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Preliminary Information for May 2015, District Meetings

Upland Game Bird and Waterfowl Updates

Waterfowl Season proposals for 2015-16 Migratory Game Bird (Duck, Goose, etc.) Seasons will not be available until after the federal season frameworks are established in July 2015. However, a couple of items to be aware of are:

- The Department has been working with its Pacific Flyway partners to modify the harvest management strategy for dusky Canada geese. Currently, Oregon is assigned a harvest quota for dusky geese and if that quota is exceeded the season for all geese must close. This necessitates the very restrictive bag limit for dusky geese (one per season) and the check station program in the NW Oregon Permit Goose Zone.

The Department has worked with our flyway partners to develop a new harvest strategy where the season for dusky geese would be closed in NW Oregon but seasons for all other types of Canada geese would be open. Under this season structure the seasons for geese in NW Oregon could be open 7-days/week during the standard 3-period season. Bag limits for Canada geese are proposed to be four per day, except dusky Canada geese would be closed to harvest. Check stations would not be required since the harvest of dusky geese would be closed. Requirements for restrictive shooting hours and identification testing would remain in place.

Proposals for this type of season framework are moving through the Flyway process but the Department will not know until late July 2015 if the USFWS will approve the change. If this proposal is not approved, the Department will consider proposing to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) a closed season for all geese in the NW Permit Zone due to the costs (~\$200,000/year) associated with operating the check station program.

- Last year the Commission approved a proposal to modify the reservation check-in system for the East Side Sauvie Island Wildlife Area to one where successful reservation holders check-in to their hunting unit or choose a hunting blind based on a random order assigned at the time of the controlled hunt draw. Required changes to the controlled hunt computer system are significant and have not been completed because of higher priority projects. Because of the delay changing to the new check-in procedure will not occur before fall of 2016.
- The USFWS has finalized a new schedule for setting federal regulations for hunting migratory game birds. Because of these changes beginning with the 2016 regulation process, the timeline for making Oregon's regulation changes will shift. At this time the Department anticipates proposing 2016-2017 game bird regulations to the Commission at their April 2016 meeting.

Because upland game bird regulations are based on a 5-year regulation framework this should not impact decisions for upland game birds, except that sage-grouse permit and fall turkey tag numbers will not be known in April. Similar to big game, the prior year's permit/tag numbers

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will be printed in the regulations as a guide for applicants. This timing change will also allow the Department to publish the 2016-2017 Game Bird Regulations in early summer instead of two weeks prior to season opening dates.

Upland Game Bird Season Frameworks are set for five year period. The 2015-2020 upland framework was adopted by the Commission last August which will result in the following changes for the 2015-16 upland game bird seasons.

- **Extend quail and partridge (chukar and Hungarian) seasons in Umatilla and Morrow Counties through Jan. 31.** This simplifies eastern Oregon regulations by removing the early closure in these two counties. The exception for Morrow and Umatilla counties was in place over concern about maintaining public access to private lands, but those concerns have lessened.
- **Extend eastern Oregon forest grouse seasons through January 31.** This change also simplifies the regulations by creating a single statewide season for forest grouse. Extending the season for “blue grouse” likely will not noticeably increase opportunity or harvest in most areas, because the grouse are generally not accessible to hunters during late season. There could be some additional opportunity and harvest for ruffed grouse, but the majority of ruffed grouse harvest (>85%) occurs during the first 6 weeks of the season (Sept 1 through Oct 15).
- **Increase spring turkey season limit to three statewide.** This simplifies the regulations and provides some additional hunting opportunity. Currently two legal turkeys are allowed statewide, except an additional (3rd) legal turkey may be taken with a bonus tag in 17 western Oregon WMUs. During the spring 2013 season, there were only 146 tag holders who hunted on a third turkey tag and those hunters averaged 2.2 birds for the season. Increasing the statewide season limit to three legal turkeys is not expected to result in a biologically significant increase in harvest. A prior purchase of a tag for each turkey would still be required. Daily bag limit remains one legal turkey.
- Rule change now allows the head **or wing** to be naturally attached to upland birds as evidence of species and sex while in the field or transit to permanent residence. This aligns with rules for migratory birds where head or wing must be naturally attached to the bird. This is consistent with neighboring states like California and Idaho.

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Big Game Regulation Overview and species by Species Highlights

Updates

General Winter Conditions

Western Oregon: Winter 2014–2015 was generally warmer, and milder than normal except for two short cold periods. Snowpacks are far below normal in all areas. Precipitation was near normal but with warm temperatures it fell as rain. Very little snow accumulation left a lot of area exposed making elk detection difficult.

Eastern Oregon: During the winter of 2014-15 conditions were very mild with little very cold weather or winter precipitation. Animals transitioned down to winter distributions early due to two “arctic blast” events, one in mid-November and the other in the end of November and lasting into December. After that time, temperatures moderated and never returned to the very cold conditions experienced in November and early December. The lack of precipitation or extreme cold carried animals through the winter in good condition, but enabled the potential for a severe drought for the coming summer and early fall.

Statewide: Given the overall mild winter conditions, lack of snow allowed animals to spread out making counts difficult in some areas. In general, 2015 spring surveys found good winter survival in many deer and elk herds. Although the water year-to-date moisture is 80-90% of normal, with record low snow accumulation areas dependent on moisture from snow are expected to experience drought conditions. Spring and summer precipitation will be critical for determining forage conditions.

