant County
- Would create consistency with beaver trapping occurring in the area
- Otter trapping would continue to be closed in areas closed to beaver trapping

## 5) Open Beaver Trapping in Umatilla County

- The closure has been in place for since 1973, beaver are now found throughout the county in appropriate habitat
- The Department sees no biological reason to continue the beaver season closure in Umatilla County

## 6) Trap size clarification

Wording in bold is proposed to be added to clarify regulations and reduce the advantage of placing the trap pan from a number two trap on a number 3 or home modified trap to circumvent the requirement for offset jaws.

- It is unlawful for any person to trap for wild animals using:  
A No. 3 or larger foothold trap **or any foothold trap with an inside jaw spread at dog greater than 6"** not having a jaw spacing of at least 3/16 of one inch when the trap is sprung (measurement excludes pads on padded jaw traps) and when the set is not capable of drowning the trapped animal.

There is no definition of a No. 3 foothold trap. Some trappers are building traps from purchased or scrounged components, or they are buying factory traps which do not follow standard sizing guidelines. The OSP have checked traps with a seven inch jaw spread and the trap pan is marked No. 2. The intent of the rule is to have adequate spacing for the larger traps. Specifying the jaw spread will standardize spacing irrespective of manufacturer.

## 7) Documentation for Use of Traps

Current regulations state:

- It is unlawful for any person to trap for wild animals using:  
6. Or possessing the branded traps or snares of another unless in possession of written permission ~~or a bill of sale~~ from the person to whom the brand is registered.

The Department is proposing to delete "or a bill of sale", this will continue the requirement for written permission to use borrowed traps however it will remove the requirement to perpetually need a bill of sale when using previously owned traps even after they have been marked with the current owners brand.

## 8) To Qualify for Ownership Tag

Harvest and population information is compromised when furtakers refuse to leave jaws from their animals. The proposed wording clarifies that jaws must be relinquished to the Department.

1. The lower jawbone **must be surrendered to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife** and information on sex, date of catch, and county of harvest must accompany each individual Oregon bobcat and river otter to qualify for ownership tags.

## 9) License Requirements

Add the following statement in the regulations: **The appropriate Furtaker's license or Hunting License for Furbearers must be in possession to hunt and/or trap furbearers.**

In the past the OSP have checked furtakers in the field who did not have their Trapping or Furbearer Hunting License on their person. This proposal would create consistency with other hunting and fishing license requirements and reflect regulations many trappers and furbearer hunters already believe are in place.

## 10) Light to Aid in Dispatch of Restrained Animals

Most trapping occurs during the winter when daylight hours are short. Many trappers attend to trap lines in the early morning to minimize time an animal may be in the trap or snare. Traps are also checked in the evening after dark rather than waiting until the next day. Current regulations do not allow the use of an artificial light to assist in the humane dispatch of animals caught in traps or snares with a firearm. The Department is proposing the following regulation to reflect an ongoing practice that has not caused any enforcement problems.

**An artificial light may be used to provide light to aid in the dispatch of animals legally restrained in a trap or snare.**

## 11) Replace term "wild animals"

The term "wild animals" is not defined in OAR or ORS; however furbearers, unprotected mammals, and predatory animals are defined in the Furbearer Regulations. For consistency and to reduce confusion these defined terms will replace "wild animals" in the regulation below.

- It is unlawful for any person to trap for ~~wild animals~~ **furbearers, predatory animals, and/or unprotected mammals** using:

## Big Game Regulation Overview and species by Species Highlights

### Bag Limit During Archery Seasons and Disability Permits

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

In June of 2010, 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 2011. If the Commission adopts this proposal the Department would list the units to have an expanded bag limit in the 2011 Big Game Regulations. The Department is proposing to remove the Desolation Unit from the area with an antlerless animal in the elk bag limit for archers and hunters with disabilities permits. The Desolation Unit is slightly below the population management objective (MO) and also below the Bull Ratio MO. Currently, there are 10 antlerless elk tags in one damage hunt within the Desolation Unit and 40 tags proposed for the Grant Youth Hunt which includes three WMUs (Murderers Creek, Northside, and Desolation). The calf ratio continues to decline, 11 calves/100 cows were observed in 2010.

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 15<sup>th</sup> (same reporting deadline as for canceled hunts) to protect antlerless animals in the impacted areas.

