

2015-2017 Hunting Season Setting

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Wildlife Program**

Season Setting Process

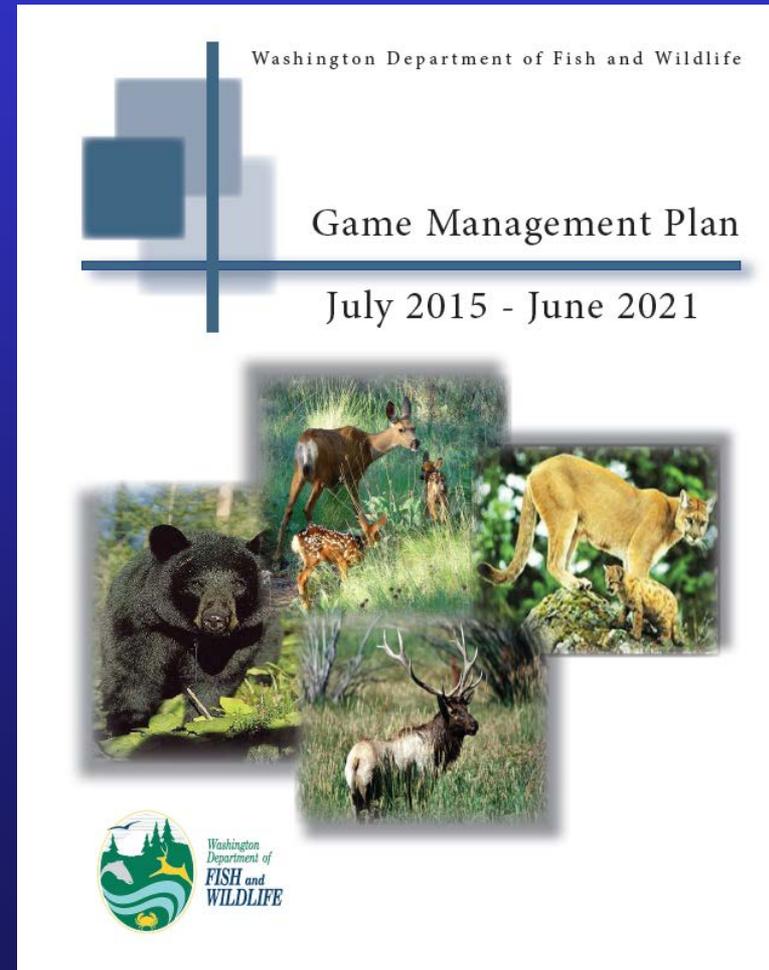
3 Phases

- Phase 1 – Scoping - Identify Major Issues
 - Example: Hunter Recruitment and Retention
- Phase 2 – Refining Issues and Creating Alternatives
 - Provide more special permits for hunters over 65
 - Provide more youth opportunity
- Phase 3 – Developing Recommendations for rule proposals
 - Provide 15% of antlerless deer permits to youth

Phase 1 - Issue Scoping

Identified 23 major hunting season issues that were consistent with the 2015-21 Draft Game Management Plan – June/July 2014

- Significant public input to develop the Game Management Plan



Phase 1 - Issue Scoping (cont.)

- Game Management Advisory Council (GMAC) reviewed proposed major hunting issues and provided feedback – June 7, 2014
- WDFW Regional staff identified issues (June – July)
- Conducted an online “Scoping Survey” to collect suggestions from the general public (June 13 through July 18, 2014)
- Met with regional staff to discuss and refine issues– July 29-30, 2014

Internet-Based "Issues" Survey

(June 13 – July 18, 2014)

- Over 11,000 comments from 1,510 individuals.

The top 7 issues receiving comments were:

- Baiting for deer and elk hunting
- Special Permit Drawings
- Mule deer hunting
- Hunter access fees on private industrial timberlands
- Changes to hunting equipment regulations
- 4 pt. antler restrictions for white-tailed deer in GMUs 117 & 121
- Early muzzleloader elk season

Phase 2 - Alternatives

- Department staff refined issues into “Alternatives” based on public comments received – August, 2014
- Collected comments online for “Major Issues & Alternatives” (public comment period – August 18 to September 22)
- Held six (6) public meetings to discuss Hunting Season Issues and Alternatives (Ellensburg, Moses Lake, Spokane, Everett, Tacoma, and Olympia) – August 19 – 28, 2014
- Tribal Coordination – August 2014 – February 2015

Identifying Alternatives

- Over 1,500 public comments were collected
- Major topics:
 - Deer and Elk hunting seasons
 - Equipment regulations
 - Permit drawings
 - Hunter recruitment and retention strategies

Phase 3- Recommendations

- Headquarters developed guidelines and Regional staff developed rule recommendations - **November 2014**
- Discussed proposed 3-year hunting season recommendations with the Game Management Advisory Council (GMAC) – **December 6, 2014**
- Collected Public comment on proposed rules through the WDFW website (**February 4 – 24, 2015**)
- HQ Reviewed public comments and worked with Regional staff on rule adjustments – **March 2015**
- Discussed final recommendations with GMAC - **March 2015**

Public Comments on Rule Proposals

Received 4,280 comments from 1,436 individuals.

The top 6 issues receiving comments were:

- Deer & Elk Baiting (1,564 comments)
- Equipment Requirements (416 comments)
- Elk General/Special Permits (382 comments)
- Deer General/Special Permits (334 comments)
- Fall & Spring Black Bear (237 comments)
- Multi-season Big Game Permits & Reduced Rate Combo elk hunting license (189 comments)

Increased Hunting Opportunities

- Adding 2 days to the modern firearm season for mule deer
- Shifting general season archery elk to start the Sat. after Labor Day
- More GMUs open for Elk during early muzzleloader season
- Increasing moose permit opportunities in northeast Washington
- More antlerless whitetail opportunity in the northeast Washington
- Additional special permit deer opportunity for youth, senior, and hunters with disabilities.
- More multi-season permit opportunity
- Additional antlerless elk opportunity in the Colockum
- More dove hunting opportunity
- Increasing cougar hunting opportunity by extending the season
- Doubling the amount of spring bear permits available in northeast Washington

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Final Steps

- Present recommendations to the Fish and Wildlife Commission and gather public testimony. – **March 2015**
- Present final recommendations to the Commission for decision – **April 2015**

Questions?

