

Proposed Big Game Hunting Season Changes under Consideration for 2020

In 2018, the Department initiated a complete review of all big game hunting seasons.

Following is a summary of draft proposed changes for the 2020 hunting season. After receiving public input, staff proposals will be finalized in August 2019. Final proposals will be presented to the Commission for consideration on Sept. 13, 2019 in Gold Beach, OR. The Big Game Hunting Review is expected to be a multi-year process. Additional proposals will be developed over the next year and proposed to the Commission in 2020 for the 2021 hunting season.

Proposals are still being developed for controlled hunt tag numbers at the time this information packet was finalized. Proposed tag numbers will be available by mid-June. As detailed above, one of the objectives of the Big Game Hunting Review is to maintain or improve overall hunting opportunity. The intent of the proposals is to not decrease overall hunting opportunities; however, opportunities will change and tag numbers will continue to be increased or decreased in response to game mammal population changes.

The majority of the proposed changes were developed with the following strategies:

- Identify opportunities where multiple hunt areas and/or time periods could be consolidated
- Expand some hunt areas to entire Wildlife Management Units (WMU) and/or made boundary descriptions simpler
- Develop proposals to expand, simplify and/or increase consistency with season dates
- Provide hunters longer seasons where possible
- Move away from controlled hunts that have split dates where the hunt opens and closes multiple times in a season
- Identify new hunting opportunities and/or expand existing hunts into areas with huntable populations where there is currently no open season
- Identify “outlier” hunts and opportunities to develop consistency
- Eliminate hunts with population concerns, where populations have significantly changed since the hunt was originally adopted
- Identify existing controlled hunt areas where a general season approach would improve ability to meet objectives, and vice versa

The majority of proposed changes can be summarized as:

- One hundred twenty-seven existing hunts were consolidated into forty-nine hunts
- Ninety-one dates were expanded, made simpler or made consistent with other hunts
- Eighty-five hunt areas were expanded to the entire unit or hunt boundaries were made simpler
- Fifty-seven bag limits were made simpler or made consistent with other hunts
- Nine new controlled hunt opportunities

- Sixteen controlled hunts eliminated; primarily due to mule deer population declines since hunts were adopted

Buck Deer – 100 Series

Attachment 3 identifies all proposed changes to Buck Deer/100 Series hunts. The majority of the proposed changes are:

- Four existing hunts were consolidated into one hunt
- Three dates were expanded, made simpler or made consistent with other hunts
- Thirteen hunt areas were expanded to the entire unit or hunt boundaries were made simpler
- Thirteen bag limits were made simpler or made consistent with other hunts
- Three new controlled hunt opportunities

Western Oregon Deer Bag Limits

Most Western Oregon general deer seasons and 100 series controlled hunts have a bag limit of “one buck deer having not less than a forked antler” which prohibits hunters from harvesting spike deer. For decades, spike deer in western Oregon have been legal during antlerless deer hunts; leading back in time to when there were tens of thousands of antlerless deer permits each year. For example, in 1959 there were 10,000 antlerless deer permits in the Alsea Unit, and 12,000 in the McKenzie Unit. When antlerless permit numbers were high it is likely the intent of the restriction on spike harvest during the general season was to protect yearling bucks from the “double jeopardy” of being harvested during both seasons.

Data shows that some yearling bucks have forked antlers while some two-year-old or older bucks have spike antlers. The current bag limit may have a negative effect on the population as the one-year-old bucks with forked antlers are available to harvest, but the less healthy one- and two-year-old bucks and those genetically inclined to remain spikes are protected from harvest. Additionally, the current bag limit creates enforcement issues and is inconsistent with deer bag limits in Eastern Oregon.