Mandatory Reporting of Hunter Harvest and Effort

History and Status of the Mandatory Reporting System in Oregon: The Mandatory Reporting system has been operational for seven full years. Overall for the first full year of reporting (2008-09 seasons) hunters reported on 15% of the tags issued (Table 1). The reporting rate more than doubled to 37% for 2009 seasons. However, by the end of March 2011 there was no apparent increase in reporting by hunters for the 2010 seasons. The Department subsequently mailed a reminder postcard to 147,000 hunters with outstanding reportable tags (at a cost of \$38,000 for postcards, postage, and staff time) and an additional 78,000 reports were received which increased the reporting rate to 58%. With no postcard reminders, reporting rates for 2011 seasons dropped to 50% (41% at the deadline dates). Hunter compliance continued to be too low to provide reliable information.

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Table 1. Mandatory harvest reporting rates, 2007 – 2014.

Hunt Type	% of Tags Reported							
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Controlled Antlerless Deer	5%	22%	49%	69%	64%	91%	90%	91%
Controlled Buck Deer	4%	21%	47%	69%	61%	91%	89%	91%
General Bow Deer	3%	14%	33%	53%	47%	82%	79%	81%
General Rifle Deer	1%	10%	25%	45%	37%	79%	76%	80%
Total Deer	3%	15%	35%	55%	48%	84%	82%	84%
Controlled Elk	4%	20%	46%	69%	62%	91%	89%	90%
General Bow Elk	3%	15%	35%	57%	49%	83%	80%	82%
General Cascades Elk	2%	12%	29%	50%	42%	81%	80%	82%
General Coast Elk	2%	12%	29%	50%	42%	81%	79%	82%
General Rocky Mtn. Elk	4%	16%	35%	59%	50%	87%	84%	86%
Total Elk	3%	16%	37%	60%	52%	86%	84%	86%
Controlled Spring Bear	6%	8%	61%	79%	79%	92%	92%	93%
SW Limited Spring Bear			47%	69%	66%	86%	86%	87%
General Fall Bear	4%	16%	35%	55%	49%	77%	76%	80%
Total Bear	4%	15%	37%	58%	52%	78%	78%	81%
Cougar	5%	17%	36%	56%	49%	73%	73%	76%
Pronghorn	9%	30%	61%	82%	76%	93%	92%	94%
General Spring Turkey	5%	3%	42%	61%	54%	79%	79%	81%
Controlled Fall Turkey	15%	40%	67%	84%	84%	93%	91%	90%
General Fall Turkey	5%	20%	37%	53%	52%	70%	71%	72%
Total Turkey	5%	5%	42%	61%	54%	79%	79%	80%
All Tags	3%	15%	37%	58%	50%	82%	80%	83%

After two mailings for the 2012 seasons (101,862 postcards for the January 31 deadline, 3,430 for the April 15 deadline, at an estimated cost of \$27,000 based on 2011 mailing costs), an overall reporting rate of 82% was achieved. For the 2013 seasons a 81,292 postcards were mailed for the January deadline and 3,503 postcards were mailed for the late hunts with an April 15 reporting deadline; the overall reporting rate declined slightly to 80%.

For 2014 tags, in addition to postcards, email reminders were sent out 1-2 weeks before each postcard mailing to hunters with an email address on file. For the 2014 seasons 23,744 emails and 93,543 postcards were mailed for the January deadline and 1,289 emails and 3,451 postcards were mailed for the late hunts with an April 15 reporting deadline; overall reporting rate increased slightly to 83%.

Although not ideal, data for most hunts can be used in the management decision making process. While it varies from hunt to hunt, overall there continues to be a slight positive bias to the data. The bias likely occurs because even with reporting rates of ~80% hunters who did not hunt or were unsuccessful are those most likely to fail to report.

Implementation of the Mandatory Reporting penalty: Although Mandatory reporting has been a requirement since 2007; the penalty was not established until after the passage of HB 2125 during the 2011 Oregon legislative session. The Legislature authorized a way to allow

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hunters who either refuse to report or missed the deadline to “buy” back in and hunt. In October, 2012, at the urging of hunters, the Commission established the \$25 penalty, because in spite of outreach efforts by the Department only 41% of 2011 tags were reported on by the deadlines.

The Department has heavily promoted the Mandatory Reporting requirement:

- It is on the cover of the annual Big Game Regulations
- There is a page dedicated to Mandatory Reporting in the regulations
- It has been on the back of all licenses and tags for several years
- Postcard reminders were sent to hunters who had not reported on 2010, 2012, 2013, or 2014 deer and/or elk tags
- Emails to hunters the Department has email addresses for
- The reporting requirement is mentioned in ODFW’s weekly recreation report
- News releases each year, and in social media
- Advertising in sportsman magazines
- As an incentive to report on time, ODFW has offered the chance to win a special big game tag to three randomly drawn hunters who report on time each year

Reporting deadlines for tags issued for 2014 hunting seasons were:

- January 31, 2015 for hunts that ended on or before December 31, 2014
- April 15, 2015 for hunts that ended from January 1- March 31, 2015

Hunters who did not report by the specified deadlines for deer and elk tags were assessed a \$25.00 non-reporting penalty. For 2012 tags, the fee was assessed beginning December 1, 2013, with purchase of a 2014 license and for 2013 tags the fee was assessed beginning December 1, 2014, with purchase of a 2015 license. Some hunters purchase both deer and elk tags, so the estimated number of unreported tags is higher than the number of hunters assessed the non-reporting fee (Table 2). The non-reporting fee is set at \$25 regardless of the number of tags that are not reported on in a given year. All fees collected go into the department’s ending balance and are used to fund wildlife programs.

Table 2. Non-reporting fee assessment, 2012-2013.

License Year	No. of deer and elk tags		No. of hunters	
	Sold	Unreported	Assessed non-reporting fee	Paid non-reporting fee*
2012	298,000	46,000	33,600	22,091
2013	305,828	53,750	39,860	7,172

*As of 4/05/2015.

