

Summary

Meeting dates: March 18-19, 2016

Agenda item: Bighorn Sheep Special Permits – Rule Briefing and Public Hearing

Presenter: Rich Harris, Ph.D., Special Species Section Manager, Wildlife Program

Background summary:

The bighorn sheep hunting seasons for fall of 2016 represent the 2nd year of the 2015-2017 three-year package. Staff will brief the Commission on proposed amendments to WAC 232-28-622 Bighorn sheep seasons and permit quotas. Updates will be provided on recent bighorn sheep harvest and the status of bighorn sheep populations. Recommendations to maintain bighorn sheep hunting opportunity will be described. 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, and 4) Adding ewe permits for disabled hunters, as well as a new category of “juvenile” for disabled hunters, both in the Chelan Butte bighorn sheep herd.

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

- Continue sustainable hunting opportunities, consistent with achieving management objectives.
 - To reduce population size in 2 herds (Cleman Mountain, Chelan Butte) that are currently over their estimated long-term capacity, and for which high population density may encourage movement of animals out of their core-range and onto lands where they may encounter domestic sheep or goats (and thus risk becoming infected with pneumonia-causing pathogens).
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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 last year. For 2016, notification was made to approximately 28,000 individuals and organizations informing them of the opportunity to provide comment on the 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:

Take public comment. Adoption is planned for the April 8-9, 2016 Commission Meeting.

Draft motion language:

NA – Briefing and public hearing only.

Justification for Commission action:

NA – Briefing and public hearing only.

Communications Plan:

WDFW Website

News Releases

Hunting Pamphlet

Form revised 12/5/12