Staff propose changing all hunts with a bag limit of “one buck deer having not less than a forked antler” to “one buck with visible antler”. The proposed change is coupled with a proposal to change all 600 series bag limits with a “one antlerless or spike deer” to “one antlerless deer”. These changes would make identification of a legal deer easier, resolve some enforcement concerns, and make buck deer bag limits and antlerless deer bag limits consistent throughout Oregon. Additionally, the change to 600 series bag limits will ensure the affected hunts are focused on damage resolution and population control rather than providing a second buck harvest opportunity.

The proposed change to a bag limit of “one buck with visible antler” is expected to increase harvest opportunities for hunters by allowing the harvest of spike bucks. Although some hunters

may choose to hunt for larger bucks, it is anticipated this bag limit change would support R3 efforts by allowing spike bucks to be harvested by hunters eager to successfully harvest their buck. The proposed change may result in an increase in buck harvest but there are sufficient bucks in the population to support increased harvest. All but one Western Oregon unit has met or exceeded the benchmark for observed post-hunting season buck ratio in at least two of the last three years. Spike harvest would not be completely additive mortality. Harvesting spikes will allow some bucks to grow older because some hunters who harvest a spike would have harvested a buck with larger antlers later in the season. Additionally, recent deer fecal DNA research has consistently shown that the actual buck ratio in Western Oregon black-tailed deer populations is higher than observed during post-hunting season spotlight surveys.

Ochoco WMU Archery Deer

The Ochoco WMU is currently included in General Archery Deer Season; however, the unit is closed to all archery deer hunting unless the hunter has an Ochoco Unit controlled archery elk tag. This is the only big game hunt in the state with this requirement, the regulation creates complication in the regulations and the Department has received complaints from hunters who only want to archery hunt deer in the unit.

Staff propose to eliminate this requirement, remove the Ochoco WMU from the General Archery Deer Season and create a new, unit wide, controlled archery deer hunt. These changes would simplify the regulations, maintain hunter opportunity, meet the herd management objectives as part of ongoing Mule Deer Initiative actions, and provide an opportunity for those hunters who only want to archery deer hunt in the Ochoco Unit.

Hood-White River – Hunt# 141A

Hunters who draw this controlled hunt tag may also hunt in Western Oregon General Deer Rifle Season. This regulation is an outlier as it is the only controlled rifle hunt in Eastern Oregon that also allows a hunter to hunt in the Western Oregon General Deer Season.

Staff propose the tag for 141A only be valid for that controlled hunt area. This change would make the hunt consistent with all other controlled rifle hunts in Eastern Oregon.

New, High Quality Mule Deer Hunts

The Department is proposing three new late season, any legal weapon, mule deer hunts in the Lower John Day River Canyon, Heppner Unit and Fossil Unit. These hunts are expected to provide a high quality hunting opportunity and generate significant interest from hunters. As with most other late season buck hunting opportunity, Landowner Preference (LOP) Tags would be limited to 5 tags or 10 percent of the total controlled buck tags authorized by the Commission for the public for each hunt, whichever is greater.

100 Series Outlier Hunts

The 100 series is listed in the Big Game Regulations as “Buck Deer” and intended to provide the primary, recreational deer hunting opportunity for bag limits of antlered deer or either sex deer.

There are four low tag number hunts in the Paulina and Metolius Units (135R, 139R2, 139M, 139M2) that are the only 100 series hunts in the state with a bag limit of “one antlerless deer”.

Staff considered moving these hunts to the 600 series, however based on mule deer population concerns in those units, staff propose to eliminate these four hunts.

Trout Creek Traditional Archery – Hunt# 168R1

A “controlled” hunt implies that there are a limited number of tags in a hunt; however, the Trout Creek Traditional Archery hunt is the only controlled hunt in the state with unlimited tags. Staff propose to set tag numbers at 300 for this controlled hunt. The proposed number of tags is based on the number of hunters that typically draw the tag currently. While ~300 hunters draw the tag each year, only 50-80 hunters actually participate in the hunt.