Black-tailed Deer Study Information

Fecal Sampling: For the last 2 years, the Department has been evaluating a black-tailed deer population estimation technique. Fecal samples are collected from a ½ square mile area and then the DNA from those samples is analyzed by a lab to determine the number of individual deer in the sample area. During 2013, we completed 31 sample areas in the Trask (n=9), Alsea (n=8), Dixon (6) and Indigo (8) WMUs and in all land-ownership categories. A total of 3,620 deer fecal samples were collected. In 2014, a total of 53 sample areas were surveyed in the Trask

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(16), Alsea (12), Dixon (12) and Indigo (13) and 4,266 deer fecal samples were collected. All samples have been submitted to a lab for DNA extraction with results of the DNA extraction due to be complete by late June 2015.

Deer Capture: To document additional biological information on black-tailed deer in the same areas that fecal sampling is occurring; the Department has been marking deer with radio collars (GPS on does, VHF on bucks). As of February 2015, 227 black-tailed deer were captured in 4 WMUs (Trask, Alsea, Indigo, and Dixon, Table 2). Radio-marked deer have been marked throughout each WMU on all land-ownership types. GPS collars are placed on does for 17 months and then break-off, during that monitoring period we typically obtain more than 3,000 locations for each doe.

Table 3. Number of black-tailed deer captured through February 2015.

WMU	Gender		Total Captures
	Male	Female	
Dixon	10	29	39
Indigo	21	36	57
Alsea	17	36	53
Trask	20	58	78
Total	68	159	227

Example of deer data from radio collars: Biological data is still being collected for most radio-marked deer. However, examining data 40 animals recovered from early in the study shows black-tailed deer use relatively small home ranges. The average home range size for 14 deer in the Trask WMU was ~300 acres, 12 Alsea deer averaged 173acres, and 5 deer in Indigo averaged 260 acres. In the Dixon where deer had distinct movements between seasonal use areas, the annual home range averaged 2,372 acres for 9 animals. Most marked deer exclusively used land within the ownership category in which they were captured. Evergreen Forest and Shrub/Scrub cover types dominated the available habitat in deer home ranges; however radio-collared does used Grassland/Herbaceous cover type significantly more than expected.

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2015 & 2016 Big Game Hunting Regulations Proposal Information

Proposed General Season Bag Limits and Dates

Annually most big game season dates follow a cycle in which they progress one day earlier each year then “jump” a week later, starting the cycle over again. A key date is the opening of buck deer rifle season which is the Saturday nearest October 1. For 2016 most hunts are proposed to be adjusted **two days earlier** than in 2015 because 2016 is a leap year. For example, archery season which opens on August 29 in 2015 is proposed to open on August 27 in 2016.

“Standard” season dates for 2016 hunts are as follows: **Note: Seasons 2 days earlier (2016 is a Leap Year) than in 2015.**

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 st Season.....	Nov. 12-15
General Coast 2 nd Season.....	Nov. 19-25
Rocky Mt. Bull Elk 1 st Season.....	Oct. 26–Oct. 30
Rocky Mt. Bull Elk Season 2 nd Season.....	Nov. 5–13
Rocky Mt. Std. Antlerless Elk.....	Nov. 19–27
Pronghorn (1 st Centerfire Season).....	Aug. 13–21

Some relevant 2016 holidays that may impact season dates are:

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

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Controlled Hunt Tag Numbers Summary

Total proposed controlled tags for the 2015–2016 seasons are increasing slightly (+2%, Table 3). Proposed controlled deer tags are up 1%, and controlled elk tags are proposed to increase 3%. Proposed pronghorn tags (2,491), bighorn tags (95), and Rocky Mountain goat tags (20) are essentially unchanged. Controlled spring bear tags for 2016 are proposed to increase 1% to 8,951. See controlled hunt tag tables for details.

Table 4. Summary of corrected controlled hunt tag numbers, 2012 – 2015.

Species/Hunt Type	2012 tags	2013 tags	2014 tags	Proposed 2015 tags	*Percent Change
TOTAL DEER	71,441	71,304	72,140	73,030	+1%
Buck	57,795	57,602	58,361	58,694	<+1%
Bow/Muzzleloader	3,496	3,558	3,618	4,472	+24%
Antlerless (600 Series)	8,917	8,870	8,893	8,599	-3%
Youth	1,233	1,274	1,268	1,265	<-1%
TOTAL ELK	57,086	57,963	59,573	61,409	+3%
Bull/Either Sex	36,792	36,890	37,049	37,112	<1%
Bow/Muzzleloader	7,527	8,104	8,587	9,004	+5%
Rifle Antlerless	11,715	11,851	12,741	14,084	+11%
Youth	1,052	1,118	1,196	1,209	+1%
BIGHORN	97	96	95	95	0%
MT. GOAT	11	14	20	20	0%
TOTAL PRONGHORN	2,679	2,577	2,499	2,491	<-1%
Rifle Buck/Either Sex	1,538	1,510	1,492	1,510	+1%
Bow/Muzzleloader	923	843	822	765	-7%
Doe	187	187	148	176	+19%
Youth	32	37	37	40	+8%
Spring Bear	2013 Tags	2014 Tags	2015 Tags	Proposed 2016 Tags	*Percent Change
TOTAL SPRING BEAR	8,795	8,853	8,871	8,951	+1%
Controlled Spring Bear	4,197	4,256	4,275	4,353	+2%
Youth Spring Bear	198	197	196	198	+1%
SW Limited	4,400	4,400	4,400	4,400	0%
Grand total tags	140,109	140,807	143,198	Proposed 2015 Incl. 16 Spr Bear 145,996	+2%

*Percent change calculated for the difference between 2014 and 2015 tags for all species except bear which is calculated for the difference between 2015 and 2016.

