

Shoulder Season Performance

The primary intent of a shoulder season is to help reduce the population in a hunting district or group of hunting districts. Shoulder seasons are designed to supplement existing harvest, not replace or reduce harvest during the existing general archery and firearms seasons. To reduce a population in a given year, the total harvest for all seasons combined – archery-only, 5-week general and shoulder season – must exceed the number of calves “recruited” or added into the population the previous spring. That is, annual harvest must exceed annual recruitment (annual “calf crop”). To assess shoulder season performance the following harvest criteria will be used to assess performance. This performance assessment will be used to determine whether FWP proposes to maintain or remove shoulder seasons and will also be used by the Commission in assessing the decision to maintain, adjust, or remove shoulder seasons. Annual performance information will be posted on the public website and will be part of annual reviews with the Commission and any associated season-setting process. While shoulder seasons will be focused primarily on private lands, implementation and assessment will be done at the hunting district(s) level. For the first shoulder season proposal in a specific hunting district, criteria are not used as entry criteria but are assessed in the years following implementation. While the criteria are couched in the context of three years, performance information will be posted annually for public review and the Commission may remove a shoulder season at any time it is determined criteria are not and will not be met. Subsequent shoulder season proposals in the same area would require meeting general season harvest criteria as *entry* criteria unless the proposal is otherwise consistent with fundamental objectives and enjoys broad, expressed support from landowners, sportsmen, FWP, and Commission. ^d

Shoulder Season Harvest Criteria

1. During the past 3 years^a the number of bulls harvested during the archery-only and 5-week general seasons combined (not including the shoulder season) is more than half (>50%) the number of bulls recruited^{b,c} during that 3-year period **AND**
2. During the past 3 years^a the number of cow elk harvested during the archery-only and 5-week general seasons combined (not including the shoulder season) is more than half (>50%) the number of cows recruited^{b,c} during the 3-year period **AND**
3. During the past 3 years^a total harvest of cows during all seasons combined (archery-only, 5-week general and shoulder season) is greater than the total number of cows recruited^{b,c} during the 3-year period **AND**

4. During the past 3 years^a total harvest of all elk during all seasons combined (archery-only, 5-week general and shoulder season) is greater than the total number of all elk recruited^{b,c} during the 3-year period **OR**
5. If harvest criteria have not been met due to clear and widely accepted extenuating circumstances (e.g., weather, forest fire, etc.), the shoulder season may be continued, as long as access to elk during the general season is not considered to be the main reason harvest criteria are not being met. If lack of access during the general season is the main reason for not meeting harvest criteria, then the hunting district(s) or a portion of the hunting district may, at the Commission's discretion, shift to antlerless only.

OR:

6. Other shoulder seasons not subject to the above harvest criteria are allowed if they are consistent with the fundamental objectives and have broad, expressed support from landowners, sportsmen, FWP and the Commission. The Devil's Kitchen Working Group represents one example of this sort of significant and diverse collaboration. While the Devil's Kitchen Working Group is not the only possible manifestation of diverse and significant support it does represent the intended level of collaboration and is identified here as a standard against which other collaborations/support will be measured. To ensure this standard of broad and diverse collaboration is met, the Commission shall review the nature and amount of landowner and hunter support when considering any shoulder season proposal under this guidance.^d