### The Oregon Mule Deer Initiative

Five units (Heppner, Murderers Creek, Maury, Steens Mtn., Warner) have been selected to participate in the initial phase of an initiative to improve mule deer populations. As part of the Mule Deer Initiative local work groups have recommended changes to hunting seasons in four units. Consistent with these recommendations, the Department is proposing the following:

- Rifle buck tag reductions occurred in the Murderers Creek, Maury, and North Warner Units in 2009 and will be continued in 2010.
- Four new controlled archery hunts in the Maury, Steens Mtn., North Warner and South Warner Units.
  - Tags will also be good for the general archery season
  - Archery elk hunting would be limited to hunters with a controlled archery deer tag for the unit
- Reduction of LOP tags in the Maury and Warner Units where tags for rifle and archery seasons have also been reduced.

Emphasis and management actions being undertaken varies for each Mule Deer Initiative Unit. Following is a brief summary of major Mule Deer Initiative activities that have been initiated.

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Heppner:

- Enhance habitat on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands to benefit mule deer.
- Increase coyote control.
- Work with federal land managers developing rules to limit cross country OHV use.

Maury:

- Juniper control.
- Increased enforcement, a second game enforcement officer has been added in the area.
- Reduce buck harvest to increase buck ratio.

Murderers Creek:

- Coordinating with ODOT to investigate and reduce deer mortality on the highway.
- Implement a winter range closure on the Phillip W. Schneider Wildlife Area in 2011.
- Juniper control and medusahead control to improve habitat.

Steens Mountain:

- Juniper removal and projects to encourage shrub regeneration.
- Increased OSP enforcement presence.
- Implement a cougar removal target area.

Warner:

- Juniper removal on BLM and private lands.
- Forest habitat improvement projects.
- Implement a cougar removal target area.

Much more detailed information regarding the Oregon Mule Deer Initiative and related projects can be found on the Department website at:

[http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/hunting/big\\_game/mule\\_deer/MDI.asp](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/hunting/big_game/mule_deer/MDI.asp)

The Department welcomes public comments on the Mule Deer Initiative (MDI). Comments will be recorded at the public meetings held in each Wildlife District throughout the state during May. Please send comments to [odfw.comments@state.or.us](mailto:odfw.comments@state.or.us); mail a letter to ODFW Wildlife Division, 3406 Cherry Ave NE, Salem, OR 97303 or fax 503-947-6009.

## **Black-tailed Deer Management Plan**

The Oregon Black-tailed Deer Management Plan was adopted by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission in November 2008. The entire plan is available on the Department Web site: <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/>.

One of the objectives identified in the plan is to develop improved population estimates for black-tailed deer in western Oregon. The age of the deer taken (determined by analyzing the teeth) and other population information collected by the Department will be used to develop a population estimate.

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Hunter cooperation will be essential to development of a reliable population estimate. It is critical that hunters provide teeth from each deer harvested. Envelopes in which to submit teeth will be available at license agents and Department offices.

## **Mandatory Reporting of Hunter Harvest and Effort**

The new hunter reporting system has been operational for two years. Hunter compliance has improved although it continues to be too low to provide reliable information. Overall for 2008-09 seasons hunters reported on 17% of the tags issued; the reporting rate doubled to 34% for 2009-10 seasons. Because successful hunters are more likely to report than those who were not successful, the reported hunter success is higher than success reported during the random telephone surveys. This bias is the reason it is important for all hunters to report.

The Department has developed a concept for a penalty that if approved by the 2011 Oregon Legislature would provide the authority 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 by the deadline. The penalty fee in other states range from \$10 to \$50. The fee could be implemented in 2012 if the authority is provided in 2011.

As an incentive hunters who report on time (see report dates below) will be entered into a drawing for special tags. The rules for the tags would be similar to those for Auction and Raffle tags (long season, statewide, etc). Because the Department does not have the authority to give away tags, the hunter would be required to purchase the tag for full price, a bargain even if the winner was a nonresident. The department is planning to award three tags, and allow the hunter to choose the species, deer, elk, or pronghorn. Reporting deadlines for the special tag drawing:

- January 31 - for cougar Tags and all hunts that start on or after August 1, and end on or before December 31, of the previous year (January 31, 2010 for most 2009 hunts).
- April 15 - for hunts that end January 1-March 31 (such as late elk hunts).
- June 30 - for Spring Bear hunts and Spring Turkey season, all of which end May 31.

