

Cougar Hunting Seasons and Regulations

232-28-297

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Summary Sheet

Meeting dates: April 8-9, 2016
Agenda item: Cougar Hunting Seasons and Regulations – Rule Decision
Presenter(s): Anis Aoude, Carnivore Section Manager, Wildlife Program

Background summary:

Department staff will brief the Commission on the proposed amendments to WAC 232-28-297 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 Cougar hunting seasons and regulations.

As described in the 2015-2021 Game Management Plan, the Department manages for stable cougar populations in all areas of the state, except the Columbia Basin and Puget Sound areas where the habitat is not suitable for cougar. To achieve that objective, the Department manages for a 12-16 percent harvest rate of an estimated cougar density within each of the 49 population management units or PMUs (PMUs not applied to Columbia Basin and Puget Sound units; see 2015-2021 Game Management Plan, pages 111-112). This 12-16 percent rate is based on research that indicated an estimated cougar population growth rate of 14 percent, plus or minus two percent.

Within each PMU, the Department has estimated cougar density based on the results from six study areas across the state. The Department is recommending a harvest guideline that represents a 12-16 percent harvest rate of the mean estimated density for each PMU. This recommendation balances recreational opportunity with cougar population management objectives. Other harvest guidelines that incorporate the uncertainty in density estimates will be discussed and may be considered by the Commission. The Department will provide information on these harvest rates and how they fit into the recreational opportunity and cougar population management strategies outlined in the Game Management Plan.

The Department is recommending a status quo hunt season framework; that is, an any weapon, early season from September 1 to December 31, followed by an any weapon, late season from January 1 to April 30. Each PMU has a harvest guideline that corresponds to a 12-16 percent harvest rate. Only recreational hunter-harvested cougar count toward the harvest guideline. The cougar season would not be closed in any PMU during the early season, even if the guideline is reached prior to January 1. If a PMU harvest guideline is reached during the late season, the Director (under existing Director authorities) may close the season. Starting January 1, cougar hunters may hunt in any PMU until April 30, or until the harvest guideline is reached and the Director closes the seasons, whichever occurs first.

Policy Issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:

- Establish cougar hunting seasons with a 12-16 percent harvest rate guideline and apply that harvest guideline to each PMU.
 - Maintain an open cougar season from September 1- December 31. Under Director authority, close cougar hunt season in PMUs that reach or exceed the harvest guideline starting January 1.
 - Continue to conduct late-cougar season Jan 1 to April 30 of the following year.
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Public involvement process used and what you learned:

The Department conducted an extensive public involvement process to develop the 2015-2017 hunting season recommendations. The Department notified approximately 28,000 individuals and organizations informing them of the opportunity to provide comment on these proposed regulations. Additionally, these individuals and organizations were informed of the opportunity to provide verbal testimony at the March 18-19, 2016 Commission Meeting in Moses Lake.

Action requested (identify the specific Commission decisions you are seeking):

Amend WAC 232-28-297 using the Department recommended option (option 1).

Draft motion language:

I move to amend WAC 232-28-297 using the Department recommended option (option 1).

Justification for Commission action:

To provide cougar hunting opportunity that is consistent with achieving game plan management objectives.

Communications plan:

WDFW Website
News Releases
Hunting Pamphlet

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 15-10-066, filed 5/1/15, effective 6/1/15)

WAC 232-28-297 ((2015-2016~~7~~)) 2016-2017((~~7~~)) and 2017-2018 Cougar hunting seasons and regulations. (1) As used in this section and in the context of general cougar hunting seasons, "harvest guideline" means the estimated allowable harvest; the actual harvest may be less than or more than the harvest guideline.

(2) General cougar season is September 1 to April 30 of the following year.

Option 1

Season dates and harvest guidelines for each season:

