

Justification and Explanation of 2012 Big Game Season Amendments

Pronghorn

- Pronghorn pioneering and herd growth provides for opportunity to open new rifle and archery hunts in Units 211, 212, Esmeralda County
- Additional nonresident hunts (rifle and archery) in unit groups where tag quotas have reach a level that affords at least 1 nonresident tag
- Muzzleloader seasons for all Washoe County unit groups were recommended in 2011 and supported by Washoe County CAB; providing additional hunting opportunity during separate season

Elk

- Introduce bull depredation hunt for Unit 145 (primarily the Fish Creek Range) where a small herd has established. This is in support of the Central Nevada Elk Plan that precludes management of elk in this unit.
- A review was made of all the bull and cow seasons based on concerns of “continual elk seasons are impacting the elk herds”. Elk herds are all showing strong herd growth, with some exceeding population objectives and demanding more successful harvest to slow elk herd growth. It was also noted that though seasons seem to be “nonstop” through much of the fall, hunting pressure intensity is more focused at the beginning of a season and is not throughout the entire area of elk distribution. Therefore, 2012 recommendations seek to increase available hunting days where appropriate.
- For the sake of consistency and to reduce confusion among bull elk hunters, set bull seasons across all unit groups in late October through early December to have the same season dates 10/22 – 11/5, 11/6 – 11/20, and 11/21 – 12/4.
- Eliminate early 072, 074 bull rifle hunt to accommodate new bull muzzleloader season (9/17 – 9/30 as recommended in 2011 (see explanation below).
- 2011 season recommendations for Unit Groups 061,071; 062-068, 072,074; 073, and 075 included new bull and cow elk season structure to spread hunter pressure and maintain success rates in early and late seasons to meet population objectives. Set earlier bull muzzleloader season to accommodate earlier split rifle seasons to end before late November when road access is severely limited due to weather events in late fall and concern of elk that disperse to Idaho typically in November; The Commission in 2011 mistakenly approved bull muzzleloader seasons to overlap with cow rifle seasons .
- 2011 recommendations included split cow elk rifle seasons in October and a late season for most of the elk herds to increase cow elk harvest to meet population objectives. The Commission in 2011 mistakenly only approved 2 of 13 of these necessary seasons and completely eliminated the October cow elk season in 6 elk herds, and without this season we are unable to properly manage these herds. The 2012 amendments would restore these seasons. Made a consistent Oct 20 cow elk rifle season closing date statewide to reduce confusion (some were Oct 19). The series of special cow elk hunts for the Atlanta Farms were eliminated because past hunts and landowner hazing have accomplished the necessary elk control on crop depredation. Added long cow elk rifle season in Unit 145 to remove cow elk.
- Eliminate an ineffective break between bull archery and muzzleloader seasons to extend archery season.

Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goat

- Bighorn pioneering from the Tobin Range has provided opportunity to open a new desert bighorn hunt in Unit 153 (formerly Unit 151), the Fish Creek Mountains in Lander County
- Due to the removal of an estray domestic sheep in the heart of the East Walker River bighorn herd habitat fall 2011, the potential that interaction occurred that could cause a bighorn disease event, and ongoing but yet inconclusive surveillance efforts, Unit 204 will be added to adjacent Unit 202 until adult bighorn survival in Unit 204 is confirmed.
- A need existed to expand desert bighorn hunt units available to nonresident s because of the 10% nonresident rule to accommodate large increases in the total statewide tags over the last few years. 2011 recommendations to add more units to the 3251 hunt were mistakenly denied forcing the increased number of nonresident tags into a limited number of units. The goal is to identify desert bighorn hunt units with larger quotas for the nonresident hunts. Almost 6,000 nonresident applicants apply for desert bighorn tags each year.
- Close Unit 066 to California Bighorn hunting due to a bighorn dieoff that occurred at the same time that 2 estray domestic sheep were removed from the core occupied bighorn habitat in late summer 2011 (along with 2 previous estray sheep events occurring earlier in the year) in the Snowstorm Mountains.
- Close nonresident hunt 8251 Units 066,068 and replace with Unit 034 due to bighorn dieoff in Unit 066.
- Open a Rocky Mountain bighorn hunt in Unit 091 (interstate hunt with Utah) based on recent survey of adequate mature rams.
- Clean up the Nonresident mountain goat hunt to represent the decision made in the 2011 big game quota commission regulation to combine Unit 101 and 102 for a single nonresident hunt 7251.

Mule Deer

- Open antlerless hunt in Unit 051 and Area 6 to reduce the herd size in proportion to its limited available and functional winter range due to catastrophic late 2011 wildfires. Antlerless hunts for Units 043-046 and 101,102,104 were eliminated by the Commission in 2011 with no biological justification. An antlerless hunt for Units 043-046 would be beneficial to reduce the herd size in proportion to its limited available winter range due to past and recent wildfires. Area 10 mule deer herd based on dampened fawn recruitment and poor herd performance in the presence of predator control shows signs of reaching its habitat carrying capacity and would continue to benefit from an antlerless hunt.
- Through the Commission's actions in 2011, several season inconsistencies were generated with different season dates for the same unit group and weapon type among the Junior 1107, 1331 and Nonresident guided 1235 hunts. The amendment attempts to correct most of these inconsistencies for 011-013; 014; 192; 195; 194,196; and 241-245.
- In 2011, 10 days were eliminated from the late split rifle season for White Pine County units with no biological or social justification. This amendment restores the consistent 2nd late season dates of 10/21 -11/5 that exists for all other unit groups in the state.
- Units 192, 194, and 196 (Carson Range) – eliminate late interstate hunts for firearms because of growing conflicts over hunter congestion in urban wildland areas; maintain late-season archery hunt that has greater public acceptance and focus it on the interstate herd, not the resident herd; have single muzzleloader hunt in September and move single rifle season to November to coincide with all other deer rifle hunts along the California border.

- Eliminate late season rifle hunt in Area 24 (recommended in 2011 also) due to concerns over additional harvest by the “add-on” special tagholders (PIW , Heritage, Silver State, and landowner compensation) and continued “trophy spotlight” put on this area.
- In 2011, archery seasons were moved forward to start on August 8 recognizing that antler growth is still occurring into mid August. To be consistent with starting seasons on a standard date (1, 5, 10, 20, etc), it is recommended to start on August 10.