Hunters can report either by telephone or through the ODFW Web site. Although both telephone and internet are functional, feedback 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 19 of the 2010 Big Game Regulations to 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)



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- The two-digit Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) number of the unit hunted. If the hunt area included more than one 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](http://www.dfw.state.or.us)

## **TMA, and Area Closure Changes Proposed for 2010**

- Implement a winter range closure on the Phillip W. Schneider Wildlife Area in 2011 to reduce disturbance on the winter range consistent with the Mule Deer Initiative.
- Beginning in 2011 extend the time period for the Murderers Creek-Flagtail TMA to begin 3 days prior to the archery season (currently begins 3 days prior to opening of controlled buck deer rifle season). Through the MDI working group process one of the objectives was to implement the Murderers Creek-Flagtail Travel Management Area during the archery season. The objective of this TMA change would be to increase buck escapement, reduce harassment, and protect soils and wildlife habitat.
- The Department has been in communication with private timber companies regarding the potential for a Travel Management Area in a portion of the McKenzie unit. At this time the area being considered as a TMA is north of the HWY 126, east of Marcola Rd, and south of the Calapooia River. The potential TMA would occur on privately owned roads and lands of those landowners wishing to participate. This would not affect access to public roads or lands. This may be included in the 2011 Big Game Regulation proposals to the Commission if agreement is reached with timber companies regarding the location, effective period, and type of access allowed.

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## Proposed Controlled Hunt Tag Numbers

Table 1. Summary of proposed controlled hunt tag numbers, 2007 – 2010. Expect minor changes due to rounding, corrections and changes.

<b>Species/Hunt Type</b>	<b>2007 tags</b>	<b>2008 tags</b>	<b>2009 tags</b>	<b>Proposed 2010 tags</b>	<b>*Percent Change</b>
TOTAL DEER	80,507	77,358	74,265	73,187	-1%
Buck	64,987	62,146	59,242	58,550	-1%
Bow/Muzzleloader	3,113	3,067	3,093	3,454	12%
Antlerless (600 Series)	11,088	10,806	10,573	10,372	-2%
Youth	1,319	1,339	1,357	1,441	6%
TOTAL ELK	53,851	53,841	52,627	53,285	1%
Bull/Either Sex	38,409	38,524	37,100	37,251	0%
Bow/Muzzleloader	4,279	4,190	4,290	4,216	-2%
Rifle Antlerless	10,418	10,452	10,550	10,783	2%
Youth	745	675	687	1,035	51%
BIGHORN	92	89	91	89	-2%
MT. GOAT	7	8	11	10	-9%
TOTAL PRONGHORN	3,094	2,898	2,736	2,696	-1%
Rifle Buck/Either Sex	1,828	1,713	1,605	1,554	-3%
Bow/Muzzleloader	1,020	946	914	920	1%
Doe	215	205	182	187	3%
Youth	29	29	35	35	0%
<b>Spring Bear</b>	<b>2008 tags</b>	<b>2009 tags</b>	<b>2010 tags</b>	<b>Proposed 2011 Tags</b>	<b>*Percent Change</b>
TOTAL SPRING BEAR	7,375	7,635	8,379	8,376	0%
Controlled Spring Bear	7,375	3,687	4,181	4,178	0%
Youth Spring Bear	198	198	198	198	0%
SW Limited		3,750	4,000	4,000	0%
<b>Grand total tags</b>	<b>145,124</b>	<b>141,829</b>	<b>138,109</b>	<b>138,273</b>	<b>0%</b>

\*Percent change calculated for the difference between 2009 and 2010 tags for all species except bear which is calculated for the difference between 2010 and 2011.

**2010 & 2011 Big Game Hunting Regulations Proposal Information**

“Standard” season dates for 2011 hunts are as follows:

Archery.....	Aug. 27–Sept. 25
Cascade Buck Deer.....	Oct. 1–Oct. 14 & Oct. 22–Nov. 4
Coast Buck Deer.....	Oct. 1–Nov. 4
Western OR Antlerless Deer.....	Oct. 22–Nov. 4
Controlled Buck Deer.....	Oct. 1–Oct. 12
Eastern OR Antlerless Deer.....	Oct. 15–23
Cascade Bull.....	Oct. 15–21
General Coast 1 <sup>st</sup> Season.....	Nov. 12–15
General Coast 2 <sup>nd</sup> Season.....	Nov. 19–25
Rocky Mt. Bull Elk 1 <sup>st</sup> Season.....	Oct. 26–30
Rocky Mt. Bull Elk Season 2 <sup>nd</sup> Season.....	Nov. 5–13
Rocky Mt. Std. Antlerless Elk.....	Nov. 19–27
Pronghorn (1 <sup>st</sup> Centerfire Season).....	Aug. 13–21