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline	Early Hunting Season	Late Hunting Season	Legal Weapon
GMU 101	((10-12)) 7-9	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 105	((2-3)) 2	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 108, 111	((7-8)) 5-6	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 113	((6-8)) 5-6	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 117	((8-10)) 6-8	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 121	((6-8)) 5-6	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 124, 127, 130	7-9	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 133, 136, 139, 142, 248, 254, 260, 262, 266, 269, 272, 278, 284, 290, 330, 334, 371, 372, 373, 379, 381	None	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 149, 154, <u>157</u> , 162, 163	((6-7)) 4-5	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 145, 166, 175, 178	((5-6)) 3-4	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 169, 172, 181, 186	((4-5)) 3	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline	Early Hunting Season	Late Hunting Season	Legal Weapon
GMU 203	((4-6)) <u>5</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Mar. 31	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 204	((9-11)) <u>6-8</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 209, 215	((4-5)) <u>4</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 218, 231	((6-7)) <u>5-6</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 224	((2-3)) <u>2</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 233, 239	((3-4)) <u>4</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 242, 243	((6-7)) <u>5-6</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 244, 246, 247	5-6	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 245, 250	5-6	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 249, 251	((7-8)) <u>5-6</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 328, 329, 335	((8-10)) <u>6-7</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 336, 340, 342, 346	((5-7)) <u>5-6</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 352, 356, 360, 364, 368	((5-7)) <u>5-6</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 382, 388	3-4	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 407	None	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 418, 426, 437	11-15	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 448, 450	((9-13)) <u>10-13</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 454	None	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 460	((5-7)) <u>5-6</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 466, 485, 490	((2-3)) <u>3</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 501, 504, 506, 530	((7-10)) <u>8-10</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 503, 505, 520, 550	6-8	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 510, 513	3-4	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 516	((3-5)) <u>4</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs <u>522</u> , 524, 554, 556	((3-4)) <u>3</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 560	5-6	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 564	((2-3)) <u>1</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 568	((2-3)) <u>2</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 572	((3-4)) <u>3</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 574, 578	((3-5)) <u>4</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 601, 602, 603, 612	5-7	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 607, 615	((4-5)) <u>4</u>	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 618, 636, 638	4-5	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline	Early Hunting Season	Late Hunting Season	Legal Weapon
GMUs 621, 624, 627, 633	None	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 642, 648, 651	6-8	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 652, 666	None	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 653, 654	((4-6)) 5	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMUs 658, 660, 663, 672, 673, 681, 684, 699	9-12	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon
GMU 667	3-4	Sept. 1 - Dec. 31	Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	Any Legal Weapon

(a) In hunt areas with a harvest guideline, the cougar late hunting season may close on or after January 1st in one or more GMUs if cougar harvest meets or exceeds the guideline.

(b) In hunt areas with a harvest guideline, starting January 1st, cougar hunters may hunt cougar from January 1st until the hunt area harvest guideline has been met, and the department has notified licensed cougar hunters by posting the hunt area closure on the ((departments)) department's web site and on the toll-free cougar hunting hotline, or April 30th, whichever occurs first.

Option 2

Season dates and harvest guidelines for each season:

Hunt Area	Harvest Guideline	Early Hunting Season	Late Hunting Season	Legal Weapon
<u>GMU 101</u>	<u>8-10</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 105</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 108, 111</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 113</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 117</u>	<u>7-9</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 121</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 124, 127, 130</u>	<u>8-10</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 133, 136, 139, 142, 248, 254, 260, 262, 266, 269, 272, 278, 284, 290, 330, 334, 371, 372, 373, 379, 381</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 149, 154, 157, 162, 163</u>	<u>5-6</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 145, 166, 175, 178</u>	<u>4-5</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>

<u>Hunt Area</u>	<u>Harvest Guideline</u>	<u>Early Hunting Season</u>	<u>Late Hunting Season</u>	<u>Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 169, 172, 181, 186</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 203</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Mar. 31</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 204</u>	<u>7-9</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 209, 215</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 218, 231</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 224</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 233, 239</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 242, 243</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 244, 246, 247</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 245, 250</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 249, 251</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 328, 329, 335</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 336, 340, 342, 346</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 352, 356, 360, 364, 368</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 382, 388</u>	<u>4-5</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 407</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 418, 426, 437</u>	<u>12-16</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 448, 450</u>	<u>11-14</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 454</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 460</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 466, 485, 490</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 501, 504, 506, 530</u>	<u>9-11</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 503, 505, 520, 550</u>	<u>7-9</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 510, 513</u>	<u>4-5</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 516</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 522, 524, 554, 556</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 560</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 564</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 568</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 572</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 574, 578</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 601, 602, 603, 612</u>	<u>6-8</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 607, 615</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 618, 636, 638</u>	<u>5-6</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 621, 624, 627, 633</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 642, 648, 651</u>	<u>7-9</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 652, 666</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 653, 654</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 658, 660, 663, 672, 673, 681, 684, 699</u>	<u>10-13</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 667</u>	<u>4-5</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>

(a) In hunt areas with a harvest guideline, the cougar late hunting season may close on or after January 1st in one or more GMUs if cougar harvest meets or exceeds the guideline.

(b) In hunt areas with a harvest guideline, starting January 1st, cougar hunters may hunt cougar from January 1st until the hunt area harvest guideline has been met, and the department has notified licensed cougar hunters by posting the hunt area closure on the department's web site and on the toll-free cougar hunting hotline, or April 30th, whichever occurs first.

