

PROPOSED 2011 HUNTING SEASON AMENDMENTS
AGMAG Meeting Dec 8 2010 9:00 – 4:00

Present:

Alberta Bowhunters Association
Alberta Fish & Game Association
Hunting For Tomorrow
Alberta Professional Outfitters Society
SRD (Game Management & Enforcement)
Tourism & Parks
Pheasants Forever
Wild Sheep Foundation (Alberta)

Absent:

Alberta Association of Municipal Districts & Counties
Alberta Beef Producers
Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society
Delta Waterfowl Foundation
Ducks Unlimited Canada

NOTE – these changes have been forwarded to various government departments for their perusal and then on to Minister for final approval. These changes will be for 2011 – regulation timelines for future changes will be in a two year period.

Big Game

- Fix the starting date for big game archery seasons for the areas that currently begin the first Wednesday following Labour Day and WMUs 108, 128 and 130 which have a start date of October 1. Currently, in the 100s, 200s and portions of the 300-500s Wildlife management units (WMUs), archery seasons change annually. The starting date would become fixed on September 1, with the exception of WMUs 404, 406, 408 and 410. These four WMUs experience a large volume of non-hunting recreational activity during the Labour Day long weekend. To avoid potential conflicts, the starting date in these WMUs would be fixed to start on September 8.

Objective: To simplify the hunting regulations by having a fixed starting date. This will decrease the annual administrative processes required to annually amend the archery seasons in the Wildlife Regulation and hunting guide. Recreational opportunities will be increased and season dates will be simplified for hunters.

- Allow for Sunday hunting in WMUs 400 – 414 during open seasons for big game. Sunday hunting is currently allowed for big game in 200 – 208, 212 – 260, 300, 416 – 440 and 500 series of WMUs. Sunday hunting was expanded for the 2009 hunting season (see AR18146) to include the entire province for bird game and most of the province for big game, with the exception of the 102 – 160, 210 and 400 – 414 (except November). Due to concerns over conflicts between hunters and

ranchers moving cattle on Sundays, WMUs 400-414 were excluded for hunting big game on Sundays.

Objective: Increase recreational opportunity and reduce complexity of regulations for hunters. Allowing Sunday hunting in WMUs 400 – 414 will be consistent with the remaining 400 series (Mountain) of WMUs.

- Allow for Sunday hunting in WMU 210 during open seasons for big game. When Sunday was expanded in 2009 (see above) WMU 210 was excluded due to the white-tailed deer and mule deer seasons being managed similar to 100 series of WMUs with Wednesday – Saturday deer hunting. It is being proposed (see below) that WMU 210 will allow for deer hunting Monday – Sunday, which is consistent with all other 200 series of WMUs.

Objective: Increase harvest of white-tailed deer and mule deer and allow for increased recreational opportunity.

The above three items will be further analyzed by Alberta Parks to see if there may be conflicts with other users in some of their park/wildland park systems. Doesn't appear that this will be a major deal and this should all proceed.

Elk

- Create an antlered elk general hunting season in WMU 525. Elk have been commonly seen throughout this WMU since 2000 and the current population can support a recreational hunt for antlered elk. This general elk hunting season is for 3-point or larger antlered elk. Dates for this hunting season will be:

Archery Only: August 25 to September 16
General (Rifle): September 17 to November 30

Objective: Increase recreational harvest opportunity and reduce potential landowner issues arising from elk in the farmland portions of this WMU.

- Change the antlered elk hunting regulation in WMU 526 from a special licence for antlered elk to a 3-point or larger general elk licence. Dates for this hunting season will be:

Archery Only: August 25 to September 16
General (Rifle): September 17 to November 30

Objective: To increase the number of licence holders, providing more recreational hunting opportunities and manage the population size and distribution of elk in this WMU.

- Create an antlered and antlerless elk season in WMU 152. Elk populations have continued to increase in this WMU and can support a Special Licence hunting season. It is proposed to combine WMUs 151 and 152 for elk hunting due to the transient nature of the elk in these two WMUs. Dates for this hunting season will be:

Archery Only: September 1 – October 31

Rifle: November 1 – 30

Objective: To increase recreational opportunity and manage the population size and distribution of elk in these two WMUs.