Some relevant 2011 holidays that may impact season dates are:

Labor Day.....	September 5
Thanksgiving.....	November 24

**General Winter Conditions:**

Western Oregon: Winter conditions were somewhat extended but fairly mild and most herds wintered well. The prevalence of Deer Hair Loss Syndrome was up in some areas but fawns were generally in good condition. Elk were dispersed because of mild conditions which made them more difficult to survey.

Eastern Oregon: In general, winter ranges had mild winter conditions. Many herds went into winter in only fair condition. Many areas of the state experienced dry conditions during fall 2009 with little green-up. Overall fawn ratios going into the winter were only fair; animals present wintered well.

Overall 2010 spring surveys found good winter survival in many deer and elk herds. However, many herds went into winter with low-moderate fall fawn/calf ratios.

**Controlled Hunting Seasons**

- Total proposed controlled hunt tags for 2010 are very similar to last year. Overall total controlled tags are up 164 tags (+0.1 percent) from 2009. Deer tags are down 1%, elk tags are up 1%, and bighorn, Rocky Mountain goat, and pronghorn are tags are down slightly from 2009. No change is occurring for 2011 spring bear tags compared to 2010.

**Species by Species Highlights**

**Black Bear**

- The Department will strengthen wording of black bear check-in requirements. Specifically, language stating that information regarding where the bear was harvested must also be provided. At a minimum the Department needs to know what unit the bear was taken in. This information is important for harvest monitoring and population modeling.

- **“Limited” First-come First-served Spring Bear Season in Southwest Oregon.**

Hunters purchased the 4,000 available SW Oregon Spring Bear “Limited”, first-come first-served tags in 2010. The Department is proposing to maintain tags at 4,000 for the 2011 season.

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

The Department initiated mandatory check-in for all harvested bears in 2008. 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  $\leq 3$  years old, or that of males is  $\leq 2$  years old, or that of females is  $\leq 4$  years old. 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. Compliance was excellent. Hunters checked in 1,159 bears in 2009.

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

- Four new Target Areas (TAs) were established and one existing TA is being maintained in winter 2009–2010. Through April 28, 2010, 46 cougars have been administratively removed: 2 from Wenaha, 22 from Ukiah, 5 from East Beulah, 12 from Steens, and 5 from the Warner. No cougars have been administratively removed from the Wenaha TA as of yet.

## Bighorn Sheep

- The Department is proposing a two percent decline in tags from 91 in 2009 to 89 in 2010.
  - Rocky Mtn. Bighorn tags decreasing by two to 9.
  - California Bighorn tags staying the same at 80 tags.

## Mountain Goat

- Rocky Mountain Goat populations continue to increase. The Department is proposing a one tag decrease to 10 tags for 2010 because of a decline goats observed in the Cusick Mountain herd.

## Pronghorn Antelope

- Pronghorn continue to do well in most areas. However; fawn ratios are down in some areas and proposed tags for 2010 are reduced 1.5% to 2,696 for 2010. The downturn was expected as coyote numbers are increasing.

## Deer

- General season black-tailed deer rifle hunter participation remained stable at approximately 79,000. Total harvest declined to slightly more than 16,000 and hunter success rate declined from 22 percent in 2008, to 20 percent in 2009.
- The Department is proposing a one percent decrease in the number of controlled buck mule deer rifle tags (58,550) for 2010.
- The Department is proposing to reduce controlled rifle antlerless deer tags by two percent to 10,372 for 2010.
- Proposed new controlled deer hunts include Upper Swamp Creek to replace the Swamp-Crow Creek hunt, and the Middle Fork John Day River hunt.
- The only significant deer hunt boundary change being considered is a reduction of the Dorena hunt area by about 1/3.