General Archery Season – Murderers Creek Unit

The Murderers Creek Unit is the only unit in the state that has a split weapon restriction in a portion of the unit during general archery season. Ninety-six percent of the unit is open to all legal archery equipment the entire season. The remaining 4% of the unit, known as the Canyon Creek Area is open to long or recurve archery equipment for the first week of archery season and then opens to all archery equipment the remaining portion of the season. This regulation creates significant complication for such a small area and reduces archery hunter opportunity.

Staff propose making the entire Murderers Creek Unit open to all legal archery equipment during General Archery Deer Season. This change would simplify the hunting regulations and make the Murderers Creek Unit consistent with all other units in the state for the General Archery Season. Simplified general seasons are a key component of successfully addressing the Department’s R3 objectives.

The Traditional Archers of Oregon have expressed the historical significance of this portion of the Murderers Creek Unit to archery hunting and their interest in continuing the restriction. In developing this proposed change, the Department felt the area’s historical significance can continue to be celebrated without creating regulatory complexity and reducing opportunity for other archery hunters. Furthermore, the Department is proposing to expand traditional archery hunting opportunity in the state by proposing:

- A new traditional-archery-only elk hunt in the North Fork John Day Wilderness Area for the 2020 season
- Identify at least one new traditional-archery-only deer hunt in Western Oregon for the 2021 season. These proposals will be developed over the next year as staff review all late-season hunting opportunity in Western Oregon. Proposals would be brought to the Commission in 2020.

Eliminate SE Whitehorse (168R2) and Juniper (171M) Due to Population Changes

These hunts were created for a high quality hunting opportunity that takes advantage of migratory buck deer (168R2) or mule deer bucks leaving a refuge area (171M). Historically, these hunts have been popular with hunters and take many preference points to draw.

Populations have significantly decreased since the hunts were created and there is no longer a consistent hunting opportunity. Hunters that have had the tag recently have expressed dissatisfaction with the hunting opportunity. Staff propose to eliminate these two hunts.

Antlerless Deer – 600 Series

Attachment 3 identifies all proposed changes to Antlerless Deer/600 Series hunts. The majority of the proposed changes are:

- Sixteen existing hunts were consolidated into seven hunts
- Sixteen dates were expanded, made simpler or made consistent with other hunts
- Seventeen hunt areas were expanded to the entire unit or hunt boundaries were made simpler
- Thirty-eight bag limits were made simpler or made consistent with other hunts
- One new controlled hunt opportunity

Western Oregon Deer Bag Limits

The 600 series is referred to in the big game regulations as “Antlerless Deer” hunts and is intended to primarily be population control to address damage or hunts that harvest a population surplus. Most Western Oregon 600 series controlled hunts currently have a bag limit of “one antlerless or spike deer”. While the intent of most 600 series hunts is to harvest does, harvest data shows that spike deer are being targeted by many hunters and harvested at a much higher proportion than they occur in the population.

Staff propose to change all hunts with a bag limit of “one antlerless or spike deer” to “one antlerless deer”. This change would make identification of a legal deer easier, resolve some enforcement issues, meet the intent of 600 series hunts and make antlerless deer bag limits consistent statewide.

Expanding Dates of 600 Series Hunts in Coastal Units

The majority of 600 series hunts in the Coast Buck Area are open from Oct. 24 to Nov. 6, which is concurrent with the latter half of Western Oregon Coast Buck Season (Oct. 3 to Nov. 6).

Staff propose to extend the dates of twelve antlerless deer hunts in the Coast Buck Area to run concurrent with the entire Western Oregon Coast Buck Season. Survey data shows that one of the primary reasons hunters do not hunt is lack of time and conflict with other commitments. The survey also showed that hunters value time in the field with friends and family. Providing these two overlapping opportunities will allow hunters more flexibility and greater opportunity to spend time hunting with friends and family.

