

## Information for July 2021, Wildlife District Outreach

### Migratory and Upland Game Bird Updates

2021-2022 Migratory and Upland Game Bird seasons were adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Commission on April 23, 2021. The 2021-2022 seasons are very similar to last year's seasons (major changes listed below). Most season opening dates are one day earlier than last year because of the calendar shift. For example, last year the chukar season opened October 10, 2020, this year chukar season will open October 9, 2021. Setting game bird seasons in April allows the Department to publish the Game Bird Regulations by early July.

Following is a list of major Commission adopted changes for 2021-2022 game bird seasons:

#### Upland Game Birds

- For most upland game birds, all aspects of the seasons (e.g. season dates, daily bag limits, possession limits) are covered by the 2020-2025 Upland Game Bird Hunting Season Framework. However, for some species like sage-grouse, there is a controlled hunt where the permit numbers are determined annually based on fall population projections. Fall turkey is another season where the hunts may be adjusted annually based on population trends or damage/nuisance issues. The following changes were adopted by the Commission: Eastern fall turkey season will open on September 1<sup>st</sup> in those hunt units overlapping Grant County. These units include: Murderers Creek, Northside, Desolation, and that portion of the Heppner WMU south and east of the North Fork John Day River. Continued nuisance and damage complaints stemming from wild turkey concentrations in Grant County prompted this opportunity for additional harvest while the birds are still on public land in the early fall.
- Beginning in the 2022 license season, SportsPac holders may select either a General Spring, General Eastern Oregon Fall, or General Western Oregon Fall turkey tag. This change would also apply to the Youth SportsPac. SportsPac sales for 2022 begin on December 1, 2021.
- Sage-grouse season length and bag limit are unchanged. Permit numbers for each Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) will be determined in early August and adopted by Temporary Rule after sage-grouse populations by WMU are estimated. Permit numbers are anticipated to be very conservative, similar to 2020. Application period is July 1 – August 14

#### Migratory Game Birds

##### **Mourning Dove Seasons**

- The state was divided into two mourning dove hunting zones (Zone 1 & Zone 2) with zone boundaries matching those already in use for duck, coot, and snipe seasons.
- In Zone 1, the 60-day mourning dove season was split into two periods.
  - Period 1: September 1 – 30
  - Period 2: November 15 – December 14
- In Zone 2, the season remains unchanged from previous seasons (September 1 – October 30).

##### **Goose Seasons**

- Eastern Oregon goose zone boundaries have been modified for the 2021-2022 hunting season. Gilliam, Hood River, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, and Wasco counties will comprise the new Mid-Columbia Zone, while the remainder of eastern Oregon (Baker, Crook, Deschutes, Grant, Harney, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Malheur, Union, Wallowa, and Wheeler counties) will comprise the new High Desert and Blue Mountains Zone.
- For counties in the Mid-Columbia Zone, the Canada goose season structure will remain unchanged from previous seasons. However, the white (snow & Ross's) and white-fronted (speckle-belly) season opening date will be delayed until November 9. This delayed start allows implementation of a NEW late season hunt period for white and white-fronted geese from February 5 – 26, 2022.
- For the High Desert and Blue Mountains Zone, goose season structures will follow those previously used only in Klamath, Lake, Harney, and Malheur counties. This means that in Baker, Crook, Deschutes, Grant, Jefferson, Union, Wallowa, and Wheeler:
  - Goose seasons will open a week earlier (concurrent with the duck season), and season splits will occur later in the season, relative to previous seasons.
  - The white and white-fronted goose seasons will be closed from late November – mid-January, allowing a late hunting period through March 10.

## **Furbearer Trapping and Hunting Updates**

**Furbearer Trapping and Hunting Regulations** are set for two-year periods. The July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2022 Oregon Furbearer Trapping and Hunting Regulations were adopted at the June 12, 2020 Commission meeting.

At the June 2020 Commission meeting, the Commission decided to form working groups to look more closely at two issues: beaver management in Oregon and trap check periods. A petition to initiate rulemaking to permanently close beaver trapping and hunting on federally managed public lands was denied by the Commission in the November 2020 Commission Meeting, with a direction to proceed with a beaver management work group. In 2021 a professional facilitator was hired and the two work groups held their first meetings in late June. Web links to view working group meetings can be found on the Commission web page (<https://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/commission/minutes/>).