## Elk

- The Department is proposing to change the bag limit for the Tioga archery and muzzleloader hunts from antlerless to 3 point + in response to the population continuing to be below the management objective.
- The Department is proposing a new Oak Ridge Private Lands hunt with shotguns or muzzleloaders as the legal weapons.
- The Department is proposing to change the bag limit for East Beulah #3 bag from one elk to antlerless in an effort to address increasing elk populations and associated increasing damage.
- Proposed controlled rifle elk tags are increasing slightly, up 1% to 48,034.
- The Department is proposing to replace late season general bow hunting for cow elk in the Santiam, Stott Mountain, Alsea, McKenzie, and N Indigo Units with controlled bow hunts. Tags would also be valid in the general season but hunters would need to draw the controlled tag to hunt in the late period.
  - For the Alsea and Stott Mtn units, the rationale for this move from a general season to controlled hunting is primarily a concern that elk populations in those units are in decline and are below population MOs despite years of reducing controlled rifle tags. Currently, population estimates for the Alsea and Stott Mtn units are below the population management objectives. These units have a general rifle bull season where any bull is legal and a general bow seasons that provide opportunities to take both bulls and cows. These general seasons have unlimited tags, therefore the ability to manage the overall elk harvest is limited to manipulating the tag numbers for controlled antlerless hunts. In the past 5 years, the Department has made significant reductions in controlled rifle tags for antlerless elk. To gain better control of the antlerless harvest a reduction in the harvest by bow hunters is necessary.
  - The population management objectives for the Alsea and Stott Mtn units are 6,500 and 1,500 respectively. A POP-II simulation done in 2009 for the Alsea unit shows a negative growth rate (averaging -5.8%) since 2003, with a winter population size of 3,177 in 2008. For the Stott Mtn unit the model estimates a 1,268 winter population size and a negative growth rate for all but two years since 1996.
    - The number of late season archery hunters in the Alsea unit has more than doubled, from 570 in 2004 to 1,183 hunters in 2009. In the Stott Mtn unit there were 278 late season archery hunters in 2004 and 437 in 2009. Antlerless elk harvest by bow hunters in the Alsea has increased from 45

in 2004 to 103 in 2009, with the vast majority harvested during the late season. Proposed estimated tags for 2011 are 250 in the Stott Mountain and 500 for the Alsea.

- For the McKenzie unit and the open portions of the Santiam and Indigo units, the move from a general late period bow season to a controlled late period bow season would enable control hunter numbers and their distribution. There has been a general trend in declining hunter success within the affected Cascade units. In particular, hunter success rates have been declining for general rifle bull hunters and controlled muzzleloader hunters in the McKenzie and Santiam units. These declines may be a result of elk populations shifting from National Forest lands to private lands, many of which have limited hunter access. If these units remain open during the general late period archery season they would likely absorb any archery hunters displaced from the Alsea and Stott Mtn units.
  - If adopted, this proposal would have a minor effect on the current level of bow hunting opportunity during the late season in the Cascades but would prevent increases in late period bow hunters. During the last 5 years (2005-2009), the McKenzie unit averaged 933 hunters a year participating in the late period of the general archery season. The estimated tag numbers for the proposed controlled hunt in the McKenzie is 800. The participation in the Indigo has averaged 628 hunters/year over the last 5 years with an estimate of 600 tags for the proposed controlled hunt. The participation in the Santiam has averaged 956 hunters / year over the last 5 years with an estimated 800 tags for the proposed controlled hunt.
- There are nine proposed Elk hunt boundary changes. Most boundary changes are minor adjustments to address shifts in elk distributions and resulting conflict. The W Siuslaw hunt boundary is being adjusted to allow addition of another new hunt: E Siuslaw.
- The Department is proposing long season, low tag number, youth hunts for antlerless elk in most areas (Table 2).

## Extended Youth Elk Hunts

The Department has heard concerns from archers and other hunters regarding hunting elk in August – September and the overlap of the new youth elk hunts with archery seasons. During the development process for these hunts the potential for conflicts and safety concerns related to rifle hunting during seasons that overlap with archery seasons were recognized, following are some of the factors considered.