Option 3

Season dates and harvest guidelines for each season:

<u>Hunt Area</u>	<u>Harvest Guideline</u>	<u>Early Hunting Season</u>	<u>Late Hunting Season</u>	<u>Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 101</u>	<u>9-11</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 105</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 108, 111</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 113</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 117</u>	<u>8-10</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 121</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 124, 127, 130</u>	<u>9-11</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 133, 136, 139, 142, 248, 254, 260, 262, 266, 269, 272, 278, 284, 290, 330, 334, 371, 372, 373, 379, 381</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 149, 154, 157, 162, 163</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 145, 166, 175, 178</u>	<u>5-6</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 169, 172, 181, 186</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 203</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Mar. 31</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 204</u>	<u>8-10</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 209, 215</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 218, 231</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 224</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 233, 239</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 242, 243</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 244, 246, 247</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 245, 250</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 249, 251</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 328, 329, 335</u>	<u>8-9</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 336, 340, 342, 346</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 352, 356, 360, 364, 368</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 382, 388</u>	<u>5-6</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 407</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 418, 426, 437</u>	<u>13-17</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>

<u>Hunt Area</u>	<u>Harvest Guideline</u>	<u>Early Hunting Season</u>	<u>Late Hunting Season</u>	<u>Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 448, 450</u>	<u>12-15</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 454</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 460</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 466, 485, 490</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 501, 504, 506, 530</u>	<u>10-12</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 503, 505, 520, 550</u>	<u>8-10</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 510, 513</u>	<u>5-6</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 516</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 522, 524, 554, 556</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 560</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 564</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 568</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 572</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 574, 578</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 601, 602, 603, 612</u>	<u>7-9</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 607, 615</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 618, 636, 638</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 621, 624, 627, 633</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 642, 648, 651</u>	<u>8-10</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 652, 666</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 653, 654</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMUs 658, 660, 663, 672, 673, 681, 684, 699</u>	<u>11-14</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>
<u>GMU 667</u>	<u>5-6</u>	<u>Sept. 1 - Dec. 31</u>	<u>Jan. 1 - Apr. 30</u>	<u>Any Legal Weapon</u>

(a) In hunt areas with a harvest guideline, the cougar late hunting season may close on or after January 1st in one or more GMUs if cougar harvest meets or exceeds the guideline.

(b) In hunt areas with a harvest guideline, starting January 1st, cougar hunters may hunt cougar from January 1st until the hunt area harvest guideline has been met, and the department has notified licensed cougar hunters by posting the hunt area closure on the department's web site and on the toll-free cougar hunting hotline, or April 30th, whichever occurs first.

(3) Harvest guideline system:

(a) All cougar killed by licensed hunters during the early and late hunting seasons, and seasons authorized under WAC 232-12-243 shall be counted toward the harvest guideline.

(b) Individual problem cougar will continue to be killed on an as-needed basis utilizing depredation permits, landowner kill permits, and WDFW depredation authority regardless of harvest guidelines.

(c) It is each cougar hunter's responsibility to verify if the cougar late hunting season is open or closed in hunt areas with a harvest guideline. Cougar hunters can verify if the season is open or closed by calling the toll-free cougar hunting hotline or visiting the department's web site.

(4) Cougar hunting season requirements and special restrictions.

(a) A valid big game hunting license which includes cougar as a species option is required to hunt cougar.

(b) The statewide bag limit is one (1) cougar per license year; excluding removals authorized under WAC 232-12-243. It is unlawful to kill or possess spotted cougar kittens or adult cougars accompanied by spotted kittens.

(c) The use of dogs to hunt cougar is prohibited; except by a commission authorized permit (WAC 232-12-243).

(d) Any person who takes a cougar must comply with the notification and sealing requirements in WAC 232-12-024.

(e) A special cougar permit is required to hunt cougar in GMU 485.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.055, 77.12.047, 77.12.150, and 77.12.240. WSR 15-10-066 (Order 15-99), § 232-28-297, filed 5/1/15, effective 6/1/15. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.055, 77.12.047, and 77.15.245. WSR 13-16-056 (Order 13-180), § 232-28-297, filed 8/1/13, effective 9/1/13. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.047. WSR 12-11-005 (Order 12-70), § 232-28-297, filed 5/2/12, effective 6/2/12.]

Summary of Public Comments Received during Official Comment Period and WDFW Response:

WAC 232-28-297 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 Cougar hunting seasons and regulations.

Summary of Comments:

We received 130 online comments on this recommendation. The most common comment (33% of comments) was from people that would like to see hound hunting as a legal method to hunt cougars. We did not consider hound hunting in this recommendation because current laws prohibit the use of hounds in sport hunting of cougars.

The second most common comment (28% of comments) was a general concern that there are too many cougars on the landscape and that there is a need to reduce cougar numbers to help struggling ungulate populations.

For comments directed at the three options, the most support was shown for the Department's recommendation (Option 1) (16% of comments). Six percent of the comments supported Option 3 while 2% supported Option 2.

The remaining comments (13%) included people that had miscellaneous suggestions that did not fit a specific category (4%), people that did not like the recommendation, but had no specific comment (3%), people that supported baiting of cougars (2%), people that had general human safety concerns (1%), people that wanted statewide hunting (1%), people that opposed cougar hunting (1%) and people that wanted the harvest reduced (1%).