Establishing Equitability and Consistency in 600 Series Hunts

With the exception of special tags (premium hunts, auction/raffle, etc.) or major damage problems, the Department's intent is to provide hunters the opportunity to hunt or apply for one buck/either sex deer tag, one antlerless deer tag, and one elk tag each year. Through this review process, several outliers have been identified resulting in some hunters with multiple controlled hunting opportunities in a year while other hunters do not draw a tag. Hunts in the 600 series with a "one deer" bag limit result in some hunters having two buck hunts in one year.

The 600 series is referred to in the big game regulations as "Antlerless Deer" hunts and is intended to primarily be population control to address damage or hunts that harvest a population surplus. There are three controlled hunts (Umatilla NWR No. 3 – Hunt #644A3, W. Blue Mtn – Hunt #649B, and Orchards – Hunt #655A) in Umatilla/Sherman Counties that are highly sought buck hunts because they provide a hunter an opportunity to apply for and potentially hunt a second buck deer in a year. These hunts are viewed as quality hunting opportunities with high success rates and an opportunity to harvest a mature buck. In 2018, hunt 644A3, 649B, and 655A took 24, 8, and 13 preference points to draw, respectively.

Staff propose to move these three hunts to the 100 series starting in 2021. These changes would meet the intent of only providing one buck hunting opportunity per year and establish more consistency in the 100 and 600 series purpose and bag limits. There would also be significant tag increases and expanded hunt area for the W. Blue Mountain and Orchards hunts. Implementation of this proposed change would be delayed until 2021 to give additional notice to hunters who have been applying for these hunts.

If this change is implemented, there would continue to be two "one deer" bag limit hunts in the 600 series. The first is Willamette Unit (Hunt #615), which has a "one deer" bag limit from Sept. 1 – Feb. 29. The Willamette Unit is a deer "de-emphasis" area with abundant damage on private land. This damage includes damage from buck deer rubbing on nursery stock, orchards, Christmas trees and other trees. Due to the significant damage caused by buck deer in the unit, staff are not proposing a change to this hunt. The second instance are 600 series youth hunts with a "one deer" bag limit. Staff is not proposing a change to these hunts due to the priority of providing a variety of youth hunting opportunity to recruit new hunters.

Removing Unnecessary Weapon Restrictions

In most areas of Oregon where there are safety concerns with the discharge of centerfire rifles, there are closures listed in the Big Game Regulations or there are local laws passed by municipalities. In Wallowa and Wasco Counties there are several controlled antlerless deer hunts (and one buck deer hunt) that prohibit the use of centerfire rifles. In the same area, there are numerous other big game hunts where centerfire rifles are allowed. These include hunting for buck deer, elk, furbearers, predators, and numerous antlerless elk emergency hunts, damage tags, and kill permits. In Malheur County there are two hunts where no centerfire rifles are allowed unless permission is obtained from the landowner. There are numerous other hunts in this area without this weapon restriction and private landowners always have the ability to not allow the use of centerfire rifles on their property.

Since there has been no safety concern with all of the other centerfire rifle hunts taking place in these areas, staff are proposing to remove the weapon restrictions on these hunts (see Attachment 3 for specific hunts).

Elk – 200 Series

Attachment 2 identifies all proposed changes to Elk/200 Series hunts. The majority of the proposed changes are:

- Eighty-seven existing hunts were consolidated into thirty-one hunts
- Twenty-five dates were expanded, made simpler or made consistent with other hunts
- Twenty-five hunt areas were expanded to the entire unit or hunt boundaries were made simpler
- Five bag limits were made simpler or made consistent with other hunts
- Two new controlled hunt opportunities

General Season Antlerless Elk Damage Tag

Over the last few decades, elk populations in many areas have increased on private land adjacent to row crop or irrigated agricultural lands. This has led to increased social conflict and economic damage to private agricultural landowners as well as decreased hunter opportunity in many units.