- There are other overlapping antlerless elk hunts with more tags/hunt area
- There are ~48,000 fall bear tags sold, many of the hunters interested in bear hunt during August and September before buck deer season.
  - Prior to 1979 there was not statewide archery season.
- There are ~45,000 cougar tags sold, some hunters are out before and during the archery season using fawn and calf calls for cougar and/or bear .
- In the new long duration youth hunts the estimated number of tags statewide is 595 for the 46 hunts which cover 62 Wildlife Management Units:
  - Average less than 10 tags/WMU
  - Youth will be accompanied by an adult
  - Youth will be fresh out of Hunter Education
  - Hunts are 5 months long

- Not all youth will hunt during archery season, some will hunt early season before school and sports practices start
- Some will hunt late during Thanksgiving/Christmas breaks
- Many will hunt with a parent during the parents deer or elk hunt
- Some will hunt on private property, landowners were very supportive of these hunts and since tag numbers are low indicated they would offer some access at a time damage to alfalfa and pastures (especially irrigated) is common.

The Department considered the biological aspects of elk as well as other factors associated with hunting when developing these seasons and concluded that there will not be negative impacts to elk herds from these hunts. Calves that survive all the other potential causes of mortality (predation, injury, starvation, disease, etc.) will generally remain with the cows during August-September. However, not all cows, in some areas less than 50%, will still have calves at heel during this time period. The calves that are still at heel in August and September are capable of foraging on vegetation by this time. Calves of cows that die (for any reason) have been known to be nursed by other cows in nursery herds.

Considering the factors outlined above the decision was made to implement the new youth hunts. After reviewing the results of the 2010 season decisions will be made regarding possible adjustments to these hunts for the future. Options for changes include elimination, modifying dates, and changing tag numbers.

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## New 2010 Extended Season Antlerless Elk Youth Hunts (some are modifications of previous hunts)

Unit #	Hunt Name	Est. Tags	2010-11 Dates
10	Saddle Mtn	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
11	Scappoose	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
12	Wilson	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
14	Trask	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
16	Santiam	20	Aug 1 - Dec 31
17	Stott Mtn.	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
18	Alea	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
19	McKenzie	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
20	Siuslaw	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
21	Indigo	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
22	Dixon	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
23	Melrose	10	Aug 1 - March 31
24	Tioga	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
25	Sixes	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
26	Powers	15	Aug 1 - Dec 31
27	Chetco	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
28, 29	Applegate, Evans Creek	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
30	Rogue	45	Aug 1 - Dec 31
31	Keno	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
33	Sprague	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
34, 39, W 77	East Cascade (Upper Deschutes, Metolius, Fort Rock West of Hwy 97)	20	Aug 1 - Dec 31
35	Paulina-East Fort Rock	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
36	Maury	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
37	Ochoco	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
38	Grizzly	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
40, 43	Maupin-West Biggs	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
41, 42	White River-Hood	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
44, 49, 54, 55	Umatilla (Columbia Basin, Ukiah, Mount Emily, Walla Walla)	30	Aug 1 - Dec 31
45	Fossil	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
46, 47, 50	Grant (Murderers Creek, Northside, Desolation)	40	Aug 1 - Dec 31
48	Heppner	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
51	Sumpter	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
52	Starkey	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
53	Catherine Ck	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
57	Sled Springs	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
58	Chesninnus	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
59	Snake River	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
60	Minam Youth	15	Aug 1 - Dec 31
61	Imnaha Youth	15	Aug 1 - Dec 31
62, 63	Pine Creek-Keating	15	Aug 1 - Dec 31
64	Lookout Mtn.	20	Aug 1 - Dec 31
65	Beulah	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
66 (N)	North Malheur River	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
67, S66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 73	High Desert (South Malheur River, Owyhee, Whitehorse, Steens Mtn., Beatys Butte, Juniper, Wagontire)	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
72	Silvies	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31
76	Silver Lake	10	Aug 1 - Dec 31



## Hunter Orange

Due to concerns about vision-related hunting fatalities, the Commission is considering making the wearing of Hunter Orange while hunting mandatory in Oregon. The Commission requested that Department staff research the issue and propose various rule options (listed below).

The Commission will be briefed on these options during the June 4, 2010 meeting in Salem, when they will decide whether to move forward with formal rule-making. If they decide to proceed, final rules regarding Hunter Orange would be considered at the Oct. 1, 2010 meeting in Bend when 2011 big game regulations will be set.

Written comments about the proposals can also be sent to ODFW Information and Education Division, 3406 Cherry Ave NE, Salem, OR 97303 or e-mailed to [ODFW.comments@state.or.us](mailto:ODFW.comments@state.or.us). Members of the public may also testify in person at Commission meetings including June and October when Big Game Regulations will be discussed.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Does the Department support making Hunter Orange mandatory?**

The department has always strongly encouraged the wearing of Hunter Orange while in the field for safety reasons. The department is reviewing the issue of making it mandatory at the request of the Commission.