Direction and Rationale:

According to our 2015-21 Game Management Plan, cougars are managed for long-term sustainability, while at the same time maximizing recreational opportunities and minimizing conflict with people. The Department based the cougar hunt guidelines on research conducted in Washington. Through that research, it was determined that a cougar harvest rate of 14% of an estimated cougar population should result in a stable cougar population and that also retains dominant cat territoriality. Since 14% is based on an estimate of reproduction and natural mortality, a range of 12-16% is used. The estimated cougar population in a hunt area (or Population Management Unit (PMU)) is based on amount of available cougar habitat in that PMU. The cougar harvest guidelines are created by combining the estimated cougar population with the 12-16% harvest rate. This approach is intended to maintain a stable cougar population on a statewide scale.

The Department has begun work to identify which, if any, ungulate populations are below population objectives. The 2015-17 Game Management Plan identified this objective as effort to help answer concerns related to predator impacts on ungulates.



PROPOSED RULE MAKING

CR-102 (June 2012)

(Implements RCW 34.05.320)

Do NOT use for expedited rule making

Agency: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Preproposal Statement of Inquiry was filed as WSR 15-24-136 on 12/2/15 and WSR 15-22-107 on 11/4/15 ; or
 Expedited Rule Making--Proposed notice was filed as WSR _____; or
 Proposal is exempt under RCW 34.05.310(4) or 34.05.330(1).

Original Notice
 Supplemental Notice to WSR _____
 Continuance of WSR _____

Title of rule and other identifying information: (Describe Subject) The subject of this proposed rule-making effort is the development and/or amendment of deer and elk seasons and permits; baiting regulations for deer and elk; deer and elk area boundaries; special closures and firearm restriction areas; importation of dead wildlife; possession of dead wildlife; reducing the spread of elk hoof disease; cougar seasons and regulations; spring black bear seasons and regulations; bighorn sheep seasons and permits; special hunting season permits; auction, raffle, and special incentive permits; landowner hunting permit program; hunting by persons with a disability; migratory waterfowl seasons, regulations, and closures; upland game bird and other small game seasons and regulations; hunter education deferrals; and other hunting regulations.

Hearing location(s):
 Moses Lake Civic Center
 401 S. Balsam
 Moses Lake, Washington 98837

Date: March 18-19, 2016 Time: 8:30 a.m.

Submit written comments to:
 Online: http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/regulations/hunting_regulations
 Name: Wildlife Program Commission Meeting Public Comments
 Address: 600 Capitol Way North
 Olympia, WA 98501-1091
 e-mail: Wildthing@dfw.wa.gov
 fax: (360) 902-2162 by (date) February 25, 2016

Assistance for persons with disabilities: Contact

Tami Lininger by February 26, 2016

TTY (800) 833-6388 or (360) 902-2267

Date of intended adoption: on or after April 8, 2016
 (Note: This is **NOT** the **effective** date)

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

See Attachment A

Reasons supporting proposal:

See Attachment A

Statutory authority for adoption: RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.020, 77.04.055, 77.12.047, 77.12.150, 77.12.240, 77.12.800, 77.32.090, 77.32.155.

Statute being implemented: RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.020, 77.04.055, 77.12.047, 77.12.150, 77.12.240, 77.12.800, 77.32.090, 77.32.155.

Is rule necessary because of a:

Federal Law? Yes No
 Federal Court Decision? Yes No
 State Court Decision? Yes No
 If yes, CITATION: Yes No
 CFR Title 50, Part 20, Migratory Bird
 Treaty Act

DATE
 February 3, 2016

NAME (type or print)
 Jacalyn Hursey

SIGNATURE *Jacalyn M. Hursey*

TITLE
 Acting Rules Coordinator

CODE REVISER USE ONLY

**OFFICE OF THE CODE REVISER
 STATE OF WASHINGTON
 FILED**

DATE: February 03, 2016

TIME: 9:33 AM

WSR 16-04-126

Agency comments or recommendations, if any, as to statutory language, implementation, enforcement, and fiscal matters:

None.

Name of proponent: (person or organization) Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

- Private
- Public
- Governmental

Name of agency personnel responsible for:

Name	Office Location	Phone
Drafting..... Nate Pamplin	Natural Resources Building, Olympia	(360) 902-2515
Implementation....Nate Pamplin	Natural Resources Building, Olympia	(360) 902-2515
Enforcement..... Steven Crown	Natural Resources Building, Olympia	(360) 902-2936

Has a small business economic impact statement been prepared under chapter 19.85 RCW or has a school district fiscal impact statement been prepared under section 1, chapter 210, Laws of 2012?

Yes. Attach copy of small business economic impact statement or school district fiscal impact statement.

A copy of the statement may be obtained by contacting:

Name:

Address:

phone () _____

fax () _____

e-mail _____

No. Explain why no statement was prepared.

These rules apply to recreational hunting and do not affect small business.

Is a cost-benefit analysis required under RCW 34.05.328?

