



Wildlife Division
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
December 12, 2018

Dear Interested Person:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is requesting public review and comment on the following items. Supporting information on this item can be found on our website under “Opportunity for Public Comment” at fwp.mt.gov/hunting/ or directly by using the links below.

2019-20 Biennial WMA Public Use Rules – Proposed

Public use rules for Wildlife Management Areas, Wildlife Habitat Protection Areas, and Fish Conservation Areas are adopted by the commission on a biennial schedule. FWP is recommending retaining existing rules with one addition. A copy of the proposed rules with red underlined edits is included on our website. The new rule pertains to camping on the Beartooth WMA, restricting camping to designated areas, and prohibiting camping on the Whitetail Prairie addition of the WMA. This new rule is intended to help manage camping activities, reduce user conflicts for some portions of the WMA, and minimize resource impacts/habitat disturbances.

Mule deer season changes in HDs 502, 510, 520 & 575 for 2019-Proposed

FWP proposes to change the 2019 mule deer hunting regulations in HDs 502, 510, 520, and 575 to address CWD, which was found in these HDs in late 2017 and early 2018. FWP is proposing this change outside of the regular biennial cycle because of CWD. Long-term CWD management, as described in the *Montana CWD Management Plan*, is aimed at maintaining low densities of deer and low buck:doe ratios in hunting districts with CWD and adjacent hunting districts to keep disease prevalence low and prevent disease spread. We are proposing to manage for lower buck:doe ratios because bucks are two to three times more likely to be infected with CWD and more likely to spread it through the population.

Specific changes proposed are:

- HD 502 change the general mule deer season from buck-only to either-sex.

- HD 510 eliminate the unlimited 510-50 buck mule deer permit and establish an either-sex mule deer season.
- HD 520 change the general mule deer season from buck only to either-sex in that portion of HD 520 lying east of Highway 212.
- HD 575 increase 575-00 antlerless mule deer B license from 250 to 500 and increase the biennial range from 5-200 to 5-750. This proposal is outside the current biennial range and requires commission action.

Elk Shoulder seasons for 2019

FWP proposes to maintain the current season structure in all districts with performance-based shoulder seasons, including early and late seasons for the 2019 license year, which would mean the shoulder seasons would run until February 2020, to allow for a more comprehensive three-year evaluation of season performance in late summer or early fall 2019. This follows the *Final Elk Season Guidelines: Flexible season structure with performance-based shoulder seasons* adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Commission on Oct. 08, 2015.

TO MAKE A COMMENT

For further clarification or additional materials, you may call the Wildlife Division office at 406-444-2612 or email at fwpwld@mt.gov. Comments will be accepted: online by using any of the links below; in writing sent to the address above; and by email to fwpwld@mt.gov.

COMMENT PERIOD DEADLINE & FINAL ADOPTION MEETING

All proposed items will be accepting public comments until **Friday, January 18, 2019 at 5 p.m.** with final adoption at the **February** Commission Meeting.

✓ **2019-20 Biennial WMA Public Use Rules-Proposed**

<http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2018/biennialWMArules.html>

✓ **Mule deer season changes in HDs 502, 510, 520 & 575 for 2019-Proposed**

<http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2018/muleDeerSeasonChanges.html>

✓ **Elk Shoulder seasons for 2019-Proposed**

<http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2018/elkShoulderSeasons.html>