#### **How big of a problem are vision-related hunting incidents.**

Hunting is a safe activity when compared to other forms of outdoor recreation and Oregon is amongst the safest states to hunt in, even compared to states that require Hunter Orange.

However, hunting in Oregon could be safer: 50% (85 out of 170) of all hunting-related incidents reported in Oregon over the past 20 years have been vision-related and 66% (21 of 32) of all hunting-related fatalities reported in Oregon over the past 20 years have been vision-related. The overwhelming majority of vision-related hunting incidents occur during big game and upland game bird hunting with centerfire firearms and shotguns.

#### **Do other states require hunters to wear Hunter Orange?**

Forty states require the wearing of Hunter Orange while hunting, which has been shown to reduce hunting-related incidents. Oregon is one of just ten states that do not require Hunter Orange, along with Alaska, Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, and Vermont.

#### **How many hunters currently wear Hunter Orange?**

Based on field observations by Oregon State Police Fish & Wildlife Division Troopers, Department staff estimate that between 15-25% or less of hunters wear Hunter Orange while in the field.

#### **Won't wearing Hunter Orange reduce hunter success?**

It depends on the species being hunted. Except for turkey and waterfowl hunting, wearing Hunter Orange would not be expected to reduce hunter success. Most states (and Department rule proposals) do not require Hunter Orange for turkey or waterfowl hunting because these species

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have excellent eyesight. All of the DRAFT options below allow the use of camouflage Hunter Orange.

## Summary of DRAFT Hunter Orange Options

<b>Hunter Orange Option # 1</b>	
Action:	No Action
Discussion	Under this option, the wearing of Hunter Orange while hunting in Oregon would remain voluntary for all hunters. The department would continue its education and information campaign; however there is no reason to expect the use of Hunter Orange to increase.

<b>Hunter Orange Option # 2</b>	
Action:	Requires all hunters 17 years of age and under to wear Hunter Orange while hunting in certain situations.
Clothing Requirement	Hunter Orange upper garment with 360° visibility <b>and</b> hat with 360° visibility. Upper garment could be a shirt, jacket, coat, vest or sweater; camouflage Hunter Orange acceptable.
Hunts and Weapons	While hunting all big game animals and upland game birds (excluding turkey) with any firearm.
Discussion	Under this option hunters 17 years of age and under would be required to wear Hunter Orange. Approximately 12% of the shooters and 17% of the victims of vision-related hunting incidents are 17 years of age and under. Adoption of this option may instill a safety ethic in young hunters they would carry forward as adults, and may encourage adults who accompany youth to wear Hunter Orange. Enforcement officers would be required to determine the age of hunters in the field.

<b>Hunter Orange Option # 3</b>	
Action:	Requires all hunters, regardless of age, to wear Hunter Orange while hunting in certain situations.
Clothing Requirement	Hunter Orange upper garment with 360° visibility <b>or</b> hat with 360° visibility. Upper garment could be a shirt, jacket, coat, vest or sweater; camouflage Hunter Orange acceptable.
Hunts and Weapons	While hunting big game animals and upland game birds (excluding turkey) with a centerfire firearm or shotgun.
Discussion	Under this option, all Oregon hunters would be required to wear a minimal amount of Hunter Orange while hunting big game and upland game birds (excluding turkey) while using a centerfire firearm or shotgun. This option addresses those hunting situations that result in the majority of vision-related hunting incidents. A decrease in Oregon's hunting related incidents would be expected. This requirement is simple to understand, comply with and enforce.

<b>Hunter Orange Option # 4</b>	
Action:	Requires all hunters, regardless of age, to wear Hunter Orange while hunting in certain situations.
Clothing Requirement	Hunter Orange upper garment with 360° visibility <b>and</b> hat with 360° visibility. Upper garment could be a shirt, jacket, coat, vest or sweater; camouflage Hunter Orange acceptable.
Hunts and Weapons	While hunting big game animals and upland game birds (excluding turkey) with a centerfire firearm or shotgun.
Discussion	Under this option, all Oregon hunters would be required to wear a moderate amount of Hunter Orange while hunting big game and upland game birds (excluding turkey) while using a centerfire firearm or shotgun. This option is consistent with International Hunter Education Association recommendations and addresses those hunting situations that result in the majority of vision-related hunting incidents. A decrease in Oregon’s hunting related incidents would be expected. While requiring more Hunter Orange to be worn than option #3, this option remains simple to understand, comply with and enforce.