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Species by Species Highlights

Black Bear

The Department is proposing 8,951 Spring Bear tags for 2016. The Department is proposing to maintain tags at 4,400 for the 2016 Southwest Limited season where tags are sold First-come First-served. An additional 4,551 tags will be allocated in 19 controlled hunts for spring bear. For Spring and Fall Bear Seasons no season date changes are proposed for 2016.

Cougar

Target Areas

There were no active Cougar Target Areas, as described in the 2006 Cougar Management Plan (Chapter VI, Adaptive Management Process) during 2014 and 2015. Several Target areas are under consideration with the potential starting date of January 1, 2016 (Table 4). Decisions regarding initiating Target Areas for 2016 will be made by fall, 2015.

Table 5. Cougar Target Areas under consideration

<u>Target Area</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Removal By</u>
Melrose	Reduce livestock/safety conflicts	WS / Vol Agents
SW McKenzie/NW Indigo	Reduce livestock/safety conflicts	WS / Vol Agents
South Paulina/North Wagontire	Mule Deer	WS / Vol Agents
Steens Mtn. Maintenance	Mule Deer/BHS	Wildlife Services
Warner Maintenance	Mule Deer	Volunteer Agents
Heppner/Ukiah Maintenance	Elk	2 ODFW Techs
Desolation Unit	Elk	2 ODFW Techs
Lake County Bighorn Sheep (parts of WMU 70, 71, 73, 74, 75)	BHS	Vol Agents/ODFW
Interstate	Mule Deer	WS / Vol Agents

Population Overview

The Department uses a deterministic, density-dependent population model (Keister and Van Dyke 2002) to estimate annual cougar abundance in Oregon from 1987 to present at the statewide level and 1994 to present at the zone level. Like most state-level population models for cougars, this model relies on harvest data to develop estimates. The statewide population abundance for 2014 was estimated to be 6,120. The population has been increasing slowly since 2006 with an average annual increase of about 1%. No Cougar Zone Quotas were reached in 2014. As of April 22, 2015 a total of 383 cougar mortalities had been reported for 2015 including 207 by hunters and 124 taken on damage complaints.

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Bighorn Sheep

The Department is proposing 95 Bighorn Sheep tags (88 California, 7 Rocky Mountain) in 39 hunts (34 California, 5 Rocky Mountain) for 2015. This represents no change from 2014. Seven tags (one Rocky Mountain, six California) are proposed for non-resident hunters (7% percent). One California bighorn hunt period (Aldrich #2) will be deleted in 2016.

Rocky Mountain Goat

The Department is proposing 20 Rocky Mountain goat tags in 11 hunts, no change from 2014. Two tags will be issued to non-resident hunters. Two new hunts are proposed for 2016: South Snake River #2, and Goat Mountain #2.

Pronghorn Antelope

The Department is proposing 2,491 tags in 57 hunts for 2015, representing a change of less than one percent from 2014 tag numbers. No changes to hunts are proposed for 2016.

Deer

Proposed general deer seasons are unchanged for 2016 except for a 2 day calendar shift. No WMUs meet criteria developed during the 2014 Archery Review for changing the general archery season bag limit either from buck to either sex, or from either sex to buck. No new deer hunts are proposed and one hunt (155B Mill Creek Watershed) will be deleted for 2016.

Overall, the Department is proposing a net 1% increase in controlled deer tag numbers for 2016. Increases in controlled buck rifle deer tags (58,694) and controlled muzzleloader deer tags (4,472) are due to minor increases in tag numbers for several hunts. Whereas the slight declines in controlled antlerless deer tags and controlled youth deer tags is largely due to changes in correction factors for individual hunts (an increased percentage of successful applicants purchasing the tag).

In 2013 House Bill 2027A authorized the Commission to limit mule deer buck tags in WMUs where the mule deer population is below the Management Objective (MO). In October 2014 the Commission adopted the same formula for mule deer that has been used for quite some time for selected deer and elk hunts with limited LOP tags. In these hunts LOP tags are limited to five tags or 10 percent of the total controlled hunt tags authorized for each hunt, whichever is greater.

For 2015 the Department will be recommending limiting LOP tags for mule deer buck hunts (100 Series) where estimated populations are below 100% of the established population MO. Based on spring 2015 data, all mule deer populations except for the West Biggs are below 100% of population MO (Appendix 1). Applying the five tag or 10% formula to the 92 controlled mule deer hunts results in 5,927 mule deer LOP tags available to be drawn in these hunts. Using 2014 LOP tag drawing information as an index to hunt specific interest by landowners, 20 controlled mule deer buck hunts had more LOP buck tags drawn than will be available in the 2015 LOP drawing (Appendix 1). The total estimated effect is about 600 fewer mule deer LOP buck tags.

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Elk

Proposed 2015 Controlled Elk Tags

Overall, the Department is proposing a net 3% increase in controlled elk tag numbers for 2015. Proposed controlled elk rifle tags for 2015 are up 1,406 tags to 51,196 tags. For the 26 controlled elk bow hunts, the Department is proposing 6,371 tags for 2015, up 6% from 2014. Proposed controlled muzzleloader elk tags are up 4 tags to 2,578. Proposed youth elk tags are up 13 tags to 1,209 for 2015.

Bag Limits during Archery Seasons and for Hunters with Disability Permits

At this time the Department is proposing to maintain existing general season structure with standard calendar adjustment of two days earlier for most season dates for 2016.

Each year the Department makes projections regarding which units will have an antlerless animal in the bag limit for archers and hunters with disabilities permits for the following year. If the Commission adopts this proposal in October 2015 the Department would list the units with an expanded bag limit in the 2016 Big Game Regulations.

The general archery bag limit is a legal bull except in units identified by the Commission each year. At this time (May 1, 2015) the Department is proposing several changes. Consistent with criteria developed during the 2014 Archery Review, when an elk population is 105% of MO, rising, and recruitment is ≥ 31 calves/100 cows in end of winter composition surveys for the previous 3 years, the unit can be considered for inclusion of an antlerless bag limit. Two units meet this criteria and the Department will propose that the Desolation and Minam units change from bull only to either sex during the 2016 general archery season.