- Change the antlered and antlerless elk hunting season in WMUs 164, 166 and 208 to allow holders of these licences to hunt with archery equipment prior to the general (rifle) season. Also, holders of this licence will be allowed to hunt in WMU 164 Monday – Saturday, instead of the current Wednesday – Saturday. Dates for this hunting season will be:

Archery Only: September 1 – October 31 **(have to be drawn)**

Rifle: November 1 – 30

Objective: To increase recreational opportunity and reduce inconsistencies between WMUs.

- Eliminate the Cypress Hills Elk Special Licence Draw (Draw Code 20) and replace it with an Either Sex Elk Special Licence (new Draw Code). Holders of the Cypress Hills Elk Special licence are authorized to hunt either antlered or antlerless elk. Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) area biologists will be utilizing either sex elk hunting in additional WMUs therefore there is a need to create an Either Sex Elk Special Licence. Applicants in Cypress Hills Elk Special Licence will have the opportunity to transfer their priority to any of the Elk Special Licence Draw codes.

Objective: Provide ASRD additional management options for setting elk hunting seasons.

Moose

- Create a Moose Archery Licence. For the 2010 hunting season the general (rifle) season in four WMUs switched to a Special Licence for antlered moose. These were the last WMUs where moose could be hunted under the authority of a Resident Moose licence. The Resident Moose licence remains valid during the archery only season where a special licence is not required. There is confusion regarding where the Resident Moose licence is valid and whether it can be used by rifle hunters. Therefore it is being used inadvertently by hunters in incorrect WMUs. This new

Moose Archery licence will eliminate any confusion by rifle hunters wanting to hunt moose.

Objective: Simplify the hunting regulations and reduce incorrect use of a hunting licence by rifle hunters. **There is no longer any portion of the province that has a general moose season so all that is available outside of the draws is the archery pre-seasons. This license will reflect that.**

- Create an antlered and antlerless moose season in WMU 151. Moose populations have increased to a level where a limited harvest could occur through Special Licence hunting. The season would be consistent with other prairie WMUs which have moose populations that can support a limited harvest. Dates for this hunting season will be:

Archery Only: September 1 – October 31 **(need to be drawn)**

Rifle: November 1 - 30

Objective: To manage the increasing moose population in this WMU and provide additional recreational opportunities for hunters.

White-tailed and Mule Deer

- Change the white-tailed deer and mule deer seasons in WMU 210 to allow for hunting Monday – Sunday. Currently, white-tailed deer and mule deer are hunted during general (rifle) seasons in WMU 210 from Wednesday – Saturday during the month of November, which allows for 16 days of rifle hunting. Wildlife management unit 210 is the only WMU in the 200 series of WMUs that currently does not allow for hunting seven days a week. This change will align WMU 210 with all other WMUs in the 200 WMU series. Concerns regarding increasing deer populations (see AR26133) will also be addressed by expanding deer hunting opportunities in WMU 210.

Objective: To increase harvest of white-tailed deer and mule deer in WMU 210 and increase recreational opportunity.

Antelope

- Allow for non-trophy or trophy antelope to be taken by archery hunters during the archery-only antelope seasons. Currently, non-trophy or trophy antelope can be taken by holders of the Antelope Archery Special Licence in three of the seven Antelope Management Areas (AMAs) and only trophy antelope can be taken in the other four AMAs.

Objective: Increase recreational opportunity and align all AMA hunting management strategies.

Big Horn Sheep

- Suspend bighorn sheep season in WMUs 429 and 328 for a period of a minimum of four years. Review population estimates and dynamics at the end of 2014 and re-assess the proposed strategy for 2015. Traditionally, WMU 328 and 429 have been managed under identical regulations because the sheep belong to the same population (they are considered two metapopulations)

Objective: To support the conservation and long-term research project ongoing at Ram Mountain. This closure will allow for transplanted sheep to reach maturity prior to being harvested.

- Initiate a long-term closure of the sheep season in WMU 326 due to the small resident sheep population. Recent population estimates and the low harvest indicate a declining population of sheep in this WMU.

Objective: Closure of the sheep season to maintain a resident sheep population in WMU 326.

Sheep notes – There is going to be a review of sheep harvest data back to 1975 and current population data. One draw code for trophy sheep and capping priorities at 10 (just for sheep) being considered. Extending wait times under review. WMU 438 will see an increase to 5 tags from three in each of the 3 draws (2011).

Cougar

- Require that hunters submit a premolar tooth from all cougars when completing the registration process. Teeth would be aged to determine the age structure of harvested cougars. The average age of cougars would be used to help determine whether hunting quotas should be increased or decreased.