The Department and landowners use a variety of tools to manage elk damage including hazing, kill permits, emergency hunts, controlled hunts and damage tags. The primary tools used currently are controlled antlerless elk hunts and damage tags. Despite these tools, elk populations continue to increase in many of these chronic damage areas.

Controlled hunts are in place in all chronic damage areas with varying levels of success. There are several constraints/issues to using controlled hunts to solve a chronic damage problem. The first is a controlled hunt application deadline of May 15th. Hunters must know far in advance, often 5 to 10 months, they have private land access, want to utilize this as their one elk hunting opportunity, and that elk will be present in the area they have permission to hunt. The second is that the number of controlled hunt tags are limited, while populations may warrant unlimited tags in chronic damage areas during certain times of the year.

Landowner Damage Program elk tags are the other primary tool being utilized with over 4,000 tags issued annually. They can be an effective tool, but there are associated issues and constraints:

- They are only valid on land owned or leased by the landowner, so hunters cannot pursue elk onto adjacent private lands
- Tags can only be issued when staff is present at ODFW offices

Eastern Cascade Elk Seasons

Outside of the Columbia Basin Elk De-emphasis Area, the only bull elk general rifle seasons in eastern Oregon are in the Eastern Cascades and spike only tags in a few WMUs. The Hood and White River Units are included in Rocky Mountain Elk 1st and 2nd Seasons, while the Metolius, Upper Deschutes, Keno, and portions of Grizzly, Fort Rock, and Sprague Units are included in the Cascade Elk Season. With the current general season approach, some units are not able to meet bull ratio objectives.

Staff propose removing the Eastern Cascade units from the general season hunts and establishing four new hunts:

- Hood/White River 1st period – One bull – Oct. 28 to Nov. 1, 2020 – Units 41 and 42
- Hood/White River 2nd period – One bull – Nov. 7 – 15, 2020 – Units 41 and 42
- East Central Cascades – One bull – Oct. 28 to Nov. 1, 2020 – Units 34, 39 and the portion of 77 west of Hwy 97
- Southeast Cascades – One bull – Oct. 28 to Nov. 1, 2020 – Unit 31 and the portion 33 west of Hwy 97

Tag numbers would be set to maintain overall hunter opportunity, but shift some harvest from the East Central Cascades to the Southeast Cascades so bull ratio objectives can be met. The new hunts would provide an improved opportunity for hunters in the East Central and Southeast Cascade due to the later timing of the season. These changes would simplify the regulations by having all Eastern Oregon rifle “One Bull” elk hunts as controlled hunts and make the Cascade Elk hunt boundary consistent with the Cascade Deer hunt boundary.

Simplify Archery Bag Limits in Sumpter and Heppner Units

The General Archery Season bag limits in the Sumpter and Heppner Units are split, with the primary public land portion of the unit having a “one bull” bag limit and the primary private land portion of the unit having a “one elk” bag limit. In both units, those private land portions have liberal controlled antlerless elk hunts as a way to control damage/populations. The split bag limits cause unnecessary complication in the regulations and result in very little antlerless elk harvest. In 2017, in the Heppner Unit there was 1,482 general season archery hunters and only 1 antlerless elk reported as harvested. In 2017, in the Sumpter Unit there was 538 general season archery hunters and 0 antlerless elk reported as harvested.

Staff propose to reduce complexity in the regulations by having a unit wide general archery season bag limit of “one bull” in the Sumpter and Heppner Units. In addition, the Heppner controlled, antlerless elk archery hunt (248R) will be expanded to the entire Heppner Unit.

Simplify Ochoco Archery Hunts

Currently, there are two concurrent archery seasons in the Ochoco Unit; 237R1 has a bag limit of “one elk” and 237R2 has a bag limit of “one bull”. Staff propose consolidating these hunts into one, “one elk” hunt with no reduction in the total number of archery elk tags.