Yes A preliminary cost-benefit analysis may be obtained by contacting:

Name:

Address:

phone () _____

fax () _____

e-mail _____

No: Please explain: This proposal does not involve hydraulics.

ATTACHMENT A

Existing Rules Proposed for Amendment

- WAC 232-12-021 Importation and retention of dead nonresident wildlife.
- WAC 232-12-228 Hunter education deferral.
- WAC 232-12-286 Reducing the spread of hoof disease—Unlawful transport of elk hooves.
- WAC 232-12-287 Possession of dead wildlife.
- WAC 232-12-828 Hunting of game birds and animals by persons with a disability.
- WAC 232-16-740 Columbia, Snake, and Yakima River waterfowl, coot, and snipe closures.
- WAC 232-28-248 Special closures and firearm restriction areas.
- WAC 232-28-283 Big game and wild turkey auction, raffle, and special incentive permits.
- WAC 232-28-286 2016, 2017, and 2018 Spring black bear seasons and regulations.
- WAC 232-28-296 Landowner hunting permits.
- WAC 232-28-297 2015-2016, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 Cougar hunting seasons and regulations.
- WAC 232-28-337 Elk area descriptions.
- WAC 232-28-342 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 Small game and other wildlife seasons and regulations.
- WAC 232-28-358 2015-2017 Elk general seasons and definitions.
- WAC 232-28-357 2015-2017 Deer general seasons and definitions.
- WAC 232-28-359 2015 Deer special permits.
- WAC 232-28-360 2016 Elk special permits.
- WAC 232-28-436 2015-2016 Migratory waterfowl seasons and regulations.
- WAC 232-28-622 2015-2017 Bighorn sheep seasons and permit quotas.
- WAC 232-28-624 Deer area descriptions.

New Rule(s) Proposed for Adoption

Department staff is requesting the Fish and Wildlife Commission to adopt one of the following three proposed rules.

- WAC 232-12-239 Baiting for the purposes of hunting deer or elk.
- WAC 232-12-245 Baiting for the purposes of hunting deer or elk.
- WAC 232-12-246 Bait volume limits for the purpose of hunting deer or elk.

WAC 232-12-021 Importation and retention of dead nonresident wildlife.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The purpose of the proposal is to add Michigan to the list of states and provinces requiring additional processing of deer, elk, and moose carcasses before they can be brought into Washington. The states and provinces listed in the WAC have confirmed chronic wasting disease (CWD) in their wild, free-ranging populations of cervids.

Reasons supporting proposal:

The proposal reduces the risk of CWD being imported into Washington State via carcasses of animals harvested in other states. Reducing disease risk helps in sustaining deer, elk, and moose populations and hunting opportunities in Washington.

WAC 232-12-228 Hunter education deferral.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The proposed rule changes will remove language pertaining to outdated practices, clarify language, and allow the department (Hunter Education and Licensing Divisions) to provide improved customer service.

Reasons supporting proposal:

The existing rules contain outdated elements that are no longer implemented. The proposal will also enable a much higher level of customer service, including: additional payment methods for the hunter education deferral; reduction or elimination of mail costs and delays; elimination of original and replacement deferral cards; opportunity for immediate hunting license purchase; and minor rule clarifications. Department cost savings will be realized via a reduction in staff time to process deferral applications and fees and the reduction or elimination of mailing and printing costs.

WAC 232-12-239 Baiting for the purposes of hunting deer or elk.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The purpose of this proposal is to further the public discussion regarding hunting deer and elk using bait. If adopted the rule would make it unlawful to use bait to hunt deer or elk for all hunters.

Reasons supporting proposal:

In the last three years the Department has been approached by hunters and landowners that do not approve of the practice of baiting for the purposes of hunting deer or elk. Additional input was received as part of the 3-year hunting season package, public process in 2015.

The non-random input the Department received via the website during the 3-year package process indicated that 23% of hunters wanted a ban on baiting with an exception for food plots and agricultural operations. Fourteen percent (14%) of hunters wanted to disallow the use of bait by hunting guides and restrict the manner and volume of baiting by hunters not using guides. A 63% majority of the hunters commenting wanted no change to the rules pertaining to baiting deer and elk.

In a random telephone survey of deer hunters conducted as part of the 2015-17 3-year package, 59% either opposed or strongly opposed baiting for deer. Deer hunters that supported or strongly supported baiting for deer made up 21% of the respondents. Eleven percent (11%) of those surveyed were neutral and 9% didn't know.

In the same random telephone survey, 68% of elk hunters either opposed or strongly opposed baiting for elk. Elk hunters that supported or strongly supported using bait to hunt elk were 14%. Eleven percent (11%) of those surveyed were neutral and 8% didn't know.