## **Big Game Regulation Overview and Species by Species Highlights**

### **Big Game Regulations Development Process**

**2022 Big Game Hunting Regulations**, will be adopted in two separate Commission meetings. Archery elk regulations for general season and eastern Oregon controlled hunts will be adopted at the August 6, 2021 Commission meeting which will be held virtually. The remaining seasons and controlled hunt tag numbers will be adopted at the September 17, 2021 Commission meeting which will be either virtual or held in Salem.

## General Winter Conditions

Western Oregon: Winter 2020–2021 started with temperatures and precipitation at or above average. February saw colder than average temperatures and with higher-than-average amounts of snow. The remainder of the winter was generally warmer and much drier than normal with snowpack melting earlier than average across western Oregon. Areas in the Cascade Mountains that were burned during the historic 2020 fire season had reduced forage available for deer and elk through much of the winter but experienced green-up in late winter. The remainder of western Oregon experienced normal forage conditions through the winter but reduced snowpack and below average spring rains may negatively affect summer forage conditions.

Eastern Oregon: Winter conditions in eastern Oregon were fairly normal through January but February was much wetter than average. The remainder of the winter was much drier than normal resulting in drought declarations across eastern Oregon. Dry conditions may negatively affect summer forage conditions. Big game species saw decent survival through the winter with no reports of major mortality events.

Statewide: The winter of 2020–2021 was fairly normal until colder and wetter conditions occurred in February. The late winter and spring was exceptionally dry resulting in drought declarations across the majority of the state.

## General Regulation Proposals for 2022

### Cooperative Travel Management Areas

The Umatilla National Forest implemented motor vehicle use rules directing where motor vehicles can be used on the forest. Roads open to motor vehicle use are designated on the Umatilla National Forest Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). ODFW staff are proposing to incorporate the Umatilla National Forest MVUM as a Cooperative Travel Management Area on the Umatilla National Forest portions of the Fossil, Heppner, Ukiah, Desolation, Mt. Emily, Walla Walla, and Wenaha units.

## 2022 Big Game Hunting Regulations Proposal Information

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) anticipates the “Standard” season dates for **2022** hunts are likely to be as follows: Note: Most season dates will be 1 day earlier in 2022 than in 2021.

Pronghorn (1 <sup>st</sup> Centerfire Season).....	Aug. 13–23
Archery Deer and Elk .....	Aug. 27–Sept. 25
Western Buck Deer and Antlerless Deer.....	Oct. 1–Nov. 4
Controlled Buck Deer.....	Oct. 1–Oct. 12
Eastern OR Antlerless Deer.....	Oct. 15–23
Cascade Bull .....	Nov. 5–11
General Coast 1 <sup>st</sup> Season.....	Nov. 12–15
General Coast 2 <sup>nd</sup> Season.....	Nov. 19–25
Rocky Mtn. Bull Elk 1 <sup>st</sup> Season.....	Oct. 26–30
Rocky Mtn. Bull Elk 2 <sup>nd</sup> Season.....	Nov. 5–13
Rocky Mtn. Antlerless Elk.....	Nov. 19–27

Some relevant 2022 holidays that may influence season dates are:

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

## **Big Game Regulation Review**

The department initiated a project to thoroughly review the Big Game Hunting Regulations, beginning with the 2018 Regulations. Regulation changes under consideration for 2022 take into consideration the elk population status relative to management objectives, public comments received in 2020 and 2021, and contracted hunter opinion survey work. Hunter opinion survey reports are online at <https://myodfw.com/articles/big-game-review> , along with other informational documents including:

- Controlled hunt tag tables for **Deer, Elk, Pronghorn, Bighorn Sheep, Rocky Mountain Goat, and Black Bear**, which include draft changes to 2022 tag numbers, deleted hunts, new hunts, etc.
- An overview of proposals for 2022 developed as part of the Big Game Regulation Review.
  - For 2022, seasons changes were focused primarily on the priority issue of eastern Oregon archery elk season.

## **Controlled Hunt Tag Numbers Summary**

Total proposed controlled hunt tag numbers for 2022 seasons (149,608) (Table 1) are an increase of 6% from 140,254 in 2021. However, it is important to note that most of the increase is caused by the large increase in elk controlled archery tags related to implementing controlled elk archery hunts in 13 units and 3 subunits in eastern Oregon. See Table 1 below and the attached tables for controlled hunt tag number details for each species/hunt series.