General Archery Season – Murderers Creek Unit

The Murderers Creek Unit is the only unit in the state that has split weapon restriction in a portion of the unit during general archery season. Ninety-six percent of the unit is open to all legal archery equipment the entire season. The remaining 4% of the unit, known as the Canyon Creek Area is open to long or recurve archery equipment for the first week of archery season and then opens to all archery equipment the remaining portion of the season. This regulation creates significant complication in the regulation for such a small area and reduces archery hunter opportunity.

Staff propose the entire Murderers Creek Unit be open to all legal archery equipment during General Archery Elk Season. This change would simplify the hunting regulations and make the Murderers Creek Unit more consistent with all other units in the state for the General Archery Season.

New Traditional Archery Hunts

Staff propose a new, controlled traditional archery-only hunt for Sept. 28 to Oct. 2, with a proposed bag limit of “one elk” and a hunt boundary of the North Fork John Day Wilderness (all units). This tag would also be valid during the General Archery Elk Season using any archery equipment.

In addition, staff plan to propose at least one new traditional-archery-only elk hunt in Western Oregon for the 2021 season. These proposals will be developed over the next year as staff review all late-season hunting opportunity in Western Oregon. Proposals would be brought to the Commission in 2020.

Grant County Landowner Permission Form Hunts

Five antlerless elk hunts in Grant County require hunters to be on a Landowner Permission Form before applying for the controlled hunt. These hunts and associated requirement were put in place decades ago prior to most private land, antlerless elk hunts. These hunts are now an outlier as there are numerous other private land elk hunts in the state without this requirement. There will be many private land areas in Grant County within the proposed GSDet opportunity that will not have the permission form requirement. The requirement also creates a complex administrative process for the Department to process and correct many controlled hunt applications. Staff propose to eliminate the landowner permission form requirement.

Eliminate Snake River Unit Antlerless Elk Archery and Rifle Hunts

Staff propose to eliminate 259 (Snake River) and 259R (Snake River Bow) to reduce antlerless elk harvest in the unit to maintain the population at management objective. The unit will continue to be included in the General Archery Elk season with a “one bull” bag limit.

Pronghorn – 400 Series

Attachment 3 identifies all proposed changes to Pronghorn/400 Series hunts. The majority of the proposed changes are:

- Seven existing hunts were consolidated into four hunts
- Three dates were expanded, made simpler or made consistent with other hunts
- Twelve hunt areas were expanded to the entire unit or hunt boundaries were made simpler
- One bag limit was made simpler or made consistent with other hunts
- One new controlled hunt opportunities

Longer, Later Seasons

Pronghorn seasons correspond with high summer temperatures, high fire danger and conflicts with large-scale wildfires. Several proposed changes will test moving the primary pronghorn season one week later and giving hunters an additional two weeks to hunt. Staff propose Aug. 22 to Sept. 6 for the Beulah, Whitehorse and Juniper WMUs. In addition, Whitehorse No. 1 and No. 2 would be consolidated from two, nine-day hunts to one, 16-day hunt.

Bighorn Sheep – 500 Series

Attachment 3 identifies all proposed changes to Bighorn Sheep/500 Series hunts. The majority of the proposed changes are:

- Eight existing hunts were consolidated into four hunts
- Twenty-one hunts were changed to consistent, set dates with longer seasons
- Four hunt areas were expanded to the entire unit or hunt boundaries were made simpler

Longer, Later Seasons

Proposed changes to bighorn sheep seasons reflect the “once-in-a-lifetime” nature of the hunting opportunity. Proposals focused on improving hunters experience by providing a longer season and moving or extending many hunts to a cooler time of the year.

John Day River Canyon Hunt Consolidation

Currently, all John Day River bighorn sheep hunt boundaries are confined to either the East or West side of the river: however, GPS collar data confirms that bighorn sheep move back and forth across the river. The majority of sheep hunters float the river, so constraining them to only one side of the river makes for a less than desirable hunting situation. Staff propose consolidation of each of the three East and three West John Day River bighorn sheep hunt into three hunts that includes both sides of the river.

