

Deer and Elk Baiting Process

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Summary Sheet

Meeting dates: May 15, 2015
Agenda item: Deer and Elk Baiting – Briefing
Presenter(s): Mick Cope, Game Division Manager, Wildlife Program

Background:

Currently, hunting deer and elk with the aid of bait is legal in Washington state. Some constituents have expressed concern about various aspects of this practice (e.g., fair chase and disrupting biological processes) while others support the practice for a variety of reasons (e.g., increasing selectivity, aiding youth, senior, and hunters with disabilities). In 2014, the Fish and Wildlife Commission requested that the use of bait for the purposes of hunting deer and elk be part of the discussion for the 2015-2017 hunting season setting process.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) brought the issue through the 9-month public process. At the April Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting, the Commission voted to keep status quo (no restrictions on baiting) but requested WDFW to convene a special working group of constituents to focus on the deer and elk baiting issue and bring a recommendation to the Commission meeting(s) in March/April 2016 for a decision.

This May 2015 briefing will focus on the process that WDFW will employ between June 2015 and March 2016 to develop a recommendation on hunting deer and elk over bait.

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

N/A – Briefing only

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

The topic of using bait for deer and elk hunting was incorporated into all of the scoping and survey materials and was also one of the many topics included in the open house public meetings held throughout the state.

In the non-random input received through the Department's website:

- Favored no change to the rule- 63%
- Favored a ban on baiting for deer and elk but not including agricultural operations- 15%
- Favored a ban on baiting for deer and elk imposed on guides/outfitters and include a limit on the amount of bait allowed- 14%
- Favored a ban on baiting for deer and elk- 8%

In the random telephone survey of deer and elk hunters:

- Fifty-nine percent (59%) of deer hunters opposed or strongly opposed baiting.
- Twenty-one percent (21%) of deer hunters supported or strongly supported baiting, and
- Twenty-one percent (21%) of deer hunters were neutral or had no opinion
- Sixty-eight percent (68%) of elk hunters opposed or strongly opposed baiting
- Fourteen percent (14%) of elk hunters supported or strongly supported baiting, and
- Nineteen percent (19%) of elk hunters were neutral or had no opinion

The comments received during the comment period in response to the filing of the CR-102 were:

- Eighty-seven percent (86.7%) of the people commenting were against one or all of the proposed new restrictions and preferred status quo.
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- Six percent (5.7%) of those commenting were somewhat in favor of one or more of the proposed new restrictions if they could be modified or more limited in a variety of fashions.
- Seven and a half percent (7.5%) of those commenting were in favor of one or more of the proposed new restrictions.

The Game Management Advisory Council (GMAC) took an official stance (a 17-0-1 vote) at their March meeting. The motion read:

In the absence of WDFW finding a biological reason to make a recommendation, GMAC is recommending that the Commission does not adopt changes to existing deer and elk baiting rules for the following reasons:

- *Effects on archer success rates - Allocation issues*
- *Impacts to hunter retention/recruitment*
- *Enforceability*
- *Effects on selectivity*

In the public meeting setting and the written public comment received, those not in favor of using bait to hunt deer and elk cited reasons of fair chase, unfair advantages over hunters that don't use bait, concentrating animals in places where neighbors don't want them, and luring animals away from land that was formerly perceived as better hunting.

Those in favor of using bait to hunt deer and elk cited reasons of being more selective in their harvest, being better able to lure animals out of security cover that is impossible to move through, being able to hunt smaller acreages successfully, improving the probability of a clean kill and reducing their risk of wounding or losing animals, enhancing the hunting experience of a youth hunter or first-time hunter, and facilitating a hunting experience for a senior hunter or hunter with disability that would otherwise be unable to hunt.

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

N/A – Briefing only

Draft motion language:

N/A – Briefing only

Justification for Commission action:

N/A – Briefing only

Communications plan:

NA – Briefing only

DRAFT Process for Developing a Proposed Rule Addressing Hunting Deer and Elk With The Aid of Bait

	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April
GMAC Meeting (June 6) - Identify members to serve on a focus group to help WDFW develop a recommendation	■										
Develop list of additional focus group members (priorities may be from those who testified at the March Commission meeting)	■										
Develop a list of regulations from other states addressing hunting deer and elk using bait and compile info for group	■										
Focus Group Meeting 1 - outline the issues -identify major questions (potentially include WDFW veterinarian)		■									
Develop information needed to address issues from Focus Group Meeting 1 - may include members and WDFW staff			■								
Brief Wildlife Committee at August meeting			■								
Focus Group Meeting 2 - Review information and develop draft recommendation			■								
September GMAC Meeting - review draft recommendation				■							
Submit CR 101							■				
December GMAC Meeting - short discussion - fatal flaws?							■				
Submit CR 102								■			
Post draft rule on WDFW website for public review and comment								■			
Address public comments collected - prepare for March										■	
March Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting - Hearing and Public Testimony										■	
Address public comments collected - prepare for April										■	
April Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting - Decision											■
Submit CR 103 as needed											■