# Initial DRAFT Proposals for Public Review

July 06, 2021

Table 1. Summary of proposed controlled hunt tag numbers for 2021.

Species	Series	Weapon/Type	2021 tags	Proposed 2022 tags	% Change 2020-2021
DEER	100	ALW <sup>1</sup>	43,376	42,968	-1%
		Muzzleloader	2,621	2,642	1%
		Bow	15,969	15,936	0%
		Youth	37	107	65%
	600	ALW <sup>1</sup>	7,530	8,040	6%
		Youth	1,270	1,354	6%
	L Premium	ALW	67	67	0%
<b>Total</b>			<b>70,870</b>	<b>71,114</b>	<b>0%</b>
ELK	200	ALW <sup>1</sup>	47,764	45,674	-5%
		Muzzleloader	1,958	1,936	-1%
		Bow	5,639	16,775	197%
		Youth	1,369	1,308	-5%
	M Premium	ALW <sup>1</sup>	64	64	0%
	<b>Total</b>			<b>56,794</b>	<b>65,757</b>
PRONGHORN	400	ALW <sup>1</sup>	1,422	1,443	1%
		Muzzleloader	160	149	-7%
		Bow	483	451	-7%
		Youth	40	35	-14%
	N Premium	ALW <sup>1</sup>	27	27	0%
<b>Total</b>			<b>2,132</b>	<b>2,105</b>	<b>-1%</b>
BIGHORN	500	Cali Ram	69	68	-1%
		Cali Ewe	10	12	17%
		RM Ram	5	6	17%
<b>Total</b>			<b>84</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>2%</b>
MTN GOAT	900	ALW <sup>1</sup>	29	29	0%
	<b>Total</b>			<b>29</b>	<b>29</b>
BEAR	700	ALW <sup>1</sup>	10,163	10,258	1%
		Youth	182	204	11%
<b>Total</b>			<b>10,345</b>	<b>10,462</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>140,254</b>	<b>149,553</b>	<b>6%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Any Legal Weapon Season (ALW)

## Species by Species Highlights

For species with controlled hunts, **Deer, Elk, Pronghorn Antelope, Bighorn Sheep, Rocky Mountain Goat, and Black Bear**, the details of changes to tag numbers, deleted hunts, new hunts, etc., can be found

in the attached controlled hunt tag tables for each species which are also be available online. Controlled hunt tag numbers are summarized in Table 1 (above).

## **Buck Deer – 100 Series**

Attachment 1 identifies all proposed changes to Buck Deer/100 Series hunts. The majority of the proposed changes are:

- One of the three archery buck hunts at Hart Mountain is being eliminated with the majority of the tags shifting to one of the remaining hunts.
- Addition of five new youth buck hunts in south central units coupled with date changes for the Warner and Interstate youth hunts. This will create a standard youth hunt season structure for these units allowing youth to hunt an expanded time period prior to the any legal weapon buck hunt in those units.

## **Antlerless Deer – 600 Series**

Attachment 1 identifies all proposed changes to Antlerless Deer/600 Series hunts. The majority of the proposed changes are:

- Increase in tags for some northwest and northeast hunts.

## **Elk – 200 Series**

Attachment 1 identifies all proposed changes to Elk/200 Series hunts. The majority of the proposed changes are:

- Changes to Starkey Experimental Forest elk hunts to account for the reduced elk population as research focuses on evaluating the potential relationship between elk and deer populations.
  - Remove two youth hunts with low hunter success.
  - Remove archery hunt with low hunter success.
  - Add one antlerless elk hunt to assist in maintaining elk populations at study objectives.
  - Adjust dates of any legal weapon hunt.
- Delete two antlerless hunts that are no longer needed to manage elk damage to private lands.
- Addition of one antlerless hunt to assist in managing elk damage to private lands.
- Convert existing controlled archery elk opportunity in the Warner unit to general season.
- 12 new archery elk hunts are proposed for eastern Oregon units that would move from general season archery elk hunting to controlled archery elk hunting. See additional information below.