Similarly, if the population is $\leq 100\%$ of population MO in a unit, declining, and recruitment is ≤ 25 calves:100 cows in end of winter surveys during the last three years it would dictate the unit have a bull only bag limit for general bow season. Three units meet these criteria; the Department proposes the Saddle Mountain, Scappoose, and Wilson units change from either sex to bull only during the 2016 general archery season.

Proposals for units to include antlerless animals in the bag limit for hunters with Disabilities Permits will continue to be based on the criteria established by the Permanent Disabilities Workgroup which 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

At this time the Department is proposing the Saddle Mountain, Scappoose, and Wilson Wildlife Management Units be removed, and the Snake River and Minam Units be added, to units with an antlerless animal in the bag limit for hunters with Disabilities Permits for fall of 2016.

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The units with an antlerless elk in the bag limit for 2016 will not be final until adopted by the Commission in October, 2015; units proposed to include antlerless animals in the bag limit could change between now and October. Hunters need to check the Big Game Regulations each year for the final list of units with an antlerless animal in the bag limit.

There is some risk 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.

Proposed 2016 Elk Seasons

For 2016, the following changes are proposed to controlled elk hunts. Overall, the Department proposes deleting 10 controlled elk hunts, and adding 8 new hunts. Proposed changes include:

- Delete 221C, and 226T2 in Western Oregon
- Add one new antlerless hunt (Harness Mountain) in unit 21 adapting to changes in management for Weyerhaeuser lands.
- Add one new hunt in the Maupin-W Biggs
- Delete seven cow hunts in Grant County: 246C, 246E2, 247D2, 247E1, 247E2, 247E2, and 265d. Most of these hunts are private land hunts. The changes are designed to simplify the hunt structure. Between remaining and new hunts tag numbers in the area are anticipated to be similar in 2016.
- Add one new hunt in Grant county (Murderers Creek)
- Delete 256B, Troy Hunt, 5 tag hunt in the Wenaha Unit
- Add an expanded antlerless hunt in the Beulah unit
- Add three new hunt periods in the Zumwalt Prairie hunt area
- Add a second bull hunt in the Chesnimnus unit

Elk Damage Tag Implementation

During the 2013 Regular Legislative Session, the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 2027 which directs the Department to create and implement a statewide Oregon Landowner Damage Program to address damage caused by elk. Patterned after the successful SW Damage Pilot program, the new elk damage program may provide elk damage tags to landowners in areas where elk are currently causing damage, in areas where there has been a history of elk damage, and in areas currently designated as an elk de-emphasis area. The elk damage tag program does not have minimum acreage requirements and does not limit the number of tags a landowner may acquire. However, no more than 5 tags may be valid at any given time. Additionally, the option for landowners to exchange unused LOP tags 1 for 2 was removed.

Expansion of the elk damage tag program statewide resulted in an overall statewide increase in the number of elk tags issued to address damage and the associated harvest. This increase was driven primarily by increases in northeast Oregon where total tags increased from 1,319 to 2,317 and harvest increased from 584 to 1,190. Total tags and harvest in northwestern Oregon declined from 737 and 378 respectively to 325 and 158 respectively. Total tags issued and associated harvest was essentially stable in southwestern Oregon and the High Desert areas of Oregon.

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Table 6. Number of elk tags and harvest issued to address conflict in Oregon during the 2013–2014, and 2014–2015 season.

Area	2013 – 2014			2014 – 2015		
	Exchange Tags	Damage Tags	Harvest	Exchange Tags	Damage Tags	Harvest
Northwest Oregon	737	0	378	80	245	158
Southwest Oregon	235	151	198	252	168	184
Northeast Oregon	1,319	0	584	797	1,520	1,190
High Desert	56	0	15	20	22	17
Total	2,347	151	1,175	1,149	1,955	1,549

Premium Hunt Concept

Background: Contained within the fee increase discussions were ideas about license restructuring, new license types, and ways to increase revenue and hunter recruitment and retention. One of the ideas that emerged from these discussions was creating premium hunts.

Concept: Create three new controlled hunt series entitled “Premium Hunts”. These hunts would apply to deer, elk, and pronghorn. Premium Hunts could occur as soon as 2016 depending on completion of the necessary computer programming by the contractor for the Point of Sale licensing system.

Aspects of Premium Hunts include:

- a. Tag(s) available in most units or appropriate group of units
 - Very low tag numbers, anticipate many units will offer 1 tag per species
 - May not offer Premium Hunt Tags in all areas, Walla Walla, Wenaha, etc.??
 - No Landowner Preference tags
 - No Guides and Outfitters tags
- b. Bag limit, either-sex in most/all areas
 - Deer tag good for any species for which there is a hunt in the Unit
 - Would include Columbian white-tailed deer in the Roseburg area
- c. No Preference Points involved
- d. Tags drawn would be an additional tag, hunters could also have a standard general season or controlled hunt tag
- e. Use any weapon legal for the species
- f. Standard application fee
 - Hunter can apply for one deer, one elk, and one pronghorn hunt (3 applications=\$24)
 - No party applications
 - Provides an opportunity for the average hunter, who pay most of the bills
 - Hunters willing to invest more can purchase raffle tickets
- g. Premium Hunts must be applied for on an application separate from the application used for other hunts for the same species.
- h. Premium Hunts will be included in Draw Cycle 2, the main early June big game drawing
- i. Season dates:
 - September 1-November 30 for deer and elk
 - August 1-September 30 for Pronghorn

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Travel Management Area (TMA) Changes

Wendling TMA: Consistent with the Access and Habitat funding grant for the Wendling TMA the Department proposes adjusting the Wendling TMA Effective Period from the current “opening of archery season through the end of the general buck deer season (including youth weekend)” to “opening of general buck deer season through November 30.” This change would significantly improve access to late season youth, muzzleloader deer, muzzleloader elk, and late archery deer hunters in the approximately 185 square mile TMA with only a minor reduction in early season archery deer and elk hunters.