Rocky Mountain Goat – 900 Series

Attachment 3 identifies all proposed changes to Rocky Mountain Goat/900 Series hunts. The majority of the proposed changes are:

- Thirteen hunts were changed to consistent, set dates with longer seasons
- Five hunt areas were expanded to the entire unit or hunt boundaries were made simpler
- Two new controlled hunt opportunities and one additional tag in an existing hunt

Longer, Later Seasons

Proposed changes to mountain goat seasons reflect the “once-in-a-lifetime” nature of the hunting opportunity. Proposals focused on improving hunters experience by providing a longer season with all hunts being one, two, or three months long.

New Hunting Opportunities

As mountain goat populations continue to expand in Northeast Oregon, two new hunts are proposed in the Wallowa Mountains. In addition to these new hunts, an additional tag will be added in the Snake River hunt and the Elkhorn Mountain hunt area will be extended to the entire Desolation Unit to include expanding populations.

Bear – 700 Series

Attachment 3 identifies all proposed changes to Bear/700 Series hunts. The majority of the proposed changes are:

- Five existing hunts were consolidated into two hunts
- Nine dates were expanded, made simpler or made consistent with other hunts
- Three hunt areas were expanded to the entire unit or hunt boundaries were made simpler

Consistent Bear Season Dates

Currently, General Fall Bear Season dates are Aug. 1 to Dec. 31 in Western Oregon and Aug. 1 to Nov. 30 in Eastern Oregon. Spring Bear controlled hunts are Apr. 1 to May 31 in all of western Oregon and parts of eastern Oregon, and Apr. 15 to May 31 in the remainder of eastern Oregon. Staff propose statewide, consistent General Fall Bear and Spring Controlled Bear season dates of Aug. 1 to Dec. 31 and Apr. 1 to May 31, respectively. This change will make the regulations simpler and is expected to have no biological impact.

Consolidation of Northwest Oregon Spring Bear Hunts

Staff propose consolidating Saddle Mt–Scappoose (710A), Wilson–Trask (712A) and N. Cascade (716A) into one NW Oregon, controlled spring bear hunt. This consolidated hunt will also include all of the Santiam and Willamette Unit.

Statewide Expansion of SW Additional Fall Bear

Hunters in an 11 WMU area of Southwest Oregon can purchase an additional fall bear tag if they fill their first tag. Staff propose expanding the ability to purchase an additional fall bear tag to statewide. This change would make the additional fall bear tag hunt area consistent with the

additional cougar tag. This change would simplify regulations and is expected to have little biological impact. In 2017, in the 11 SW Oregon units combined 238 hunters harvested 40 bear, an average of less than 4 bear per unit.

Premium Hunts

Staff are proposing the following changes to Premium Hunts:

- To make boundary descriptions simpler, the eastern portion of the Biggs Unit will be added to the Maupin-W Biggs (N40) pronghorn hunt and removed from the Col. Basin-E Biggs (N44)
- Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge will now be open for the Beatys Butte (L70) and Juniper (L71) premium deer tags

Western Gray Squirrel

Staff are proposing the following western gray squirrel seasons:

North-central Oregon

Open Season: Sept. 15 – Oct. 31

Bag/Possession Limit: 3/6

Open Area: White River, Hood, Metolius, Upper Deschutes, and Paulina Units

Remainder of Oregon

Open Season: Sept. 1 – Nov. 15

Bag/Possession Limit: 5/15

Open Area: All units outside of the North-Central hunt area. Exception: There would continue to be no bag limit or closed season in the portion of the Rogue Unit south of the Rogue River and South Fork Rogue River and north of Hwy 140.

This proposal makes the following changes from the current seasons:

- Moves to set season dates that do not change each year
- Shifts seasons approximately one week later
- Allows hunting in Eastern Oregon units that do not currently have a squirrel season