



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: June 24, 2021

Agenda Item: Proposed Extension of Late Elk Shoulder Season

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Minutes

Background: The commission adopted "Final Elk Season Guidelines - Flexible season structure with performance-based shoulder seasons" on October 8, 2015. From that document: "A 'shoulder season' here is defined as: *any firearm season printed in the hunting regulations that occurs outside the 5-week general firearm season between August 15 and February 15 in one or more hunting districts or portion(s) thereof.* Examples might include B licenses or general seasons extended early or late or additional sets of B licenses or permits valid early or late. Shoulder seasons here do not include early backcountry hunts, primitive weapon hunts, game damage hunts, management seasons, or season extensions." The stated intent was to supplement existing antlerless elk harvest, not replace or reduce harvest during existing general archery or firearm seasons. Elk shoulder seasons provide the ability to harvest more antlerless elk, although the distribution of the harvest may not be consistent temporally.

Several hunting districts (HDs) currently remain above objective even with late shoulder seasons. The commission may consider extending shoulder seasons in HDs that have late seasons that currently end before Feb. 15, 2022, to increase antlerless harvest or alter elk distributions. Any extension could apply to all license-permit types valid in those HDs with associated restrictions (e.g., not valid on NF lands). Currently, those elk HDs include:

262, 290, 298, 390, 391, 393, 411, 417, 502, 510, 511, 520, 530, 540, 560, 575, 580, and 590.

Public Involvement Process and Results: This meeting opens the public comment period, and comment will be accepted until 5 p.m. on July 26, 2021. The commission will be provided with all comment prior to the August meeting when a final decision will be made.

Alternatives and Analysis: A number of these elk shoulder seasons have had earlier ending dates because of public input from landowners and hunters. The public will have the opportunity to comment on this proposal and the comments will be provided to the commission before they make a final decision.

Agency Rationale and Recommendation: The department supports the adoption of the proposed late season end date extension for fall 2021–winter 2022 for public comment.

Proposed Motion:

I move the commission vote to adopt for public comment the late season end date extensions to February 15, 2022, for all relevant license-permit types for antlerless elk shoulder seasons in Hunting Districts 262, 290, 298, 390, 391, 393, 411, 417, 502, 510, 511, 520, 530, 540, 560, 575, 580, and 590.