During the first four years of the Wendling TMA, early season access has been very limited due to fire danger. During the first four years of the TMA, one of the cooperating landowner allowed approximately 10 days of primarily non-motorized access while the other two cooperators were not comfortable allowing access due to fire risk.

Eagle Creek TMA: The Department, supported by a letter from the U. S. Forest Service, (USFS) proposes to vacate the Eagle Creek TMA. This TMA occurs exclusively on National Forest land in McKenzie Unit. The TMA has been in effect during Cascade Rifle Bull Season since 1976. The TMA was designed to facilitate camp based hunters through locking and opening of gates before and after the elk season. It allows hunters to transport camping supplies but remove motor vehicles before the gates are closed and then retrieve their camping supplies following the close of the season. The USFS takes the lead on managing the gates with assistance from ODFW and OSP.

Elk use in the Eagle Creek TMA has been declining as the forest habitat matures. The decline in elk has been followed by a decline in hunters. According to the USFS, only one hunter camp was set up for the 2012 elk season and no camps were set up in 2013 or 2014. It is believed walk-in hunter use of the Eagle Creek TMA is low. In 2014, an OSP Fish and Wildlife Trooper found no parked vehicles when he checked the TMA entrance gates during one day of the Cascade Elk Season.

Chesnimnus TMA: The description of the Chesnimnus TMA was inadvertently dropped from the regulation booklet however it is still in affect; it was adopted into Administrative Rule: **635-065-0760** (qq) Chesnimnus: Three days prior to Chesnimnus rifle bull season through end of Chesnimnus rifle bull season -- That portion of the Chesnimnus Wildlife Unit within the boundaries of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest;

Changes to 2015 Hunts

South Sumpter Hunt Dates: The 2015 Oregon Big Game Regulations incorrectly list the open season dates for the S Sumpter 251D controlled antlerless elk hunt as from October 17-October 31, 2015; the correct ending date should be December 31, 2015. A Temporary Rule was adopted to cover the application period however it expires before the hunt occurs. The Department is asking the Commission to adopt into permanent rule the intended, traditional season dates for the hunt.

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635-071-0010 : Notwithstanding the provisions of the 2015 Oregon Big Game Regulations: (1) The season dates listed on page 57 for the S Sumpter (251D) Controlled Rocky Mountain Antlerless Elk Hunt is extended to December 31, 2015

Oregon Disabilities Hunting and Fishing Permit Renewal Period

To be considered a person with a disability under the wildlife laws, a person must provide to the Department either written certification from a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant of certain specified disabilities, or written proof from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or the Armed Forces showing the person to be at least 65 percent disabled.

Prior to 2005 the Disabilities Permit was considered permanent; there was no requirement to renew. With “permanent” permits the numbers increased from 600 permits in 1999 to over 19,600 in 2006. In 1999 in addition to the disabled veteran category the requirements for a disabilities permit were, 1) unable to be mobile without the assistance of a wheelchair or, 2) visually impaired. In 2000, in addition to disabled veterans, the criteria for issuing a Disabilities Permit were expanded to five categories: 1) Permanently unable to walk without the use of, or assistance from, a brace, cane, crutch, prosthetic device, wheelchair, scooter or walker; 2) restricted by lung disease; 3) a cardiac condition; 4) a permanent, physical impairment that prevents the person from holding or shooting a firearm or bow or from holding a fishing rod in hand; or 5) a visual impairment.

Beginning in 2006, hunters have been required to renew their Disabilities Permit every two years. Since hunters have been required to renew Disability Permits there are approximately 7,000 active permits. To renew a permit, the holder must submit a new, updated application form which requires a visit to a medical professional. The Department is proposing to change the renewal period to five years. The change will primarily benefit hunters who have a disability that does not require regular visits to a physician.

Weyerhaeuser Company Permit and Lease Fee Access Areas

Weyerhaeuser Company is implementing a variety of access permits and/or leases. The level of impact to access of affected controlled hunts, general seasons and WMUs hunts is estimated in Appendix 2. In Western Oregon, plus the Hood WMU, Weyerhaeuser owns a total of 1,274,796 acres. For 2015, 58% of their total lands are in the fee access program, approximately double the acreage in fee access areas in 2014, the first year of the program (see below).

Year	Lease Acres	Permit Acres	Total acres
2014	38,132	320,062	358,194
2015	107,134	625,980	733,114

Weyerhaeuser anticipates additional changes to the fee access program in the future. Lands not included in the program are generally parcels where controlling access would be difficult to administer, such as where Weyerhaeuser property is checker-boarded with BLM land. It is the hunter’s responsibility to confirm access for the hunts they apply for. Hunters will need to contact Weyerhaeuser to determine permit system timing and what restrictions may be in place. For details contact Weyerhaeuser at 1-888-741-5403 or online at:

<http://www.weyerhaeuser.com/Businesses/RecreationalAccess>

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Appendix 1. Number of LOP Mule Deer Buck Deer tags available during the 2015 season.