## **Eastern Oregon Archery Elk Season**

The Department is proposing to add 13 WMUs and three sub-units into controlled hunts in eastern Oregon for the 2022 hunting regulations. This is an extension and modification of the proposal first introduced last year that was postponed to solicit additional public input and feedback.

# Initial DRAFT Proposals for Public Review

July 06, 2021

Under the current proposal, WMUs with concerns over current bull escapement levels, and those units with high archery participation and harvest greater than 35% of that within controlled seasons for any legal weapon are proposed for controlled hunts.

Remaining WMUs will continue to be managed under the existing structure, with a single general season for remaining units statewide.

With the addition of more units into the controlled hunt structure for archery, the department is proposing that tags only be valid within the designated area and dates allotted for each individual hunt. This would eliminate the ability for archers to hunt general season areas with a controlled hunt tag. This change will decrease the density of hunters within the residual general season WMUs and increase the likelihood of hunters being able to draw their desired controlled hunt. Additionally, the change creates consistency across all controlled elk hunts.

In addition to single WMU controlled hunts, the department is also proposing a controlled hunt structure to include the five WMUs that encompass the Eagle Cap Wilderness. This zone hunt concept was derived from input received through the public input process undertaken by the department in review of this year's regulation proposal.

Input received from the initial public outreach also highlighted a desire to develop a new opportunity for youth to maintain a statewide archery season tag that would also be valid in all of the new proposed controlled units. Concepts on how to achieve this request are being evaluated by staff.

In developing these proposals, the department also considered alternatives such as smaller general season areas, general seasons with limited tags available on a first-come-first-served basis, and controlled hunts that included larger areas. A commonly suggested, "choose your weapon" approach was also considered, where hunters who were unsuccessful in the controlled hunt draw for a rifle tag would not be eligible to purchase a general archery season tag. These alternatives were not moved forward as draft proposals because they would not accomplish the department's objectives, would create regulatory complexity and enforcement issues, and would continue to manage archery hunting differently than rifle hunting.

The eastern Oregon archery elk regulations will be presented at the August 6, 2021 Commission meeting. If the Commission does not modify existing archery seasons in August, reductions may occur to the proposed controlled any legal weapon (rifle) elk tag numbers shown in Attachment 1 in order for the department to achieve bull escapement goals.

Visit MyODFW.com at the following address to view additional data summaries and find more information regarding the archery regulation development process: <https://myodfw.com/articles/big-game-review>

## **Pronghorn – 400 Series**

Attachment 1 identifies all proposed changes to Pronghorn/400 Series hunts.

- Changes to controlled hunts for pronghorn consist of minor tag number adjustments in some hunts.

## Bighorn Sheep – 500 Series

Attachment 1 identifies all proposed changes to Bighorn Sheep/500 Series hunts. The majority of the proposed changes are:

- 1 Rocky Mountain bighorn hunt (Wenaha) is being added in 2022.
- 1 California bighorn hunt (Sumpter) is being deleted in 2022 due to disease affecting the herd.

## Rocky Mountain Goat – 900 Series

Attachment 1 identifies all proposed changes to Rocky Mountain Goat/900 Series hunts.

- There are no changes to controlled hunts for Rocky Mountain goat.

## Bear – 700 Series

Attachment 1 identifies all proposed changes to Bear/700 Series hunts. Proposed changes consist of:

- Addition of a new youth hunt (Mt Emily – Walla Walla)
- Minor tag adjustments in one hunt (South Central)

## Premium Hunts

Staff are proposing no changes to Premium Hunts for 2022.

## Western Gray Squirrel

Regulations for western gray squirrel seasons can be found in both the Big Game Regulations and Game Bird Regulations. No changes are proposed for 2022 western gray squirrel seasons.

Staff are proposing the following western gray squirrel seasons for 2022:

### **North-central Oregon**

Open Season: Sept. 15 – Oct. 31

Bag/Possession Limit: 3/6

Open Area: Hood, Metolius, Paulina, Upper Deschutes, and White River Units

### **Remainder of Oregon**

Open Season: Sept. 1 – Nov. 15

Bag/Possession Limit: 5/15

Open Area: All units outside of the North-Central hunt area. Exception: There would continue to be no bag limit or closed season in the portion of the Rogue Unit south of the Rogue River and South Fork Rogue River and north of Hwy 140.