

Deer and Elk – HD 222



Draft Changes for 2022-2023 Hunting Regulations (boundary types, LPT changes, species, etc.):

Boundary Change: Hunting District 222 is a brand-new district. It is the result of consolidating HDs 213, 215, 291 south 293 and 298.

White-tailed Deer: Offer an either-sex opportunity on the general license for the entire season, which reflects past season-structures. Introduce an unlimited over the counter Deer B license for antlerless white-tailed deer valid district wide. This replaces former B Licenses in these old HDs and opportunity is expanded to all land ownerships. Remove former Prison Ranch Deer B Licenses.

Mule Deer: Remove all unlimited antlered buck permits and introduce a new limited mule deer permit. Add 100 new B Licenses for antlerless mule deer (only valid outside National Forest and BLM boundaries and not valid on FWP WMAs). Remove the general license opportunity for youth that used to be available in the old HD 213.

Elk: Continue the current structure of brow-tined bull or antlerless elk in the archery-only season and brow-tined bull in the general season and add brand new brow-tined bull or antlerless on private land only also with the general license. Remove all antlerless elk permits and instead introduce 300 antlerless Elk B Licenses valid in the general seasons for the entire HD. Propose new 1,000 B Licenses for use during general season and early and late (NEW) shoulder seasons on private land only.

Biological Implications:

Boundary Change: There is similar habitat across these districts and similar hunting regulations have been used in these districts historically. This district is characterized with a mix of public and private land, and elk numbers and presence on private lands is greater in this district than in surrounding districts.

White-tailed Deer: White-tailed deer numbers are doing well and have been managed successfully with an either-sex season in most of the former districts in past seasons. The new Deer B Licenses will help address game damage issues in a HD that is mostly private land or leased public land, even if harvest occurs on public land.

Mule Deer: In general, in this new HD, the availability of mule deer and mule deer bucks to hunt on public land has declined. Therefore, it is important currently to be conservative with mule deer buck harvest until buck recruitment progresses district-wide over time. For antlerless mule deer management, the new larger HD incorporates a variety of biological circumstances, but overall mule deer numbers have declined from historic benchmarks but cause isolated

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game damage

on scattered private lands. The new B Licenses provide a tool for some to hunt on private lands to address these local issues.

Elk: This season structure on the general license reflects an elk population at about double its objective overall. For the new 1,000 B 222-01 Licenses, this focus on antlerless harvest on private land has proved to be an effective tool for harvesting and redistributing elk on private land at the time and from the places where elk are causing damage. FWP has seen good success with this tool in the past and see a need by way of elk counts relative to objective to apply it again. The new Elk B 222-02 License provides control on the hunting pressure applied to public lands, so that the opportunity to harvest antlerless elk in these areas can persist.

Social Implications:

For white-tailed deer, we expect loud and strong reaction to the removal of the deer B licenses because some hunters have valued this opportunity in the past. For the new deer b over the counter license, this is a different strategy for harvest than in the past, so it will likely require a lot of conversation.

For mule deer, some hunters will be impacted by reduced hunting opportunity that results by the new limited buck permit and we are likely to hear reactions to that. For the new mule deer B licenses, FWP expects comments from landowners as they consider how to apply this tool to their game damage situations.

For elk general license opportunities, FWP expects support along with some concerns. Concerns raised by sportsmen include that FWP may lose management precision with expanded hunting districts. There is a concern, and maybe a limiting social concern, that this season type will overwhelm Block Management areas and those landowners. We will continue to work on this and refine it as public involvement ramps up.

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