<b>Hunter Orange Option # 5</b>	
Action:	Requires all hunters, regardless of age, to wear Hunter Orange while hunting in certain situations.
Clothing Requirement	Hunter Orange upper garment with 360° visibility <b>and</b> hat with 360° visibility. Upper garment could be a shirt, jacket, coat, vest or sweater; camouflage Hunter Orange acceptable.
Hunts and Weapons	While hunting big game animals, upland game birds (excluding turkey), small game animals and predators with any firearm.
Discussion	Under this option, all Oregon hunters would be required to wear a moderate amount of Hunter Orange while hunting big game, upland game birds (excluding turkey), small game and predators while using any firearm. This option addresses visibility issues across all firearm hunting situations, regardless of whether or not they have been shown to result in vision-related hunting incidents. A decrease in Oregon’s hunting related incidents would be expected. This option is simple to understand, comply with and enforce.

Under the current proposals being considered:

- If an archery hunter carried a centerfire firearm legal for big game, and has a valid big game tag for a species for which the firearm would be legal (for example, carrying a centerfire handgun and has a bear tag) they would be required to wear Hunter Orange.
- Under the options above the requirement to wear Hunter Orange would be tied to the weapon used. For example, if a hunter drew an antlerless deer tag and hunted with a rifle they would be required to wear Hunter Orange; if they chose to hunt with a bow they would not be required to wear Hunter Orange.

**Miscellaneous Regulation Concepts Being Considered**

- **Allow any legal weapon during “rifle” pronghorn, and elk hunts;** adds archery equipment as an option, muzzleloaders are already legal. Archery is already an option during centerfire seasons for bighorn sheep, Rocky Mountain goat, bear, cougar and antlerless deer.

- Provides hunters the option to use a shorter range weapon if they so choose.
- There are no Archery Elk Youth Hunts. This change would enable youth from archery hunting families to use their preferred weapon.
- Allows archery hunters to hunt with rifle hunting friends and family.
- **Allow Sport Pac hunters to use the deer voucher for 600 series hunts.**
  - Allows a hunter in eastern Oregon who draws an antlerless tag but does not draw a controlled buck tag to use their deer voucher for the antlerless tag rather than not be able to use it or use it for a western Oregon general season buck tag they have no interest in.
- **Allow tags sales after deadlines.** Beginning in September 2009 hunters that signed an affidavit stating they had not yet hunted in a specific season were allowed to purchase a tag for that season after paying an administrative fee equivalent to a duplicate fee (now \$17.00) in addition to the tag fee.
  - Every year the Department hears from hunters that failed to a tag due to an unforeseen circumstance, or SportsPac license holders that have already purchased a tag but failed to pick it up on time. These hunters have often already invested considerable time, effort and money preparing for the season.
    - ~3,100 tags were sold after deadlines, including ~600 SportsPac tags
    - Revenue from these tags was ~\$102,000.00

To purchase a tag after the deadline hunters must submit the affidavit to the ODFW Licensing Services Office in Salem directly or through any ODFW field office that sells licenses.

**NOTE: All Tag Sales Deadlines remain in place.** It remains illegal to hunt without the appropriate tag in possession.

- **Allow second choice after using “Preference Point” as first choice.** Currently when applying for controlled hunts if a hunter chooses a point saver as their first choice they cannot select a second or other choice except for Landowner Preference (LOP). The Department is considering changing the system so that hunters who use a point saver as their first choice could also submit a second through fifth choices .
  - **It is important that hunters understand most hunts are filled by first choice applicants.**
    - Only hunts which have fewer first choice applicants than tags go to second choice.
  - This would enable hunters to apply for easy to get hunts such as “Spike Only” hunts and other undersubscribed hunts as second choice and reduce the need to return to a License Sales Agent at a later date to stand in line and try to get a “leftover tag”.
- **Predator hunting workshops and incentives.**
  - Promote workshops on hunting predators including bear and cougar. The Department could partner with OHA and experienced hunters to put on workshops in various parts of the state.
  - Ideas include incentives such as placing successful hunters in a drawing for special tags with long seasons similar to auction and raffle tags.
  - Allowing motion decoys for bear and cougar.