Objective: Monitor the age of harvested cougars to improve management and help set harvest quotas. **Hunters will be advised of results. Lab in Montana does aging. Will be voluntary in 2010/2011 season – mandatory after that.**

- Re-align Cougar Management Area (CMA) boundaries to reflect cougar population increases in northern and northeastern Alberta. This would result in a shift towards a larger number of CMAs that are sized similarly to those in southern Alberta, which would remain unchanged. Add WMUs 351, 511, 512, 515, 516, 517 to the CMA system, and remove WMU 216 from the CMA system. Renumber CMAs sequentially from south to north.

Objective: Redistribute cougar harvest pressure to reflect population increases and range expansion in northern and northeastern Alberta. Allow finer-scale

management of cougars in response to conflicts and local population objectives. Provide additional cougar hunting opportunities.

- Create a fall season for cougars in 100 – 500 series of WMUs that are outside of CMAs (exception: WMU 410 would both a fall season and a winter season to achieve a higher harvest). The use of dogs would not be allowed in this season in order to prevent conflicts with other hunters and landowners. Create a separate ‘fall’ cougar license. **License cost likely less than present “winter” cougar license. Be just for the month of November. No quota. All other “cougar” rules apply (registration etc)**

Objective: Allow cougar hunting as a management tool in the white zone, where conflicts with people are highest. Provide cougar hunting opportunity in areas where an abundance of private land precludes hunting with dogs.

- Allow landowners to keep cougars that they kill on their own land. Currently, cougars killed under this authority must be submitted to a Fish and Wildlife Officer.

Objective: Reduce wastage of cougars taken by landowners outside of the normal hunting season. **Also hopefully increase registration rate, collection of data.**

Black Bear

- Align the start of spring black bear seasons to April 1 province-wide. Change the closure of the spring season in southwest Alberta (WMUs 300, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 308, 310, 312, 314, 400, 402, 404, 406 and 408) from May 15 to May 31. Change the start of the fall rifle season to September 1 in WMUs that currently open on the first Wednesday after Labour Day. Currently, black bear season start and end dates are inconsistent and some seasons close while bear pelts are still in good condition.

Objective: Standardize black bear season start and end dates to simplify regulations and provide additional hunting opportunity. **Alberta Parks checking on any potential conflicts within their system.**

- Prohibit the use of bait for hunting black bears in the portion of WMU 320 that lies west of Highway 22, and the portion of WMU 526 that lies north of Highways 2 and 64. Fish and Wildlife staff have received numerous reports of grizzly bears at black bear baits in these areas, including female grizzly bears with cubs. This has created safety issues for both hunters and grizzly bears at these sites. The Black Bear Management Plan stipulates that baiting should occur only outside of occupied grizzly bear range.

Objective: Prevent public safety concerns and grizzly bear mortalities in occupied grizzly bear range.

Wolf and Coyote

- Align restrictions on baiting for wolves and coyotes with those for black bears. Allow wolf and coyote baiting only from December 1 to March 31, during seasons and in WMUs where baiting for black bears is allowed, as authorized in writing by a Fish and Wildlife officer. Require wolf and coyote hunters and trappers to post warning signs at their baits. Currently, wolf and coyote hunters and trappers can place baits in grizzly bear range and in most cases do not have to post warning signs. This creates public safety concerns for people that may encounter carnivores (wolves, cougars, bears) at these sites and could lead to unnecessary grizzly bear mortalities if bears are shot in self defence.

Objective: Reduce public safety issues and the risk of grizzly bear mortalities at wolf and coyote baits

Migratory Bird

- Change daily bag limit of white-fronted geese to conform to the updated North American White-Fronted Goose Management Plan. Proposed bag limits will be increased to:

5 daily/15 in possession (Alberta resident, Canadian resident)

4 daily /12 in possession (Non-resident alien)

Objective: To align migratory bird regulations through prairie provinces and conform to 2010 update of the North American White-Fronted Goose Management Plan that includes prescriptive harvest based on population inventory. The proposed change also increases hunting opportunity.

Upland Bird

- Close sharp-tailed grouse hunting season in Smokey, Foothills, and Clearwater areas, as well as WMUs 248, 250, 258, 260, 336, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 353, 360, 505, 503, 504, 506, 509, 510, 511, 512, 514, 515, 516, 517, 523, 526, 527, 523, 544, and 841. Figure 1 shows WMUs where it is proposed to close sharp-tailed grouse hunting season for 2011.

