



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

AUG 17 2015

Ravalli County Commissioners

Wildlife Division
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
August 7, 2015

Dear Interested Person:

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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is requesting public review and comment on the following item. Supporting information on this item can be found on our website under "Opportunity for Public Comment" at fwp.mt.gov/hunting/.

2015 ELK PLAN OBJECTIVE ADJUSTMENTS

FWP is proposing elk plan adjustments in two areas:

- The Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit (EMU) in the South and Middle Forks of the Flathead and the Swan (HDs 130, 140, 141, 150 and 151). Change the objective for HDs 130, 141 and 141 from 225 observed elk to a range of 150 -320. Change the objective for HDs 150 and 151 from 400 observed elk to a range of 310 to 500. These areas are almost all public land.
- The Bitterroot Valley (HDs 204, 240, 250, 260, 261, 262 and 270) (Table 1). Proposed changes are designed to better reflect the situation on the ground with recent changes in hunting district boundaries and to facilitate management while slightly increasing the valley-wide objective from 7,470 to 7,550.

2015 LATE SEASON WATERFOWL SEASONS/CLOSURES

Other than changing season start and end dates consistent with calendar rotation FWP proposes no changes from the 2014 season with the following few exceptions:

- In the Central Flyway Zone 2 for ducks, coots and tundra swans AND the South Zone for geese make the closed period of the split season a week earlier, to Oct 12-23, to allow waterfowl hunting during a significant migration period for ducks and tundra swans in late October.
- In the Central Flyway shorten the "bonus teal" season from 16 days to 9 days to accommodate the earlier closed portion of the split season.
- Increase the canvasback bag limit from 1 to 2.
- Eliminate the Milltown Reservoir goose hunting closure in Missoula County, Pacific Flyway.

BRUCELLOSIS 2016 ANNUAL WORK PLAN

The proposed 2016 work plan largely restates the 2015 plan with the following adjustments.

- Adjusted dates to reflect calendar progression for 2016.
- Clarified operational process for hazing efforts.
- Proposal for landowners to identify up to 25% of hunters selected for elk management removals.

PUBLIC SCOPING – BIENNIAL SEASON SETTING (2016-17 HUNTING SEASONS)

FWP has the opportunity to make major changes to hunting seasons every two years. Between August 6 and September 3 FWP will communicate with local sporting groups, work groups, Citizens Advisory Committees, interested individuals, and more on any developing recommendations and encourage comment and additional ideas at these venues and through an on-line survey monkey. Following initial scoping, additional opportunity to comment season proposals that presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission are encouraged in December and January.

TO MAKE A COMMENT

For further clarification, you may call the Wildlife Division office at 406-444-2612. Comments can be made online at fwp.mt.gov by clicking on 'Submit Public Comments,' or by using the links below. Written comments can be sent to: FWP – Wildlife Division, Attn: Public Comment, POB 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701.

COMMENT PERIOD DEADLINE & FINAL ADOPTION MEETING

- ✓ **2015 Elk Plan Objective Adjustments**
<http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2015/2015ElkPlanObjectiveAdjustmentsProposed.html>
 - *Public comment deadline: September 7th at 5 p.m.*
 - *Final adoption: October Commission meeting.*

- ✓ **2015 Late Season Waterfowl Seasons/Closures**
<http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2015/2015lateSeasonWaterfowlSeasonsProposed.html>
 - *Public comment deadline: August 21st at 5 p.m.*
 - *Final adoption: August 25th Commission meeting.*

- ✓ **Brucellosis 2016 Annual Work Plan**
http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2015/2015_16brucellosisPlansProposed.html
 - *Public comment deadline: September 8 at 5 p.m.*
 - *Final adoption: October Commission meeting.*

- ✓ **Public Scoping – Biennial Season Setting (2016-17 Hunting Seasons)**
http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/publicComments/2015/2016_17huntingSeasonsScoping.html
 - *Public comment deadline: September 3rd at 5 p.m.*