Although some potential exists, the Department has no data at this time to suggest that the practice of baiting for deer and elk hunting has a negative population or natural resource effect.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission discussed this issue in March and April 2015 and decided to not make changes to the existing rule (baiting for deer and elk hunting is allowed). Since then, the Department has facilitated further discussion with a group of hunters interested in the issue. That group met several times over the past year. Through that process, and input received from the Game Management Advisory Council in 2015, it is clear that there is no consensus on this issue other than scents and natural agricultural practices should not be considered baiting. Members expressed several points of view ranging from banning all baiting for deer and elk hunting to retaining the ability to bait using any quantity. The committee discussed alternatives to the “all or none” scenario, which resulted in several options that will be presented to the Commission for discussion and possible decision. The Commission will consider options that range from banning all baiting to retaining all baiting, including two specific options that consider a volume limit on the amount of bait allowed.

WAC 232-12-245 Baiting for the purposes of hunting deer or elk.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The purpose of this proposal is to further the public discussion regarding hunting deer and elk using bait. If adopted the rule would make it unlawful to hunt deer or elk using bait in excess of 10 gallons and bait located closer than 200 yards from another bait site.

Reasons supporting proposal:

In the last three years the Department has been approached by hunters and landowners that do not approve of the practice of baiting for the purposes of hunting deer or elk. Additional input was received as part of the 3-year hunting season package, public process in 2015.

The non-random input the Department received via the website during the 3-year package process indicated that 23% of hunters wanted a ban on baiting with an exception for food plots and agricultural operations. Fourteen percent (14%) of hunters wanted to disallow the use of bait by hunting guides and restrict the manner and volume of baiting by hunters not using guides. A 63% majority of the hunters commenting wanted no change to the rules pertaining to baiting deer and elk.

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options that range from banning all baiting to retaining all baiting, including two specific options that consider a volume limit on the amount of bait allowed.

WAC 232-12-246 Bait volume limits for the purpose of hunting deer or elk.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The purpose of this proposal is to further the public discussion regarding hunting deer and elk using bait. If adopted the rule would make it unlawful to hunt deer or elk using bait in excess of 10 gallons.

Reasons supporting proposal:

In the last three years the Department has been approached by hunters and landowners that do not approve of the practice of baiting for the purposes of hunting deer or elk. Additional input was received as part of the 3-year hunting season package, public process in 2015.

The non-random input the Department received via the website during the 3-year package process indicated that 23% of hunters wanted a ban on baiting with an exception for food plots and agricultural operations. Fourteen percent (14%) of hunters wanted to disallow the use of bait by hunting guides and restrict the manner and volume of baiting by hunters not using guides. A 63% majority of the hunters commenting wanted no change to the rules pertaining to baiting deer and elk.

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WAC 232-12-286 Reducing the spread of hoof disease—Unlawful transport of elk hooves.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The purpose of this proposal is to allow, under certain circumstances, the legal transport of elk hooves coming from GMUs with treponeme associated hoof disease. The amendment would help facilitate current research on treponeme associated hoof disease and make the emergency rule permanent.

Reasons supporting proposal: This proposal helps facilitate research on treponeme associated hoof disease in elk while also helping reduce the probability of the disease spreading.

WAC 232-12-287 Possession of dead wildlife.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

Currently there is no legal way to salvage and possess deer, elk, or moose that have been killed by a motor vehicle. Per a request by the Fish and Wildlife Commission, the Department has investigated a strategy that would allow salvage and possession of those animals. The proposed amendments to WAC 232-12-287 would facilitate the legal salvage of road-killed deer and elk.

Reasons supporting proposal: This proposal would allow citizens to salvage meat from a deer or elk that has been killed in a vehicle collision.

WAC 232-12-828 Hunting of game birds and animals by persons with a disability.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The proposal is intended to reinstitute a rule that was deleted in 2014 related to shooting firearms from vehicles. The anticipated effects would be greater clarity for hunters and enforcement officers.

Reasons supporting proposal:

Currently, all hunters with disabilities are permitted to shoot from their vehicles under RCW 77.32.238. In 2014, WAC 232-12-828 provided language that described how hunters with disabilities can shoot from a vehicle. This language was removed in preparation for an RCW change that was anticipated in 2015. That RCW change never occurred. Hunters with disabilities currently do not have defined guidance for shooting from a vehicle. Recommended language addition reinstitutes how, when, and where hunters with disabilities may shoot from their vehicles. WDFW Enforcement staff and county prosecutors have requested more defined language. The proposed rule change is recommended to stay in rule until the RCW is changed.

WAC 232-16-740 Columbia, Snake, and Yakima River waterfowl, coot, and snipe closures.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The proposal amends WAC 232-16-740, Columbia, Snake, and Yakima River waterfowl, coot, and snipe closures, to correct an inaccurate boundary description for the closure on the Snake River contained in subsection 6.

Reasons supporting proposal:

Need to provide a clear, accurate description of the boundary for effective enforcement and conservation of migratory bird resources.