Objective: Eliminate further reduction of sharp-tailed grouse populations within areas that are already scarcely populated.

- Align hunting season dates to September 1 – November 30 for ruffed, spruce, and blue grouse, grey partridge, ptarmigan (outside 500 series of WMUs), and pheasant (outside prairies area and WMUs 300 – 349). Season dates for Prairie and WMUs 300 – 349 will remain unchanged.

Objective: Increase opportunity and reduce accidental violation due to confusion and complexity of current hunting regulations

- Extend ptarmigan hunting in 500 series of WMUs to January 15.

Objective: Increase opportunity to hunt migratory ptarmigan that arrive after the traditional season has ended.

- Align sharp-tailed hunting season dates in all open WMUs to October 1 – 31

Objective: reduce sharp-tailed grouse harvest in areas with depressed populations, and reduce accidental violation due to confusion and complexity of current regulations.

- Align daily bag and possession limits of ruffed, spruce, blue, and sharp-tailed grouse, as well as grey partridge and ptarmigan to five / day, and 15 in possession.

Objective: Reduce accidental violations due to complexity of game bird regulations and align regulations between bird species.

- Open hunting seasons for:
 - ruffed and spruce grouse, and pheasant in all 100 – 500 series of WMUs
 - blue grouse in all 300 and 400 series of WMUs
 - ptarmigan in all 300 – 500 series of WMUs
 - partridge in all 100 – 300 series and all 500 series of WMUs

Objective: Reduce accidental violations due to complexity of game bird regulations and align regulations between bird species.

Miscellaneous

- Currently when a poacher kills an animal while trespassing on private land and the only offence is trespassing under the *Petty Trespass Act*, the seizure powers of the *Wildlife Act* aren't available to officers. Even when such a person is convicted of trespassing, the judge will most often allow the convicted person to retain the animal they 'poached' because the *Petty Trespass Act* doesn't establish that the wildlife is unlawfully possessed. A similar situation can result if the poacher kills game while discharging a weapon illegally under a municipal bylaw.

Objective: A provision will be added to the *Wildlife Regulation* to establish that such an unlawful harvest will result in the offence of "unlawful possession of wildlife" under the *Wildlife Act*. This will allow officers to use well established provisions of the *Wildlife Act* related to search, seizure, forfeiture, penalties, licence suspensions, or judicial orders in situations where an animal was harvested as a result of a person hunting in contravention of other laws. **Current fine for trespassing is \$287 – voluntary payment**

- Currently, regulations do not allow a person to butcher a big game animal carcass (and remove the evidence of sex/species or tag) except at the hunter's usual place of residence or at a commercial meat cutting premises. Whether a hunter lives in an apartment or just wants to utilize a friend's butchering equipment, many hunters do not butcher their big game at their own residence; it is common for hunters to butcher game at another person's residence.

Objective: To legalize a practice that is common and accepted while continuing to deter illegal activity, such as grinding up illegally taken big game while camped in the field, in an effort to avoid detection by authorities. To remove this as a technical violation, regulations will be amended to also allow the removal of the evidence of sex/species and tag when game is completely butchered at a permanent residence with the resident present.

- Currently the red squirrel is listed as a fur-bearing animal and can only be hunted during an open season by the holder of a fur management licence (registered or resident). On privately owned land in both urban and rural areas, red squirrels can be a destructive nuisance for a variety of reasons. They regularly get into buildings and attics, damage bird feeders, and pester pets and people. Unlicensed members of the public require a damage control licence in order to hunt or trap a red squirrel (even to use a live trap).

Objective: provide for the hunting and trapping of red squirrel on private land while maintaining commercial opportunities and the sale of pelts under fur management licences. The red squirrel will remain in the category of fur-bearing animals but a change will allow the red squirrel to be hunted or trapped by residents on private land without a licence and at all times of the year.

Other points of discussion on items from previous AGMAG meetings that are NOT currently being proposed:

Sandhill Crane season – holding off for now. Some opposition from “bird watchers.” Very high population numbers across North American range. Great eating. Alberta one of only 2 jurisdictions in NA not having a season. High level of government not in favour.

Capping of priorities – not going forward. Some consideration for sheep in future after sheep harvest/population reviews are completed.

Crossbow in the archery seasons – nothing as of now. Will be a question asked in the online game harvest surveys (will be emailed mid Dec – deadline for responses Jan 31). App 50000 email addresses on data base. Typically get 30% response. Hunters using same email address (buying licenses online, registered on Alberta Relm) will get one email with all the individual participants survey questions for each license they held. Will only be one crossbow question per email address.

