

Deer & elk – HD 360



Draft Changes for 2022-2023 Hunting Regulations:

Combine the current Hunting Districts 360 and 362 into a new district, HD 360. Small redistricting of HD 360 near Big Sky.

- General elk license: Valid for brow-tined bull/antlerless elk archery and rifle season.
- Elk B license 398-00: 500 antlerless elk B licenses; was valid in HDs 360 and 362, now would be given the new number 360-00 to reflect new district name.
- General deer license: No change.
- Antlerless white-tailed deer B license 399-00: Valid in the proposed new HD 360.

Biological Implications:

This follows the regulation simplification directive by combining hunting districts where possible. These two districts share elk herds and management challenges. The elk B license had administrative number 398-00 because it was valid in both districts. When combined, it can be given a simple HD-specific number 360-00.

The boundary change by Big Sky was proposed due to data from research on the resident elk herd in the under-objective HD 310. The elk made significant use of that old portion of HD 360. Incorporating it into HD 310 would help protect that under-objective wintering population due to the more restrictive elk regulations in that district.

Allowing the HD 399-00 white-tailed deer B license through the new district is because white-tailed deer are densely populated in areas of HD 360 where they cause damage and disease concerns. HD 360 was in the 399-00 package before. However, there are few white-tailed deer in HD 362. The addition of HD 362 into this district could mean limiting growth of WTD populations in this district. This reduces potential for CWD but also reduces future hunting opportunity.

Social Implications:

For elk, this is expected to be relatively acceptable because it retains liberal harvest strategies and would not change on-the-ground management. It would, however, make interpretation of future hunter harvest data more challenging as it would render lower-resolution information for hunters and for the biologist. It may make some game damage issues easier, but some may become more challenging as we would have multiple hunts within the same district. Currently that is hard to manage off one hunt roster.

Some hunters may be concerned that this takes too heavy a hand on white-tailed deer management.

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The boundary change could result in some perceived loss to hunters no longer able to hunt antlerless elk in certain portions of the Big Sky area. It could cause some concern by some homeowners in Big Sky who may get landscaping damage from elk, but hunting is also limited in Big Sky. There is little to no agriculture in the area, so no crop game damage problems are expected.

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