WAC 232-28-248 Special closures and firearm restriction areas.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The purpose of the proposal is to change the Special Closures and Firearm Restriction Areas rule to clarify a restriction in Grays Harbor County. The restriction in question should only apply during modern firearm deer and elk seasons. The restriction is unnecessary during other times of the year. The restriction still allows hunting to be used as a management tool.

Reasons supporting proposal:

Special closures and firearm restriction areas allow the Fish and Wildlife Commission to restrict or close hunting activity in certain areas and during certain time periods to optimize safety, discourage trespass on restricted lands, and protect sensitive species.

WAC 232-28-283 Big game and wild turkey auction, raffle, and special incentive permits.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

We are recommending a few minor changes to big game and wild turkey auction, raffle, and special incentive permits hunting for 2016: 1) A new "Three-deer auction permit", valid September 1 - December 31. 2) Allow the Department to extend the areas open to the holder of the single, statewide moose auction permit beyond those open to holders of moose draw permits. 3) Remove GMU 175 from areas available to the holder of the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep raffle permit.

Reasons supporting proposal:

1) Increase hunter interest in deer hunting and provide additional revenue for the deer/elk section. This was suggested by a citizen group as likely to be attractive to hunters, and will help raise revenue and interest in deer hunting without adverse effects to the resource. This will complement the existing, three-deer raffle permit, which contains similar stipulations.

2) Increase revenue available to monitor moose populations. This was suggested by involved citizens as a way to enhance interest in moose and increase available revenue for moose. For the past 3 years, the Department has documented an expanding front of moose colonization to the west and south of the primary moose areas. We have not had resources to formally survey these areas, but know that there are a few large bull moose that could safely be harvested without interrupting this expansion. We recommend beginning with the auction permit, because hunters bidding for this generally do their own scouting, and thus can actually help us understand moose distribution in these areas.

3) GMU 175 represents the area typically used by the Asotin bighorn sheep herd. Although the herd appears to be slowly rebounding from a disease-related reduction, the number of mature rams has become sufficiently low to generate a biological concern. There are currently an insufficient number of rams in this herd to justify a ram hunt for 2016.

WAC 232-28-286 2016, 2017, and 2018 Spring black bear seasons and regulations.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The proposal is intended to establish harvest guidelines for 22 spring bear hunts around the state. The anticipated effects include timber damage or public safety mitigation and providing for hunting recreation within harvest levels described in the 2015-21 Game Management Plan.

Reasons supporting proposal:

Proposed harvest is anticipated to be consistent with the Game Management Plan. In addition, these proposals provide additional tools for landowners to deal with timber damage. Some proposals may help the agency address concerns over public safety.

WAC 232-28-296 Landowner hunting permits.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

This proposal modifies hunt dates on properties enrolled in WDFW's Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP) program for the 2016 hunting seasons. These sites offer special hunting opportunities to the public through permits issued by WDFW, raffles, or selection by the landowner.

Reasons supporting proposal:

Several years ago, the Fish and Wildlife Commission developed a policy to expand the private lands available to the general public for hunting. One of the programs that was authorized was the Landowner Hunting Permit Program. This program encourages landowners to provide opportunity to the general hunter in exchange for customized hunting seasons and the ability to generate funding to offset the cost of providing public access.

WAC 232-28-297 2015-2016, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 Cougar hunting seasons and regulations.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

This proposal includes three alternative options for modifying existing rules. The proposal establishes harvest guidelines for 50 cougar units around the state. Cougar guidelines are designed to provide a long season and hunting opportunity for hunters without the use of dogs (i.e., spot and stalking in snow and/or calling). The anticipated effects are harvest levels consistent with the game management plan, balancing hunting opportunity with sustainable cougar populations.

Reasons supporting proposal:

To provide early and late season hunting opportunity for hunters without the use of dogs (i.e., spot and stalking in snow and/or calling), while maintaining sustainable cougar populations.

WAC 232-28-337 Elk area descriptions.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

One new Elk Area is being proposed for Asotin County. The proposed addition is intended to reduce agricultural damage.

A change to Elk Area 6054 in Pierce County is proposed. The purpose is to make the boundary more discernable and make hunts held in the Elk Area more effective at mitigating elk damage.

The proposed change to Elk Area 6064 in Grays Harbor and Jefferson Counties removes some public land that was unnecessarily included. The Elk Area was established due to safety concerns but the original boundary included some USFS lands where this concern does not exist.

The proposal removes one Elk Area (EA 6063) in Grays Harbor and Jefferson Counties that is no longer needed.

Reasons supporting proposal:

Elk Areas allow the Fish and Wildlife Commission to adopt hunting seasons that can be conducted at a smaller scale than the Game Management Unit. Setting seasons at this scale allows for more strategic wildlife management using hunting as a tool to control populations and mitigate wildlife conflict.