2015 Hunt #	2015 Hunt Name	% of Population MO	Controlled Tags Available in 2015	LOP Tags Available in 2015	LOP Tags Drawn in 2014	Anticipated # LOP Tags Impacted
131	Keno Unit	75%	1,045	105	6	0
131R	Keno Unit Bow	75%	138	14	0	0
132	Klamath Falls Unit	75%	927	93	57	0
132M	Klamath Falls	75%	27	5	28	23
133	Sprague Unit	14%	660	66	0	0
134	Up Deschutes Unit	53%	2,750	275	5	0
135	Paulina Unit	58%	1,925	193	27	0
135M	Paulina Unit	58%	11	5	0	0
135R	Paulina Unit Bow	58%	11	5	0	0
136	Maury Unit	61%	385	39	61	22
136R	Maury Unit Bow	61%	125	13	3	0
137	Ochoco Unit	73%	3,080	308	91	0
138	Grizzly Unit	82%	1,320	132	215	83
139	Metolius Unit	85%	400	40	14	0
139M1	Metolius # 1	85%	44	5	2	0
139M2	Metolius # 2	85%	22	5	0	0
139R1	Metolius Bow #1	85%	21	5	33	28
139R2	Metolius Bow #2	85%	28	5	4	0
140	Maupin Unit	86%	495	50	35	0
141A	Hood-White River	71%	165	17	0	0
141B	White R Unit	77%	2,090	209	93	0
141C	White R Unit	77%	10	5	5	0
141M	Hood-White River	77%	42	5	0	0
141T	The Dalles Watershed Youth	77%	5	5	0	0
142A	Hood Unit	71%	770	77	0	0
142B	Hood Unit	71%	10	5	3	0
143A	E Biggs	66%	715	72	35	0
143B	W Biggs	100%	927	No Limit	161	0
144	Columbia Basin Unit	71%	1,980	198	77	0
145	Fossil Unit	79%	2,200	220	88	0
145M	Flatiron	79%	55	6	0	0
146	Murderers Cr Unit	67%	990	99	120	21
147	Northside Unit	43%	1,320	132	163	31
148	Heppner Unit	68%	3,520	352	108	0
148M	Ditch Cr	68%	193	20	0	0
149	Ukiah Unit	94%	1,898	190	90	0
150	Desolation Unit	47%	1,320	132	17	0
151	Sumpter Unit	89%	1,650	165	83	0

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Appendix 1. Continued.

152A	Starkey	83%	825	83	37	0
152B	Starkey Experimental Forest	83%	25	5	0	0
153	Catherine Cr Unit	38%	428	43	100	57
154A	E Mt Emily	76%	216	22	35	13
154B	W Mt Emily	76%	523	53	30	0
154C	Mt Emily	76%	10	5	5	0
154R	Mt. Emily Unit Bow	76%	424	43	0	0
155A	Walla Walla Unit	95%	248	25	37	12
155B	Mill Cr Watershed	95%	3	5	0	0
155R	Walla Walla Unit Bow	95%	159	16	0	0
156	Wenaha Unit	65%	495	50	13	0
156R1	Wenaha Unit Bow	65%	265	27	0	0
157	Sled Springs Unit	58%	1,925	193	67	0
158	Chesnimnus Unit	60%	550	55	41	0
159	Snake R Unit	45%	330	33	12	0
160	Minam Unit	37%	660	66	12	0
161	Imnaha Unit	43%	825	83	13	0
162	Pine Cr Unit	67%	413	42	20	0
163	Keating Unit	54%	545	55	66	11
164	Lookout Mt Unit	73%	330	33	57	24
165	Beulah Unit	73%	2,090	209	120	0
165A	SE Beulah	73%	540	54	18	0
165R	W Beulah	73%	20	5	0	0
166	Malheur R Unit	77%	1,870	187	142	0
166M	N Malheur	77%	55	6	1	0
167	Owyhee Unit	70%	495	50	100	50
167A	NE Owyhee	70%	136	14	0	0
168A	Trout Cr Mountains	77%	53	6	39	33
168B	E Whitehorse	77%	275	28	17	0
168M	NE Whitehorse	77%	28	5	3	0
168R1	Trout Cr Traditional Bow	77%	Unlimited		0	0
168R2	SE Whitehorse	77%	20	5	0	0
169A	Steens Mtn	47%	275	28	86	58
170A	Beatys Butte	68%	220	22	36	14
170M	Hart Mt	68%	15	5	0	0
170R1	Hart Mt Bow #1	68%	17	5	0	0
170R2	Hart Mt Bow #2	68%	17	5	0	0
170R3	Hart Mt Bow #3	68%	6	5	0	0
171A	N Juniper	57%	110	11	14	3
171B	S Juniper	57%	110	11	6	0
171M	Juniper	57%	10	5	2	0

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Appendix 1. Continued.

172	Silvies Unit	83%	990	99	147	48
172M	Silvies Unit	83%	55	6	0	0
173	Wagontire Unit	44%	193	20	44	24
174A	N Warner	50%	51	6	27	21
174B	S Warner	50%	303	31	22	0
174R1	N Warner Bow	50%	65	7	2	0
174R2	S Warner Bow	50%	94	10	0	0
174T	Warner Unit Youth	50%	20	5	2	0
175	Interstate Unit	30%	1,760	176	137	0
175M	Interstate Unit	30%	26	5	2	0
175T	Interstate Unit Youth	30%	30	5	22	17
176	Silver Lake Unit	72%	2,200	220	3	0
176M	Silver Lake/E. Ft. Rock	72%	55	6	3	0
177	Fort Rock Unit	41%	2,750	275	7	0
Total Tags			58,282	5,834	3,189	593

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Appendix 2. Estimated hunt area impacts of Weyerhaeuser Permit and Lease Fee Access Areas.