Question –

ASRD Fish and Wildlife is consulting Alberta hunters regarding allowing the use of cross-bows during archery-only seasons.

Cross-bows can be used to hunt big game during primitive weapon and rifle hunting seasons but not during archery-only seasons. If cross-bows were permitted during archery-only seasons, it is predicted that this would add hunters to those seasons and, in turn, result in an increased harvest. Depending on the increase in harvest, additional species (i.e. moose and mule deer) and areas may be placed on draw for archery hunting where a special licence had not previously been required.

Do you support allowing the use of cross-bows during archery-only hunting seasons?

Yes

No

Neutral

Muzzleloading season – Get sense of harvest /use before expanding. SRD and most stakeholders do not view the inline muzzleloaders as primitive – are more like single shot centerfire rifles.

Elimination of age restrictions for hunters – no support from some groups and levels of government.

Lifting of OHV restrictions – await Land Use Framework and Grizzly Management Plans before going forward with any changes.

Deer baiting – NO support from SRD. Vehicle for the spread of disease, CWD especially. Some jurisdictions are looking at how to remove deer baiting. “Biologic” type crops not agricultural and could be viewed as baiting. Enforcement/conviction an issue.

Lakeland Park in WMU 841 – Area under review thru Parks. May be asking for spring black bear hunting closure. Open game bird later (Oct 1). Conflicts with other users reasoning.

Wildland Parks in general – Parks suggest there may be restrictions in carrying firearms outside of the hunting seasons spring and fall. Would need a permit. Depends on where park is as to degree of conflict.

Bear baiting – discussion of signage. Thoughts of adding wildlife certificate # to options on sign. WIN number could be a privacy concern. Also identity theft. Kelly (HFT) will do up a draft of a sign template.

Points Of Interest

Bowhunting numbers:

2009/2010	15406 Res	248 NR	1110 NRA	TOTAL 16764
2010/2011	16634	252	1085	17971

(app 8% increase in Res bhtrs)

Results of ABA Survey (to Dec 8 2010) on Proposed SRD 2011 Proposals:

Standardized start dates for archery seasons:

FOR 864	AGAINST 41	TOTAL 905	95.5%
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Crossbows in the archery seasons:

FOR 29	AGAINST 897	TOTAL 926	96.9%
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Muzzleloader season:

FOR 99	AGAINST 819	TOTAL 918	89.2%
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(The totals vary as some respondents did not answer all questions)

Next AGMAG meeting – (Wednesday) April 27, 2011

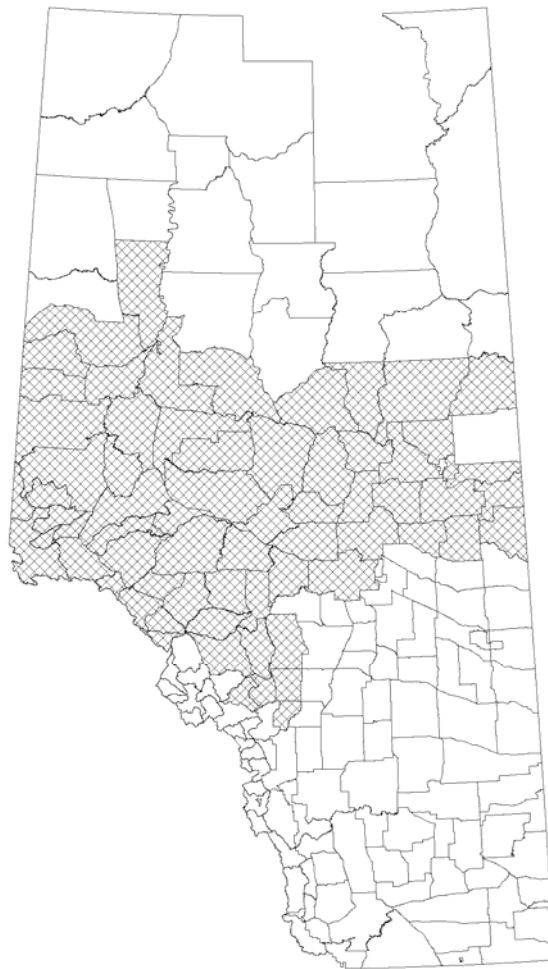


Figure 1. Proposed WMUs to be closed for sharp-tailed grouse hunting