WAC 232-28-342 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 Small game and other wildlife seasons and regulations.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The proposal amends WAC 232-28-342, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 Small game and other wildlife seasons and regulations, to specify legal season dates, bag limits, and open areas to hunt small game and other wildlife for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 hunting seasons. In this proposal HIP requirements are removed from WAC 232-28-342 and are included in WAC 232-28-436.

Reasons supporting proposal:

Minor modifications to WAC 232-28-342 are needed to provide additional recreational hunting opportunities for disabled hunters, and consolidate migratory game bird regulations due to changes in the federal regulatory process.

WAC 232-28-358 2015-2017 Elk general seasons and definitions.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The purpose of this proposal is to retain general season elk hunting opportunity for 2016. The purpose is also to balance the elk hunting opportunity between user groups. The proposal also increases elk hunting opportunity when elk populations allow.

Reasons supporting proposal: This proposal provides for recreational elk hunting opportunity and protects elk from overharvest. The proposal would maintain sustainable general elk hunting season opportunities for 2016. The proposal helps address elk agricultural damage problems and provides for elk population control when needed.

WAC 232-28-357 2015-2017 Deer general seasons and definitions.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The purpose of this proposal is to retain general season deer hunting opportunity for 2016. In addition, the purpose of the proposal is to balance the hunting opportunity between user groups. The proposal also increases the opportunity when deer populations allow, and reduces the opportunity when declining deer numbers warrant a change.

Reasons supporting proposal: These proposals provide for recreational deer hunting opportunity and protects deer from overharvest. The proposal would maintain sustainable general deer hunting season opportunities for 2016. The proposal helps address deer agricultural damage problems and provides for deer population control when needed.

WAC 232-28-359 2015 Deer special permits.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The purpose of this proposal is to retain special permit deer hunting opportunity for 2016. In addition, the purpose of the proposal is to balance the hunting opportunity between user groups. The proposal also increases the opportunity when deer populations allow, and reduces the opportunity when declining deer numbers warrant a change.

Reasons supporting proposal: These proposals provide for recreational deer hunting opportunity and protects deer from overharvest. The proposal would also maintain sustainable deer special permit hunting season opportunities for 2016. The proposal helps address deer agricultural damage problems and provides for deer population control when needed.

WAC 232-28-360 2015 Elk special permits.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The purpose of this proposal is to retain elk special permit hunting opportunity for 2016. The purpose is also to balance the elk hunting opportunity between user groups. The proposal also increases elk hunting opportunity when elk populations allow, and reduces elk hunting opportunity when declining elk numbers warrant a change. The proposal makes minor adjustments to season dates.

Reasons supporting proposal: This proposal provides for recreational elk hunting opportunity and protects elk from overharvest. The proposal would maintain sustainable elk special permit hunting opportunity for 2016. The proposal helps address elk agricultural damage problems and provides for elk population control when needed.

WAC 232-28-436 2015-2016 Migratory waterfowl seasons and regulations.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The proposal amends WAC 232-28-436, 2015-16 Migratory waterfowl seasons and regulations, to specify legal season dates, bag limits, and open areas to hunt waterfowl, coot, snipe, band-tailed pigeon, and mourning dove for the 2016-17 hunting season. In this proposal HIP requirements are removed from WAC 232-28-342 and are included in WAC 232-28-436.

Reasons supporting proposal:

Migratory game bird seasons and regulations are developed based on cooperative management programs among states of the Pacific Flyway and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, considering population status and other biological parameters. The rule establishes migratory game bird seasons and regulations to provide recreational opportunity, control waterfowl damage, and conserve the migratory game bird resources of Washington.

WAC 232-28-622 2015-2017 Bighorn sheep seasons and permit quotas.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

We are recommending a few minor changes to bighorn hunting for 2016: 1) Discontinuing ewe permits for the Selah Butte herd (which is declining); 2) Adding ewe permits for the Cleman Mountain herd (which is over-abundant); 3) Adding ram permit opportunity for the Swakane and Chelan Butte herds; 4) Adding ewe permits for disabled hunters, as well as a new category of “immature ram” for disabled hunters, both in the Chelan Butte bighorn sheep herd; and 5) making minor adjustments to season dates.

Reasons supporting proposal:

Maintain population size and hunter opportunity and reduce the risk of bacterial infection from domestic sheep/goats by reducing the tendency of animals in over-abundant herds to foray from their core ranges.

WAC 232-28-624 Deer area descriptions.

Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:

The proposed changes to the Deer Area Descriptions rule will create three new Deer Areas: one each in Chelan, Kittitas, and Yakima Counties. The proposed additions will accommodate using hunting as a management tool and are intended to reduce agricultural damage in these locations.

Reasons supporting proposal:

Deer Areas allow the Fish and Wildlife Commission to adopt hunting seasons that can be conducted at a smaller scale than the Game Management Unit. Setting seasons at this scale allows for more strategic wildlife management, using hunting as a tool to control populations and mitigate wildlife conflict.