Impacted Hunts Identified as of 4/24/2015

Fee Access Acres by Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) for Unit Wide and General Season Hunts

WMU	WMU #	Lease Acres	Permit Acres	Total Acres	Total % of WMU
Alsea	18	8,803	0	8,803	0.70%
Hood	42	9,465	10,029	19,494	8.10%
Indigo	21	9,595	106,456	116,051	9.34%
McKenzie	19	5,485	50,291	55,775	3.30%
Melrose	23	3,938	0	3,938	0.64%
Saddle Mt	10	2,957	82,916	85,872	14.84%
Santiam	16	13,595	109,017	122,611	5.76%
Scappoose	11	26,957	70,629	97,585	20.34%
Sixes	25	1,679	0	1,679	0.26%
Tioga	24	17,318	173,645	190,963	19.28%
Trask	14	5,804	0	5,804	0.69%
Wilson	12	1,538	22,997	24,535	6.64%

600 Series Deer Hunts (use Fee Access Acres by WMU for Unit Wide Hunts)

Hunt	Name	Fee Access Acres	Hunt Acres	Percent of Hunt
616A1	NW Santiam	116,097	576,390	20.142%
616A2	SW Santiam	3,613	379,464	0.952%
619	W McKenzie	55,535	704,962	7.878%
621A	Dorena	74,498	270,725	27.518%
621B	Calapooya	45,486	321,848	14.133%
623A	Central Melrose	3,938	363,836	1.082%
624A	Tioga	31,854	817,220	3.898%
624B	E Tioga	1,011	113,589	0.890%
642A	Hood-Hood River Valley	19,494	278,487	7.000%
616T	SW Santiam	3,613	417,451	0.866%
621T	N Indigo	85,656	704,821	12.153%
623T3	Melrose	3,938	608,866	0.647%
625T	N Sixes	1,679	354,265	0.474%
640T	Mid-Columbia Private	19,494	1,916,548	1.017%

Buck Deer Hunts (use Fee Access Acres by WMU for Unit Wide Hunts)

Hunt	Name	Fee Access Acres	Hunt Acres	Percent of Hunt
General	Cascade	293,937	7,661,753	3.84%
General	Coast	419,182	11,347,078	3.69%
123A	Umpqua	137,192	32,536,649	0.42%
141M	Hood-White River	19,494	481,607	4.05%
141A	Hood-White River	4,852	381,996	1.27%
100M	N Muzzleloader	177,632	5,475,079	3.24%
121M	S Indigo	41,549	572,454	7.26%
123M1	Melrose-N Sixes	5,617	968,402	0.58%
123R1	Umpqua Bow	137,192	2,366,067	5.80%

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Controlled Elk Hunts (for General Seasons and Unit Wide Hunts use Fee Access Acres by WMU)

Hunt	Name	Fee Access Acres	Hunt Acres	Percent of Hunt
210A1, A2	Onion Peak	12,987	81,806	15.88%
210B1, B2	Lewis and Clark	18,474	149,949	12.32%
210C	Upper Nehalem	35,573	108,061	32.92%
210D	Lower Columbia	242	50,612	0.48%
210F1, F2	Camp McGregor	7,255	27,684	26.21%
211A1, A2, A3	S Scappoose	45,993	208,480	22.06%
211B	N Central Scappoose	51,593	271,304	19.02%
212A1, A2, A3	Miami-Nehalem	2,375	52,080	4.56%
214D	Beaver Cr	914	72,824	1.26%
214E	Pike	499	62,839	0.79%
214F1, F2	NE Trask	2,005	139,129	1.44%
216B	SW Santiam	3,613	417,426	0.87%
216C1, C2, C3	Molalla	75,476	358,500	21.05%
216D	Sandy	39,503	418,283	9.44%
216E	Green Mt	16,988	75,826	22.40%
216F	NW Santiam	116,097	576,390	20.14%
218A	NE Alsea	4,359	371,855	1.17%
218C	SE Alsea	3,484	251,658	1.39%
218E	Central Alsea Private	952	169,971	0.56%
219A	S Central McKenzie	5,180	312,478	1.66%
219B	NW McKenzie	305	230,555	0.13%
219C	Horse Rock	5,180	135,025	3.84%
221A	NW Indigo	74,486	271,406	27.44%
221B	Cougar Mt Taylor Butte	9,435	45,774	20.61%
221C	Sutherlin	41,091	111,715	36.78%
221D	S Indigo Priv. Lands	34,764	151,197	22.99%
221E	Mosby	37,172	120,008	30.98%
224A	Callahan	52,873	69,788	75.76%
224B	Old Blue	85,673	93,988	91.15%
224C	Tioga Private	187,017	419,242	44.61%
225A	N Sixes	1,679	354,265	0.47%
241B	White River-Hood	19,494	842,173	2.32%
241C1, C2	N White River-Hood	19,494	481,640	4.05%
200M1	NW Cascade	252,388	4,490,160	5.62%
200M2	SW Cascades	41,549	3,171,592	1.31%
214M	NE Trask	2,005	139,129	1.44%
221T2	Sutherlin	41,091	111,715	36.78%
224T2	Callahan	52,873	69,788	75.76%
224T3	Old Blue	85,673	93,988	91.15%
241T	White River-Hood	19,494	842,173	2.32%
221R	N Indigo Bow	74,520	270,817	27.52%
224R	Tioga Unit Bow	14,752	215,419	6.85%

Bear Hunts; contact Weyerhaeuser for Spring Bear Season access policies

Hunt	Name	Fee Access Acres	Hunt Acres	Percent of Hunt
710A	Saddle Mt - Scappoose	183,458	1,058,448	17.33%
712A	Wilson-Trask	30,340	1,210,500	2.51%
716A	N Cascades	84,612	2,934,000	2.88%
717A	Alsea-Stott Mt	8,803	1,571,918	0.56%
General	SW Oregon	312,631	9,444,908	3.31%
General	W Oregon Additional	400,488	9,505,185	4.21%
General	E Oregon Additional	19,494	41,950,956	0.05%
General	Cascades Additional Non-res	313,432	10,288,738	3.05%
General	SW Additional Non-resident	196,580	6,337,649	3.10%